



PERSPECTIVE | ECOLOGY

Messages from a Mountain

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Science 19 May 2000:
Vol. 288, Issue 5469, pp. 1183-1184
DOI: 10.1126/science.288.5469.1183

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Summary

Mt. St. Helens' eruption on 18 May 1980 devastated a vast forested area, creating an unprecedented natural laboratory for studying the effects of large disturbances on ecosystems. As [Franklin and MacMahon](#) discuss in this Perspective, recovery was found not to follow the expected pattern of "ecological succession" from the edges. Rather, it was found to be highly heterogeneous, with surviving organisms and organic structures such as tree boles and standing dead trees playing a major role. In a related Perspective, [Newhall](#) discusses the geological lessons learned from the eruption.



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