

UC SANTA BARBARA

# THE *Current*

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## 'UCSB Reads 2014' Selects 'The Big Burn' by Timothy Egan

In 1910, a wildfire raged across national forests in northeast Washington, northern Idaho and western Montana. Over two days, flames scorched roughly 3 million acres.

The Big Burn, as it was known, eventually led conservation pioneers Theodore Roosevelt and Gifford Pinchot, chief forester, to consider the notion of public land as a national treasure, owned by and preserved for every citizen.

In his book, "The Big Burn: Teddy Roosevelt and the Fire That Saved America," Pulitzer Prize-winning reporter Timothy Egan uses the wildfire as a backdrop against which he chronicles the social, cultural and political history that led to the formation of the U.S. Forest Service.

The UC Santa Barbara Library has chosen the book as this year's selection for UCSB Reads. Using "The Big Burn" as a starting point, the university aims to engage readers in intellectually stimulating dialogue about issues of significant local and national interest, including conservation, wildfire management and the politics of environmentalism.

The book was selected in conjunction with the Bren School's Strategic Environmental Research Initiative on Wildfire and Climate Change, which is bringing faculty together from various disciplines to generate new approaches to fire management.

An annual winter quarter event, UCSB Reads engages the campus and the Santa Barbara community in conversations about a key topic while reading the same book. UCSB Reads is presented by the UCSB Library, in partnership with the Office of the Executive Vice Chancellor. A committee that included faculty and staff members, administrators, and student representatives made this year's selection.

Beginning at 10 a.m. on Wednesday, Jan. 15, Chancellor Henry T. Yang and University Librarian Denise Stephens will be on hand at the UCSB Library to distribute free copies of the book to registered UCSB students. Associated Students has, in part, funded the book distribution. "The Big Burn" is also on sale at the UCSB Bookstore.

"The Big Burn" is also the selection of the Santa Barbara Public Library System's winter Santa Barbara Reads program. The event runs concurrently with UCSB Reads, as it has for the last seven years, with events at library branches. Multiple copies of "The Big Burn" are available for loan, including e-book and audiobook versions. The Santa Barbara Public Library also offers "Book Club in a Bag" kits, which feature 10 copies of the book and a set of reader questions geared toward book club participants. The Luria Library at Santa Barbara City College, and the Westmont College Library are also partners in the program.

A variety of UCSB Reads events, including faculty panels, book discussions and exhibits, will take place throughout the quarter, both on campus and at local public libraries. All free and open to the public, these will culminate in a public talk by the author on March 4 in UCSB's Campbell Hall.

For more information about UCSB Reads, contact Rebecca Metzger, assistant university librarian for outreach and academic collaboration, at (805) 893-2674 or [rmetzger@library.ucsb.edu](mailto:rmetzger@library.ucsb.edu). A complete list of upcoming UCSB Reads activities is available at <https://www.library.ucsb.edu/ucsbreads>.

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## **About UC Santa Barbara**

The University of California, Santa Barbara is a leading research institution that also provides a comprehensive liberal arts learning experience. Our academic community of faculty, students, and staff is characterized by a culture of interdisciplinary collaboration that is responsive to the needs of our multicultural and global society. All of this takes place within a living and learning environment like no other, as we

draw inspiration from the beauty and resources of our extraordinary location at the edge of the Pacific Ocean.