



Open meadow area of Yosemite valley floor is more typical of natural conditions existing before establishment of the park.



Heavy undergrowth of incense-cedar, fir, and pine under the Giant Sequoias at Yosemite resulted from many years of fire suppression.

## U. C. Foresters Aid Fire Ecology Program at Yosemite Park

A PROGRAM OF ENVIRONMENTAL RESTORATION with particular emphasis on the re-introduction of fire as a natural agent in the ecology has been initiated in Yosemite National Park, according to Bob Barbee, Natural Resources Specialist. On hand this past summer for a field trip and weekend seminar with representatives of several government agencies, University researchers, and students, was Harold Biswell, Professor of Forestry and Conservation, University of California, Berkeley—a long-time proponent of the use of fire to improve forest ecology and

reduce fire hazards. The group watched and participated as Biswell conducted a prescribed burning demonstration on the valley floor (see photos here and cover).

Discussions revealed that when the Indians inhabited the valley, at least part of it was burned every year to keep it open, to encourage forage for wildlife, and to encourage the growth of black oaks, from which the acorn crop was carefully harvested. After the deliberate burning was stopped, and natural lightning-caused fires were suppressed, Ponderosa pine came in, along with incense-cedar, to crowd out the meadow grasses and browse for wildlife, and to eliminate the best views of the spectacular waterfalls and the towering mountains.

Park officials are now involved in a program of environmental restoration, aimed at correcting the unnaturally induced changes in the valley and re-establishing many of the pristine conditions existing in the early days of the park. Other new plans for the park's ecology, according to Superintendent Wayne Cone, include drastic limitations on private automobile traffic in the valley—with the possible substitution of a large parking lot and a transit system allowing visitors to take a short ride into the valley where they could then hike, bicycle, take tram tours, or camp without the noise and smog of thousands of automobiles.



Easily controlled prescribed burn (photos above, and cover) on the valley floor in Yosemite was fed by a good layer of pine needles and was hot enough to burn the invading undergrowth of incense-cedar, small pines, and firs, without endangering the large Sequoias or pines.

**CALIFORNIA AGRICULTURE**  
 Progress Reports of Agricultural Research,  
 published monthly by the University of California  
 Division of Agricultural Sciences.

William W. Paul ..... *Manager*  
 Agricultural Publications

Jerry Lester ..... *Editor*

Eleanore Browning ..... *Assistant Editor*  
 California Agriculture

Articles published herein may be republished  
 or reprinted provided no advertisement for a  
 commercial product is implied or imprinted.  
 Please credit: University of California  
 Division of Agricultural Sciences.

*California Agriculture* will be sent free upon  
 request addressed to: Editor, *California*  
*Agriculture*, Agricultural Publications, Uni-  
 versity Hall, University of California,  
 Berkeley, California 94720.

To simplify the information in *California*  
*Agriculture* it is sometimes necessary to use  
 trade names of products or equipment. No  
 endorsement of named products is intended  
 nor is criticism implied of similar products  
 which are not mentioned.

141