Introduction to Fire in the Earth System

Fire is a critical component of the earth system, influencing nearly all biomes of the world and playing an important role in regulating ecosystem processes and biodiversity. In recent decades, fire activity has increased in many temperate forests worldwide, even in ecosystems where natural ignitions are scarce, and this increase begs questions of whether climate change, human ignitions, land-use change, and/or altered vegetation are responsible. This learning activity provides an introduction to the interaction between human activities and fire.



Image from NASA: http://www.nasa.gov/topics/earth/features/climate-fire.html

1)	Discuss your personal observations and experiences with wildfire over your lifetime. Have you noticed any trends or changes that seem significant? Describe a summary of your observations.
2)	If you have noticed changes, what do you believe is responsible?
	Examine the National Interagency Fire Center's statistics on acreages burned in the United States between 1961 and 2012. Summarize at least three trends you notice over the past 50 years.