Fire is a majordriving force shaping and maintaining the integrity of various forestecosystems. In particular, pine forests often depend on fire forsustainability, because fire removes the organic layer of the forest floor toprepare a desirable seedbed and helps eliminate competitors. The majority ofKorean forests are dominated by pine species, because pine forests werehistorically protected for various purposes (e.g., source for buildingmaterial), and pine species were widely planted in the 1960s and 1970s torestore the barren soil that resulted from the Korean War and excessive naturalresource extraction since 1907. Fires, however, have been excluded from themodern Korean landscape for an extended time mainly due to an aggressive fireexclusion policy and low fuel loading to sustain crown fires. Consequently, itis not clearly known how dominant native species (e.g., Pinus densiflora, P.thunbergii, and Quercus mongolica) interact with fire in Korea and how fireinfluences interspecific competition among them. Naturally, the general publicdid not consider fire an integral and essential part of forest maintenance inKorea and believed it could only yield harmful results. Moreover, some peopleeven believed that Korean forests could be maintained without fire. For thefirst time in modern history, Korea experienced a wildland fire [1,000 ha in1996 (3,762 ha), which was followed by several large fires, including theEastern Coastal Fire in 2000 that burned 23,794 ha (or approximately 0.4 % ofKorea’s total forest) in 9 days. These series of fires concerned the generalpublic for two reasons: (1) people became aware that large-scale fires ([1,000ha) can occur in Korea, and (2) forest fire can threaten daily life becausemany people live very close to the forest (two thirds of Korea is forest).Climate change is also believed to increase wildfire intensity and size, andhigh fuel loading that is a result of a fire exclusion policy exacerbates it.These circumstances emphasize the need to understand fire regime and behaviorin Korea. Various studies were also conducted pertaining to fire prevention andprediction and forest restoration and ecology over the last 15 years.Synthesizing and sharing current knowledge regarding fire science in Korea withthe community will generate better synergism. This special issue contains fivecontributions intended to describe the effects of forest fires on forestecosystems in eastern coastal areas of Korea and provide an overview ofrestoration projects. The first contribution, by Ahn et al. (2013) provides areview of studies in Korea over the last two decades and compares findings withother such studies worldwide. Their review covers various fire ecology topics(i.e., postfire stand dynamics, soil property, water quality, and fire effectson insects and soil fauna), as well as postfire restoration planning issues(i.e., pine restoration, fuel breaks, and soil erosion). This work summarizesup-to-date fire science studies in Korea and help readers understand the dynamicsof fires in Korea. Moreover, it helps researchers identify future study needs.

ECOLOGICAL IMPACTS OF FIRE AND POSTFIRE RESTORATION IN KOREA