



Written by [James Murphy](#) on August 7, 2018

California Fires: Government Policies, Not Global Warming

As large swaths of California are yet again on fire, environmentalist groups, the leftist media, and Democratic California Governor Jerry Brown are quick to blame climate change. But the burning in California has more to do with misguided and short-sighted environmental regulations than with weather or climate.

Currently, [CAL FIRE](#), the California government entity that reports on fires, is tracking 18 separate wildfires throughout the state. The largest of these fires are the Carr Fire, which has killed seven and was reportedly started by a [flat tire](#), and the Mendocino Complex Fire, which consists of two separate fires — the Ranch Fire and the River Fire — which today surpassed last year's Thomas Fire as the largest in state history. To date, the Mendocino Complex fire has destroyed more than 283,800 acres and it is still growing.



Governor Brown, who last year called the spate of recent fires in his state “a new normal,” has again blamed man-made global warming as the culprit of these new fires. “Nature is very powerful,” Brown said recently. “and we’re not on the side of nature.”

“Since civilization emerged, 10,000 years ago, we haven’t had this kind of heat condition, and it’s going to continue getting worse and that’s the way it is,” [Brown falsely and absurdly claimed](#).

On Monday, President Trump weighed in on the situation in California. “California wildfires are being magnified & so much worse by the bad environmental laws which aren’t allowing vast amounts of readily available water to be properly utilized,” the president tweeted. “It is being diverted into the Pacific Ocean. Must also tree clear to stop fire spreading!”

Though the president wasn’t exactly clear what water needed to be diverted to fight the new fires, he may have been referencing the need for California to [harvest rainwater more effectively](#), which would not only assist with fire management but also with California’s water shortage.

But the last sentence of President Trump’s tweet is actually quite important. Old growth, dead trees, and other detritus that provides fuel to fires is rarely cleared out in California owing to strict environmental laws. The National Environmental Policy Act has put countless hurdles in the way of forestry companies and other groups who wish to clear forest areas of usable timber, which is crowding out new growth. Not only do the old trees and dried up vegetation create excellent conditions for runaway fires, they literally choke out the healthy trees, which become weak and susceptible to disease.



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The Endangered Species Act has made it nearly impossible for private-property owners to clear dead brush from their own land because it may destroy habitats of protected species. From 1993 until 2003, residents of Riverside County were prohibited from removing brush from their properties because such brush had become a habitat for the endangered kangaroo rat. When a wildfire broke out there in 2003, the dry, dead brush served as kindling as the blaze destroyed 2,700 homes and killed 27 people. The rat's habitat was also destroyed.

So, in what can charitably be described as a misguided attempt to save the environment from the ravages of human activities, government regulations have made the fires worse. In 2012, the Obama administration rewrote many of the regulations governing national forests, making them even more restrictive and further bureaucratizing their management.

After the rewrite of forest regulations in 2012, a coalition of timber, livestock, and off-road vehicle organizations challenged the new rules, observing that the new regulations would, among other things, contribute to an increase in number and intensity of forest fires. In 2015, Judge Ketnji Brown Jackson, an Obama appointee, rejected the group's claims in Washington, D.C., District Court.

"Hotter, drier, longer forest fires we are witnessing today have nothing to do with 'dangerous man-made climate change,'" said Paul Driessen, a senior policy advisor at CFACT. "They have a lot to do with idiotic forest management policies and practices."

So, man is indeed responsible for much of the fire-related tragedy we see in California. But anthropogenic global warming has nothing to do with it. Man, through governmental policies, has created the conditions for the recent wildfires in California to be larger and more intense than those of decades past.

At least the fires provide a metaphor for California itself, as the state seems content to burn itself down, both literally and figuratively.

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