

Why a Wet Winter Could Mean a Damaging Fire Season

Increased fuel for wildfires has officials across the state concerned

By: John Shrable ✉ (<mailto:jshrable@ksee.com>)

Posted: May 11, 2017 06:16 PM PDT

Updated: May 11, 2017 06:16 PM PDT

With over 100 million dead trees across the Sierra Nevada crews slated to battle Summer wildfires across the state are already preparing for what could be a damaging season.

And an abundance of Winter rain does not a calm fire season make. This year alone 8,000 acres have already burned across the state, 7,000 of those being in Fresno County alone.

"The dead trees are not going away, the dead oak trees in the lower elevations that died during the drought are not coming back, but now we have a grass crop that grew." says Mark Johnson, the Unit Chief for Cal Fire in the Fresno and Kings District.

It's a stark contrast being a forest of dead trees and underneath those trees lush tall grass. But as temperatures heat up and weather dries out all this grass will dry too, becoming tinder for wildfires.

Chief Johnson adds, "So now we have a tall ladder fuel that will allow fires when they get started at the lower elevations to easily transition from the brush into the trees."

Johnson represents just one of many agencies meeting this week to discuss preparedness for fire season ahead.

"We will be on the front lines reducing potential wildfire risk." comments Bruce Saito with the California Conservation Corps to a press meeting including these agencies.

"The rim fire released more emissions in just a couple of weeks than the city of San Francisco releases in an entire year." adds Brittany Covich of the Sierra Nevada Conservancy.

Felling every one of the millions of dead trees in the state's forests may be an impossible task, but efforts to create new fire breaks, such in the neighborhoods surrounding Shaver Lake, are signs of preparedness before the flames even take hold.

"The difference this year is these fire fighters are not only prepared to respond to fires but they are also out working on projects just like this one here." motions Ken Pimlott of Cal Fire to the fuel break around him, "Fuel breaks, prescribed burning, other projects to reduce the intensity of fires should they occur in these communities."

Just this season Cal Fire introduced it's own app that helps home and property owners across the state gauge how prepared for wildfires they actually are. The app can be found in both the Apple and Google App stores.

"The difference this year is these fire fighters are not only prepared to respond to fires but they are also out working on projects just like this one here." motions Ken Pimlott of Cal Fire to the fuel break around him, "Fuel breaks, prescribed burning, other projects to reduce the intensity of fires should they occur in these communities."

Just this season Cal Fire introduced it's own app that helps home and property owners across the state gauge how prepared for wildfires they actually are. The app can be found in both the Apple and Google App stores.

Copyright 2017 Nexstar Broadcasting, Inc. All rights reserved.