

Townhall

Trump Blames California Wildfires on Poor Environmental Laws

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President Trump doubled down on his criticism of California's environmental regulations and water management policies as the state struggles with one of the worst wildfire seasons in recent history.

"Governor Jerry Brown must allow the Free Flow of the vast amounts of water coming from the North and foolishly being diverted into the Pacific Ocean," Trump tweeted on Monday. "Can be used for fires, farming and everything else. Think of California with plenty of Water - Nice! Fast Federal govt. Approvals."

The president's comment comes after he said Sunday that too much water from the northern part of the state is being wasted by flowing into the Pacific Ocean.

"California wildfires are being magnified & made so much worse by the bad environmental laws which aren't allowing massive amount of readily available water to be properly utilized," he said. "It is being diverted into the Pacific Ocean. Must also tree clear to stop fire spreading!"

Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke has long argued for better forest management policies. On Monday he reminded people that the fires in the Western U.S. have been more intense due to an overabundance of dead timber that officials are not able to remove without facing lawsuits.

"Fires across the west are burning hotter and more intense," he tweeted. "The overload of dead and diseased timber in the forests makes the fires worse and more deadly. We must be able to actively manage our forests and not face frivolous litigation when we try to remove these fuels."

Zinke is not alone in his arguments. Conservatives have blamed poor environmentalist policies over the last four decades for exacerbating wildfires.

As a Reason Foundation study noted, the U.S. Forest Service, which is tasked with managing public wildland, once had success in minimizing widespread fires in the early 20th century.

But many of these successful methods were abandoned in large part because of efforts by environmental activists.

The Forest Service became more costly and less effective as it increasingly “rewarded forest managers for losing money on environmentally questionable practices,” wrote Randal O’Toole, a policy analyst at the Cato Institute.

Spending on the Forest Service has risen drastically, but these additional resources have been misused and haven’t solved the underlying issues. [...]

In a May congressional hearing, Rep. Tom McClintock, R-Calif., said, “Forty-five years ago, we began imposing laws that have made the management of our forests all but impossible.”

He went on to say that federal authorities have done a poor job of implementing methods to reduce the number of deadly fires, and that this has been devastating for America’s wildlands.

“Time and again, we see vivid boundaries between the young, healthy, growing forests managed by state, local, and private landholders, and the choked, dying, or burned federal forests,” McClintock said. “The laws of the past 45 years have not only failed to protect the forest environment—they have done immeasurable harm to our forests.” (CNS News)

California Gov. Jerry Brown blamed climate change, however.

According to CBS News, there are currently at least 18 major wildfires throughout the state of California that have killed nine people.