

West Coast Fire Kills at Least 33, Environmentalist Policies Blamed

At least 33 people are dead and half-a-million ordered to evacuate as 100 wildfires sweep across 12 Western states.

The landscape is truly apocalyptic. Millions of acres of forest are burning along the West Coast, the smoke blotting out the sun. In Oregon, dozens have died, and officials fear that number could go much higher.

Here in Yosemite National Park, the normally breathtaking scenery is hidden by a choking layer of smoke and falling ash.

The Creek Fire in the Sierra National Forest is keeping 1,600 firefighters busy day and night, but considering its size, locals say that's not nearly enough.

Rancher Larry Kellerhals said, "The whole area for miles around burned, burned Monday I believe, so I'm worried about my stock, they haven't gotten anything to eat for four or five days."

"I'm hoping to get back as soon as the officials will let me in," he said.

The smoke coming from this 175,000-acre fire is almost overwhelming up here just about an hour to the east of Fresno, California. And it's blanketing all of Southern California all the way to Las Vegas, Nevada. But that's not necessarily a bad thing according to some of the officials, who say this blanket of smoke is part of what is helping to contain this fire.

CALFIRE Public Information Officer Michael Davis said, "While this smoke is a real burden, and it's not any fun to have your community socked in with smoke and be breathing this, it's

actually doing a lot of good because it's moderating fire behavior substantially, and that's giving us a chance to try and get out in front of this thing."

The Trump administration has dedicated more than 26,000 personnel to assist, with dozens of grants paying for fire suppression and to help rebuild.

"My administration is closely coordinating with state and local leaders and we want to thank the more than 200,000 people that are working on it and 28,000 firefighters and first responders who courageously and bravely are fighting out there," the president said.

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