

Record wildfires continue to expand across Colorado

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Colorado has become a major hotspot for record-breaking wildfires in the Western United States in the 2020 fire season with flames reaching the major population centers of Boulder and Fort Collins. As of Thursday, eleven different fires have been burning across the state razing over 550,000 acres and dozens of homes. Thousands of residents are under evacuation orders.

Red flag warnings have been in effect throughout the state as unusually warm temperatures for the month of October coupled with low humidity and high winds create the conditions for the sudden eruption of fires. In some areas, firefighters on the front lines have been unable to use helicopters and other aircraft to combat the spreading fires due to wind gusts of over 35 mph.

Terrified residents have posted pictures and video of ominous scenes of billowing black smoke barreling towards their homes with the orange haze of the fires underneath. “It’s getting worse and worse. It’s bad. It’s really bad,” a Grand County resident exclaimed in a video she posted online.

On Thursday morning, the East Troublesome Fire in northern Colorado exploded to over 125,000 acres burned, a six-fold increase from the night before with a reported 19,000 acres burned. The fire, currently only 5 percent contained, is now the fourth largest in state history.

The sudden eruption forced the area around the town of Grand Lake to evacuate with police officers knocking door-to-door by 6 p.m. Wednesday night. On Thursday, Rocky Mountain National Park announced that it would close due to the fires and hazardous air quality with a pre-evacuation order being sent to towns in the surrounding area.

“It was really an amazing amount of fire spread yesterday,” said Fire Incident Commander Noel

Livingston during a Thursday morning briefing and noted that the fire had spread 20 miles overnight and is burning at an estimated 6,000 acres per hour. “The fire is growing faster than we can catch it right now.”

Despite over 300 firefighters battling the blazes across the state, meteorologists are expecting a cold front to approach the area accompanied by wind gusts of up to 50 mph. Officials are depending on a stronger front of cool and humid air over the weekend which may produce snowfall that could offer some relief. Still, officials are projecting that the fires will not be extinguished until November 10.

At the current trajectory, officials fear the possibility that the East Troublesome Fire could collide with the Cameron Peak Fire a few dozen miles north in the Roosevelt National Forest. The Cameron Peak Fire in Larimer County near Fort Collins has been burning since August 13 and has become the largest fire in state history at more than 200,000 acres burned. The fire eclipses the previous record also set this year at the end of July by the Pine Gulch Fire near the city of Grand Junction with over 139,000 acres burned.

Throughout the summer, devastating record-breaking fires have erupted across the western United States at an unprecedented rate, particularly in California and Oregon. The fires in California have so far blackened 4.1 million acres in 2020, compared to 2 million in 2018. At their peak in mid-summer, the fires in Oregon and Northern California unleashed toxic fumes and particulates giving cities like Portland and San Francisco the most polluted air in the world.

Climate scientists are reporting the exponential growth of mega, or complex fires, decades before previous predictions. In 2015, a study from the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) warned that average fire size would double by 2050 in Southern

California with a gradual increase in fire severity. The growing scale and ferocity of the wildfires coupled with the extending fire season year after year across the western US are the clear outcome of human-induced climate change.

Alex Hall, an author of the UCLA study, told *Scientific American*, “The massive increase in wildfire size and intensity that we have seen over the past five years, maybe, especially over the past two or three years, is not something that was predicted by climate scientists.” Hall continued, “What we’re seeing now are new types of behavior that have emerged as a result of climate change... not seen in historical records.”

Simultaneously, the destructive effects of climate change are compounded by a neglect of effective fire prevention. Forest management projects under the federal US Forest Service covering millions of acres of forests are being stalled due to a lack of funding. Services included the thinning of small trees, clearing of dry brush and prescribed fires which are known to prevent small fires from growing into life-threatening catastrophes have been criminally underfunded by the Democrats and Republicans in Congress.

A recent report by the *Los Angeles Times* revealed a massive backlog of Forest Service fire prevention projects that has accumulated yearly, covering over 2.2 million acres in 2019 for Oregon and Washington states compared to 544,000 acres in 2008. In California, where over 16 million acres of forested land are owned by the federal government, there are over 225,000 acres of fire prevention projects that have yet to be completed or begun.

The failure of adequate fire prevention methods over years of accelerating climate change has created a tinderbox across millions of acres of the western United States that immediately erupts if given a spark. The growing danger of climate change and the failure of capitalist governments to address the issue seriously is just one of the many reasons why the regime that places profits over human lives must be replaced with a socialist society.



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