

Of course I would like to blame the California wildfires on poor land and water management, and that may well turn out to be the primary factor, but I'm going to come out and say the unsayable: I don't know anything about the subject at all.

(Well, I know enough to know that the catch-all, unfalsifiable "climate change" claim is not the explanation -- I am to believe that up until recently we had the optimal temperature, but small deviations lead to catastrophes? I sure hope anybody advancing such a thesis believes in God, because the natural likelihood of that story is precisely zero.)

However, I can at least share with you some of what I've been reading on the subject, and that includes an [article](#) by Jonathan Lesser, which reads in part:

The most common causes of recent wildfires in the Golden State have been human activities (including arson) and poorly maintained power lines, such as those belonging to the Pacific Gas and Electric Company (PG&E), which caused the 2018 Camp Fire that killed 85 people. Another likely culprit: bad forest management. Last April, Los Angeles County unveiled its Community Forest Management Plan. The plan is heavy on buzzwords about the need to ensure an "equitable tree canopy" and "environmental justice" but light on strategies to reduce wildfire risk.

Various studies purport to "prove" that wildfires are increasing in number and destructiveness. But the trend since 1987 has been fewer wildfires each year.... The acres burned have climbed upward, though that trend is skewed by the 4.5 million acres burned in 2020 and 2.5 million acres burned in 2021. Acreage burned in 2022–2023 totalled some of the lowest levels in the last 40 years. A longer-running trendline shows that the number of state wildfires peaked in the 1920s.

That the acreage burned is increasing even as the number of wildfires has decreased is not the result of climate change. Rather, it is the combined result of efforts to suppress wildfires and environmentalists' demands to leave forests undisturbed. California's Mediterranean climate, with its historically wet winters followed by months of dry conditions, heightens the likelihood of wildfires. But instead of removing dead and diseased trees and undergrowth, the state, following environmentalist restrictions, has allowed that natural fuel to build up, creating the conditions for explosive wildfires. Land-use restrictions have also forced development nearer wildfire-prone areas, worsening the damage and loss of life.

With regard to fire-insurance cancellations, California law made it impossible for private insurers to price risk appropriately, and since no private firm is a welfare agency or wishes to go bankrupt, numerous California homeowners in the affected area had their policies canceled some months ago.

That really is the classic case of government intervention: in the name of making people better off (we're going to get you lower insurance premiums!), they make people much worse off (you now have no insurance at all).

So that's what I have for you on a subject on which I have about as much information as the average person scrolling on his phone.