

Southern carlifornia environmental disaster-wildfires final



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The recent and past southern California wild fires have left many people homeless while others have lost their lives. For instance, the October 2003 fires burned approximately 742, 000 acres of land and destroyed about 3, 361 homes and about 26 lives lost. There are various factors that have contributed to the fires, comprising of forests, which covered about 5% of area burned in 2033, and shrub lands.

However, there are three important lessons that have been learned in these fires and these are; even though the fires have been massive, there have proceeding ones like before this year there was a major one in 2003, and these future ones should be expected. The contemporary fire management policy is not effective enough' the future government development should be able to plan for these fires like other natural disasters and integrate the engineering solutions much as has been done with earthquakes and other natural events.

One of the largest fires ever to heat southern California was in 1878, where about 60, 000 acres of land was burned in Los Angeles county and about 500, 000 acres in 1889. The causes of these fires were put forward as decadal scale variation of climate, natural cycles due to fuel buildup, and human demographic patterns. When the fires rage, the most immediate reaction is normally for the residents to evacuate or be evacuated. An evacuation order is usually given with most of them being mandatory. The government establishes evacuation points.

Some of the evacuees have sought refuge at temporary camps like El Toro High School, San Diego County Shelter, and Stadium. According to some

residents; Thomas Richardson “ I wanted some, but its first the fact that due to sleep deprivation, I’ve been drinking a lot of coffee, and I don’t think I can stomach it right now. So I’ll probably have to wait a little bit later this evening to taste anything. Brian Watt: “ Frying bacon beets burning embers any day. And for an hours, as the sun came up outside El Toro High School in Lake Forest, the smell of bacon cut through the smoky air.

It smelled like. ” Joe White: “ we’ve heard anywhere from 100 to 500 homes, we’ve heard anything from going home today to going home on Sunday, and I don’t know who knows the truth. Watt: most say they are pleased with the shelter at El Toro, even though its 60 miles from home. But many cant get reliable information about the fate of Fallbrook and when they can go back ...

(Brian Watt: 2006. some evacuees allowed to return home, others stuck waiting: 89: 3 KPPC, Southern California radio) <http://www.scpr.org/news/stories/2007/10/25/18-fallbrook-wait-10250.html>).

When the evacuees return some of them find their homes completely destroyed others partially and as such have to begin rebuilding. Other residents also have to contend with the massive ashes, which are a health hazard, especially to people suffering from asthma. The health risks due to exposure are certainly acute as the fire blanketed in this year’s episode most of southern California cities with a combination of both smoke and dust driven by very strong blowing winds.

According to an article on the LA Times “ Some of the worst devastation has been in and around Malibu, where the losses included two beloved

landmarks; in San Diego, where at least one person died and 14 were

injured; and in the communities of Agua Dulce and Canyon Country, midway <https://assignbuster.com/southern-carlifornia-environmental-disaster-wildfires-final/>

between Santa Clarita and Palmdale. At least 25 buildings there were destroyed and 3,800 remained threatened by a rapidly moving blaze driven by winds gusting to 80 mph. At least four people were reported injured, one severely". ([http://www.latimes.com/news/la-me-fire22oct22,0,3287968.tory? track= rss](http://www.latimes.com/news/la-me-fire22oct22,0,3287968.tory?track=rss)). The landscape is often left in a degraded state. Fire is considered an essential component of wild land ecosystems. Within the Mediterranean climates globally, numerous plant species have adapted to a condition that they can only exist in presence of the fires. Wild land fires usually produce duration of rebirth as well as in after the fire environments by eliminating dead matter and then releasing nutrients back to the same environment, which seem to be locked in the mature plants as well as organic litter.

There are various causes of the southern California fires; most of them natural while could be considered artificial. Natural causes The existence of fire within a landscape has been at least one of the greatest evolutionary factors contributing to the composition of flora in the entire state and the world over. Often, the natural fire causes include: lightening, sparks of fire originating from rocks, volcanic activity as well as the spontaneous combustion of organic substances and plant materials.

Of these, lightening is considered the most effective factor in almost all the fires that have hit Southern California and anywhere else in the world. This is so because the rate at which lightning strikes the earth is about 100 times a second averaging to about over 3 billion strikes per annum (Barbour, Burk, & Pitts 1980). The origin of the lightening is considered to be from the summer thunderstorms. It is as a result of storms that form due to the convergence of <https://assignbuster.com/southern-carlifornia-environmental-disaster-wildfires-final/>

a warm moist together with rising air mass and a cool high air mass with the warm air mass attempting to overlap a mountain range.

The resulting convergence of the warm moist air is typical in the California region and other parts of the world. In reference to the California lightning fires, they typically take place at just above 5, 000 feet above sea level even though there are cases where it has occurred at much lower altitudes.

Although most of the raging wild fires that have rocked California have been to natural causes, there are however instances when human activities have also played a role. The human activities with respect to the landscape date back to some 30, 000 years with the advent of the first Americans.

Most of the Native Americans history is told of fires used to clear forests. These stories illustrate the threat posed by wildfires then and that fire was used in a continuous way back then. Albeit there have been arguments that link other human activities which have resulted in global warming to the advent of fires, some scientists disagree with this school of thought. Even though, there is an agreement that in the future the issue of global warming could result in major wild fires, presently this is not the case (Noel Shepherd, 2007).

This they attribute to the fact that there has been a dangerous mix of drought and wind, which has constantly manifested itself in the Southern California region for ages. According to a study carried out in 2006, researchers established that western federal forests had been burned about seven times more in 1987-2003 than in the proceeding 17 years. However,

the study also found that the region for varied from the rest of the west, with no significant increase on frequency of fires with temperature rise.

According to scientist Anthony wester, most of the year Southern California is hot and dry which is a recipe for fire regardless of the fact that this is a climatic change or not. Documented work reveal that in the 19th century human settlement in this region changed the fire pattern of the coastal California by enhancing its frequency. Thus, future climate change is projected to have minimal impact in changing fire regimes of shrub land landscapes in relation to other global changes like population growth and habitat fragmentation.

As such, the future management of fire requires a strategic approach that will puffier fuel manipulations and at the same time go beyond just evaluating and assessing effectiveness of their strategies/methods based only on area covered. It should also take into consideration such strategies that are tailored to suit the needs and conditions for various regions, due to the fact that there exists marked variations between the central coastal section and Southern California in origin of fire ignition, burning season as well as historical patterns of burning, human settlement and population growth.

The magnitude of the raging wild fires can never be undermined, the recent fires confirms some progress in both the federal and state's commitment, but more needs to be done. Evacuation process needs to be more efficient and residents need to be warned in advance to avoid unnecessary deaths.