

**Climate change and forest management leading to worse wildfires**

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(NEW YORK) -- The United States experienced historic natural disasters last week, with unprecedented wildfires torching the West and the Atlantic hurricane season setting a record for the number of named storms at this point of the year.

Officials in California and the Pacific Northwest, as well as scientists, pointed to these natural disasters as hard evidence that climate change is a global threat and scientific reality impacting American communities.

Last Monday, President Trump pointed to forest mismanagement as one reason behind the fires and expressed skepticism about climate change at a press briefing after Wade Crawford, California's state secretary for natural resources, said people need to follow the science.

"It'll start getting cooler, you just watch," said the President

"I wish science agreed with you," Crawford replied.

"I don't think science knows actually," responded President Trump.

ABC meteorologist Melissa Griffin tells ABC's Perspective Podcast that the President is correct in saying that the weather will start getting cooler, but only because of the changing season's.

"Winter will cool down and fire season 2020 comes to an end, and that's it. But then what about fire season 2021? When it does cool down, we seem to forget that [the next] fire season will be around the corner again and what's to say that the next fire season isn't going to be worse? That's the weather aspect, but when it comes to climate, nothing is cooling down. All of the scientific research, when it comes to our warming climate, just has these graphs going up," said Griffin.

Climate change is warming the surface of the Earth at a faster rate than ever before and it is leading to fire friendly conditions, but how forests are managed also impacts fires.

Forest management, according to Griffin, is the administration of forests and it includes "the scientific and technical aspects of managing a forest" and it does play a role in wild fires.

"It's pretty much forest regulation. For example, if you have a dead tree that falls in one of the forests out West forest management is the one that are in charge of removing it so it's not a danger to anything else. And if it does fall and it is dead, it is going to dry up even rapidly. And that's going to be an issue when it comes to these wildfires," said Griffin.

She says the combination of forest management and climate change are leading to bigger fires.

"Management policies have created tinderboxes and that's because they're not removing these dead trees and dead brush fast enough in a forest. Climate change has only made it more likely that these tinder boxes, that forest management is creating, will explode into massive fires and they will spread, and grow faster and bigger than what we've ever seen before," Griffin said.

Wildfires are not just burning in forests far from populated regions. They are also happening around cities like Los Angeles or San Francisco, which Griffin says is a sign that climate change, and not just forest management, is having an impact on fires.

"We're talking about neighborhoods. We're talking about building areas. It's more populated regions and that does have to do with climate change. Anywhere can see these massive fires grow, especially out west. The entire world is warming at an alarming rate, but the Pacific Coast they've seen some of the most dramatic temperature increases," said Griffin.

The worst case for scenario for Griffin is humans don't do anything to stop or slow climate change.

"If we don't do anything this just continues to exasperated itself each and every year. We keep seeing the climate, the global temperatures and the global ocean waters continue to rise. That is what we're really trying to avoid here, because the more that happens, the more we're going to see glaciers melting. We're going to see things that we have never seen in our lifetime before. It's almost a question mark. Who knows what's going to happen if this continues," said Griffin.

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