

Wildfires

Climate change impacts



Climate change influences wildfires by creating dry and hot conditions, which worsens wildfires by increasing the length of the season, allowing for larger fires, and yielding more acres burned.

Connection to climate change



Already observed changes



Western U.S. **wildfire season** **105** days longer than in the 70s



Western U.S. **snowpack** declined by **>20%** since early 20th century



Western U.S. now have **3x** as many **large fires** as in the 70s



Soil **moisture content** in western U.S. at its **lowest** level in 120 years



Western U.S. wildfires now **burn 6x** as many **acres** as in the 70s



Bark beetle outbreaks more **frequent**, killing large amounts of parched trees

Anticipated future changes

By 2050:



Area burned annually by U.S. wildfires could increase **2-6x**



Conditions suitable for summer wildfires are projected to increase substantially across most western U.S. states

Impacts to society

Wildfires can result in dangerous air quality levels and severe property and infrastructure damage

People with respiratory issues and those already burdened by poor air quality – **low-wealth communities, agricultural and outdoor workers, and communities of color** – are especially vulnerable to severe impacts from wildfires

For sources of information, please visit: www.edf.org/climateimpactsources

*Anticipated future changes are for scenarios without climate action



COSTS

Billion-dollar wildfire events in the U.S. have cost **\$103.7 billion** in damages since 1980 and the cost per event has been increasing from **\$18.4 billion** per year in the 80s to **\$85 billion** per year in the 2010s