

Brown points to climate change for early fire season

By Anthony York, Los Angeles Times

SACRAMENTO – Gov. Jerry Brown put the state’s early wildfire season in global terms Monday, saying the state would have to grow accustomed to more forest fires as a consequence of climate change.

Brown’s remarks at the CalFire aviation management unit in Sacramento came as firefighters in Ventura County said they expected to have the 28,000-acre Springs fire fully contained today. State firefighters have responded to about twice the average number of wildfires so far this year – more than 1,100 in all.

“Our climate is changing, the weather is becoming more intense,” Brown said in an airplane hangar filled with trucks, airplanes and helicopters used by the state to fight fires. “It’s going to cost a lot of money and a lot of lives.

“The big issue (is) how do we adapt,” Brown said, “because it doesn’t look like the people who are in charge are going to do what it takes to really slow down this climate change, so we are going to have to adapt. And adapting is going to be very, very expensive.”

With the snowpack in the Sierra mountains at just 17 percent of normal, state officials are bracing for a long, destructive fire season. State Natural Resources Secretary John Laird, who joined Brown at Monday’s press conference, said he was preparing for “a deadly year.”

CalFire Director Ken Pimlott said more than 40,000 acres have burned in California this month alone. While the early fire season has become more common in Southern California, state

officials officially opened the fire season in Northern California six weeks earlier than normal – just the fourth time in state history that has happened, he said.