

Drought could lead to record wildfire season

By Mark Koba, CNBC

Three years of severe drought have made plenty of misery for California and other Western states. Now to make matters worse, the extremely dry conditions are creating the potential for a devastating fire season.

“All the pieces are in place for a really bad season of wildfires,” said Malcolm North, a research ecologist with the U.S. Forest Service. “We’re likely to set a record for fires this year.”

The drought has hit hard in states like Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, Texas and especially California, where the snowpack in the Sierra Nevada is at 12 percent of the annual average. Snowpack in the Cascades in Washington and Oregon is also below normal.

That has dried out the trees, shrubs and grasses that end up fueling the fires.

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