

Fire plus rain plus drought equal mud

By Amy Quinton, NPR

Less than an hour west of South Lake Tahoe, trucks carrying burned timber from the Eldorado National Forest roar down the canyon as chain saws buzz in the distance.

But U.S. Forest Service ecologist Becky Estes says besides humans, not much else in this forest seems alive.

“We’re standing in an area that ... is going to be probably 100 percent mortality of the trees,” Estes says.

Rainstorms continue to pound drought-stricken California, where dangerous mudslides have caused serious damage in areas burned by wildfires. This year, the state had one of its worst wildfire seasons on record.

Starting in September, the King Fire burned nearly 100,000 acres in the Eldorado. In this steep river canyon, 50,000 acres burned in one day. Now the pine trees are black and lifeless, and not one pine needle remains on the branches.

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