

Editorial: Treat wildfires like other natural disasters

Publisher's note: *This editorial is from the March 23, 2015, Sacramento Bee.*

An out-of-control wildfire is just as much a natural disaster as a hurricane or flood. Just ask Californians who fled for their lives or saw their homes burn down in recent years.

But that's not how wildfires are handled in the federal budget, and it's taking money away from worthwhile programs in our national forests and parks.

This has to change.

The U.S. Forest Service, the White House, bipartisan supporters in Congress and conservation groups are on the right track. They're trying to push through legislation (HR167) so that the costs of fighting the few catastrophic wildfires would be paid from emergency funds, just as when other natural disasters strike. The Forest Service and Interior Department would continue to fund routine firefighting from their regular budgets.

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