

2015 fire season approaching record level



Grassy areas in the West are quick to burn with this being year four of the drought. Photo Copyright 2015 Carolyn E. Wright

By Gloria Dickie, High Country News

USA Today earlier this week reported that U.S. wildfires were approaching “record levels.” The article pointed at the more than 5.5 million acres burned so far this season – second only to the summer in 2011, when just more than 6 million acres had burned by the end of July.

Certainly, the 2015 fire season started off with a bang. As of Thursday, 21 large fires – meaning more than 100 acres – were burning in Western states. But when it comes to wildfire, the tide turns quickly, and this season may not set any all-time records.

This year’s fire season has been an odd one. The usually fire-prone Southwest has burned less than the Pacific Northwest, California and Alaska. More than 85 percent of acreage burned has been in Alaska. Meanwhile Colorado, which has broken a

number of its own fire records over the past few years, has remained relatively fire-free.

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