

2015 wildfires burned a record 10.1 mil. acres

By Gloria Dickie, High Country News

The summer of 2015 was unlike anything most career firefighters had ever seen. Across the United States, fires erupted not only in dry woodlands, but also in grasslands, rainforests, and tundra, ignited by lightning strikes and careless campers.

Flames dripped from lichen-covered trees in the Pacific Northwest, and in Alaska, ate into permafrost. U.S. military personnel were called in to battle the ferocious blazes across the West – as were Canadians, Australians, and New Zealanders.

By year's end, wildfires would consume more than 10.1 million acres of land in the U.S., destroying 4,500 homes and taking the lives of 13 wildland firefighters. Fighting the blazes cost an unprecedented \$2.6 billion, the majority spent in the West.

“While the news that more than 10 million acres burned is terrible, it's not shocking, and it is probable that records will continue to be broken,” said Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack in a press release.

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