

Inmate crews dwindle as wildfire season grows longer



Inmate crews were used on the Washington Fire near Markleeville in 2015. Photo/Carolyn E. Wright/Copyright 2016

By Joseph Serna, Los Angeles Times

Already plagued by years of drought and a beetle infestation that has reduced millions of trees to kindling, California is facing yet another crisis as it enters the brunt of wildfire season: a dwindling roster of prison inmates who can battle blazes.

The gap is due largely to California's controversial realignment law, which mandates that inmates convicted of non-serious, nonviolent and non-sexual offenses serve time in county jails rather than in state prisons.

As a result, the pool of eligible firefighting inmates has been shrinking.

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