

USFS wants to stop putting out some fires



Crews on Nov. 6 try to stabilize the burn scar left from the Emerald Fire on Tahoe's South Shore. Photo/LTN

By Lauren Sommer, KQED-TV

California's fire season hasn't turned out to be as bad as some feared this year. In fact, forest managers say that certain kinds of fires – the “good” fires – were sorely lacking.

Sierra Nevada forests are adapted to low-intensity fires that clear the underbrush and prevent trees from getting too dense. After a century of fire suppression, many forests are overgrown, which can make catastrophic fires worse.

So forest managers are piloting a new policy designed to shift a century-old mentality about fire in the West.

The idea is to let naturally-caused fires burn when they aren't a threat to homes or people. But actually making those decisions on the ground isn't easy in a crowded state like

California.

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