

Calif. forests failing to regrow after intense wildfires

By Bob Berwyn, Inside Climate News

There are warning signs that some forests in the Western U.S. may have a hard time recovering from the large and intense wildfires that have become more common as the climate warms.

After studying 14 burned areas across 10 national forests in California, scientists from UC Davis and the U.S. Forest Service said recent fires have killed so many mature, seed-producing trees across such large areas that the forests can't re-seed themselves. And because of increasingly warm temperatures, burned areas are quickly overgrown by shrubs, which can prevent trees from taking root.

Historically, severe fires were uncommon in the forests covered by the study, largely made up of yellow pines and mixed conifers, but extended drought and heatwaves have exacerbated fire conditions across the West. The changing climate is also seen as a factor in recent wildfires in the Southeast, which is also mired in drought.

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