

Why fighting wildfires often fails

By Steve Inskeep, 60 Minutes

Fighting wildfires in America cost federal agencies almost \$2 billion last year including more than half the budget of the U.S. Forest Service. Wildland fires are growing worse in a time of drought and climate change, and the biggest and most destructive fires can't be stopped.

They are a force of nature: imagine trying to stop a hurricane. Yet the government has to try, because more than a 100 million Americans now live in – or near – forests and grasslands that can erupt in flames.

Much of the Kern River Valley near Bakersfield burned in a wildfire that swept across 75 square miles. It killed two people and destroyed 285 homes. The wildlands that fed this fire are the same wildlands that attracted residents like Fred Roach.

It kept burning despite the efforts of firefighters who spent \$22 million trying to stop it.

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