

Wildfires surge in Western United States

By Benjamin Spillman, Reno Gazette-Journal

Wildfires are surging across the Western U.S. with more than 4 million acres charred this year.

That's almost double the rate from last season and more than 40 percent above the five-year average for mid-July.

While fire is part of healthy forest and rangeland regeneration it can also be dangerous for communities in its path and expensive to fight. Wildfires can spew unhealthy levels of air pollution hundreds of miles and deplete the budgets of federal agencies charged with preserving the land.

In general, about 80 percent of wildfires are human caused.

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