California Has No Excuse for Its Wildfires, and Blaming Trump Is a Dishonest Cop-Out

By Steve Milloy
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California Gov. Gavin Newsom is trying to blame anyone and everything for his state’s wildfires except himself, his Democratic party and the radical green groups that have dictated the California agenda for the past 40 years.

At a meeting before cameras with President Trump on Monday about the wildfires, that have so far burned 3 million acres of California forests. Gov. Newsom faked an apoloogy for California’s failure to manage its
3 million acres of California forests, Gov. Newsom faked an apology for California’s failure to manage its forests: “There is no question when you look [at] this past decade and look at the past thousand years that we have not done justice on our forest management. I don’t think anyone disputes that.”

Other than the odd reference to “the past thousand years,” so far so good. But then Gov. Newsom tried to pull a fast one on President Trump.

Newsom continued, “But one thing is fundamental – 57% of the land in this state is federal forest land, 3% is California.” (The other 40% is held by private landowners.)

So Gov. Newsom said, in effect, that while California has been remiss on the 3% of the forests it controls, the federal government has been remiss on 57% of California’s forests. So the federal government is almost 20 times more at fault than California.

This is complete nonsense. First, although the federal government owns 57% of California’s forests, it actually controls 0% of them when it comes to something like forest management, which is shorthand for controlled burns and logging.

If the federal government wants to manage the forests it “owns,” or approve or undertake virtually any other project involving public lands, it has to jump through various regulatory hurdles to do so. The most formidable and infamous one being the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA).

Signed into law by President Richard Nixon in 1970, NEPA requires that the federal government produce an Environmental Impact Statement for projects on public lands, a process that includes seeking public input and is subject to lawsuits.

This sounds eminently reasonable except that radical green groups now use the NEPA process to cause infinite delay for projects they oppose from roads to pipelines. The tortuous process imposed upon the Keystone XL pipeline has gone on for a decade, and it’s a good example of the never-ending, totally-litigious and arbitrary NEPA process.

While the federal government does not need to go through NEPA to fight wildfires on an emergency basis on public lands, it would need to go through NEPA to do the more proactive and deliberate forest management.

You may be assured that the environmental extremists would bring all their money, influence, political power and lawyers to bear on any effort to manage the 57% of California’s forests owned by the federal government.
That would guarantee no forest management would occur anytime soon. And time may not be on California’s side.

Researchers have shown that over the past 1,100 years, California has experienced numerous megadroughts lasting decades. One even lasted 220 years. These droughts occurred long before SUVs and coal-fired power plants, so they were undeniably natural.

California has now been in a drought for several years, a period which has turned the state’s forests into tinder boxes. Based on the state’s natural history alone, California could be in a drought for a very long time, which means California could burn until there is nothing left to burn.

It is beyond obvious that California and U.S. emissions cuts have are having no impact whatsoever on California’s drought-prone nature. So regardless of whether one believes in the man-made global warming apocalypse or not, meaningful forest management must begin now. But that is not possible with the NEPA process abusers.

President Trump proposed administrative changes to NEPA this year to streamline approvals. But California and its green allies are fighting these sensible proposals with lawsuits. The state filed its lawsuit just two weeks ago.

So who is Newsom kidding?

The sad, but inconvenient truth is California Democrats and their green allies would rather watch their beautiful state burned to a crisp than practice sensible forest management. That is the insanity of politics based on the climate agenda.

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