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5 Negative Impacts from Wildfires

…it goes well beyond the smoke

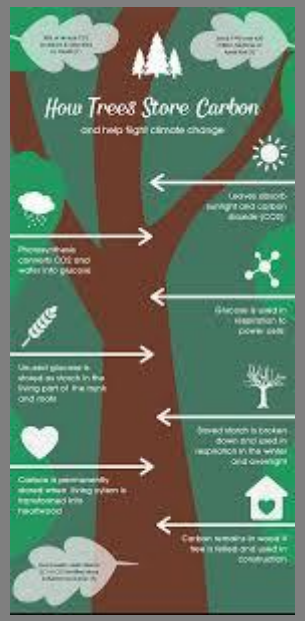
#5 – Hazardous air quality

WORLD RESOURCES INSTITUTE

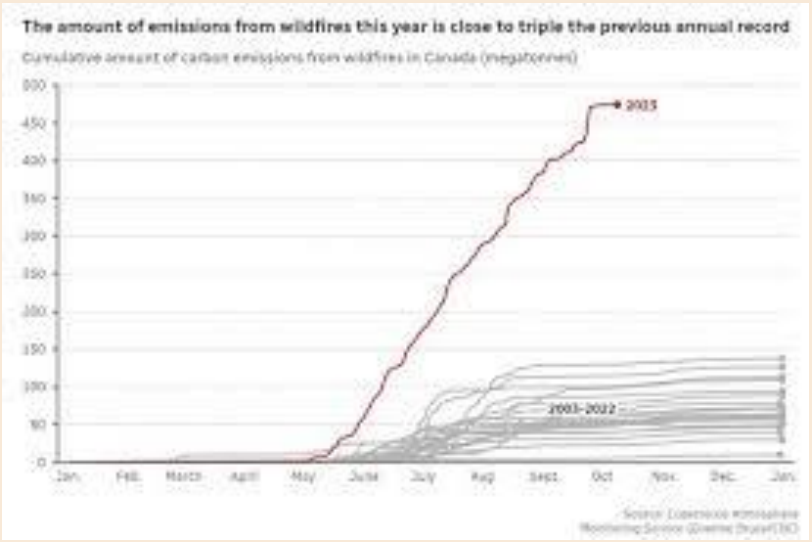
The information presented here is from a World Resources Institute article published last year.

I thought it important not only because of the far-reaching impact of wildfires, but because the final impact highlights what I consider the single most influential issue that the climate movement would be wise to emphasize.

- The fine particles in wildfire smoke create the biggest health concern. They can result in respiratory illnesses and aggravate existing heart and lung conditions.
- In 2023, the wildfires in Quebec Canada caused unhealthy or hazardous air quality for more than 75 million people in the U.S.
- The smoke was visible as far as southwestern Europe.
- Smoke emissions from Australia's brushfires in 2019 – 2020 may have contributed to the rare three-year La Niña event.



#4 – They worsen climate change



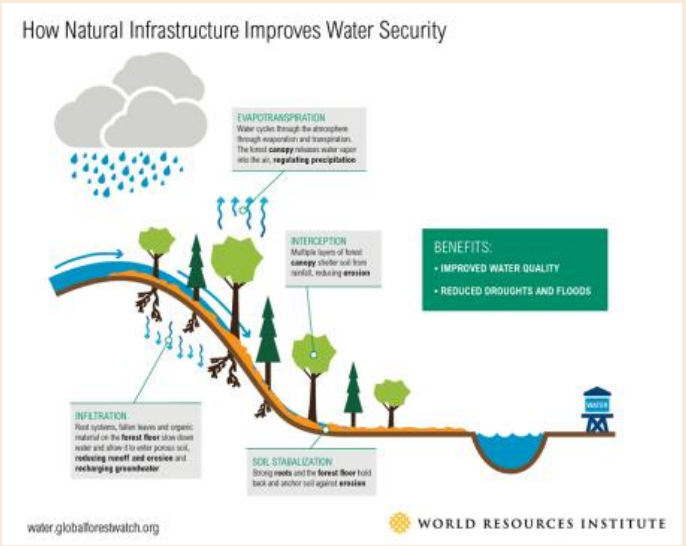
Wildfires cause a double-whammy when it comes to carbon emissions.

Burning forests release carbon and the decline in forests reduce the amount of carbon forests absorbed.

- In 2021, the wild fires in boreal forests in North America, Europe, and Asia released 1.76 billion tons of carbon dioxide.
- If the fire were a country, the 2021 fires would be among the top 10 biggest global emitters.
- Forests absorb a net 7.6 billion metric tons of CO_2 annually. That's about 1.5 times what the U.S. emits in a given year.

Note: A boreal forest is a forest that grows in the northern hemisphere's cold regions and is made up of coniferous trees that can tolerate the cold.

#3 – Diminished water security



It may not be intuitive that forests are connected to the water supply, but forested watersheds provide more than two-thirds of the world's drinking water.

- 33 of the world's 105 largest cities rely on forested areas for their water supplies.
- Forests reduce erosion and act as a filtration system. These characteristics prevent sediments and other pollutants from entering rivers and lakes.
- By way of example, after the 2018 California Camp Fire, post-fire rainstorms caused debris and toxicants to enter the water supply prompting some utilities to stop using water from those sources.

#2 – Increased Flood Risk

A city's hard surfaces cause increased runoff from rain.

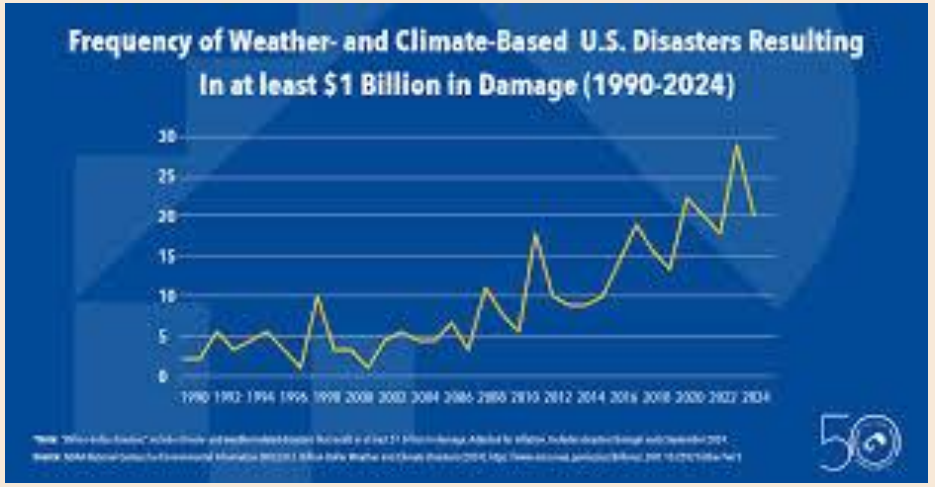
Healthy forests around cities act like sponges that store excess runoff and slow the flow of water down.

- Even relatively small amounts of rainfall in an upstream forest after a wildfire can result in flash floods.
- For example: After the Hermits Peak-Calf Canyon fire in New Mexico, flooding destroyed more than 430 homes and led to power outages that caused livestock losses among rural framers.
- And the risk of flooding can last years, until the vegetation grows back.

The climate movement probably doesn't want to hear this because it's so focused on the environmental impact. But if you want to get the average citizen on your side, hammer home that climate change costs them money.

The financial estimates presented in the WRI article may or may not be totally accurate, but that's less important than stressing how climate change has a real cost to almost everyone.

#1 – Economic losses



There are direct and indirect costs associated with wildfires:

- It is estimated that the impact to air quality from wildfires costs $16 billion annually in the U.S. alone.
- After a wildfire, the cost to produce drinking water can increase by $10 million to $100 million.
- If nothing changes, flood-related losses globally could reach an estimated $1 trillion by 2050.
- And wildfires reduce economic activity:
  - Australia's bushfires may have cost its tourism industry $4.5 billion between 2019 and 2020.
  - Economic loss estimates from the Maui Hawaii fires came in at $9 million per day.

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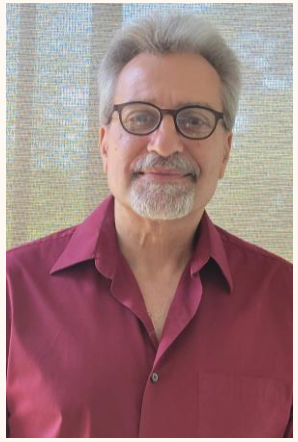

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Unbiased and Unfiltered

- An honest assessment of the climate change effort.
- I cover what's working – but more important - the issues/roadblocks that the industry would prefer to ignore.
- A must-read for anyone with a desire to understand what's really going on with renewable energy and climate change.

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