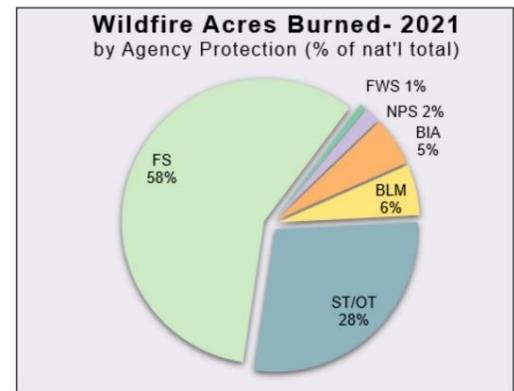
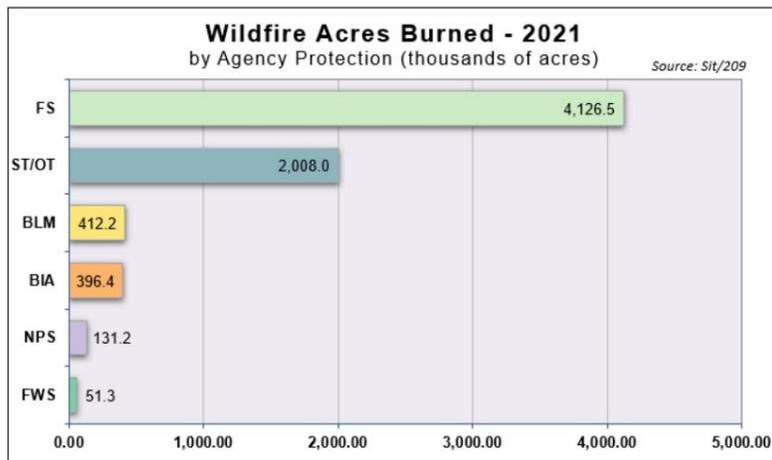




President Biden: Executive Order *Talking Points*

- President Biden's Executive Order (EO) comes as millions of acres of National Forest Systems lands are burning every year from severe wildfire. In 2021, [more than half of all acres](#) that burned in the United States occurred on lands protected by the U.S. Forest Service. The EO will do little to address a crisis that is [killing large and old trees](#), and destroying forests, watersheds, and wildlife habitat.



- Wildfires are also a significant source of greenhouse gas emissions. In the Western United States, wildfires [released a record 130 million tons](#) of CO₂ in 2021. Wildfire smoke in the Pacific Northwest [are causing atmospheric carbon monoxide levels to spike](#).
- Many of these severe, carbon-emitting wildfires could have been less severe had the Forest Service implemented more proactive forest management activities including mechanical treatments. Researchers have called for significant reductions in tree densities on Western lands to make forests more resilient to wildfires, insects, disease, drought and other impacts of climate change.
- By adding more bureaucracy to our broken system of federal land management, President Biden's Executive Order will make it more challenging for his administration to implement its 10-year wildfire strategy, which seeks to double the level of treatments on fire-prone national forests.
- Most NFS land is already set aside from active forest management. Of the 193 million acres of National Forest System (NFS) lands, [less than half](#) (45 percent) are unreserved and available for forest management and timber harvest. The rest are either permanently set aside as Congressionally-designated wilderness areas or national monuments, or are held as “inventoried roadless areas” where management is prohibitive.
- Every National Forest has a plan which must “provide for key characteristics associated with terrestrial and aquatic ecosystem types” including old growth. The 2012 Planning rule, adopted during the Obama Administration, sought to address old growth issues through the locally developed Forest Plan because “these issues are best identified and determined at the forest or grassland level, reflecting ecosystems

and plant and animal communities on the unit.” The Executive Order’s top-down approach appears to ignore the Obama Administration’s own planning rule.

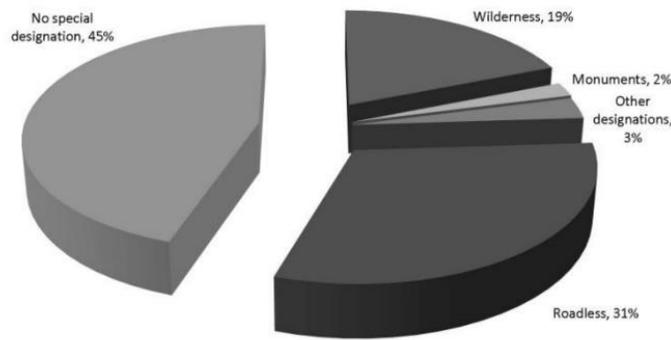
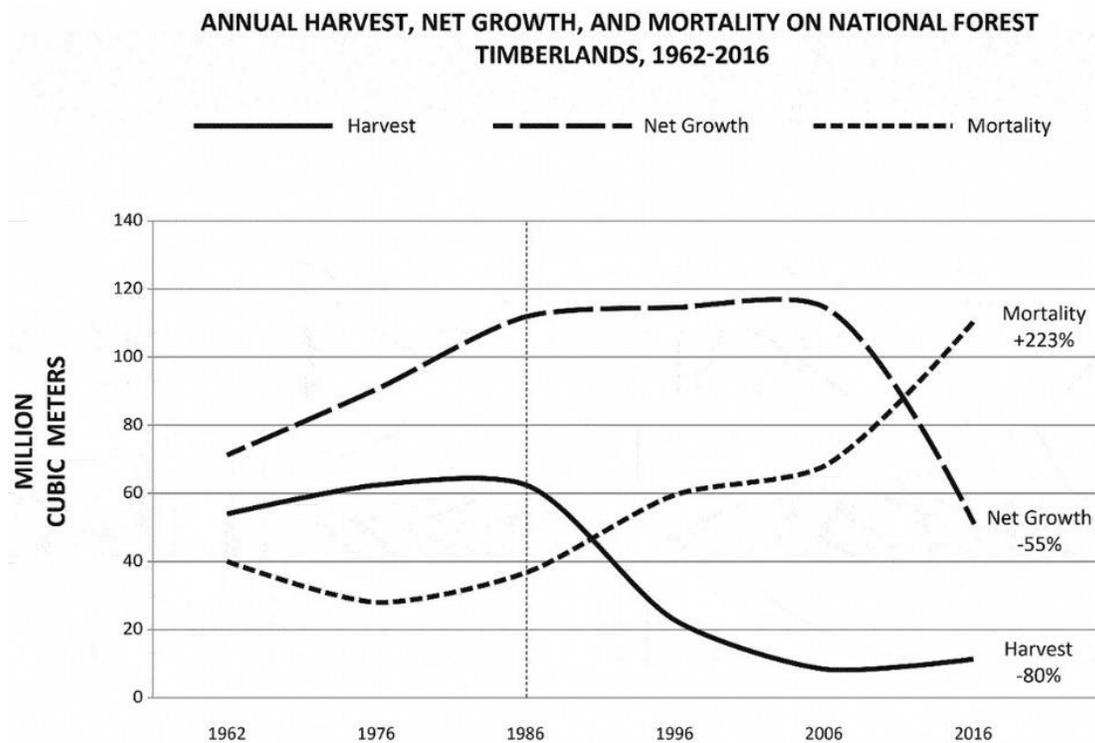


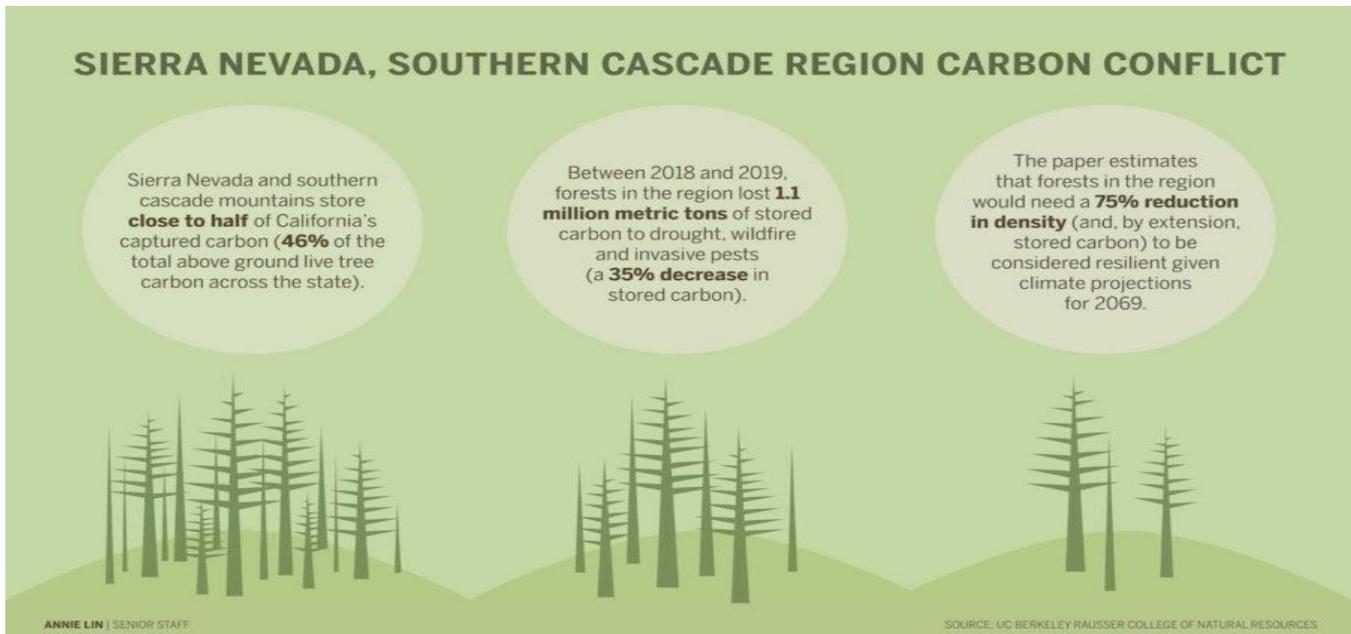
Figure 1. NFS Lands

- We’ve already seen the results of what happens when we don’t manage our forests. Between 1962 and 2016, timber harvest has decreased 80 percent, while net growth has decreased 55 percent, and tree mortality has increased more than 223 percent. The NFS lands’ ability to sequester and store high rates of carbon will only decline further if these trends continue.

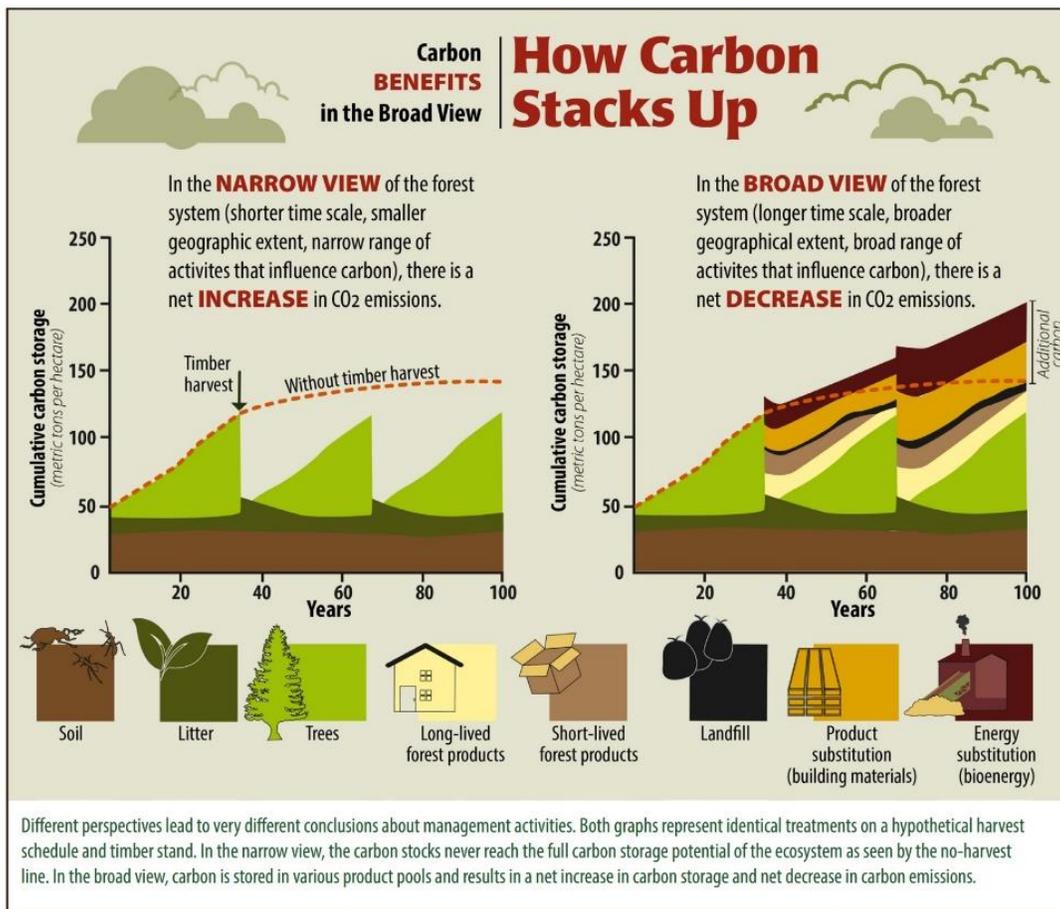


- Eighty million acres of NFS lands are at immediate risk of wildfire. Without action, more NFS lands will become a net source of carbon emissions. It would be a mistake to walk away from our national forests and hope insects, disease, mortality, and catastrophic wildfires don’t destroy the resources, wildlife, and communities we’re trying to protect.
- California alone has lost 1.1 million metric tons of stored carbon to drought, wildfires and invasive pests between 2018 and 2019 alone. [Researchers at UC Berkeley](#) found that current climate projections will require a significant reduction in tree density for forests to be considered “resilient” to intense

disturbances such as droughts and wildfires. They say California may need to revise its forest carbon policy because forests in the future will not serve as major carbon sinks without intervention.



- President Biden's EO also does nothing to provide Americans relief from high costs, because the EO will make it more difficult for the Forest Service to provide a sustainable supply of wood to meet our nation's everyday need for wood products.
- In fact the EO will make it more costly to produce the only building material that is renewable, requires less energy to produce, and one that actually stores carbon. The climate benefits of American wood products are lost when we reduce domestic supply, and are forced to import more wood products from countries that don't share our modern forest practices and environmental standards.
- In their [6th annual report](#), the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) suggests that the use of wood products contributes to carbon mitigation in two distinctly different ways, carbon storage in wood products and material substitution. The IPCC warns that reduced harvest may lead to gains in carbon storage in forest ecosystems locally, but these gains may be offset through international trade of forest products causing increased harvesting pressure or even degradation elsewhere.
- America's wood products industry depends on a predictable supply of timber from NFS lands to stay in business, retain workers and invest in their facilities. Without this supply, the sector will lose more manufacturing and timber harvesting capacity. As we've seen in other parts of the country, the Forest Service struggles to restore national forests and reduce fire risks when this capacity is lost.
- Given the science, if the solution to climate change is to maximize the carbon sequestration capacity of our nation's forests, we should pursue policies that encourage the sustainable harvest of trees, the storage of their carbon in wood products, and the replanting of young trees in their place.



- [There is also science](#) to suggest that although large trees sequester carbon at a faster rate than small trees on an individual basis, their contribution to carbon sequestration rates is smaller on an area basis. In other words, an acre of young, fast-growing trees is capable of sequestering more carbon than an acre of old, slow-growing trees in any given timeframe.
- We don't have to stand by as tree mortality, wildfires and carbon emissions increase. Rather than setting aside more federal land from forest management, a better option is to maintain the cycle of forestry- the continuous planting, growing and harvesting- that results in reduced carbon emissions and discourages the conversion of forests to non-forests when they succumb to severe wildfire.