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1. Lessons for India from the California forest fires

- What are the causes for Forest Fire?
- What are the different methods practiced in India to contain Forest fires?
- How should we be prepared to fight and mitigate the forest fires?

GS paper 3 (Disaster management)

In this video, you can find detailed answers for all the above questions.

The above article has been retrieved from:

N.A. (2018, November , 16). Lessons for India from the California forest fires. Hindustan Times. Retrieved from <https://www.hindustantimes.com/editorials/lessons-for-india-from-the-california-forest-fires/story-69xcHcRMrlgnS6QKxnU0mM.html>

What is the context about?

- The forest fires raging in California, United States, is said to be the most destructive wildfire in the state's history, with more than 8,800 structures, most of them homes, destroyed.
- According to the US Drought Monitor, 18% of the state is currently experiencing severe drought, which is exacerbating the seasonal weather patterns that make it difficult to fight fires in the state.

- Experts have said that climate change is also making conditions more favourable for wildfires in the American West.

What are the causes for Forest Fire?

- Forest fires are caused by Natural causes as well as Man-made or anthropogenic causes
- Natural causes such as lightning which set trees on fire. High atmospheric temperatures and low humidity offer favourable circumstance for a fire to start.
- Man-made causes like flame, cigarette, electric spark or any source of ignition will also cause forest fires.
- The problem of forest fires has been aggravated with rising human and cattle population and the increase in demand for grazing, shifting cultivation and Forest products by individuals and communities.
- High temperature, wind speed and direction, level of moisture in soil and atmosphere and duration of dry spells can intensify the forest fires.

What are the different methods practiced in India to contain Forest fires?

- Helicopters or aeroplanes or ground-based personnel spray fire retardant chemicals, or pump water to fight the blaze. This is very expensive and usually not practiced in India.

- ❑ The second is to contain the fire in compartments bordered by natural barriers such as streams, roads, ridges or fire lines. A fire line is a line through a forest which has been cleared of all vegetation. Once the blaze has burnt out all combustibles in the affected compartment, it vanishes out and the neighbouring compartments are saved.
- ❑ The third is to set a counter fire. The counter fire rushes towards the wildfire, leaving a stretch of burnt ground. As soon as the two fires meet, the blaze is extinguished.
- ❑ The fourth approach is to have enough people with leafy green branches to beat the fire out. This is mostly practised in combination with fire lines and counter fires.

How should we be prepared to fight and mitigate the forest fires?

- ❑ Increase the number of fire fighters as well as equip them properly with drinking water bottles, back-up supplies of food and water, proper shoes or boots, rakes, spades and other implements, light, rechargeable torches, and so on.
- ❑ Seasonal labour could be contracted during the fire season.
- ❑ With adequate training, they would serve to fill gaps along the line. Local villagers would be the best resource.
- ❑ To keep the source of fire separated from combustible material.

- Do not allow combustible material to pile up unnecessarily.
- Adopt safe practices in areas near forests viz. factories, coalmines, oil stores, chemical plants and even in household kitchens.
- In case of forest fires, the volunteer teams are essential not only for fire fighting but also to keep watch on the start of forest and sound an alert.