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Wildfires and Progressive Climate-Change Deniers

CO2 emissions from fires overwhelm the cuts from regulation.

By The Editorial Board [Follow](#)

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Haze and smoke caused by wildfires in Canada hang over the Manhattan skyline on June 7. PHOTO: ANDREW KELLY/REUTERS

Progressives are proclaiming that the smoky skies engulfing the eastern U.S. from Canadian wildfires are another sign that the climate apocalypse is nigh. Instead, they're a reminder that government policies to mitigate the impact of natural disasters matter more than those to reduce CO2 emissions.

Much of the East Coast has been under air-quality alerts since Friday. Smoke was so thick Wednesday that the Federal Aviation Administration halted flights at New York City's LaGuardia airport. As of Tuesday, there were 415 active wildfires across Canada with 238 burning out of control. No doubt drought and a warm start to the summer have

contributed, but the bigger culprit is poor forest management that has let fuel accumulate over decades.

This hardly gets a mention in media reports, nor from anti-fossil fuel politicians. “Since the Paris Accords, the 4 major U.S. banks—including 2 with HQs here in the city with the worst tonight—have lent over \$1 trillion for new fossil fuel supply projects,” New York City comptroller Brad Lander tweeted Tuesday. “Tonight’s a smoke signal that it’s time for them to stop.” Maybe the smoke clouded his judgment.

The reality is that even if U.S. banks stopped financing fossil-fuel projects today, global CO2 emissions would rise for decades owing to growing coal production in India and China. Another inconvenient truth is that government policies to reduce CO2 emissions will be swamped by wildfire emissions.

University of California researchers last year calculated that wildfire emissions in 2020 were two times higher than the state’s greenhouse gas reductions from 2003 to 2019. California wildfires in 2020 were the state’s second largest source of CO2 emissions after transportation and generated double the greenhouse gases of all the state’s power plants.

Another study this spring in the journal *Science* estimated that burning boreal forests in North America and Eurasia in 2021 released 1.76 billion tons of CO2, nearly twice as much as global aviation that year. That’s also more than four times New York State’s annual emissions and about three times as much as the Inflation Reduction Act’s projected reductions in 2030.

Government land management policies that prevent wildfires from spreading out of control, such as prescribed burns, would reduce CO2 emissions more than offshore wind or electric-vehicle mandates. Alas, this doesn’t fit with the climate left’s book of Revelation.

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