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Comments: There is no lack of fire and it is false to portray that western North Carolina's temperate forest as fire adapted.

The North Carolina U.S. Forest Service's statements regarding the frequency of natural wildfire are vastly misleading.

The US Forest Service significantly misinforms the public about the frequency of natural fire in the state of North Carolina. The USFS must end the practice of advising that forest lands naturally burn with frequency and mislead with dialogue, public relations, news releases or any other means of communications with the public that prescribed burning is returning fire to our forests. All agencies reporting and/or managing wildfires have consistently reported that wildfires nationally are human caused of 84 - 99% of the time.

Humans cause 96% of all wildfires that threaten people's homes (1). In fiscal year 2021-2022 North Carolina experienced 6,887 wildfires that burned 26,958 acres. Only 1% of those wildfires were directly linked to a natural ignition source such as lightning (2). Research on human-started wildfires accounted for 95% of all wildfires in Eastern Temperate Forests and 84% nationally (3.). This not unique or controversial data, this is data is accepted by all agencies that are involved in reporting and/or combating wildfire.

Instead of setting more fires that are harmful to human health, ecosystems and contribute to climate change the USFS must pursue means of mitigating the cause of excess wildfires through law enforcement, stronger prosecution, public information, inter-agency cooperation, burning bans, and means for the public to dispose of debris that is a cause of a large percentage of wildfires.

(1.)Mietkiewicz, N.; Balch, J.K.; Schoennagel, T.; Leyk, S.; St. Denis, L.A.; Bradley, B.A. In the Line of Fire: Consequences of Human-Ignited Wildfires to Homes in the U.S. (1992-2015) <https://www.mdpi.com/2571-6255/3/3/50>

(2.)North Carolina US Forest Service web page: With fall wildfire season underway in North Carolina, Forest Service agencies urging the public to use caution <https://www.fs.usda.gov/detail/nfsnc/news-events/?cid=FSEPRD1067966>

(3.) Jennifer K. Balch, Bethany A. Bradley, John T. Abatzoglou, and Adam L. Mahood: Human-started wildfires expand the fire niche across the United States: <https://www.pnas.org/doi/10.1073/pnas.1617394114>