

# **FireWatch: A Citizen's Guide to Wildfire Suppression Monitoring**

## ***Part Four: A Guide to Online Wildfire Information Gathering of CalFire Incidents***



*by  
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Firefighters United for Safety, Ethics, & Ecology  
November 2020



[www.fusee.org](http://www.fusee.org)

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**ABOUT FIREFIGHTERS UNITED FOR SAFETY, ETHICS, and ECOLOGY (FUSEE):** FUSEE (pronounced FEW-zee) is a national nonprofit organization founded in 2004 that conducts public education and policy advocacy to promote safe, ethical, ecological fire management. FUSEE members include current and former wildland firefighters, fire managers and scientists, fire educators and students, forest conservationists, rural residents and other interested citizens.

Inspired by the great Aldo Leopold's "Land Ethic," FUSEE promotes a new Fire Ethic in fire management policies and practices:

*"A thing is right when it contributes to the safety of firefighters and the public, ethical public service and use of taxpayer dollars, environmental protection of fire-affected landscapes, and ecological restoration of fire-dependent ecosystems. It is wrong when it tends otherwise."*

FUSEE informs, inspires and empowers firefighters and their citizen supporters to become torchbearers for the new paradigm of Ecological Fire Management.

For more information or to receive printed copies of  
*FireWatch: A Citizen's Guide to Wildfire Suppression Monitoring*  
*Part Four: A Guide to Online Wildfire Information Gathering of CalFire Incidents*

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*Ferguson Fire 2018 – Containment efforts on and around the Ferguson Fire which is burning near Yosemite National Park.  
Elements from CAL FIRE San Diego Strike Team 9330 engage in structure protection in the area of Lush Meadows, Mariposa County, CA.  
Photo by PIOF Jim Bartlett, Team Rubicon/BLM for USFS*

*This publication has been produced and distributed with the generous support of the  
Environment Now Foundation, the Fund for Wild Nature, the Stoutert Family Fund, and other private donors*

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## I). INTRODUCTION

The signal of climate change is making its presence clear in California with the rapid upsurge in wildfire activity. The last three fire seasons have seen some of the largest, deadliest, and most destructive wildfires recorded in California state history. Wildfire incidents are almost always framed initially as an “emergency” subject to immediate aggressive initial attack by firefighters, then later get framed as a “crisis” if it escapes control efforts and threatens local communities, and finally gets framed as a “catastrophe” if and when it leads to fatalities of firefighters or civilians, damaged or destroyed buildings, or simply if the fire grows to a large size. This framing of wildfires in California as emergencies, crises, and catastrophes seems to have no possibility of ending anytime soon, but is not sustainable socially, economically, or ecologically. There must be significant changes in fire management policies and practices to enable people and property to be safe while fires restore and maintain ecosystems that have evolved with and depend upon recurring fires on the land.

As the adage goes, “if all you have is a hammer, everything looks like a nail,” and that explains somewhat the treadmill of mismanagement that is spinning faster and faster from constantly reacting to all wildfire ignitions as a state of emergency and applying a crisis management mentality that becomes a self-fulfilling prophesy resulting in catastrophes. In this situation, when citizens are simultaneously desperate and dependent upon the state agencies to respond to wildfires, these agencies gain control over immense power and resources to do essentially whatever they want with minimal transparency, oversight, or constraints. Billions of taxpayer dollars are poured annually into federal and state agencies to manage wildfires and suppression spending is soaring, but by their own measures, these agencies are failing to show success in terms of improving firefighter and public safety, property protection, or environmental quality. On this treadmill of mismanagement, agencies are unwilling to accept any fires on the landscape at the same time climate change is making fires more likely to ignite and burn, and are unable to invest any effort in strategic planning or preparation for living and working with fire because they are constantly desperately chasing wildfires, never able to get ahead of the situation.

No agency fits this image and faces this dilemma more than the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection, recently renamed as CALFIRE, symbolizing its fire protection duties as its primary mission and source of its identity. CALFIRE is responsible for wildfire prevention and suppression on all state, private, and corporate wildlands under its areas of responsibility, and also holds contracts for fire suppression duties with individual counties and some units of the federal government. It is one of the world’s largest firefighting organizations, and commands immense amount of taxpayer funds and resources--in many respects, rivalling or surpassing the bureaucratic power and fiscal resources of the federal fire agencies in California. But for all that money, personnel, and resources at its disposal, CALFIRE notoriously lacks transparency or accountability in its firefighting operations. Neither the agency, nor the California legislature, nor the Governor’s office seems to apply oversight to CALFIRE suppression actions. Consequently, this calls for citizen watchdogs who care about proper land management and use of taxpayer funds and resources to do the “fire watch” themselves.

The following document is the fourth part of a series of FUSEE FireWatch Guides that are intended to help citizens monitor wildfire suppression operations. With the growing number of large, multi-jurisdictional wildfires in California that involve unified command structures of federal and state agencies and organizations, most of the scrutiny for firefighting actions has been focused on federal agencies such as the U.S. Forest Service. CALFIRE has largely escaped the critical eye of news reporters, conservation organizations, and others who should have interest in watchdogging management actions on public lands. The influence of CALFIRE’s “zero tolerance” policy for ecological fire management and its devotion to total suppression and fire exclusion is now affecting management of federal lands, especially when CALFIRE participates in joint command with Forest Service on wildfires burning on national forests. It is time for CALFIRE to be held accountable for firefighting actions that put firefighters at unnecessary extra risk, spend excessive amounts of taxpayer dollars on futile suppression efforts, or damage public lands from over-aggressive firefighting actions. This FireWatch Guide is intended to help citizens step up and perform this monitoring duty that is the first step in making CALFIRE more transparent, accountable, and responsive to the citizenry they serve.



## II). CALFIRE'S WEBSITE

CALFIRE is an all-emergencies responder, but their website highlights wildfire response. From this page you can access links to state-wide wildfire information and maps across the state or get info on individual wildfire incidents. The information provided on the CALFIRE website is only basic, general information. There are no details about the suppression operations, but this general information on specific wildfire incidents is a good place to start your monitoring efforts.

On the homepage, scroll down to the “**Incident Information**” header, and you can click on the button for <**CALFIRE Statewide Fire Map and Incident Information**> or <**Incident Information**> (they both link to the same page). This will show a state map featuring the largest wildfires, along with a list of active fires of interest (these may or may not be wildfires managed by CALFIRE), and a search box you can enter the names of wildfires to look up info. A drawback is that this is not a dropdown menu with a pre-set list of incidents; you must know the names of the individual wildfires that you are seeking more information.

### **Tip for searching for more info on individual wildfire incidents:**

On the homepage, click on the link for <**Incidents**> on the left side of the top toolbar. This is a drop-down menu where you can click on specific fire seasons going back the previous eight seasons, but for wildfire monitoring select the current year. Currently, this links to info from all the fires from 2020 back to 2013. Scroll down below the statewide map and you will find statewide stats for the current fire season on:

- total number of acres burned
- total number of fires
- total number of human fatalities
- total number of structures damaged or destroyed

This page also contains a search box where you can enter the name of a specific incident name, year, county, or keyword.

For more detailed info on specific incidents, click on an individual year, for example, click on the year <2020>. This will bring up a statewide map with the locations of individual wildfires. Active (i.e. uncontained) wildfires are identified by red flame symbols, and inactive (i.e. contained and controlled) wildfire are marked by gray flames. Click on the <+> symbol repeatedly at the upper left tool bar to zoom in on the map and locate a specific wildfire in the area you are interested in. As you zoom in, you may need to move the map focus to keep the area you are searching for in the center of your computer screen. When you click on a flame symbol, a pop-up window will present the following info:

- Incident name and type
- start date and date of last updated info
- the administrative unit the wildfire is located in (e.g. specific national forest)
- the county and general location of the fire
- the number of acres burned and percent contained (some small fires that were contained and controlled during initial attack may not provide this info).

If you seek more info, click on <View Details> and the following additional info may be provided:

- CALFIRE incident? (yes or no if the fire is the responsibility of CALFIRE)
- there might be links to Inciweb and contact info for the agency managing the fire (e.g. specific National Forest’s website, phone number) if it is not a CALFIRE incident
- cause of the fire
- status of the fire (i.e. active or inactive)
- if it is an active fire incident, contact information for the Incident Command Post and the agencies in charge of the fire will be provided
- statistics on the number of structures damaged or destroyed
- info status (e.g. if it is finalized and the last info update provided or not)
- location by latitude/longitude

## FIRE STATS AND EVENTS

For broad statistics on wildfire incidents in California, go to the homepage and click on the link for the <Stats and Events> on the right side of the top toolbar. This provides a table for current year statistics on the year-to-date for:

- number of fires and acres burned
- previous year-to-date number of fires and acres burned (for comparison with current year stats)
- five-year average covering the same interval of dates)
- 2020 combined stats year-to-date for both CALFIRE and the USFS number of fires and acres burned

These stats are updated weekly, and are unofficial until the final fire season reports have been completed and all stats tabulated.

The screenshot shows the CAL FIRE website interface. At the top, there is a navigation bar with links for Incidents, About Us, Careers, Programs, Grants, Resources, Stats & Events, and Search. A 'Translate' button and 'Settings' icon are also present. Below the navigation bar is a map of California with numerous wildfire location markers. A pop-up window for 'Pitman Fire' is open, displaying the following information:

Incident Type	Wildfire
Start Date	2020-12-26
Last Updated	2020-12-26 13:59:57
Admin Unit	San Bernardino National Forest
County	San Bernardino
Location	East of Lytle Creek Road and North of I-15 in San Bernardino County
Acres Burned	
Percent Contained	

Below the map is a '2020 Incident Archive' section, which is circled in red. It provides a summary of all 2020 incidents, including those managed by Cal Fire and other partner agencies. The summary includes four key statistics:

- 4,177,856 Acres Estimated Acres Burned
- 9,639 Incidents Number of Incidents
- 31 Fatalities Confirmed Loss of Life
- 10,488 Structures Structures Damaged or Destroyed

Below the summary is a table for '2020 Incidents' with columns for Name, Start Date, Counties, Acres, and Containment.

This page also provides a box of “General Information/Links” to stats and info on the following:

- top 20 largest California wildfires
- top 20 most destructive California wildfires
- top 20 deadliest California wildfires
- wildland fires and acres--all jurisdictions (1987-2018)
- suppression costs
- arson arrest stats
- fire reports
- CALFIRE news releases

Clicking on the three “Top 20” lists above will provide tables that list in descending order of significance:

- the name of each wildfire incident and the cause of ignition (e.g. lightning, powerlines, arson, undetermined, under investigation, etc.)
- the month and year they were burning
- the counties affected
- number of acres burned
- number of structures damaged or destroyed
- number of fatalities

The screenshot shows the CAL FIRE website's 'Stats and Events' page. The navigation bar includes links for Incidents, About Us, Careers, Programs, Grants, Resources, Stats & Events, and Search. The main content area is titled 'Stats and Events' and features a 'Current Year Statistics' section. A table titled 'Number of Fires and Acres' provides data for various intervals. A sidebar on the right, highlighted with a red box, is titled 'General Information/Links' and contains links to: Top 20 Largest California Wildfires, Top 20 Most Destructive California Wildfires, Top 20 Deadliest California Wildfires, Wildland Fires & Acres - All Jurisdictions (1987-2018), Suppression Costs, Arson Arrest Statistics, Fire Reports, and CAL FIRE News Releases.

Interval	Fires	Acres
January 1, 2020 through December 20, 2020	8,112	1,443,152
January 1, 2019 through December 20, 2019	5,687	137,126
5-Year Average (same interval)	5,856	446,960
2020 Combined YTD (CALFIRE & US Forest Service)	9,917	4,257,863

Click on the link to [<Wildland Fires and Acres--All Jurisdictions>](#)

and you will get a table that breaks out the number of fires and acres burned according to CALFIRE, Federal units, and Local Governments, along with a total of all fires and acres burned in those three general jurisdictions.

Click on the link to [<Suppression Costs>](#) and you will get a list of total fire suppression expenditures by CALFIRE each fiscal year going back to 1979. However, the current and previous year figures are estimates, presumably because the bills are still being processed.

The link to [<Arson Arrest Statistics>](#) just presents a list of the total number of arson arrests for the last five years with no more details about the specific fires provided.

The link to [<Fire Reports>](#) provides a notification that the information that this link used to provide, such as CALFIRE fire investigation reports, accident information reports, green sheets, red books\*, and incident reporting documents are no longer available online. Instead, you must make requests for those documents either orally, in writing, or by fax to the following address:

CAL FIRE Legal Office  
PO Box 944246  
Sacramento, CA 94244-2460  
FAX: 916-657-4072  
EMAIL: PRA.Request@fire.ca.gov

This page also presents a disclaimer that CALFIRE may refuse to disclose those records, but provides a link [<Guidelines for Access to Public Records>](#) that explains the process for requesting information, and what kinds of documents CALFIRE can deny giving you.



## WILDFIRE STATISTICS

\*Note: CALFIRE'S Red Books are available on the <[Stats and Events](#)> page under the header "Historical Wildfire Activity Statistics". Just click on the link for <[Redbooks](#)> which brings up a list of ten consecutive years of Redbooks. The most recent Redbook is from 2018, so there is an apparent two-year lag in compiling and posting these annual statistics. These Redbooks are approximately 50 pages each, and contain the most detailed wildfire statistics grouped under a number of categories including:

- number of fires in each county and administrative unit
- number of fires according to different causes of ignition
- number of fires according to different size classes
- number of fires in different vegetation types according to county and administrative unit
- dollar damage of fires by different sizes and causes in each county or unit
- stats of fire activity statewide depicted in graphs according to various criteria
- glossary of fire terms, including definitions of "Direct Protected Areas" (DPAs) and "State Responsibility Areas" (SRAs)

**Current Year Statistics**

The below statistics are tracked on a weekly basis and provide a snapshot of the number of fires and acres burned. These are preliminary numbers taken from our Computer Aided Dispatch (CAD) system, and will likely change as dispatched wildfires may end up being other types of fires or false alarms. These numbers are subject to change until the final fire season reports are completed and tabulated.

Interval	Fires	Acres
January 1, 2020 through December 20, 2020	8,112	1,443,152
January 1, 2019 through December 20, 2019	5,687	137,126
5-Year Average (same interval)	5,856	446,960
2020 Combined YTD (CALFIRE & US Forest Service)	9,917	4,257,863

*(Statistics include all wildfires responded to by CAL FIRE in both the State Responsibility Area, as well as the Local Responsibility Area under contract with the department. Statistics may not include wildfires in State Responsibility Area protected by CAL FIRE's contract counties. Final numbers will be provided in the annual Wildfire Activity Statistics Report (Redbook) once it's published.)*

**General Information/Links**

- Top 20 Largest California Wildfires
- Top 20 Most Destructive California Wildfires
- Top 20 Deadliest California Wildfires
- Wildland Fires & Acres - All Jurisdictions [1987-2018]
- Suppression Costs
- Arson Arrest Statistics
- Fire Reports
- CAL FIRE News Releases

**Historical Wildfire Activity Statistics**

Redbooks



## COMMUNICATIONS SECTION

Click on the link for <[CALFIRE News Releases](#)> for a wealth of information including:

- all CALFIRE news releases from the last six years categorized by year (currently 2015-2020)
- fire safety education information (e.g. fire safety inside and outside the home with links to organizations specializing in educational materials on these issues, holiday tree fire safety, links to more info on defensible space)
- factsheets (see below for more detail)
- multimedia links (see below for more detail)

Under the “**Fact Sheets**” header can be found lots of information:

- general info about CALFIRE as an organization (including its mission)
- fire and emergency response (including several links to the California Fire Plan, info on aviation resources, engines, bulldozers, and other suppression equipment)
- fire safety education (includes links to several factsheets produced by partner organizations that are especially valuable to residents)
- office of the state fire marshal (includes links to safety protocols)
- resource management and forestry (includes a factsheet on pre-fire management plus several links for more info on various resource management and forestry topics)

**Stats and Events**

**Current Year Statistics**

The below statistics are tracked on a weekly basis and provide a snapshot of the number of fires and acres burned. These are preliminary numbers taken from our Computer Aided Dispatch (CAD) system, and will likely change as dispatched wildfires may end up being other types of fires or false alarms. These numbers are subject to change until the final fire season reports are completed and tabulated.

**Number of Fires and Acres:**

Interval	Fires	Acres
January 1, 2020 through December 20, 2020	6,112	1,443,152
January 1, 2019 through December 20, 2019	5,687	137,126
5-Year Average (same interval)	5,856	446,960
2020 Combined YTD (CALFIRE & US Forest Service)	9,917	4,257,863

(Statistics include all wildfires responded to by CAL FIRE in both the State Responsibility Area, as well as the Local Responsibility Area under contract with the department. Statistics may not include wildfires in State Responsibility Area protected by CAL FIRE's contract counties. Final numbers will be provided in the annual Wildfire Activity Statistics Report (Redbook) once it's published.)

**General Information/Links**

- Top 20 Largest California Wildfires
- Top 20 Most Destructive California Wildfires
- Top 20 Deadliest California Wildfires
- Wildland Fires & Acres - All Jurisdictions (1987-2018)
- Suppression Costs
- Arson Arrest Statistics
- Fire Reports
- CAL FIRE News Releases

Under the “**Multimedia**” header includes icons that provide links to CALFIRE’s:

- video library of short videos its public relations staff has produced, covering a number of different topics and issues
- photo library that mostly contain shots of personnel receiving awards at official ceremonies, but also include some images from the field
- archive of past public service announcements

Click on the <“**arrow icon**”> and it will take you to the “**Videos**” section for the archive of short video clips from “CALFIRE TV”. These videos date back to the 1980s with CALFIRE public relations staff giving:

- educational lectures or interviewing fire staff
- fire reports, fire situation reports, or statewide fire summary briefings, presented on specific dates
- educational or informational videos on a variety of different topics

There is no apparent organization according to topics in the “Videos” link, so you will have to randomly search through images for a video that may be of interest to you.

Back under the “Multimedia” header, click on the <“**camera icon**”> to access CALFIRE’s photo archives. Almost all of these photos are CALFIRE captains receiving awards at official ceremonies. But, keep scrolling through the various pages of photos and you can discover a few images of fuels reduction actions. All photos are free for educational/non-commercial use if you give the credit of “courtesy of CALFIRE.”

Back under the “Multimedia” header again, click on the <“**sound icon**”> to access the archive of CALFIRE Public Service Announcements and Fire Situation Reports.

Scroll to the bottom of the “**Communications**” page and you can sign up to CALFIRE’s social media sites, and sign up to receive notifications via twitter about breaking fire news, updates on large fires, and red flag warnings.



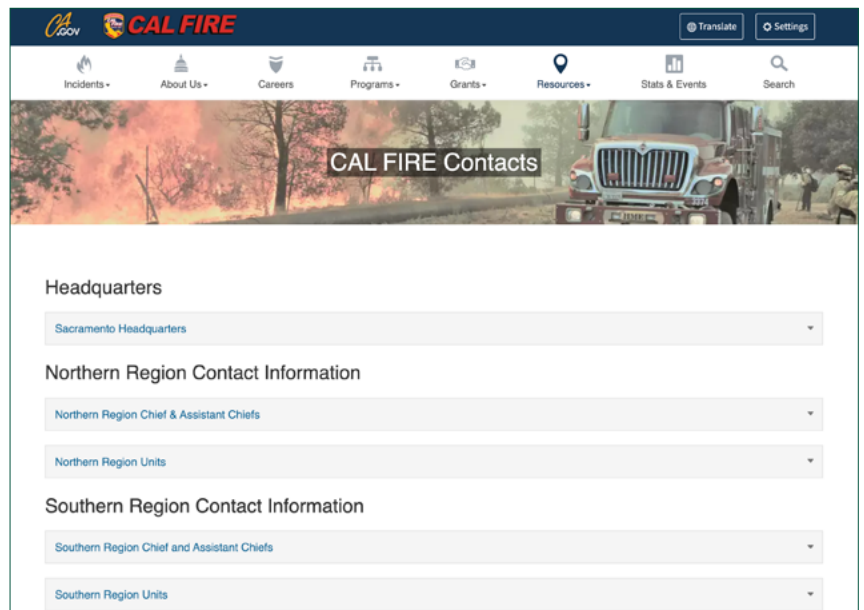
## CALFIRE KEY CONTACTS

To get contacts for CALFIRE headquarters and regional offices, click on the “**Resources**” link on the top toolbar, and then click on <**CALFIRE Contacts**> where you will find a list of positions, names, and phone numbers of CALFIRE leaders to contact.

### III). NIFC FTP Website

The National Interagency Fire Center’s FTP website [ <https://ftp.nifc.gov> ] is the portal to accessing documents on CALFIRE’S suppression operations. This is the fine detailed documentation of daily firefighting plans and actions that citizen wildfire monitors will need to access, and learn how to read and analyze for data about firefighting damage.

From the main portal, click on the link to <**Incident Specific Data**> and you will get to a parent directory with several folders that contain documents from all the regions across the U.S. You will want to access the California folders. These are divided into folders for North, South, and Statewide subregions. For an example of the kinds of data and documents you will want to access, click on the <**Calif N**> folder.



Inside the California North folder there will be over a dozen folders, but click on the <**!CALFIRE/**> folder. (Alternately, if you are interested in fires managed by the USFS, you would click on “**Federal Incidents**” folders.) For documents from the current year--the most likely set of documents a citizen wildfire monitor will want--click on the folder for the current/most recent year. In this example, click on <**!2020 Incidents/**> for wildfire incidents in 2020. The folders are labelled by their organizational code and their “common” name.

Here you will find folders for each major wildfire incident. Note that data is not available for all of the wildfires that CALFIRE has suppressed, just the major incidents that accumulate lots of documentation. For our example, click on the folder for the BTU Lightning Complex listed as [<CA-BTU-009692 BTU Lightning Complex/>](#).

Within this folder for the BTU Lightning Complex there are several other folders. Importantly, the structure for these folders are set up, but they may be empty unless actual documents are placed in them. So do not fret if you click on a specific folder, or folders within a folder, and it is empty. For instance, in our example of the BTU Lightning Complex, only half of the folders contain any documents.

Fortunately, for citizen wildfire monitors, the most important folders for your purposes are ones that almost always contain documents and files. The key folders for the information you will want can be found in these folders for each wildfire incident:

- GIS
- IAPs
- IR

Of these folders, the GIS folder may be most source for reviewing mapping data, and the IAPs folder is the most important source for reviewing documentation of suppression operations.

### **GIS Folders**

The GIS folders may be divided into two sub-folders:

- “**Incident Data**” contains files needed for those who are able to work with GIS applications to review or create maps.
- “**Products**” contain maps in pdf format that are fixed but readable to those with an Adobe reader application.

The most valuable thing about these maps is that they provide site-specific data of suppression actions. This is essential for discovering site-specific impacts on natural resources, ecological values, or places that hold special social values of concern. These maps used in conjunction with documents from the IAPs folder can help a citizen wildfire monitor retrace the actions and visualize the impacts on the land resulting from inappropriate or overaggressive firefighting actions.

Some maps are of mixed usefulness to citizen wildfire monitors. The extremely large size of some wildfires requires small-scale maps to capture the large area, and the resulting images are so limited in detail (they might not even be readable on a small computer screen) that they don't supply enough information for identifying site-specific actions. The largest wildfires might even break up the area into a series of separate maps covering smaller sections of the fire. The large-scale maps that zoom in on a small portion of the fire do provide greater detail about suppression operations, but you might need to have a small-scale map handy to identify the part of the fire covered by the small-scale map. The real benefit of the operations maps are that they provide a good spatial sense of the locations and extent of firefighting actions, and this can be hard to comprehend when sifting through the voluminous pages of IAPs.



## **IAPs Folder**

This folder is the real “bread and butter” source of information for citizen wildfire monitors. It includes the “Incident Action Plans” that documents in detail the kinds of suppression resources and actions that were ordered for each day of the fire. Some incidents produce two IAPs a day, an initial one issued in the morning and a final corrected version in the afternoon, and/or one for the day shift and another for the night shift. If the wildfire is large enough to be divided into different zones (which was the case for several wildfires in California during 2020), then there might be IAPs for each zone within a folder of the IAPs for each specific day of the fire. A single wildfire incident can generate literally hundreds of pages of information in its archive of IAPs, so it is good to know what kinds of information are in them, and where to find it, so you can be efficient in your reading and analysis of these documents.

If you are interested in specific dates of operation (for example the fire suddenly grew rapidly in size or the newsmedia featured a story about some interesting actions or events that happened on that day), then you can click on the folder for that day to review its IAPs. Alternately, you can systematically examine all of the main IAPs for each and every day, looking for those “needles in a haystack” of information.

For our example, we’ll examine the IAPs for 8/21/2020 on the **BTU/TGU Lightning Complex** and we’ll select the “**Master IAP**”. That document contains a package of federal forms of varying interest and usefulness to citizen wildfire monitors. The most data-rich document providing the clearest understanding of suppression operations is the ICS-209 document, but important information needed to reconstruct a wildfire’s progression can be found in the following documents that are part of the package of an IAP:

- fire weather forecasts: provides weather data that is key for fire spread
- fire behavior forecasts: provides info on vegetation types and anticipated rates of fire spread
- assignment lists (ICS-204 WF): provides the work assignments that give specific instructions for each crew or resource that day. This is especially good for tracking where dozers are operating. It’s best to use these assignment sheets alongside a map of suppression operations to get a clear idea of what happened and where.

## **IR Folder**

This is the folder that holds the data from InfraRed imagery. You will need to use Google Earth to access the data. This presents excellent map images of the fire perimeters and hotspots, overlaid on images of the landscape that feature terrain and rough vegetation cover. Wildfires in previously logged areas clearly identify past clearcuts, and make good visuals to demonstrate the relationship between commercial timber extraction and wildfire spread. The IR folder is divided into two sub-folders: FireWatch and NIROPS. The former may be empty, but NIROPS is usually populated with kmz files that must be used with Google Earth.



## **CONCLUSION**

The FireWatch Guide for CALFIRE is intended to help citizen wildfire monitors navigate the online sources of information, data, and documents in order to get informed about wildfire suppression operations on CALFIRE incidents. In general, fire managers work with the best interests of citizens and the land in mind, but they also operate without much transparency or accountability for their decisions and actions. The point of monitoring suppression operations is to educate the public about the risks, costs, and impacts of firefighting actions that are tradeoffs for the short-term protection that suppressing and excluding fire provides. In many cases, the short-term impacts and long-term effects of aggressive, mechanized suppression can be more significant than the effects of wildfire.

Unfortunately, CALFIRE is not tasked with managing lands of its own, and lacks that sensibility of resource management and land stewardship. Their firefighting mission is pure and simple: put the fire out by any means necessary. Unless and until citizens in California learn about the damage being done by over-aggressive suppression, and demand reform of suppression policies and practices, there really is no incentive for CALFIRE to change its ways of responding to wildfire. Uncovering the evidence of firefighting damage is the duty of volunteer citizen monitors, and using this guide will help wildfire monitors know where to look for useful information to inform and educate fellow citizens about fire management actions being conducted with their tax dollars in the landscape they inhabit. Wildfire suppression monitoring is an essential first step in making the case for a paradigm shift towards ecological fire management.