

FIREFIGHTERS UNITED FOR SAFETY, ETHICS, AND ECOLOGY

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Firefighters' Group Exposes the Devastating Impacts of Carr Fire "CATlines" New Report and Video Footage Details the Harm Caused by Bulldozed Firelines

EUGENE, OR – Firefighters United for Safety, Ethics, and Ecology (FUSEE) released a video and report, "**Carr Fire CATlines: The Environmental Impacts of Bulldozers in Wildfire Suppression,**" on Thursday, January 17, 2019 that describe the devastation left by bulldozer firelines (called "CATlines" by firefighters) from the 2018 Carr Fire area in Northern California. Many of the catlines failed to stop wildfire spread and put dozer operators' lives at extreme risk causing one fatality, but are now long-lasting scars on the landscape that is causing harm to soils, water, wildlife, and other natural and cultural resources.

The report includes screenshots from a four-minute video that includes drone footage filmed entirely within the Carr Fire area, and interviews Michael Beasley, a 30-year veteran wildland firefighter who served as a Fire Behavior Analyst on several California wildfires in 2018. **The video also includes exclusive footage of the first few moments of the start of the Carr Fire** that eventually burned nearly 230,000 acres, destroyed or damaged 2,000 homes, and killed eight people including three firefighters. The report includes maps of the Carr Fire that show the location of burned timber plantations that the catlines were attempting to protect, and maps from the suppression operations that show the pathways of catlines plowing down to mountain streams. The Carr Fire CATlines report also describes in detail the general environmental and social impacts of bulldozing firelines in wildfire suppression.

"Catlines put wildland firefighters at unnecessary extra risk and are ineffective in stopping wildfires during extreme conditions such as those that occurred during the Carr Fire," said Timothy Ingalsbee, Executive Director of FUSEE. "Those catlines failed to stop the fire, but now they are starting to erode, causing long-term soil erosion that is right now oozing mud into lakes and streams including the prized recreation sites of Shasta Lake, Whiskeytown Lake, and Trinity Lake."

"The use of catlines in wildland firefighting cause significant environmental impacts such as fragmenting forests that harms wildlife habitat, eroding soil that pollutes waterways, and spreading invasive weeds and downed logs that increases hazardous fuels for future wildfires," Ingalsbee writes in the report.

"Moreover, catlines are often installed along ridgelines that are dotted with Native American sacred sites, often linked by paths still used to this day by Native spiritual practitioners"

“When we’re setting records for temperature and fuel dryness like we were last summer on the Carr Fire, it is not unusual for embers to travel a mile or more. With that kind of fire behavior, no catline is going to stop a fire,” said Michael Beasley, Fire Behavior Analyst on a California Incident Command Team. “What we do know about these catlines is that they’re essentially linear clearcuts, and all of them represent a significant scar on the landscape.”

Summary Points:

- Catlines working during extreme conditions often put firefighters’ lives at unnecessary extra risk.
- Catlines leave scars on the landscape that endure long after vegetation has recovered from the fire.
- Catlines initiate soil erosion that pollutes lakes, rivers and streams.
- Catlines help spread invasive weeds and leave downed logs that increase hazardous fuel loads.
- Catlines can destroy Native American cultural resources and heritage sites.

“It can take hundreds of years to create a few inches of fertile soil in mountainous forests, and this precious resource can be stripped away in minutes with the passing of a bulldozer’s blade,” said Michael Beasley. “Some people might think this sacrifice is worth it if catlines actually stopped wildfires, but in the extreme fire behavior conditions that climate change is producing, catlines are less effective, and dozer operators are taking on increased risk for naught.”

The full report is available for download at <http://www.fusee.org/fusee-publications/>

The four-minute video footage is available to view at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x4USUprkt_Q

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[FUSEE](#) is a nonprofit organization that conducts public education and policy advocacy promoting safe, ethical, ecological wildland fire management. FUSEE members include current and former wildland firefighters, fire managers and scientists, fire educators and students, forest conservationists, rural homeowners and other interested citizens. We strive to inform and empower fire management workers and their citizen supporters to become *torchbearers for the new paradigm* of ecological fire management.