Torrid pace of wildfires likely to linger

The Farad Fire in Northern California started July 10 near the state line. Photo/USFS

By Kevin Fagan and Filipa Ioannou, San Francisco Chronicle

After a hot weekend that saw wind-fanned wildfires lurch out of control and gobble up thousands of acres of trees and dozens of homes from Santa Barbara to Butte County, Monday's respite in the weather was just that – a respite.

California is now far ahead of last year's pace for forest and grassland fires, and conditions are ripe for it to stay nasty all summer long, said CalFire Chief Ken Pimlott.

Much of Northern Nevada is burning as well.

Last year's downpours may have ended the five-year drought and eased its tinder-dry conditions a bit, but the heavy grasses sprouted by the rain now present frightening fuel, he said. So which condition is worse – drought or heavy new brush?

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