

Media Contacts:

Ryan Becker | Vice President of Communications, Visit California
(916) 505-2842 | rbecker@visitcalifornia.com

Linea Gagliano | Director of Global Communications, Travel Oregon
(503) 729-6021 | linea@TravelOregon.com

David Blandford | Co-Chair, Washington Tourism Alliance
(Senior Vice President of Public Affairs, Visit Seattle)
(206) 461-5806 | dblandford@visitseattle.org

As Wildfires Affect Western United States, Tourism Leadership Establish West Coast Tourism Recovery Coalition to Share that the West is Open for Business

SACRAMENTO, Calif. — Tourism leaders from California, Oregon and Washington are working together to welcome visitors this summer amid a rash of wildfires in the West.

While the West Coast has dealt with dozens of wildfires in primarily rural areas, the visitor experience remains largely unaffected. The perception that the majority of the region is burning has prompted visitors to cancel trips even in communities hundreds of miles from the fires.

“Visitors spend a combined \$166 billion in our states, and travelers will cancel trips if they don’t have information to help them make a safe choice,” said Caroline Beteta, president & CEO of Visit California.

In a recent study conducted by Visit California, 11 percent of travelers said wildfires prompted them to cancel trips to California, representing a loss of \$20 million to the state’s tourism economy last month. In Oregon, similar concerns have arisen with a Travel Oregon wildfire study from 2017 showing \$51 million in tourism revenue lost last year alone.

Of the three states’ combined total of more than 205 million acres of land mass, less than 1 percent has been affected by fires in 2018. Across all three states, all gateway airports and roads are open. Most tourism regions and icons remain untouched.

The West Coast Tourism Recovery Coalition will raise public awareness about the hundreds of communities and experiences that are unaffected throughout the region. More importantly, the Coalition aims to encourage travelers to return to these communities to help in the healing process for those who were affected.

“Wildfires know no borders, and have unfortunately become a way of life in the American West, especially in rural communities that rely on welcoming visitors from around the world during the busiest summer and fall seasons when fires most often occur,” Beteta said.

Coalition partners have committed to work together to provide on-the-ground updates to tourism industry businesses and residents, collaborating closely with regions affected by fires and their respective government agencies.

“Wildfires have been a part of summer travel on the West Coast for many years,” said Shiloh Burgess, Co-Chair of the Washington Tourism Alliance. “As destination marketing organizations at the state and community levels offer broader and more current travel tips and advisories, we find travelers are better prepared to adjust their plans – and to resume plans when fires ease.”

“As fires subside and smoke clears away, all Americans can support these communities by visiting fire-impacted areas for vacations this year,” Travel Oregon CEO Todd Davidson said. “Not only will you have world-class experiences, but you’ll create memories to cherish on the spectacular west coast while also helping your fellow Americans in recovery efforts.”

Travelers considering a trip to the West Coast can find the latest fire and air quality information at CalFire.ca.gov or Airnow.gov for California, oregonSmoke.blogspot.com for Oregon; or gacc.nifc.gov/nwcc for the Pacific Northwest.

For more information and communications issued by the West Coast Tourism Recovery Coalition, contact Ryan Becker at rbecker@visitcalifornia.com.

Interview requests can be facilitated with executive leadership of the coalition including Caroline Beteta, President & CEO of Visit California; Todd Davidson, CEO of Travel Oregon Shiloh Burgess, Co-Chair of Washington Tourism Alliance and Tom Norwalk, President and CEO of Visit Seattle. For individual interviews, use contacts above. To request a group availability, contact Odalys Flores, NJF PR Account Supervisor, oflores@njfpr.com or (310) 569-6859.

###