

# THE CHRISTIAN SCIENCE MONITOR

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## Crowdfunding for wildfire victims: A new solution to an old problem?

Amidst a devastating wildfire season in California, some nonprofit organizations are crowdsourcing donations to assist families affected by the state's drought and wildfires.

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By Beatrice Gitau, Staff



As hundreds of acres burn across California, a pair of philanthropists hope to find a 21st-century solution for people affected by the severe drought and devastating wildfires.

Husband-and-wife philanthropist team Tom Steyer and Kat Taylor launched the [California Drought Relief Fund](#) with its first \$100,000, and they hope to raise [an additional \\$150,000](#) from crowd-funded donations, according to the Huffington Post. They pledge that "every last drop" of funding – 100 percent of donations – will go to one of [three designated aid groups](#).

"From devastating drought to dangerous wildfires, California's families are already feeling the impacts of climate change. As

Californians, we stand ready to lend a hand to our friends and neighbors," Mr. Steyer [said in a statement](#). "Their struggles remind us of our moral responsibility to protect our communities while we address the cause of the climate crisis and build a better future for our children."

Last weekend, two of the season's most unruly wildfires swept across Northern California, destroying hundreds of homes and forcing more than 20,000 people to flee.

"It's supplying aid to victims right there on the spot to get them a hot meal, some clothes, something to carry them through a tough night," foundation spokesman Carroll Willis [told the Huffington Post](#). "It's a way to offer immediate assistance on the worst day of their lives."

The new fund is built on the same infrastructure Mr. Steyer and Ms. Taylor created last summer for the Climate Relief Fund, which raised money for victims of "climate-related disasters" across the United States.

For drought relief, Steyer and Taylor have partnered with the California-based Courage Campaign, the climate-awareness organization 350.org, and the Climate Reality Project.

All funds raised will be distributed to three local relief organizations: Self-Help Enterprises (SHE), the Environmental Justice Coalition for Water (EJCW), and the California Fire Foundation (CFF). SHE and EJCW are providing bottled water, temporary water storage tanks, and low-interest loans for new water well construction to households whose wells have run dry. EJCW targets help to low-income families, typically migrant workers, seasonal workers, and households making less than \$50,000.

CFF offers public outreach about fire safety, provides educational and other assistance to families of firefighters who died in the line of duty, and distributes \$100 gift cards to wildfire victims to help them purchase basic necessities like food or clothing immediately after a disaster.

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