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Australia Battles Wildfires as Tree Cover Loss Surges, Latest Incident in Western Australia

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Australia has been grappling with significant tree cover loss over the past two decades, with the latest incident occurring in Western Australia on November 28, 2024. The country's vast landmass of over 768 million hectares includes a tree cover extent of approximately 42 million hectares. However, the net change in tree cover has been negative, with a loss of over 2.50 million hectares and a gain of just over 1.60 million hectares, leading to a net loss of around 917,000 hectares.

Wildfires have been a major driver of this loss, accounting for a substantial portion of the tree cover decline. In the years 2019 and 2020 alone, wildfires contributed to over 1.30 million and 1.90 million hectares of tree cover loss, respectively. Urbanization and forestry activities have also played significant roles, with urbanization accounting for thousands of hectares of loss annually.

The impact of these losses is not just limited to the environment but also to the carbon footprint of the nation. The total gross emissions from tree cover loss have reached staggering figures, with certain years like 2020 witnessing emissions of over 685 million megagrams.

The challenge of managing and mitigating tree cover loss remains a pressing issue for Australia, as the country continues to face incidents like the recent wildfire in Western Australia. The ongoing trend of tree cover loss, if not addressed, could have far-reaching consequences for Australia's biodiversity, climate, and overall environmental health.



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