



National Significant Wildland Fire Potential Outlook

Predictive Services
National Interagency Fire Center

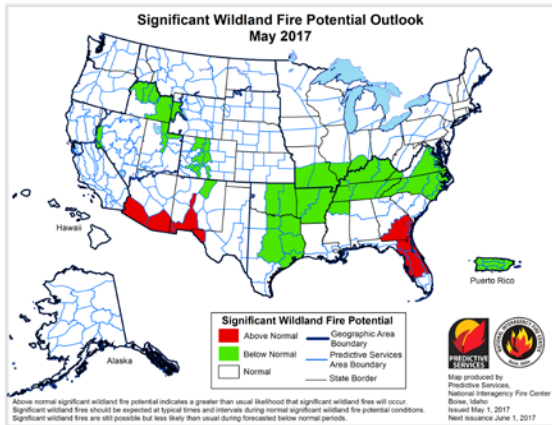


Issued: May 1, 2017
Next Issuance: June 1, 2017

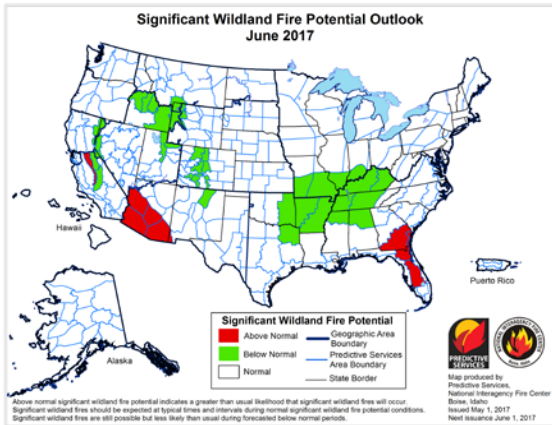
Outlook Period – May, June and July through August 2017

Executive Summary

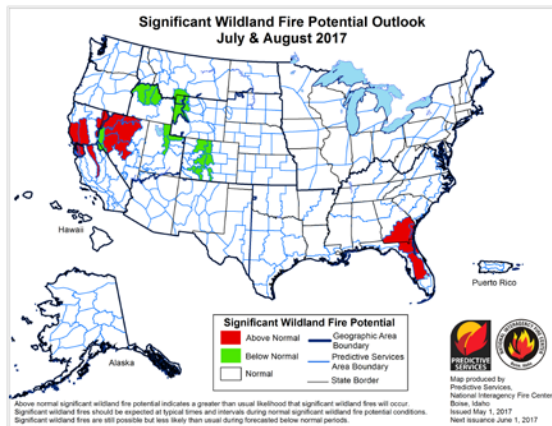
The significant wildland fire potential forecasts included in this outlook represent the cumulative forecasts of the ten Geographic Area Predictive Services units and the National Predictive Services unit.



Florida and southeastern Georgia continue to experience significant fire activity as warmer and drier than normal conditions persist. Worsening drought conditions in these areas continue to lead to increased fire activity and behavior. Recent precipitation events have not been significant or frequent enough to provide relief. The existing conditions and activity are expected to peak by early June before beginning to show improvement and subside as tropical patterns develop bringing beneficial precipitation.



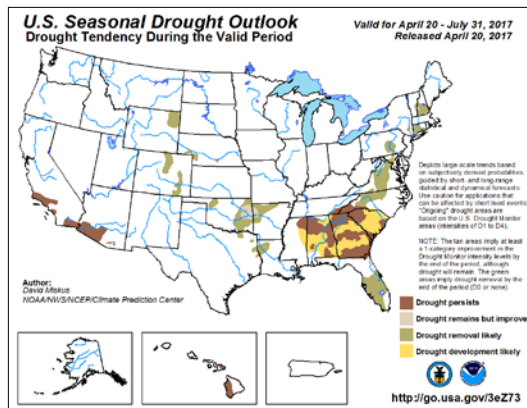
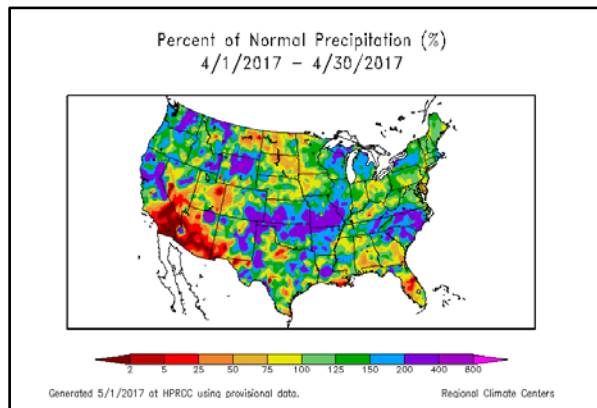
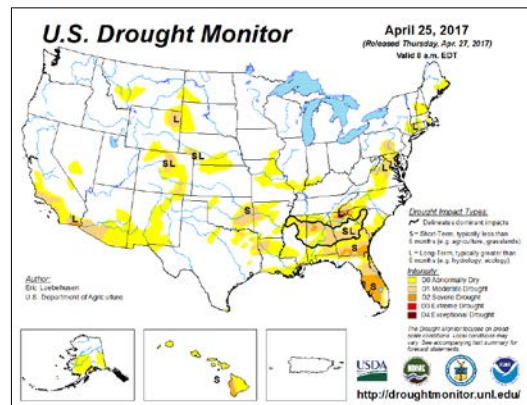
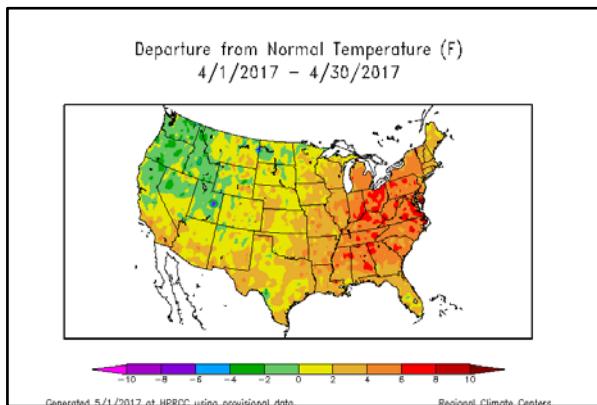
Wildfire activity across the Southern Plains has begun to wane as the seasonal shift westward begins. Greenup has begun to take hold and precipitation events have become more common across the Central and Northern Plains. Arizona and western New Mexico will see an increase in fire activity in May and June as the region enters the heart of its fire season. Heavy growth of fine fuels across southern Arizona and southwestern New Mexico have led to above normal fire potential along the Mexican border that should persist through June before the monsoonal rains arrive in early July and decrease activity. As the fire season progresses into July, there are concerns with the seasonal shift west and north into California, and Great Basin. Exceptional winter and early spring precipitation is leading to the development of a substantial crop of fine fuels in the lower and middle elevations. The heavy loading of fine fuels could become problematic when they cure out in July. In the higher elevations, the mountain snowpack continues to melt at a normal to slower than normal rate. This should produce a delay in the onset of significant fire activity in the high elevations. In Alaska, the south central portion of the state continues to be abnormally dry. While overall normal fire potential is forecast, bursts of more significant fire activity are possible across the interior portion of the state. By mid-late July, the western fire season will begin to progress north into the Pacific Northwest and Northern Rockies. While a normal transition into fire season is expected in the lower elevations, a delayed entrance is possible in the higher elevations as both regions enter their fire seasons having seen abundant winter and spring precipitation and snowpack accumulation.



Past Weather and Drought

Warmer and drier than normal conditions developed over the Southwest and Southern California early in the month as the seasonal storm track began to consolidate and refocus further north. By month's end, wildfire activity began to show an increase in prone areas. The Deep South continued to see drier than normal conditions, especially across central Florida where less than 25% of normal precipitation was received. Across the northwestern portion of the nation the overall cool, wet pattern continued. Higher elevations in the Cascades and along the Continental Divide continued to see additional snowfall. Elsewhere slower than normal snowpack melting rates were observed. The dry conditions observed across the Central and Southern Plains in March yielded to overall wet conditions as green up began. Drier than normal conditions across the Northern Plains led to a slight uptick in pregreenup grass fire activity. The Great Lakes region and the Northeast experienced overall warmer than normal conditions and above normal precipitation. In Alaska temperatures were below normal for the month, but precipitation was below normal. Snowpack melting rates were also near normal.

Overall, drought conditions improved across most of the nation in April, but previous areas of concern continued to experience drought intensification and expansion. Southern Georgia and Central Florida saw preexisting drought conditions worsen while abnormally dry conditions along the Mexican border with Arizona and New Mexico became more expansive. Areas experiencing relief were the Central and Southern Plains and the Southern Appalachians.



Left: Departure from Normal Temperature (top) and Percent of Normal Precipitation (bottom) (from High Plains Regional Climate Center). **Right: U.S. Drought Monitor (top) and Drought Outlook (bottom)** (from National Drought Mitigation Center and the Climate Prediction Center)

Weather and Climate Outlooks

El Niño-Southern Oscillation (ENSO) continues in a neutral state. Latest model forecasts show slight warming but continue to keep ENSO in a neutral state through June with a weak El Niño developing by late summer or early fall.

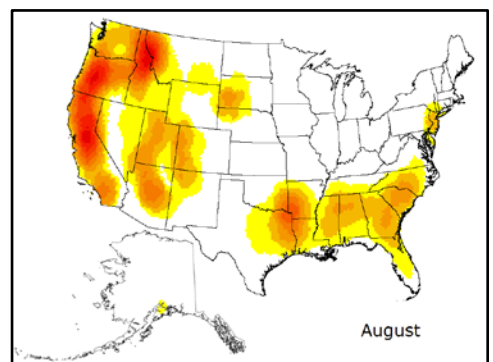
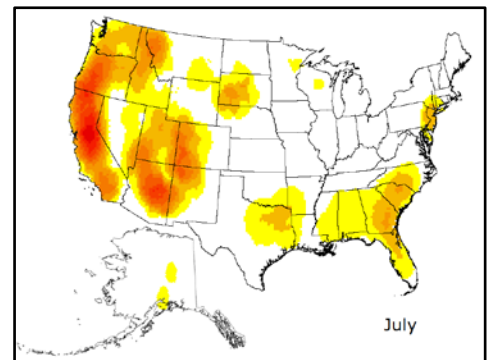
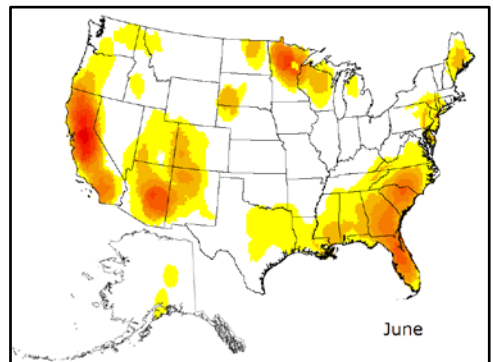
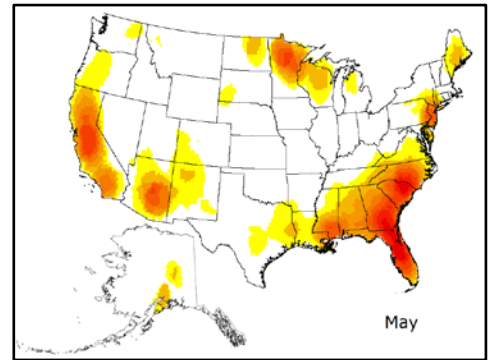
Temperatures across the southern third of the nation, from Southern California to the Carolinas, are expected to remain above normal through June. However, a trend toward normal temperatures in July and August may take hold as the tropical season begins and brings the Monsoon to the Southwest and as more significant storm activity develops over Florida and along the Gulf and Atlantic Coasts. Further north, normal to below normal temperatures are expected across the Pacific Northwest, Northern Rockies, and Northern Great Plains through June before trending toward above normal for July and August. The Great Lakes region and the Northeast can expect below normal temperatures in May that transition to above normal temperatures for the remainder of the summer. In Alaska, overall warmer than normal temperatures are expected during the outlook period.

Below normal precipitation trends will continue across the Southeast into June before more typical weather patterns return bringing near normal precipitation amounts for the remainder of the summer. Across the Gulf Coast region, west of the Florida Panhandle, above normal precipitation is possible during the outlook period. Across Arizona, New Mexico, and Southern California, drier than normal conditions are expected to continue along and west of the Continental Divide until the monsoonal rains arrive in July. East of the Continental Divide, precipitation amounts will continue to be closer to normal. Northern California and the Great Basin will experience drier than normal conditions in May and early June but could yield to periods of above normal precipitation received by July and August. The Pacific Northwest can expect to see normal conditions transition to drier than normal by July and August. Across the Central and Northern Rockies regions, wetter than normal conditions should normalize by June with these conditions lingering through the remainder of the summer months. In Alaska, an overall normal precipitation is expected except across eastern portions of the interior along the Canadian border where below normal precipitation is expected until late in the summer when the seasonal shift begins and brings wetter conditions.

Geographic Area Forecasts

Alaska: Normal significant wildland fire potential is expected for Alaska through the Outlook period.

The U.S. Drought monitor is showing an expanded area of abnormally dry over much of the southern mainland Alaska and the Kenai Peninsula. Precipitation amounts have been below normal for much of the state for April, continuing the dry conditions. Most areas are near normal snowpack due to the limited melting from a cool spring, however, some areas are below normal snowpack particularly in the Matanuska and Susitna Valleys and the Copper



Normal fire season progression across the contiguous U.S. and Alaska shown by monthly fire density (number of fires per unit area). Fire size and fire severity cannot be inferred from this analysis. (Based on 1999-2010 FPA Data)

River Basin. Calculations of the Canadian Forest Fire Danger Rating System are being started as areas become snow free and particularly over the Panhandle, Kenai Peninsula, the Mat-Su areas and the Copper River Basin and Southwest Alaska and a few locations in the Tanana Valley. By the end of May snow free conditions should spread north to near the Brooks Range.

After a cool, dry April across most of the state, temperatures across the state are expected to be warmer than normal conditions are forecast through the summer. Precipitation forecasts show below normal in the west at the end of spring and into summer but then an area of above normal precipitation over the eastern Interior only, will be developing in June and lasting into August. While earlier this year the lower snow pack was expected to lead to an early start to fire season in some areas, the cold March and early April slowed the normally expected melting. Fire season timing is expected to be near normal.

Northwest: Normal significant wildland fire potential is expected for the Northwest through the Outlook period.

Rain and snow continued to accumulate in April over most of the Area as the procession of Pacific frontal systems continued with little break during the month. Precipitation was at or well above normal for the Area with temperatures below average as they have been since early December. Snow accumulation continued over the higher terrain while melt off is well underway for lower terrain. Elevations above 5000 feet continued to experience significant snow accumulation during April due to the heavy amounts of moisture and unusually cool temperatures during the month. All reporting basins across the higher elevations of the Area showed above average snowpack for late April. Due to the wet and cool weather, fire danger indices remain far too low for wildfire risk and are not expected to rise to the levels needed for potentially large fires until late June or early July. 1000 hour fuel moistures are currently above 30percent for most of the area and are nowhere averaging less than 20 percent, even in the drier reporting regions at lower elevations east of the Cascades.

The latest climate outlooks indicate no unusual extremes of either precipitation or temperature through June. However, given the trend of cool and wet conditions prevailing since December, this seems likely to continue for the Pacific Northwest through June with few periods of warm and dry weather. In July and August longer range projections suggest warmer-and-drier than typical weather coming to the Area. Current projections do not indicate an early arrival for fire season. However, if July and August turn out to be warmer and drier than typical, the region may see normal or even heavier-than-normal large fire activity late in fire season depending upon the amount of lightning received.

Northern California and Hawaii: Normal significant wildland fire potential is expected for Hawaii through the Outlook period. In Northern California abundant precipitation will lead to a slower start to fire activity in June in the far east side zones. This will give way but a robust fire season in July and August in most southern portions of the Area thanks to abundant fine fuel crop development.

The North Ops Area has experienced a very wet rainy season. The majority of the Area has received greater than 150 percent of normal precipitation since the rain year began on October 1. The snowpack in the high country is 185 percent of normal for late April. The outlook for the Area is for close to normal precipitation and near to above normal temperatures through August. A robust fine fuel crop is still growing across much of the lower elevations of the Area, and is expected soon in the high desert as well. Considering the ground moisture and anticipated snow runoff fine fuels are not expected to be fully cured until late July or August. Also, expect a green-up phase of live fuels at all elevations to reach a peak at fairly high values, and later in the spring or early summer than in recent years. This will lead to a relatively late start (likely August) to the active fire season at mid and upper elevations, but there is a greater likelihood that mid and upper elevations will still have below normal fire activity than above normal even late in the fire season. The amount of lightning that these areas receive will be the main variable.

Since significant fires are rare in May significant fire potential in May is normal for all areas. It is typical for large fire activity to ramp up in a few PSAs in June, especially in the Sacramento Valley and Foothills and in the Far East Side PSA, but considering the current conditions and the outlook it is expected that

significant fire potential in June will be below normal in the far east side, while only a few grass fires will mean near normal activity elsewhere. Significant fire potential will begin to increase during the latter part of July, mainly in areas dominated by fine fuels, as seasonal drying of soils and fuels takes place. Therefore, significant fire potential is expected to be normal in all areas in July. Fine fuels are expected to be fully cured in August and those areas are expected to have an above normal potential for significant fires. All other areas have normal significant fire potential in August.

Sea Surface Temperatures in the vicinity of Hawai'i are expected to remain above normal through August. Therefore, temperatures throughout the islands are expected to remain above normal. This pattern will likely lead to near normal rainfall patterns throughout the state through August. The Climate Prediction Center outlook for Hawai'i is for near normal precipitation through August. Spring has been dry so far throughout the state and the KBDI has increased almost back up to normal levels. The Drought Monitor now shows the entire state in the Abnormally Dry category, with Moderate to Severe drought spreading. The most critical area is the lee side of the Big Island of Hawai'i. This is because rainfall there typically diminishes in the late spring and summer and the moisture deficit is not likely to be made up.

Southern California: Normal significant wildland fire potential is expected in most areas of southern California through August except in the Sierra Foothills where above normal significant wildland fire potential is expected to develop in June and the Sierra where below normal significant fire potential is expected through June.

Seasonal grasses have cured, or curing is well underway, across most of Southern California at the current time. This year's grass crop is a heavy one, due to the very wet winter and grassfire activity and associated resource demand will increase from south to north across the Area this spring into early summer. The fire potential across the Sierra Foothills will likely be exacerbated by the high amount of dead or dying trees due to the 5-year drought and bark beetle infestation. Once the grass crop cures in late May or June, any new start in the fine fuels should have little trouble transitioning into the ladder fuels and heavier dead timber.

Conversely, a record amount of snowpack higher up in the Sierras will keep fire potential low above 9,000 feet well into summer. It will take several weeks for melt off to occur in the high country and some areas that are shaded may not see snow melt complete until fall. Usually, it takes 3 to 5 weeks for fine fuels across the Sierras to become susceptible to fire once snow melt occurs. Therefore, it may be August before the high Sierras sees any wildfire potential, if at all, this year.

At the current time, most long term model guidance indicates much of the interior west will see well above normal temperatures this summer. However, across South Ops' area, this may be moderated a bit by the presence of a favorable sea surface temperature profile for the development of troughs and onshore flow. Temperatures along the coast, in particular, may be close to normal while inland areas remain a bit above normal this summer. There is still no clear long range model consensus for the upcoming monsoon season, but given the progressive pattern covering the Pacific the past few months, it seems somewhat likely more summer thunderstorms will remain east of the Area than usual. Therefore, near to slightly below normal precipitation is expected in the mountains this summer.

Northern Rockies: Normal significant fire potential is expected for the Northern Rockies through August except for Yellowstone National Park which expects below normal significant fire potential from June through August.

Above average precipitation and near average temperatures persisted over most of the Western PSAs the past month, extending into portions of Central and Southeast Montana, maintaining very moist conditions that have been in place since last October. Due to a remarkably persistent westerly flow that has been in place since March, preventing any dry spells of more than a few days from occurring. In fact, Bonners Ferry ID, and Kalispell and Billings, MT are currently experiencing their wettest water-years since 1948, while Missoula is its second. Northeast Montana and much of Western North Dakota were drier than average over the past month, with near-average temperatures, while most of eastern North

Dakota saw above-average precipitation. Mountain snowpacks across the Area experienced significant gains at the middle and higher elevations in most areas this past month, keeping them near to well above average. In central Montana though, snowpacks are melting somewhat faster and are only around 70 to 80 percent of average. Lower elevations are also melting at a somewhat slower pace than typical, and there is a much greater areal coverage of mountain snowpack at this time over the Area than has occurred over the previous two years. This, combined with the moist fall, winter, and spring to date, is keeping the Area drought-free over its entire extent. Green-up is underway at lower elevations throughout the Area, at a slightly faster pace than average east of the Continental Divide, according to the latest NDVI imagery. With the moist conditions most areas last fall, winter, and this spring, May will be out of season on both sides of the Continental Divide as a robust green-up will be occurring. 1000-hour fuel moistures are above average Area-wide. With drought conditions absent, live fuel moistures will be at normal healthy levels the rest of this spring and early summer. With long-range temperature and precipitation outlooks continuing at least average precipitation the next several months, with near to above average temperatures, fuels drying will be slower than the last few years, especially at higher elevations, through June and into at least early July, given also our robust and slowly melting snowpacks.

Impacts from climatic transitions should translate to an overall near to above average precipitation pattern continuing through May, with near average temperatures. The latest long-range outlooks are suggesting above average temperatures may develop in June and July over north Idaho and most of Montana, but with at least average precipitation, with this likelihood persisting into August. For all of the PSAs, fire season progression and potential will be at slightly slower pace and slightly below normal levels through June, given all the factors previously mentioned. Yellowstone National Park, with its above average snowpack, will be below normal potential in June and July, due to very moist conditions there. For July and August, given our lack of drought status Area-wide, even with the possibility of warmer than normal temperatures over much of the Area, normal fire potential is expected.

Great Basin: Below normal significant wildland fire potential is expected to develop across northern portions of the Great Basin and far western Nevada in May and June. For July and August, expect above normal significant fire potential to develop across the northwestern portion of Nevada thanks to anticipated abundant fine fuel growth.

After a wet winter, the southern portion of the Great Basin and parts of central Nevada started drying out in February and March with largely below normal precipitation. Conversely, continued above normal precipitation from far Western Nevada into the northern half of the Great Basin. Temperatures were near to just below normal over western and northern areas and near to just above normal further east and south. A healthy snowpack is still in place across the higher elevations of the Great Basin, with most high elevation sites reporting above 250 to 300 percent of normal in the Sierra into far Western Nevada. The exception to this is across central and southern Utah where SNOTEL sites are reporting at 20 to 50 percent of normal. A robust grass crop has been reported across the lower elevations of the Great Basin, particularly across western and northern Nevada. Fuel Specialists have reported that as of the end of April, fine fuels are in various stages of green-up across the Great Basin. This grass crop is expected to play a significant role later in the season, however fuel moisture will likely remain above normal into May.

Climate outlooks call for above normal temperatures across the southern portion of the Great Basin through May with possible cooling over the southern and eastern portions of the Great Basin at times from June through August. Precipitation is expected to be below normal over the southern portion of the Great Basin in May, with possibly below normal precipitation over western and northern areas into June through August. There is also potential for above average precipitation across the eastern half of the Great Basin later in June through August associated with the monsoon. If the anomalously warm temperatures and dry conditions come to fruition in May, the abundant fine fuel crop will dry out and begin curing. However, fuel moisture will take some time to decrease with snowmelt and spring moisture to contend with. Later in May through June the low to mid elevation fuels should completely cure from south to north. Towards the end of April through May, as temperatures warm and fuels begin to dry, it is possible that during warm and windy conditions there could be brief periods of increased fire potential after a dry period, especially with high grass loading. Additionally, there have been reports of grasses

extending higher in elevation than is typical, which would allow fires to make bigger than expected upslope runs in fine fuels before 1000-hr fuels have dried. There is concern regarding elevated fire potential in July and August across the lower elevations of much of western and northern Nevada and possibly into southwest Idaho. The higher elevations of the Sierra into Idaho, Wyoming and northern Utah will continue to see below normal fire potential until the snow melts. Below normal fire potential is expected in these areas through July, with a return to normal fire potential by August. The only areas that may remain in below normal at the high elevations throughout the season could be Wyoming and northern Utah, depending on monsoonal moisture.

Southwest: Above normal significant wildland fire potential is expected across southwestern Arizona eastward across southeastern Arizona eastward into southwestern New Mexico for May. Above normal potential will begin to spread northward west of the divide by June. Below normal significant fire potential is expected across the mountains of northern and northeastern New Mexico during both May and June. Normal significant fire potential is expected to return Area-wide by July into August.

Over the past month temperatures have been generally above normal across much of the area although a cooler tilt has been seen across far northeastern and eastern portions. A swath of above to well above normal precipitation occurred from northeastern New Mexico and northwest Texas southward across most areas of eastern New Mexico and adjacent west Texas. Some areas of above normal precipitation also occurred across northern sections of both Arizona and New Mexico. Otherwise, most of the Area experienced below normal precipitation.

An eventful and wet beginning to winter turned drier and milder over the past several months across the majority of the Southwest Area. As a result, snowpack values, which were much above normal for many areas early to mid-winter are now only above normal across the northern New Mexico as well as the Colorado border region and the far northern Mogollon rim area. Snowpack in most other locations is minimal to non-existent. The overall drier weather pattern Area-wide, that existed up until the past 3 to 4 weeks, had brought about enhanced west to southwest flow at times which lead to downslope conditions across areas to the lee of the New Mexico central chain. Periods of human-caused fire activity had been an issue during the frequent breezy-winds and mild periods. However, over the past month storm systems glancing the region to the north as well as frequent backdoor cold frontal activity brought welcome precipitation to most of the previously active eastern plains as well as bouts of cooler temperatures. As May approaches, a similar pattern will more than likely continue for the eastern portion of the Area which will likely continue to keep significant fire potential at normal to below normal levels. Areas further south and west, however, are expected to have above normal significant fire potential during May being just south of the main jet stream and away from the main focus of the enhanced moisture. The likely drier and milder weather focused west of the divide will lead to above normal significant fire potential further west across all of southern Arizona into southwestern New Mexico, as areas further east will likely continue to see periods of enhanced moisture and more frequent bouts of cooler temperatures. By June, significant fire potential is expected to increase further north and west west of the divide with areas further east likely to continue to see regular bouts of moisture. Above normal significant fire potential in these areas will be revolving around normal to above normal fine fuel loadings and eventually lightning as the primary ignition source as spring moves forward into the early summer.

The monsoonal timeframe is more than likely to begin early or on-time and will drop significant fire potential regionally as July progresses. Confidence in this overall outlook is now above average with higher confidence during May overall.

Rocky Mountain: Below normal significant wildland fire potential is expected in the higher elevations of Colorado and northwestern Wyoming from May through August. Elsewhere across the Area, expect normal significant wildland fire potential through August.

A considerably warmer than average weather regime has transpired during the early spring period, and to a much lesser degree readings have been above average in April as well. Precipitation deficits emerged in April across southwest Nebraska and carried over from March across western Colorado into

south-central Wyoming, with at or above average precipitation for the remainder of the Area. While drought has been gradually lessening across much of the Area, the exception is across western Colorado into south-central Wyoming where long term drought is emerging with precipitation deficits less than 75 percent and in many areas less than 50 percent of average. An abundant dead grass and brush fuel component remains in place in the lower elevations and foothills of the Rocky Mountain Area. However, green-up conditions are gradually expanding in the lower elevations and grasslands, and has been reducing the threat of fire activity. Fuel-beds are under snow cover across many Area mountain locations, but warmer than average conditions has removed snow cover and exposed many foothill locations. Western Wyoming mountain snowpack values are well above the historical median, with near to above average values for the remainder of the state and Colorado. However, in the Black Hills of South Dakota warm temperatures have resulted in an earlier than average melt off of the snowpack, and resultant earlier than average progression of green-up.

Short to medium term model forecast precipitation reflect a broad upper trough across the central U.S., and a resultant series of weather systems impacting the Area with significant rain and higher elevation snow. Medium to long range weather forecasts predict cooler and wetter than average conditions for the Area during the middle portion of May, with a drier and especially warmer indication during the latter portion of the month into early June. Otherwise, long-range weather forecasts overall for the Area point towards average temperatures and precipitation for June through August, except a wetter than average indication becoming more likely across Colorado into southern Wyoming July and August. Recent late April temperature and precipitation trends along with forecasts through mid-May point towards an average large fire risk forecast for May. As the month of May progresses, the expectations are for a continuing trend of decreasing fire risk as green-up expands in the lower elevations and foothills. On average May is one of the wetter months of the year for the Area. As a result of recent and forecast temperatures and precipitation, and residual effects of above median snowpack, the expectation across the mountains of western Wyoming and Colorado is for below average large fire risk May through August. Otherwise, average significant fire potential is forecast in the lower elevations and foothills of the Area during the May-August period.

Eastern Area: Normal significant wildland fire potential is expected for most the Eastern Area through the Outlook period, with an area of below normal potential in the southwestern portion of the Area into June.

Soil moisture and precipitation anomalies were below normal across northwestern Minnesota towards the end of April. Some residual longer term drying also remained in place across portions of New England and the eastern Mid-Atlantic States. Wetter than normal conditions were in place over portions of the Mid-Mississippi Valley. Near to above normal precipitation and soil moisture anomalies were in place over the rest of the Eastern Area towards the end of April. Fuel moistures were below normal across northwestern Minnesota towards the end of April. Fuel moistures were near to above normal over the remainder of the Eastern Area towards the end of April.

Cooler than normal trends are forecast over portions of the Eastern Area in May. Wetter than normal trends are expected across portions of the Mississippi Valley, the Great Lakes, northern Mid-Atlantic States, and New York in May. Warmer than normal temperatures are forecast to develop over much of the Eastern Area in June and persist into July over the Mississippi Valley. Drier than normal conditions may develop in June across the southwestern half of the Eastern Area with a turn towards wetter than normal conditions expected over much of the region in July. The spring fire season came to a close over the southern tier of the Eastern Area in April as green-up completed. Fire activity may persist over portions of northwestern Minnesota as well as drier portions of New England in May prior to green-up.

Southern Area: Above normal significant fire potential is expected through August from southern Georgia through south-central Florida. Below normal significant fire potential is expected from Texas northeast through Kentucky in May and June, returning to normal in July.

Drought conditions continue to persist across south Georgia and Florida and little improvement is expected for the most part into May and June. Deep south Florida may be an eventual outlier as

weather patterns may produce an improving environment for diurnal storms and rain activity. Far west Texas could show some increasing drought tendencies during May and June

For the Southern Area, eventually a return of a wetter and lower fire risk fall weather pattern with warmer than average and drier than average weather patterns punctuating the months of Jun and July is generally expected. Fire risks during the fall will almost certainly be lower than they were during the fall of 2016. As a transition into the summer occurs, vegetative stress could develop as areas of warmer and drier than average conditions peak during the first half of summer. In May, below average rain, above average temperatures along with periods of lower humidity will keep drought and fire potential a persisting feature of south Georgia and the Florida Peninsula. A gusty wind field is also expected to continue into May and will further accentuate fire danger. A higher rain frequency as well as higher event rain totals are expected to minimize fire potential across our northern tier of states and in a north-south oriented area just west of the Mississippi River Valley and back into eastern Oklahoma and east Texas. For June, minimum humidities are expected to gradually improve in the southeast as the transition to a summertime pattern begins and which would result in a more characteristic pattern of afternoon shower and thunderstorm activity. Lightning strike ignitions will become a greater ignition threat where fuels remain receptive due to the existing drier fire environment. Overall rainfall, though, is still expected to be below average and should keep a still volatile fire risk environment in play. In July and August the pattern of warmer and drier than average weather which has dominated the first half of the year will likely continue into mid-summer. While fire risks are expected to exhibit atypical seasonal trends into July, a higher humidity and a more favorable environment for afternoon storms during August should help reduce fire risks from previous levels. In addition, very warm water temperatures in the western and coastal waters of the Gulf of Mexico as well as along the Atlantic Coast could provide supporting conditions for coastal tropical development and the typical high rain and drought reducing effects these storms produce. Later in the year, a warming of the tropical Pacific is expected which typically produces a variable pattern of temperatures and precipitation over the summer with an increase in rain potential and humidity levels into fall. The resulting condition should produce a fire risk limiting higher humidity and greater rain producing weather environment.

Recent significant fire activity remains confined to southern Georgia and the Florida peninsula which is not expected to change during May. Volatile and dry tropical fuels along with increasing drought, above average temperatures, and periods of lower humidity and gusty winds will ensure fire risks will continue to peak into the May June timeframe. Fire conditions out in west Texas will need to be monitored as the potential for warmer than average fuels curing and drying weather develops. Lightning will begin to be a factor in Florida during May and June and this will increase the ignition threat within the drier fuels environment. Florida's historical peak for large fires occurs in May.

Outlook Objectives

The National Significant Wildland Fire Potential Outlook is intended as a decision support tool for wildland fire managers, providing an assessment of current weather and fuels conditions and how these will evolve in the next four months. The objective is to assist fire managers in making proactive decisions that will improve protection of life, property and natural resources, increase fire fighter safety and effectiveness, and reduce firefighting costs.

For questions about this outlook, please contact the National Interagency Fire Center at (208) 387-5050 or contact your local Geographic Area Predictive Services unit.

Note: Additional Geographic Area assessments may be available at the specific GACC websites. The GACC websites can also be accessed through the NICC webpage at: <http://www.nifc.gov/nicc/predictive/outlooks/outlooks.htm>