

# Fuels and Fire Behavior Advisory

## Central and Southern Great Plains

Date Advisory Effective - March 18, 2026



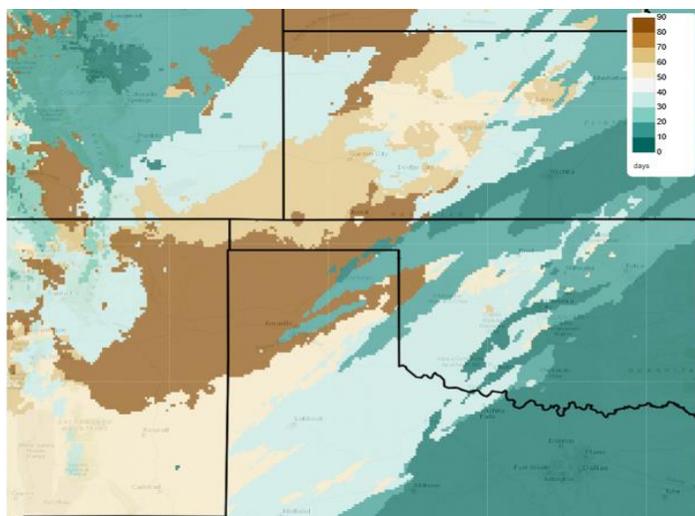
**Subject:** Above normal to exceptional grass loads are widespread across the central and southern Great Plains. Dry and unusually hot weather expected most of the rest of March will result in these abundant fuels becoming historically dry for this time of year.

**Discussion:** Abundant, freeze-cured grasses dominate the landscape across the advisory area, while drought has been expanding and intensifying since late winter. A highly anomalous weather pattern is affecting the western and central U.S. this week, with a summer-like heat dome contributing to record high temperatures and accelerated drying of the landscape. As the upper-level high pressure ridge responsible begins to break down during late March, the potential for wind-driven wildfire outbreaks may increase. Otherwise, as the fire environment warms and dries, summer-like fire behavior and increased resistance to control will occur.

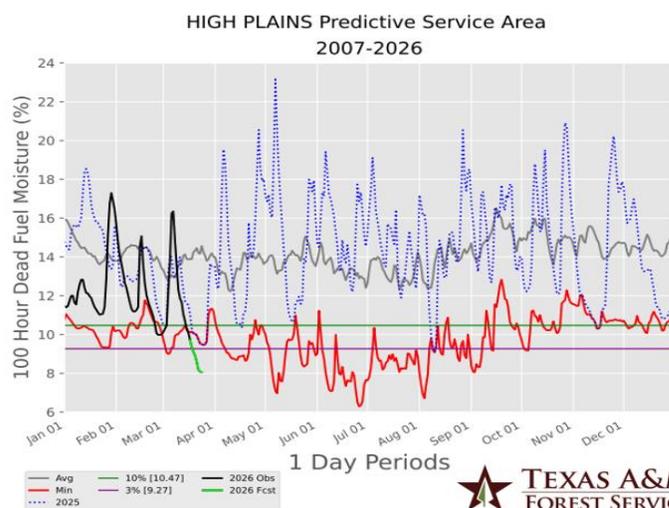


*Example of freeze-cured, above normal grass loads in the Texas panhandle (Texas A&M Forest Service).*

**Differences from Normal Conditions:** Well above normal rainfall during the 2025 growing season left widespread above normal to locally exceptional grass loading across the advisory area. While spotty rainfall and irrigated fields have led to areas of green-up, most of the landscape is dominated by freeze-cured grasses. A record warm winter has been followed by persistently warm and dry conditions, resulting in above normal fire occurrence. High temperatures well into the 80s and 90s will be common this week, with triple-digit readings expected locally on the hottest days. These conditions are more typical of summer than early spring. Dead fuel moisture is forecast to reach historical lows for this time of year as a result, with the energy release component forecasted to exceed the 97<sup>th</sup> percentile at times. Oklahoma Forestry Services recently reported a re-emergence of heat on the month-old Ranger Road incident in the panhandle – a likely sign of underlying dryness that will increasingly factor into resistance to control as drought intensifies further.



*Wetting precipitation amounts of at least a quarter inch have not occurred in most of the advisory area in 30-100+ days (Climate Toolbox)*



*100-hour dead fuel moisture across the Texas panhandle is forecast to reach historical levels of dryness for March and April (Texas A&M Forest Service).*





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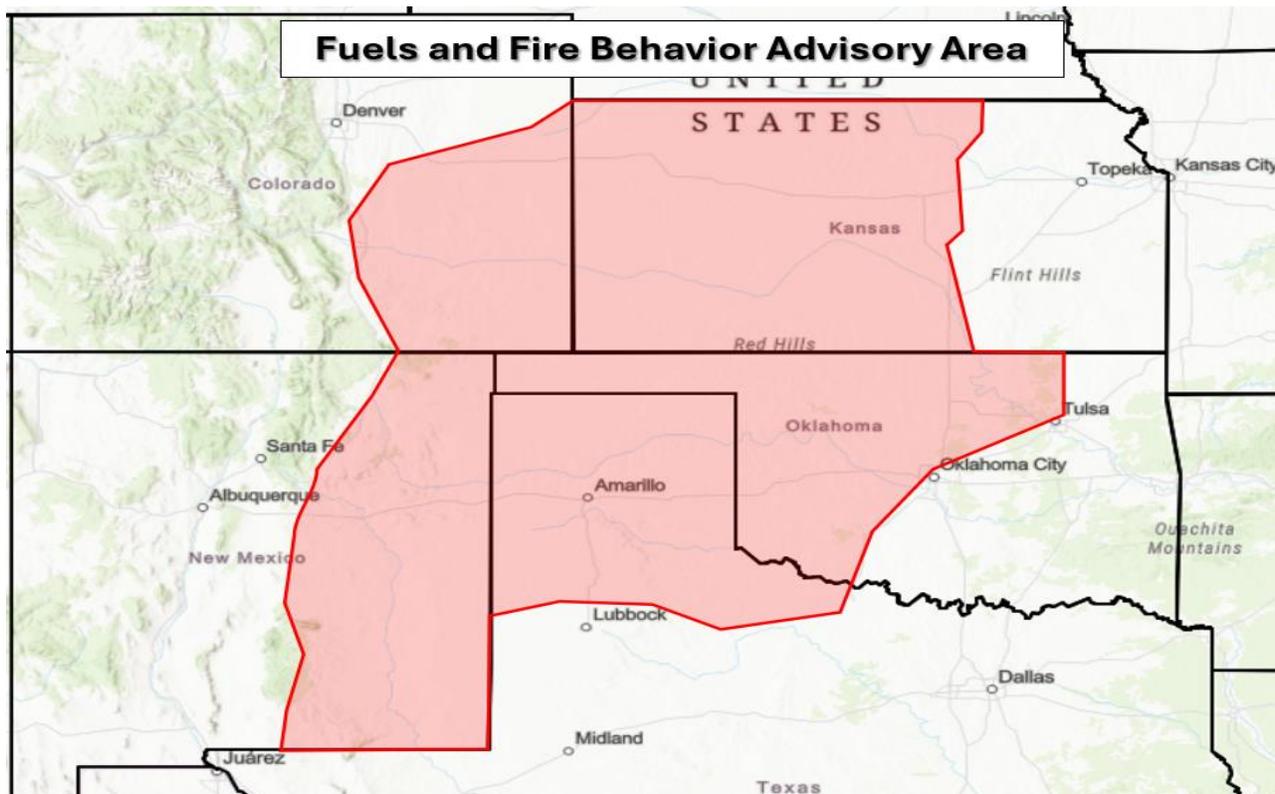
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### Concerns to Firefighters and the Public:

- The fire environment across the advisory area is primed for a continuation of above normal fire occurrence and fire intensity, especially during periods of elevated or higher fire weather. Rates of spread of 2-5 miles per hour have been observed in February and March in the advisory area.
- Critical fire weather patterns may occur with dryline passages, downslope wind events, dry cold fronts and dry return flow associated with quick warming trends.
- Fire spread will change dramatically with any increase in wind speed or change in direction. Firefighters should expect extreme rates of spread in fine fuels, along with increased fireline intensity on all portions of the fire. Frontal assault of wind driven fires should not be considered.
- Continuity of grass fuels may limit the potential for firebreaks, especially in canyons and other areas of complex terrain. Killing freezes on March 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> also damaged wheat fields that were greening up quickly and would normally be used in limiting fire spread.
- The dry conditions and pattern of lower-than-normal mean humidity may increase burn periods and promote active burning during nighttime hours.
- Expect longer duration and more complex initial attack, along with an increasing occurrence of extended attack.
- The public should avoid areas in the vicinity of ongoing fires and heed evacuation notices if fires occur near their communities.

**Area of Concern:** The advisory area covers the grass-dominant landscapes of southeast Colorado, western and central Kansas, northern and western Oklahoma, northwest Texas and eastern New Mexico.



**Issued By:** The Southern Area Decision Support group in coordination with state and federal partners in the Southern, Southwest and Rocky Mountain Geographic Areas.