North American Seasonal Fire Assessment and Outlook

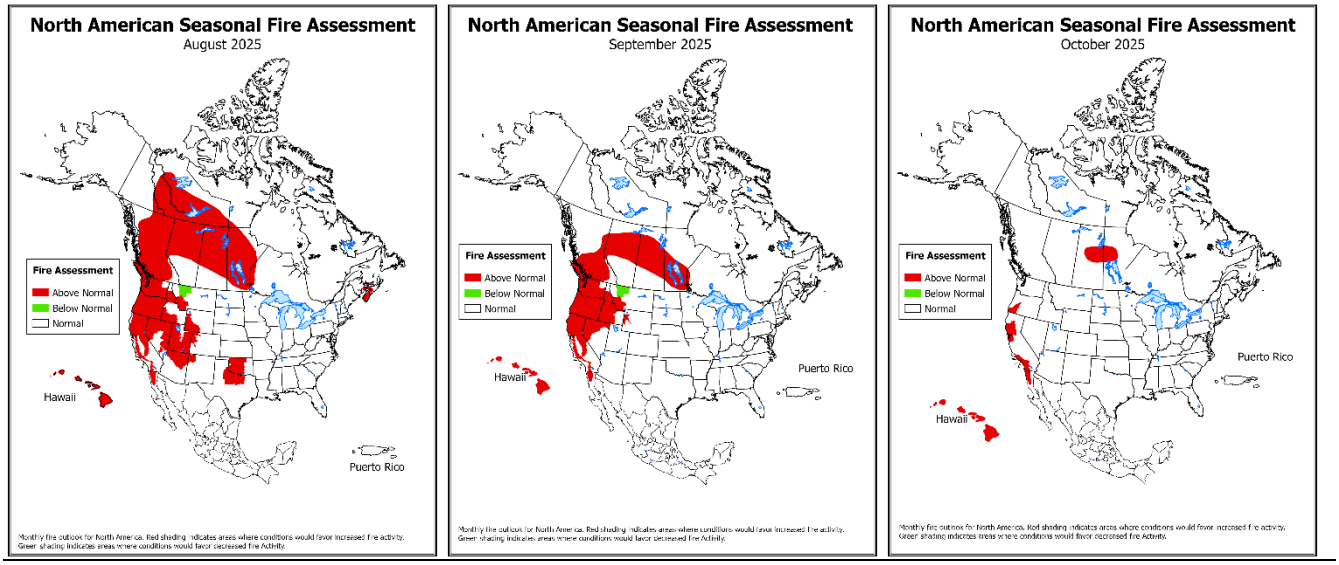
National Interagency Fire Center ● Natural Resources Canada ● Servicio Meteorológico Nacional
United States Canada Mexico

Outlook Period August 2025 through October 2025
Issued 13 August 2025

Executive Summary

The upper air flow over Canada during much of July resembled a textbook La Niña situation with high pressure off the Pacific Coast dropping moisture into western Canada from the northwest while Arctic surface high pressure areas settled over central regions. This general pattern has changed little over the past few months, with the result being the highest fire activity located in the region with consistently dry air, the central and eastern Prairies and western Ontario. This pattern produced a cool July in much of east-central British Columbia, the Prairie Provinces, and the Northwest Territories. Yukon, western and southern British Columbia, northwestern Alberta, and northeastern Manitoba recorded warmer than normal temperatures.

Plentiful rain fell through central British Columbia, edging into the southeastern part of the province, southern Alberta, and southwestern Saskatchewan. With Arctic surface high pressure settling into the Prairies, the southern edges often rode along the 49th parallel, producing easterly winds that interacted with Pacific moisture streams on the east side of the Rocky Mountains. Calgary, Alberta, recorded its 3rd wettest July with over 160 mm (6.5”) of rain and possibly the coolest July since 1995.



Monthly fire outlook for North America for August 2025 (left), September 2025 (middle), and October 2025 (right). Red shading indicates areas where conditions would favor increased fire activity. Green shading indicates areas where conditions would favor decreased fire activity. *Click on each image to see larger versions.*

Eastern Canada recorded near-normal temperatures in most locations in July, but with large swings between hot and cool weather. In Ontario, temperatures came out slightly above normal east and south of Lake Huron. In Quebec, patchy areas of slightly above normal temperatures were confined to extreme southern regions, the Gaspé Peninsula, Anticosti Island, and along the Gulf of St Lawrence east of Natashquan. A cool pocket remained on the east side of Hudson Bay north of James Bay to Umiujaq. The Atlantic region recorded above-normal temperatures in northern New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island, northwestern Nova Scotia, and eastern and northern Newfoundland and Labrador. In northeastern Newfoundland, Badger recorded an all-time high of 34.9 C on July 17.

Northwest Ontario, above the “elbow” in the border with Manitoba, continued dry for the fifth consecutive month, with the driest regions recording 30% or less of normal July rainfall amounts. Dry conditions also occurred in far southern regions, although a band of higher rainfall occurred from Lake Superior through the Timmins area, into Quebec near Val D’or, across James Bay, and into the northern half of Labrador. Heavy thunderstorms in some regions led to high rainfall totals, sometimes in spotty areas, with some southern Quebec regions receiving a month’s worth of rain in a single event.

Rain tended to diverge around much of the Atlantic region, with convective showers generating the bulk of the totals. Northwestern New Brunswick had close to normal rainfall, and southwestern Newfoundland came out with a spotty surplus of precipitation from a single storm system on July 21. The rest of the region was drier than normal. Atlantic tropical storm activity was almost absent with weak disturbances that stayed off the coast and only one named storm.

Lightning to date for 2025, while not contributing to many fires in Atlantic Canada, is at a record low in New Brunswick, where July counts were second lowest on record, and fourth lowest in Nova Scotia (records from 2002 onward). With persisting dry weather, even a little lightning may contribute to new fires. July lightning in Newfoundland and Labrador was above normal, joining Nunavut as the only jurisdictions with above normal activity.

Fire activity in the US increased in early July before moderating late in the month but then increasing again in early August. Most of the western geographic areas were active, with the Great Basin, Rocky Mountain, and Southwest Areas most active, while Alaska observed a steady decrease in activity. The National Preparedness Level increased to four (on scale of 1-5) July 12 before lowering to three July 28, followed by another increase to four August 5. July precipitation was below normal for most of the West, especially the Southwest where the North American Monsoon has been weak thus far. Dry areas were also found in the Lower Mississippi Valley and Northeast. However, precipitation was above normal in Montana, eastern Oregon, central Texas, and portions of the Midwest. Overall, drought expanded and intensified across the West, but improvement was found across much of the Plains and Midwest.

Climate Prediction Center and Predictive Services outlooks issued in late July indicate above normal temperatures are likely across much of the US through November, although portions of the Mississippi Valley may stay closer to normal in August. Drier than normal conditions are likely in the Four Corners states in August, with the area of likely below normal precipitation expanding into much of the Plains for the fall. Above normal precipitation is most likely along the East Coast through November. Above normal significant fire potential is forecast much of the northwestern US through September, but with a much smaller footprint than last month, and most of the northern Rockies normal if not below normal near Glacier National Park. Above normal potential also forecast for much of north Texas, western Oklahoma, Great Basin, Four Corners, and central Rockies west of the Divide in August. For September, that elevated significant fire potential in parts of the Four Corners states, Oklahoma, and Texas is expected to revert to normal. Fire potential will return to normal for much of the West in October, except for portions of southwest Oregon, central California, and southern California, which will remain above normal. Above normal significant fire potential is forecast for the lee sides of Hawai’i all three months.

While wildfire activity remains minimal across most of Mexico, the season is intensifying in the northern Baja California Peninsula. It is expected to peak this month before concluding in September.

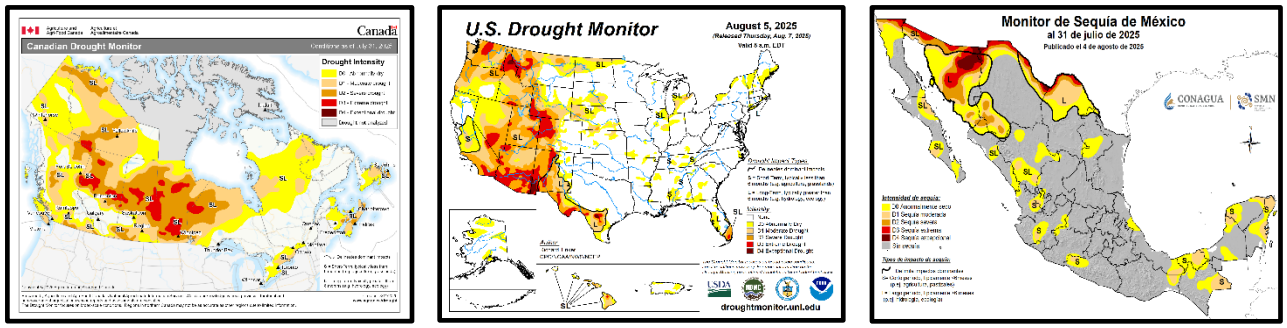
Recent weather patterns have had mixed effects on drought conditions across Mexico. Between May and July, average temperatures were above normal, with precipitation being below average in July but exceeding normal values in May and June. A hot and dry outlook is forecast for the August-October quarter. While temperature and precipitation are expected to be within normal ranges but lean warm and dry, the occurrence of extreme events cannot be ruled out.

Critical Factors

The critical factors influencing significant fire potential for this outlook period are global climate patterns related to sea surface temperatures, particularly in the Pacific Ocean, and large scale, longer-term soil moisture deficits:

El Niño-Southern Oscillation and Other Climatic Teleconnections:

El Niño-Southern Oscillation (ENSO) neutral conditions persist in the equatorial Pacific Ocean with sea surface temperatures near average. The Climate Prediction Center is forecasting ENSO neutral conditions to continue into the early fall, with a possible transition to La Niña later in the fall. The negative phase of the Pacific Decadal Oscillation (PDO) persists and remains a factor for this outlook, as well. The Madden-Julian Oscillation (MJO) has been active the last half of July in Indonesia, and the tropical West Pacific and is expected to remain active into mid-August as it continues eastward in the tropics. The ENSO neutral conditions will continue to be the main driver of this outlook, coupled with the negative PDO. The MJO has a smaller impact on this outlook, mainly for August.



Left: Canadian Drought Monitor from *Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada.* **Middle:** United States Drought Monitor. **Right:** Mexican Drought Monitor from *CONAGUA-Servicio Meteorológico Nacional.*

Drought:

Drought rapidly intensified in many parts of Canada, continuing the general trend of worsening conditions since early spring. By the end of July, about 71% of Canada was in abnormally dry conditions or some level of drought. Extreme drought has redeveloped around the British Columbia-Alberta-Northwest Territories border juncture, which has been in drought since 2022. Patches of extreme drought are now present in northern and central Alberta, central Saskatchewan, many parts of Manitoba, and extreme western Ontario. Only small patches of western Canada are drought-free: north-central British Columbia, the mountain ranges of central Yukon, the west-central Northwest Territories, the Alberta-Saskatchewan border around Lake Athabasca, the Rocky Mountains in British Columbia roughly between McBride and Kootenay National Park, western and southern Alberta south of Grande Cache, and Saskatchewan southwest of Saskatoon. Of note, the wettest area in western Canada in July has been southern Alberta, which was in extreme or exceptional drought in the summer of 2023, while much of central Alberta was drought-free.

In eastern regions, the extreme drought patch straddling the Manitoba-Ontario border is followed by abnormally dry conditions to severe drought eastward across northern Ontario, central Quebec, and central Labrador. A similar band stretches east from Lake Huron along Lakes Erie and Ontario, over most of New Brunswick and Newfoundland, and all of Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island. These bands are bisected by a drought-free region from Lake Superior east to southern Labrador and the Northern Peninsula of Newfoundland. Quebec's Ungava Peninsula and extreme northern Labrador are also drought-free.

In the US, temperatures for July were above normal east of the Mississippi River and the Pacific Northwest. Temperatures were cooler than average in most of California, with temperatures generally near normal on the Plains. Precipitation across the US in July was well above normal in central Texas, much of it occurring early in the month when historic and catastrophic flooding was observed July 4, resulting in 135 deaths. Above normal precipitation was also observed in much of Montana east of the Continental Divide into the northern half of the Mississippi Valley. Smaller pockets of above normal

rainfall were observed in northern California and eastern Oregon. Precipitation was largely below normal across the rest of the West, with the greatest departures from normal west of the Cascades, in California, and in the Greater Four Corners west of the Continental Divide. Other areas of below normal precipitation were in the Lower Mississippi Valley as well as much of the Northeast. Precipitation in Alaska was mostly a bit below normal, but above normal in southwest Alaska. Precipitation in Hawai'i was below normal, especially for Kaua'i and the Big Island. Precipitation has been above normal in early August for Montana and portions of the Northwest, but well below normal in the southern half of the West. Drier than normal conditions have also persisted into August for the Lower Mississippi Valley and Northeast.

Overall drought slightly decreased across the US since late June with just under 30% of the US in drought as of August 5. Drought persisted in the southwestern US, with slight improvement in portions of New Mexico. Drought also improved in much of the northern Plains and Florida, with the most pronounced improvement in drought across the Texas Hill Country, a result of the devastating flooding early in July. However, drought has intensified and expanded across much of the Northwest into the northern Great Basin and western Colorado. Drought is also developing in portions of the Southeast and Lower Mississippi Valley due to the below normal rainfall in July, with abnormally dry conditions in portions of the Northeast. Extreme drought persists in portions of the southwestern US but has expanded into portions of the northern Intermountain West. Extreme drought now covers portions of every western US state except Wyoming. Extreme drought is also occurring in small portions of southwest Texas and South Florida. Small areas of exceptional drought persist in southwest New Mexico and South Texas, with a small area developing in the Idaho Panhandle.

During the first half of July, above average precipitation was observed in northwestern, northern, central, and southern regions of Mexico. This was primarily due to the influence of Hurricane Flossie, which moved close to the Mexican Pacific coast during the first few days of the month. Also, moisture from both oceans, the presence of low-pressure troughs, and the passage of five tropical waves over Mexico also factored into the above normal rainfall.

This precipitation helped to reduce areas with moderate to exceptional drought in the states of Sonora, Chihuahua, Coahuila, Sinaloa, and Durango. Conversely, below average precipitation was recorded in western, eastern, southern, and southeastern Mexico. This led to an increase in abnormally dry conditions in Jalisco and moderate drought in southern Veracruz, Tabasco, Chiapas, and the Yucatán Peninsula. As of July 15, the percentage of areas with moderate to exceptional drought across Mexico was nearly 18%, or 4% lower than that recorded at the end of June.

Fire Season Status:
As of August 5, Canada has recorded about 4,100 fires, with over 700 active, burning about 6.7 million hectares. This marks the second greatest area burned total for the time of year, after 2023. Many of these fires are large, as the number of fires is slightly below or close to long-term averages. The most intense region continues to be central Saskatchewan and Manitoba, although other areas also have active fires. Of note, several fires have caused problems on both the Pacific and Atlantic coasts, with events on Vancouver Island and Newfoundland.

Largest fires include 25LF-SHOE in Saskatchewan at about 560,000 hectares, although this merged with two other fires giving this complex a total burned area of over 800,000 hectares. An almost continuous line of fire runs almost 300 km from east-central Saskatchewan near the junction of highways 106 and 135 (near and south of Pelican Narrows) northeast to Leaf Rapids in Manitoba. This area is likely interrupted by the Churchill River and possibly other water bodies. Other fires or complexes over 100,000 hectares are in northeast British Columbia, the Northwest Territories, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, and Ontario.

Total area burned in Saskatchewan stands at over 2.5 million hectares, which is approaching the average annual area burned for all of Canada. Manitoba's total is over 1.7 million hectares, while totals in British Columbia, Alberta, the Northwest Territories, and Ontario are each over 500,000 hectares. To

aid with suppression, resources have been acquired from Australia, Chile, Costa Rica, Mexico, New Zealand, and the US.

Across Canada, evacuees numbered about 16,400 as of August 6. Some previous evacuees have returned home, but with the large number of fires and active burning, evacuation alerts and orders continue to be sporadically issued.

In the US, fire activity gradually increased across most geographic areas the first half of July with a moderation the latter half of the month before slowly increasing again at the end of the month into early August. However, Alaska saw a gradual decrease in activity throughout the month after a very busy second half of June. Lightning events in the Northwest and Northern California Geographic Areas at the beginning of the month started several new large fires requiring incident management teams. Lightning in western Colorado July 10 ignited three large fires including the Turner Gulch Fire, which remains active at the end of the month. However, two large fires in northern Arizona and central Utah are indicative of how dry the high elevation timber is in these areas after a dry winter. The Dragon Bravo Fire in Arizona and Monroe Canyon Fire in central Utah have been extremely active since emerging early in the month, with large plumes observed daily on each fire July 23-31. Through August 13, 1,473,988 hectares (3,642,224 acres) have burned across the US, below the 10-year average at 81% of average. However, the 43,381 fires recorded thus far is above average, at 118%.

Between January and July 2025, a total of 6,474 wildfires were recorded across all 32 states of Mexico, affecting approximately 1,117,916 hectares. Of the total burned area, 95% corresponded to grass and brush, while the remaining 5% affected timber. The states with the highest number of wildfires were Jalisco, State of Mexico, Michoacán, Chihuahua, Mexico City, Durango, Puebla, Guerrero, Chiapas and Oaxaca. Together they accounted for approximately 75% of the national total. The largest burned areas were recorded in Chihuahua, Durango, Guerrero, Sinaloa, Jalisco, Tabasco, Nayarit, Baja California, Sonora and Michoacán, which collectively represented 77% of the total burned area nationwide. Out of the total number of wildfires, 1,290 incidents (approximately 20%) occurred in fire-sensitive ecosystems, burning 156,101 hectares. This is equivalent to 14% of the total affected area.

From a regional perspective, the northern, central, and western portions of Mexico have experienced the highest wildfire activity in terms of frequency. Regarding the extent of burned area, the northern, northwestern, and Pacific states have been the most severely impacted.

Canada Discussion

August/September/October: Forecasts suggest normal to above normal temperatures across most of Canada except for cooler than average conditions along the northern British Columbia coast, western Yukon, and parts of the Arctic. Warmer temperatures are most accentuated over Quebec and Atlantic Canada, where drier than normal conditions are also forecast. Low pressure systems moving across the central Prairie Provinces during August will provide beneficial rain to some active fires. However, these events may not fully extinguish the larger or more intense blazes. These regions feature severe to extreme drought and would require repeated rainfalls to saturate the ground, while warm and dry conditions between these events will likely allow for resurgence of fire activity. Above average fire activity in August will therefore continue in many Canadian regions.

Monthly rainfall begins to taper off in much of western Canada in September, which is usually not good news given the amount of fire on the landscape and drought intensity heading into August. Many large fires active in August will likely continue burning into September and beyond. A drier period is forecast by many models for the southern Prairies, although orientation of wet and dry bands suggests a southwesterly flow of air from the Pacific with good moisture in British Columbia but with uncertainty whether this wets the central Prairies or regions farther north. Any precipitation in far northern regions helps, as fire activity generally tapers of with shorter daylight periods, cooler temperatures, and better surface moisture retention. Dry conditions may continue in the Atlantic region, but a tropical storm passing through the Atlantic Provinces could interrupt the dry period.

Forecasts for warmth are most accentuated in eastern regions, from Ontario to Atlantic Canada, but other regions may be warmer than normal. This may prolong fire activity in the central Prairies, but effects may be dictated by the amount of precipitation that falls.

With generous rainfall in the southern Prairies over the summer, a good crop of grass, herbs, and shrubs could create higher fire intensity as vegetation cures, but this depends on conditions being warm, dry, and windy. Models suggest normal to dry conditions in the southern Prairies, while warm and dry conditions continue to be favored in eastern Canada. While some suggestion of above normal precipitation exists in most forested regions, normal amounts are light in October so above normal values may not be dramatic. If the weather patterns that have dominated central Canada most of this year continue, some snow may begin to fall in northern parts of the Prairie Provinces. This may prevent many new fires from occurring; however, deep-burning fires in the most active summer regions in central Saskatchewan and Manitoba may continue, thus part of this area is highlighted as having possible above normal fire activity.

United States Discussion

August/September/October: ENSO neutral conditions are occurring in the equatorial Pacific Ocean and are expected to continue into early fall. Model, Climate Prediction Center, and Predictive Services forecasts for the next three months indicate above normal temperatures are likely across much of the US, especially in the western and northeast US. Below normal precipitation is expected in the southwestern US in August, and across the northern and central Rockies into the Plains for September and October. The North American Monsoon remains weak and is expected to remain weaker than average until the end of the monsoon season, typically mid-September. In the eastern US, above normal precipitation is likely for the Appalachians to the East Coast.

Above normal significant fire potential is forecast for most of the Northwest, California, northern Nevada, southwest Idaho, and the southern Idaho Panhandle through September. Above normal potential is forecast for much of eastern Nevada, Utah, northern Arizona, northwest Colorado, western Wyoming, central Oklahoma, and North Texas in August before returning to normal in September. Above normal potential is forecast to spread into central Idaho in September while persisting for the Bridger-Teton National Forest. Below normal significant fire potential is forecast for portions of north-central Montana through September due to recent abundant rainfall. Most areas return to normal potential in October, but above normal potential will persist in southwest Oregon, portions of northern California, and Southern California. Above normal fire potential is forecast for the lee sides of Hawai'i through October.

Mexico Discussion

August/September/October: Above average rainfall is forecast for several states in August, including Guanajuato, Jalisco, Sinaloa, Sonora and Yucatán. In contrast, the rest of the country is expected to receive below average precipitation. Above average maximum temperatures are projected across most of the national territory. However, some areas may experience below average maximum temperatures. These exceptions include parts of the Baja California Peninsula, Sonora, Chihuahua, Durango, Tamaulipas, Sinaloa, Nayarit, Jalisco, Colima, Guanajuato, Michoacán, State of Mexico, Puebla, Veracruz, Oaxaca, Chiapas, Yucatán, and Quintana Roo.

Above average rainfall is forecast for the states of Aguascalientes, Puebla, and Quintana Roo in September. In contrast, below-average precipitation is expected in the rest of the country. Above average maximum temperatures are projected across most of Mexico. However, some areas may experience below average maximum temperatures. These exceptions include parts of Baja California, Sonora, Chihuahua, Durango, Tamaulipas, Nayarit, Jalisco, Colima, Guanajuato, Michoacán, Puebla, Veracruz, and Quintana Roo in September.

Above average rainfall is forecast for several states in October, including Chihuahua, Coahuila, Durango, Guanajuato, Guerrero, México, and Sinaloa. In contrast, the rest of the country is expected to receive below average precipitation. Above average maximum temperatures are projected across most of Mexico in October. However, some areas may experience below average maximum temperatures. These exceptions include parts of the Baja California Peninsula, Chihuahua, Sinaloa, Nayarit, Jalisco, Colima, Guanajuato, Michoacán, Puebla, Veracruz, Oaxaca, Chiapas, Yucatán, and Quintana Roo.

Considering the current temperature and precipitation patterns, the national drought situation, and the climatological outlook, wildfire activity across most of Mexico is expected to remain minimal during the August–September-October period due to the seasonal decline in fire occurrence typical of this time of year. However, in the state of Baja California, wildfire activity is projected to remain above normal throughout the quarter, with a peak in August and the end of the season is expected in September.

Additional Information

Additional and supplemental information for this outlook can be obtained at:

United States:
National Significant Wildland Fire Potential Outlook
https://www.nifc.gov/nicc-files/predictive/outlooks/monthly_seasonal_outlook.pdf

Canada:
Canadian Wildland Fire Information System
http://cwfis.cfs.nrcan.gc.ca/home

Mexico:
Servicio Meteorológico Nacional
https://smn.conagua.gob.mx/es/observando-el-tiempo/monitoreo-atmosferico-ambiental

Outlook Objective

The North American Seasonal Fire Assessment and Outlook is a general discussion of conditions that will affect the occurrence of wildland fires across Canada, the United States, and Mexico. Wildland fire is a natural part of many ecosystems across North America. This document provides a broad assessment of those factors that will contribute to an increase or decrease of seasonal fire activity. The objective is to assist wildland fire managers prepare for the potential variations in a typical fire season. It is not intended as a prediction of where and when wildland fires will occur nor is it intended to suggest any area is safe from the hazards of wildfire.

Acknowledgements

Contributions to this document were made by:

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Ginny Marshall, Natural Resources Canada
Liam Buchart, Natural Resources Canada

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Julie Osterkamp, GIS, Bureau of Land Management
Steve Larrabee, Predictive Services Fire Analyst, Bureau of Indian Affairs

Mexico: Roberto Pineda León, Servicio Meteorológico Nacional
Martín Ibarra Ochoa, Servicio Meteorológico Nacional
Darío Rodríguez Rangel, Servicio Meteorológico Nacional
José L. Solís Aguirre, Servicio Meteorológico Nacional