National Significant Wildland Fire Potential Outlook

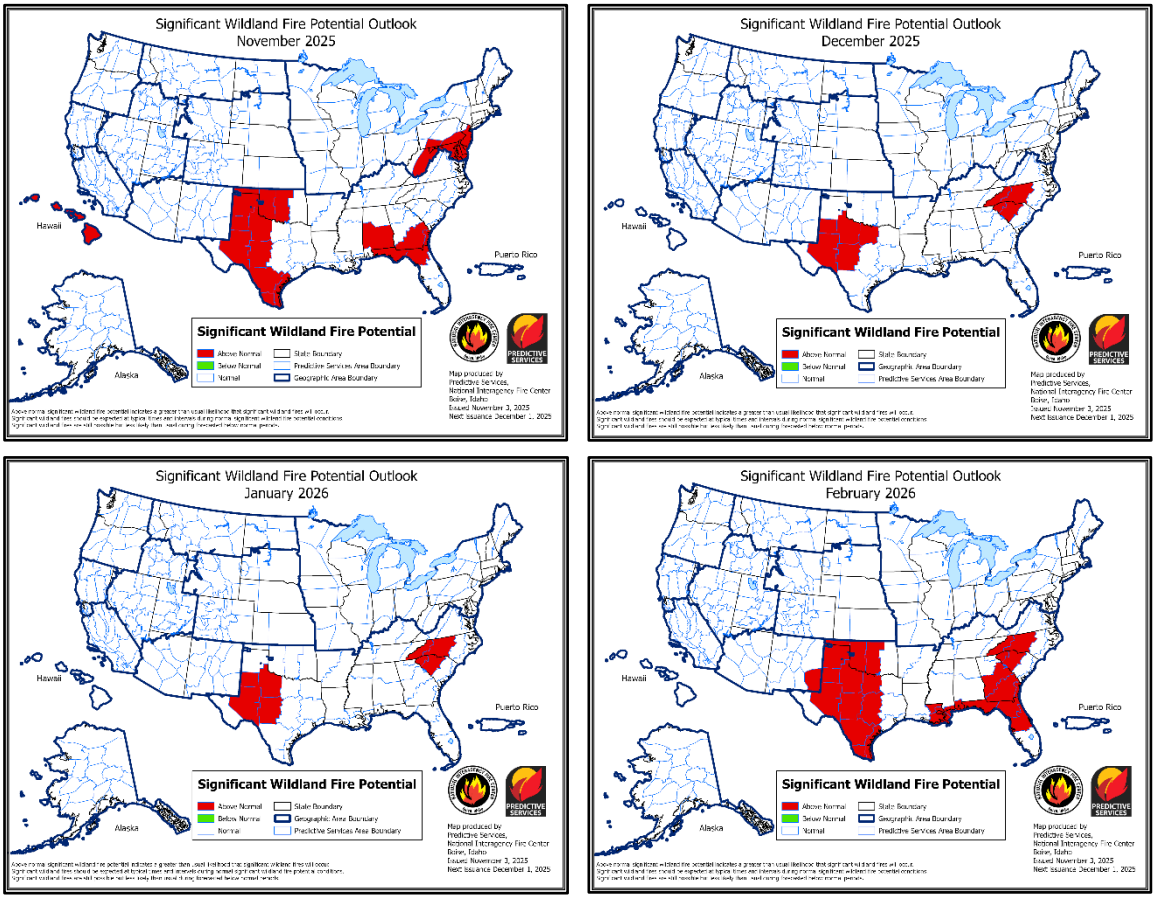
Predictive Services
National Interagency Fire Center

Issued: November 3, 2025
Next Issuance: December 1, 2025

Outlook Period – November 2025 through February 2026

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.



Fire activity decreased across the US through October, although a slight increase in activity occurred in the Southern Area the latter half of the month, typical for fall. The National Preparedness Level decreased to one (on a scale of 1-5) October 10 due to the reduction in activity nationally. Total acres burned through October is below the 10-year average at 70%, but with an above average tally of wildfires of 113%.

October precipitation was above normal across most of the West, with more than 200% of normal precipitation in portions of California and Arizona. Precipitation was mostly below normal across the Plains, with less than 25% of normal rainfall in South Texas. Portions of the Lower Mississippi and Ohio Valleys had above normal rain for October, but precipitation was below normal for much of the Mid-Atlantic, Northeast, and Upper Mississippi Valley. Overall drought changed little with over 43% of the country in drought, but some areas noticed improvement while others observed drought development or intensification. Drought intensified in northern New England and the

Lower Great Lakes but improved across the Ohio Valley with many areas removed from drought. Drought also intensified along the northeast Gulf Coast, with drought development in portions of the southern Plains. Drought in the West was improved, with portions of every state seeing improvement, with the greatest improvement in the Northwest and across much of the Rockies.

Climate Prediction Center and Predictive Services outlooks issued in late October forecast temperatures that are likely to be above normal across the southern half of the US and most of the East Coast. Temperatures are likely to be near to below normal from the Northwest into the northern Plains and Upper Great Lakes. Precipitation is expected to trend below normal for the southern tier of the US, with the greatest chance of below normal precipitation in the Southeast. Precipitation is likely to be above normal for the northwestern US into the northern Plains, Great Lakes, and Ohio Valley through the winter.

Most of the US is forecast to have seasonally low significant fire potential for the outlook period. However, for November, above normal potential forecast for portions of the central Appalachians, Mid-Atlantic, northeast Gulf Coast, and much of the southern Plains. In December, above normal potential is forecast for the east slopes of the southern Appalachians into the Piedmont, and across portions of central and West Texas, with above normal potential continuing for most of these areas into the new year. For February, above normal potential is forecast to expand from the southern Appalachians to the northeast Gulf Coast and most of Florida. Above normal significant fire potential will also expand across the southern Plains, covering most of Oklahoma and Texas and a portion of southeast New Mexico.

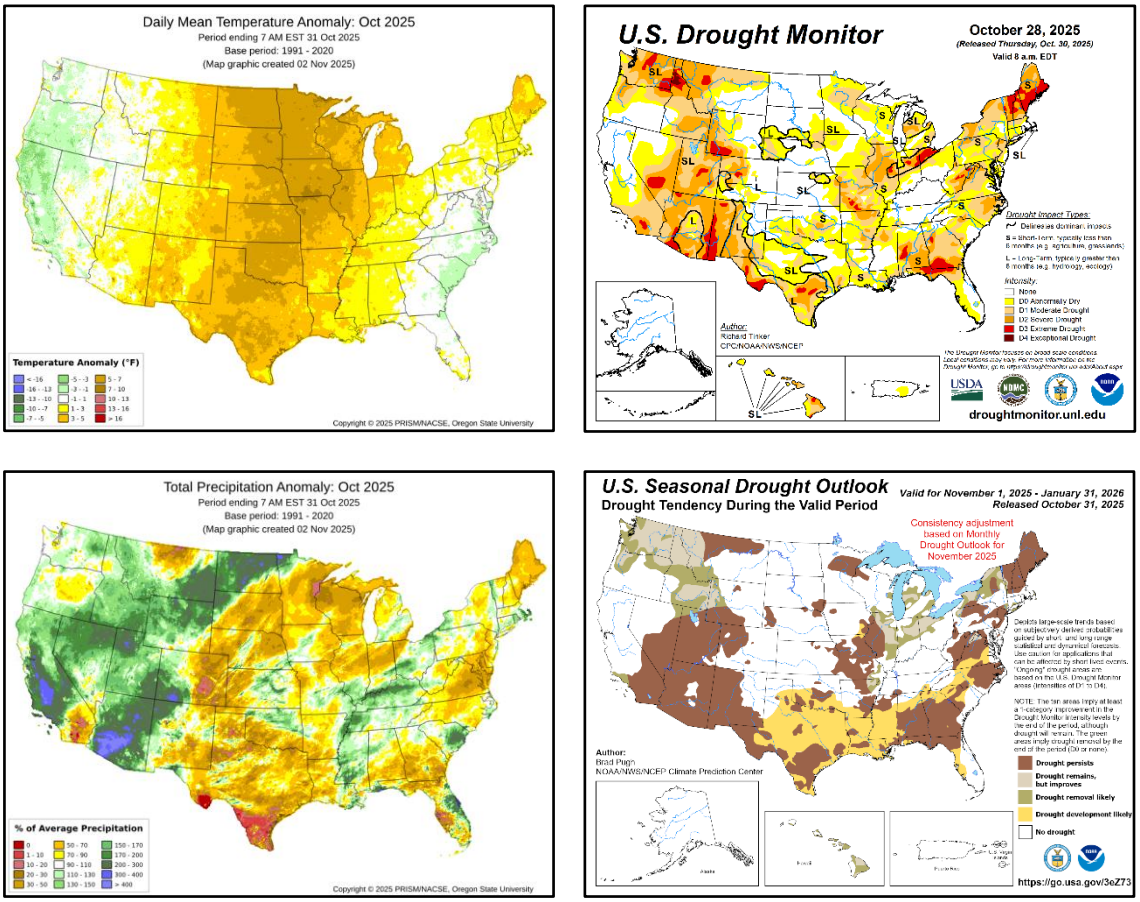
Past Weather and Drought

Temperatures in October were above normal for the Plains and Mississippi Valley into the Great Lakes and portions of the Northeast. Temperatures were more than 5°F above normal for most of the Plains to the Upper Mississippi Valley. Temperatures were near to below normal in the Mid-Atlantic and Southeast, while the Intermountain West was near normal and the West Coast below normal, especially in California. Temperatures were above normal for most of Alaska, while Hawai'i temperatures were near to slightly above normal.

Precipitation across the US in October was above normal across most of the West except for portions of the Mojave Desert, eastern Oregon, and north-central Montana, which were below normal. Precipitation 200-400% of normal was observed across portions of central California, Arizona, southwest Colorado, and northwest Utah. Above normal precipitation was also observed in eastern Montana to northern and western North Dakota, as well as portions of the Lower Mississippi, Ohio, and Tennessee Valleys. Above normal rainfall occurred in eastern South Carolina and along the Florida Atlantic Coast. Below normal precipitation was observed across much of the Plains except North Dakota, with portions of South Texas receiving less than 10% of normal October rainfall. Below normal precipitation was also observed in much of the Mid-Atlantic and Northeast, but anomalies were much smaller than those observed over the summer. The Great Lakes also were drier than normal for October, except portions of Lower Michigan were near normal. Precipitation in Alaska was mostly above normal for western Alaska and the Interior but below normal for the panhandle. Precipitation was below normal for most of Hawai'i, with less than 50% of normal rainfall for much of Oahu, Maui, and the Big Island.

With fire activity gradually waning across the US, there were no significant fire-effective events across the country. However, a strong Nor'easter at the beginning of October brought relief to the Mid-Atlantic and southern New England, especially areas closer to the coast. Other well-timed precipitation events occurred in the Northeast to keep fire activity low for the fall fire season. Drying was observed across much of the Southern Area during the month with activity gradually increasing across Texas, Oklahoma, and the Southeast. However, a well-timed moderate rain event of long duration occurred the last week of October in the southern Appalachians and

Southeast, providing relief. A weak to moderate Santa Ana event occurred in southern California October 27-29 but was associated with little increase in activity due to the overall wet October.



Left: Departure from Normal Temperature (top) and Percent of Normal Precipitation (bottom) *(from PRISM Climate Group, Oregon State University).* **Right: U.S. Drought Monitor (top) and Seasonal Drought Outlook (bottom)** *(from National Drought Mitigation Center and the Climate Prediction Center).*

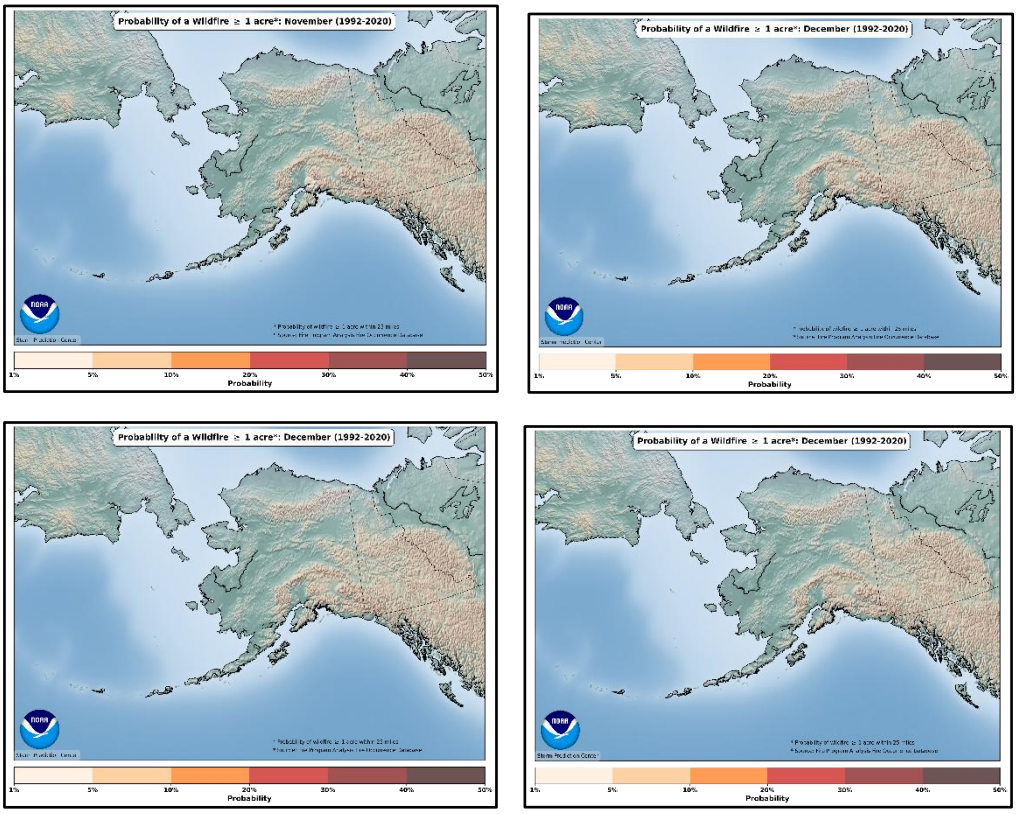
Overall drought changed little across the US with over 43% of the country in drought as of October 29. Drought intensified in portions of northern New England, the Lower Great Lakes, and Southeast, with some expansion as well. Drought development was also noted in portions of the southern Plains and Minnesota. However, drought improved across portions of the West during October, with the most significant improvement noted in the Northwest, portions of the Rockies, and central and southern California. Drought also improved across the Ohio Valley, with many areas removed from drought the past month. Areas of extreme drought persist in all western US states but covers less than half the area compared to late September. Extreme drought also covers portions of northern New England, northwest Ohio, northern Indiana, east-central Illinois, southwest Missouri, South Texas, western Alabama, South Georgia, and the Florida panhandle. A small area of exceptional drought persists in the Idaho panhandle. Drought is expected to persist where it exists across the southern US, with drought development forecast in the southern Plains and expansion in the Southeast. Drought improvement and/or removal are forecast for the northwestern US and Great Lakes, with drought persistence forecast in northern New England to the Mid-Atlantic.

Weather and Climate Outlooks

The El Niño-Southern Oscillation (ENSO) has trended toward La Niña in October, with the Climate Prediction Center declaring a La Niña Advisory October 9. Sea surface temperatures now average more than 0.5 C below average across the central equatorial Pacific Ocean, indicating that La Niña has developed. CPC forecasts a weak La Niña to persist through the end of the year, with a 55% chance of a transition to ENSO neutral conditions early next year. A strong negative

phase of the Pacific Decadal Oscillation (PDO) persists, with a slight intensification observed in October. The Madden-Julian Oscillation (MJO) became active in October in the Indian Ocean, progressing into Indonesia at the end of the month. Most models are forecasting the MJO to remain active in November as it moves east into the western Pacific and western hemisphere. The weak La Niña and the negative PDO will be the main drivers of this outlook, with some modulation of the pattern likely in November due to the active phase of the MJO.

Geographic Area Forecasts



Normal fire season progression across Alaska shown by the probability of a fire greater than 1 acre within 25 miles. Fire severity cannot be inferred from this analysis. (Based on 1992-2020 FPA Data. Analysis courtesy of the Storm Prediction Center.) Note that December is shown three times, and January/February occurrence is similar to December, which is minimal.

Alaska

Normal significant fire potential is expected for Alaska during the next four months. Ample rainfall, snow, and cold temperatures have brought the 2025 fire season to a close in Alaska, with minimal fire activity expected until spring.

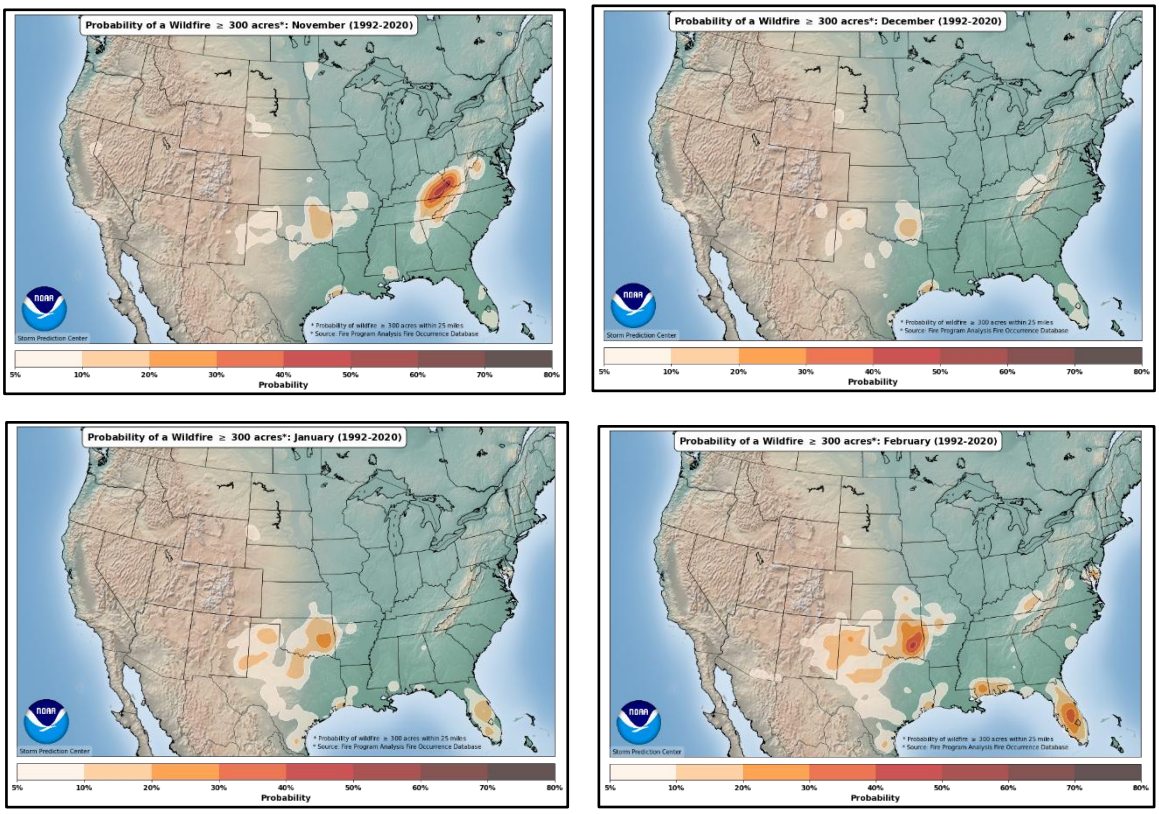
October was another warm, wet month. Significant rain fell in many areas, turning to snow in the last half of the month across much of the north and Interior. The south and west have yet to see substantial snow at lower elevations, but near-freezing temperatures and wet fuels have diminished any concerns.

Climate Prediction Center outlooks for November through February show warmer than normal conditions are likely for northern and western Alaska, and colder than normal conditions for the Panhandle. Between the two regions, equal chances of warmer or colder conditions are forecasted. For precipitation, wetter than normal conditions mirror the warmer area of the west, while drier than normal conditions cover most of the panhandle.

La Niña conditions are in the forecast, typically indicating a slightly colder and wetter winter than normal for some parts of the state. However, the correlation seems to be best south of the Alaska Range and has not panned out in recent years. Despite the changing climate, fire season in Alaska remains virtually non-existent in winter months, and these cold and warm or dry and wet leanings in the winter do not have much impact on the summer fire season, which is instead more reliant on springtime temperatures and melt rates.

Fire activity has been low for October with less than five ignitions. Fuels are very wet or snow-covered across the state. Fire weather indices have been shut off in areas with an established snowpack. In other areas, rain has dampened fuels to the extent that they pose little to no ignition or spread hazard.

The 2025 fire season is over for Alaska. As the permanent winter snowpack continues to expand through early November, fire potential will remain limited, leading to normal fire potential through February.



Normal fire season progression across the contiguous US shown by the probability of a fire greater than 300 acres within 25 miles. Fire severity cannot be inferred from this analysis. (Based on 1992-2020 FPA Data. Analysis courtesy of the Storm Prediction Center.)

Northwest

A weak La Niña is expected to bring cooler and wetter conditions to Oregon and Washington through February, especially west of the Cascades. Occasional warm spells may limit low-elevation snowfall early, but frequent storms should support near to above normal snowpack at higher elevations. Significant fire potential remains normal, which is very low for this time of year.

October weather across Oregon and Washington began with above normal temperatures and below average precipitation, particularly in northern and central areas. Daytime highs during the

first half of the month were 2 to 6°F above average, and precipitation totals through October 20 were generally 25 to 70% of normal west of the Cascades. Relative humidity remained low, and several days featured gusty winds, especially east of the Cascades, contributing to brief periods of elevated fire weather concern. Isolated thunderstorms occurred early in the month, but widespread rainfall was largely absent through mid-October.

A major pattern shift occurred during the final 10 days of the month as multiple atmospheric river events brought widespread rain, strong winds, and some mountain snow. From October 23 to 26, the first system delivered localized totals exceeding 6 inches in the Coast Range, Olympics, and Cascades. Another round of heavy precipitation arrived October 31, with an additional 2 to 5 inches mostly across western Washington. These storms pushed monthly precipitation totals to 110 to 150% of normal in many western locations, effectively ending critical fire weather conditions across the region.

As of late October, western Oregon and Washington have seen significant drought improvement, with many areas now classified as abnormally dry or drought-free. This is largely due to the multiple atmospheric river events that brought heavy rainfall late in the month. In contrast, central and eastern Oregon remain in moderate to severe drought, especially in the high desert and Klamath Basin. Eastern Washington also continues to experience moderate drought, with lingering dryness in the Columbia Basin and Palouse.

Initial attack activity across the Pacific Northwest was average for October. In central Washington, the Lower Sugarloaf and Labor Mountains Fires showed brief flare-ups in early October, but overall fire activity declined significantly compared to September.

As October progressed, seasonal changes and moderating weather improved fuel conditions across Washington and Oregon, aiding successful fire suppression efforts. Shorter burn windows, cooler nights, a lower sun angle, and periods of increased relative humidity and precipitation all contributed to this improvement. By the end of the month, heavy rainfall began affecting both states, further boosting fuel moisture across the region. Energy Release Component values continued their seasonal decline throughout October.

NOAA's Climate Prediction Center (CPC) indicates that La Niña conditions are currently present and are expected to persist through February. A transition to ENSO-neutral is likely by early spring (55% chance). This weak La Niña typically brings less predictable seasonal patterns to the Pacific Northwest. Historically, weak La Niña winters in Oregon and Washington have produced a wide range of outcomes, from dry and mild to cool and stormy. As such, seasonal confidence is moderate, but cooler and wetter seasonal conditions should keep significant wildfire activity very low.

CPC forecasts suggest slightly below-normal temperatures are favored across western and northern Washington and northwest Oregon, especially during December through February. The rest of the region shows no significant signal, reflecting the uncertainty typical of weak La Niña winters. For November, ridging may bring brief warm spells, but overall, the region leans cooler than average.

Precipitation is expected to be above average across western Oregon and Washington from November through January. While occasional warm spells may limit low elevation snowfall early in the season, cooler periods should allow snow to accumulate at mid and high elevations. February precipitation trends are uncertain, with no strong signal. Snowpack may build slowly at first, but frequent storms should support steady accumulation. Overall, conditions favor near to above normal snowpack by mid-winter.

The Northwest will maintain normal (very low) significant fire potential designations for November through February. It would take a few weeks of warm, dry weather plus a significant wind event to bring most fuels into a sustained burnable condition.

Northern California and Hawai'i

Significant fire potential for northern California is projected to be normal for November through February. Historically less than one large fire occurs on average within each PSA from November through February. Hawaii's significant fire potential remains above normal for November and normal from December through February.

Most of October was comprised of blocking patterns which included high-amplitude, slow to break down high- and low-pressure systems. A total of four widespread wetting rain events affected the region including two atmospheric rivers. Precipitation was near to above normal most areas. Average temperatures were near to below normal. A little under 1,100 lightning strikes were observed using the Vaisala detection system with the majority occurring October 2. A total of six weak to moderate dry northerly and easterly wind periods occurred during the month with the strongest occurring October 20. The strongest southerly and westerly wind event occurred from October 24-26, but relative humidity was generally elevated on October 25 and 26 when the strongest winds occurred. No National Weather Service Red Flag Warning or Predictive Services High Risks were issued.

Dead fuel moisture experienced noticeable moistening and drying periods throughout October, but regional Energy Release Component values were generally near or below seasonal levels. Live shrub and tree canopy fuel moisture generally reached the season minimum and peak flammability during September and October although moderation occurred across several sample sites during October due to moisture absorption from the multiple wetting rain events. Sufficient soil moisture and temperature allowed for additional herbaceous green-up, generally below 3,500 feet, while dormancy and a cured state was generally found above 3,500 feet. Green-up was sufficient to act as a heat sink and reduce fire spread across some lowland areas such as the Upper Sacramento Valley. The US Drought Monitor remained unchanged from September with a small area of moderate drought designated across the far northwest corner. The one- and two-month Evaporative Demand Drought Index values on October 25 showed no discernible drought or stress signals.

Wildfire business lowered during October while prescribed burn activity increased. The daily wildfire ignition average during October was five compared to 16 during September. The October 2008-2024 daily ignition average is 10. No significant fires were reported with the largest being 39 acres mainly in grass east of Clear Lake. The regional large fire average for October based on a 1992-2023 database is five. The regional preparedness level went from two (on a scale of 1-5) on September 30 to one October 22. Prescribed burning, both pile and broadcast projects, increased during October with peak burning conducted during the third week when ideal conditions occurred ahead of a significant wetting event.

Whiplash weather patterns remain the likely weather scenario during the next four months with both dry-warm and cool-moist periods brought on by changes in the jet stream due to various teleconnection signals. Guidance signals are mixed based on the use of analogs and projections from dynamic climate models, therefore mixed temperature and precipitation anomalies are likely.

Based on the current fuel state and future weather predictions, normal significant fire potential is projected for November through February which means very little overall. Critically flammable live and dead fuel alignments are likely to be minimal, although some extended dry-warm periods could create heightened flammability periods and benefit prescribed burning. Lowland herbaceous green-up, upper elevation snow, shorter day periods, and lowering sun angle will also lessen the risk or shorten the burn periods. Dry and gusty wind events preceded by an extended drying period would create the most spread potential during the next four months.

Sea surface temperature anomalies surrounding the Hawai'ian Islands were near to above average during October. Average temperature anomalies were mixed but generally near to above

normal. Precipitation anomalies were generally near to below normal with near normal favoring the northern tier. Drought conditions changed very little from late September through late October. Moderate drought touched all the islands while severe to extreme drought touched most of the island chain, especially favoring the lower half. Prior rain events have provided some herbaceous green-up but it is mainly in the early stages across the leeward sides and not enough to mitigate spread potential across most areas during dry and gusty wind events. A Red Flag Warning was issued by the National Weather Service from October 23-35, but no significant wildfires were reported during October.

The El Niño Southern Oscillation is expected to be in a weak La Niña state during most of the outlook period. Near to above normal temperature anomalies are expected. Precipitation anomalies should be mixed during November but trend above normal overall since weaker La Niñas have been associated with more Kona Lows. Drought stress should continue in areas during November but steadily improve during the entire outlook period and lead to less stress on the live fuels. Herbaceous green-up should also be more prolific across the leeward sides but this fuel state will support significant fire potential early in the outlook period. Enhanced trade wind periods are likely and could prompt Red Flag Warnings earlier during the period. Based on the weather projections and current state of the fuels, above normal significant fire potential is forecasted during November favoring the southern half of the island chain with normal forecast the rest of the outlook period.

Southern California

A Pacific trough was the dominant feature over the West Coast for the first half of October with only one brief weak ridge of high pressure. Temperatures were below normal most of this period with only a couple days slightly above normal. A deep area of low pressure that moved inland into central California brought temperatures as much as 10 to 25 degrees below normal October 13-15. A progressive pattern of weak ridges and weak troughs moved into California from the Pacific Ocean during the second half of October. Temperatures were near normal most of this time, with a brief period of below normal temperatures and a brief period of above normal temperatures. Overall, for the entire month, most locations observed well below normal temperatures.

Scattered showers and isolated thunderstorms moved across central California October 2-3. Moisture from the remnants of Hurricane Priscilla brought scattered showers and thunderstorms to southern California October 9-10. The deep low mentioned above brought widespread significant rainfall away from deserts October 13-14. The snow level was around 6,000 feet across central California and around 7,000 feet across southern California with this storm. One to three feet of snow fell over the Sierra with several inches of snow across the peaks of the southern California mountains. Scattered showers and thunderstorms moved across the region October 21-22 as a weak area of low pressure moved inland from the southwest. Overall, for the entire month, precipitation was well above normal except most desert locations received below normal rainfall. Strong southwest to northwest winds occurred across the mountain ridges and desert passes with deeper troughs and most of the region received strong southeast to southwest winds with the deep area of low-pressure mid-month. There was weak offshore flow as ridges moved inland from the Pacific Ocean during the last half of the month, but there were no moderate to strong Santa Ana wind events.

There continues to be less drought across central and southern California as time moves on. Southern California remains under moderate to severe drought, but there is less severe drought than was observed in September. There remains a small area of extreme drought across the Lower Deserts. Abnormally dry conditions continue across most of central California, but much of the central coast and the Sierra now have no drought. The San Joaquin Valley went from moderate drought in September to abnormally dry. Over most of the region, the 1000-hr and 100-hr dead fuel moisture was above normal all of October. The live fuel moisture rose gradually starting in the middle of month due to the widespread significant rainfall and is now mainly

between 50% and 80%. The rainfall received also caused green-up to start across the lower elevations.

Even though the sea surface temperatures across most of the Pacific Basin remain above normal, they are starting to cool. Computer models show that these sea surface temperatures will continue to slowly cool into the winter months. Therefore, we are no longer expecting well above normal temperatures and well below normal precipitation for this water year. Pacific troughs will continue to work their way into the Pacific Northwest and move south into California at times. Temperatures and precipitation will most likely end up near to a little below normal from November through February. There will most likely be a near normal amount of Santa Ana wind events through the winter months. However, since there was a significant rainfall event across southern California before a Santa Ana wind event occurred, the significant fire threat has been lowered to near normal across the entire region for November through February.

Northern Rockies

Significant wildland fire potential is expected to remain normal across the Northern Rockies Geographic Area (NRGA) through the outlook period. Moisture in the western part of the NRGA has been near to above normal for the past 60 days and routine fall weather has supported moisture retention. East of the Continental Divide, drier conditions are emerging over northern Montana but forecast northwesterly jet stream patterns through the winter should bring normal to above normal precipitation.

North central Montana precipitation was well below normal in October and the US Drought Monitor shows moderate drought emerging over the northern plains. Drought indices have changed little over north Idaho and western Montana despite October precipitation anomalies of 100 to 150 percent. This likely reflects ground water deficits built over multiple years of drought with the current Drought Monitor showing a large area of severe to extreme drought. North Dakota experienced temperature anomalies 5 to 7 degrees above normal in October, but precipitation events were abundant due to high relative humidity.

No new large fires occurred in October. Prescribed fire was mostly limited to pile burning with a few smaller broadcast burns being conducted.

Multiple global teleconnection patterns support cooler and wetter than normal conditions across the northern tier of the central US this winter. Forecast patterns will support accumulating snow cover across the region, therefore fuels are expected to retain current moisture levels and be resistant to fire.

Great Basin

Normal significant fire potential is expected across the Great Basin through the period, which results in low fire activity and little, if any, potential for large fires. However, fine fuels could dry out quickly and remain a concern in southern Idaho and northern and western Nevada where above normal fine fuel loading has been reported. These areas may have some concern if strong cold fronts bring strong winds after prolonged dry periods occur until snow begins in the mid to lower elevations.

Temperatures overall in October were above normal across the eastern half of the Great Basin and near to just below normal farther west. Precipitation was well above normal over much of the Great Basin, except for southern Nevada and western areas of the Arizona Strip where precipitation was more localized. Cold fronts brought increased winds, colder temperatures, rain and mid to high elevation snow throughout the month. Moderate to severe drought with pockets of extreme drought across southern and eastern Nevada, most of Utah, and the Arizona Strip is

expected to continue through early next year. Moderate to severe drought across far northern Utah, Idaho and western Wyoming is expected to improve through the winter, with drought removal likely in some areas. Drought is not expected to develop across western and northern Nevada into southwest Idaho.

Fuel moisture increased to above normal with Energy Release Component below normal across most areas of the Great Basin in October due to cooler temperatures and precipitation. Heavy fine fuel loading in portions of northwest and north central Nevada and southwest Idaho will remain a concern through the fall and early winter as fuels transition into dormancy.

Light initial attack continued through October; and any new large fires were short-lived. Prescribed fire increased significantly in the latter half of October, especially in central Idaho and Utah.

Global patterns suggest a higher likelihood of below normal temperatures in January and February across the Great Basin. Precipitation patterns are not as definitive; however, forecasts lean toward above normal precipitation in northern areas and below normal precipitation across southern areas. This pattern may lead to above normal snowpack for Idaho and Wyoming and potentially into the northern Sierra and northern Utah mountains. Therefore, normal fire potential is expected through February, which would indicate low fire potential for the region. The only exception might be localized events through the fall and early winter across northwest and north central Nevada into southern Idaho in areas of above normal fine fuel loading. If conditions remain drier and absent from snow, strong winds associated with cold fronts could increase fire potential for a burning period.

Southwest

As of late October, the US Drought Monitor indicated widespread areas of severe to extreme drought across most areas west of the Divide, with pockets of exceptional drought along the southern border of Arizona and New Mexico. These drought conditions will likely gradually worsen into the end of the year, with drier than normal conditions expected.

Precipitation in October was much above normal across central and southern Arizona and western New Mexico, with slightly below normal values over northern Arizona and eastern New Mexico. With the La Niña that developed in October forecast by the Climate Prediction Center (CPC) to persist this fall, precipitation is expected to decline and become below normal for the rest of the year into early January.

Temperatures in October were near normal across most of the region. The CPC outlook for November is for above normal temperatures across the region. This trend is expected to continue through the end of the year and into early January.

One large fire occurred in southeast Arizona at the end of the month, otherwise, fire activity has been minimal in October due to both the significant precipitation received in the first part of the month, as well as decreasing day lengths and good overnight relative humidity recovery. The CPC outlooks call for warmer and drier than normal conditions through the fall and into the first part of winter, which may allow for a slight increase in fire activity. Overall large fire activity should remain low, which is normal for this time of year. Fire potential is expected to increase to above normal across far southeast New Mexico in February, however; due to the abundant grass crop and the forecasted dry winter weather.

Rocky Mountain

October brought frequent storm systems to the Rocky Mountain Area (RMA), with above normal temperatures and a sharp precipitation boundary along the Continental Divide; wet conditions to

the west and drier conditions to the east. These patterns improved drought on Colorado's West Slope but allowed drought to persist or emerge elsewhere, particularly in eastern South Dakota and Kansas. Regular precipitation helped limit fuel drying, continuing fuel conditions near seasonal averages, and most fire activity remained small and quickly contained. Looking ahead, La Niña is expected to persist through most of the winter, likely bringing cooler, wetter conditions to the north and warmer, drier conditions to the south along with increased wind potential. While fire potential is expected to remain normal through winter, brief periods of elevated risk may occur during warm, dry, and windy stretches.

October continued the trend of storm systems moving across the RMA every 7 to 10 days. Temperatures remained above normal throughout the month, with the central Plains averaging 4 to 8 degrees above normal, while Colorado and Wyoming saw slightly lower anomalies of 3 to 5 degrees above average. Precipitation was largely divided by the Continental Divide, with areas to the west experiencing consistently wet conditions as low-pressure systems tracked across the RMA. One of these systems included the remnants of Hurricane Priscilla, which brought heavy rainfall and localized flooding to Colorado's West Slope in mid-October. Overall, precipitation west of the Divide ranged from 120 to 200 percent of normal, with some localized areas exceeding 200 percent. In contrast, areas east of the Divide received significantly less moisture, with totals ranging from 25 to 75 percent of average. The wet conditions on the West Slope have led to some improvement in drought status, while drought conditions elsewhere in the RMA, particularly in western Wyoming, remained largely unchanged. Meanwhile, the combination of limited precipitation and above-normal temperatures has contributed to emerging drought concerns in eastern South Dakota and eastern Kansas.

Regular rounds of precipitation throughout the month limited the duration of drying periods, preventing significant decrease in fuel moisture. Although there were occasional periods of increased wind combined with lower elevation cheatgrass and other fine fuels drying more rapidly, overall fire danger remained near seasonal averages across the RMA.

Most fire activity across the RMA consisted of initial attack incidents, with over 95% of fires contained within one or two operational periods and held to 10 acres or less. Most of this activity occurred on the West Slope prior to the arrival of precipitation, and in western South Dakota, where drier conditions and fine, grass-dominated fuels were more available to burn.

During the November to February period, La Niña conditions that developed this month are expected to persist, similar to last winter. Historically, La Niña winters in the RMA are associated with cooler and wetter conditions across the northern third of the RMA, while the southern third tends to experience warmer and drier conditions. Current long-range models support the emergence of this typical pattern as winter approaches. With wetter and cooler conditions in the northern third, drought is likely to improve or end in western Wyoming over the winter. Meanwhile, the normal to below precipitation in Colorado will likely result in drought conditions continuing through the winter months. Additionally, La Niña winters often bring slightly enhanced wind activity across the RMA during the cool season months.

Given that current fuel conditions are near seasonal norms and the November to February period typically corresponds to minimal large fire activity, normal fire potential is expected through the outlook period. However, due to the potential for increased wind events associated with La Niña, brief periods of elevated fire potential may occur, particularly following stretches of warm, dry weather, when fuels are no longer snow covered. These elevated conditions are expected to be short-lived, generally lasting no more than one or two operational periods.

Eastern Area

Normal significant fire potential is forecast for most of the Eastern Area through February 2026. There are concerns about the storm at the end of October accelerating leaf drop in western

Pennsylvania, into West Virginia and New Jersey, with November likely to start dry. Therefore, above normal potential is forecast for eastern West Virginia to the Mid-Atlantic coast.

Much of the Eastern Area was drier than normal for October, but not to the extent many areas observed over the summer. The driest area was across central and southern Minnesota into northern Wisconsin where less than 50% of normal rainfall was observed. Other dry areas, including New England, the Mid-Atlantic, and Mid-Mississippi Valley, received 50-75% of normal precipitation. Portions of southeast New England, the Mid-Atlantic coast, and northwest Minnesota received above normal precipitation, with most of the rain in New England and the Mid-Atlantic occurring with a strong Nor'easter at the beginning of the month. Temperatures were well above normal for October across the Midwest, with Missouri, Iowa, and Minnesota averaging 5-8°F above normal for the month. Farther east, temperatures were slightly above normal in the Northeast and closer to normal in the Mid-Atlantic.

Drought has persisted in much of the Northeast the past month, with some intensification of drought, especially in northern New England, northern and western New York, and western Pennsylvania. Drought has also developed in portions of eastern Pennsylvania and northern New Jersey. Drought improved along the Ohio River, but intensified across portions of Missouri and Illinois, while developing in northern Minnesota and northwest Wisconsin. Extreme drought persists in portions of eastern West Virginia and northern New England, with small areas of extreme drought also reported in southwest Missouri, central Illinois, northern Indiana, and northwest Ohio.

Recent fire activity has predominantly been occurring in areas of the Great Lakes, New England, and Mid-Atlantic states that have been transitioning from a drought-based live fuels system to a dead fuels system with leaf drop and periods of dry weather. For the majority of the Eastern Area, this outlook period has the fall transition complete and fire potential will depend on the frequency of precipitation and wind events, in both speed and duration, so that days since rain or wind dried fuels will be factors for increased fire potential. Combine these weather factors with increased human ignition activities like debris burning, hunting, and warming fires, it is expected that the Eastern Area will occasionally have days of above normal fire activity during November and into early December across portions of the area. Areas of long-term or intensified drought still have potential to burn deep into the ground, go underground, rekindle outside of control lines, or require extensive mop-up. The southeastern Mid-Atlantic states have been experiencing fire danger indices that are rebounding to similar levels after precipitation that increase with drying periods. These areas have potential to have above normal fire activity during mid to late November if conditions align with leaf drop from late October storm activity exacerbated by periods of drying from low relative humidity or consistent winds.

Overall, temperatures forecast by the Climate Prediction Center (CPC) are likely to be above normal in winter in the Northeast and Mid-Atlantic over the winter after a seasonable start in November. Normal temperatures are likely in the Big Rivers, while temperatures are likely to trend below normal by late winter in the Upper Midwest. Precipitation is expected to be below normal for November in the Mid-Atlantic, otherwise, no clear signal is forecast over the winter that extends into the Northeast. Precipitation is likely to be above normal for much of the Great Lakes and into the Big Rivers.

Normal potential is forecast for the next four months for most of the Eastern Area as most areas traditionally have little to no fire activity over the winter. This month, eastern West Virginia into western Pennsylvania and eastward into New Jersey will remain a concern as the storm at the end of October produces a significant amount of leaf drop. The first half of November is likely to be dry with periods of breezy conditions, as well. Periods of low relative humidity will also occur, and when coincident with winds, periods of fire spread conducive to significant fires are possible. The forecast also correlates well to what occurred in 2012 in West Virginia, when a late October storm was followed by a mild, dry, and breezy period resulting in a significant increase in fire activity in mid-November. Therefore, above normal potential is forecast for eastern West Virginia

and south-central Pennsylvania into New Jersey, most susceptible to dry, northwest to west winds. Elsewhere, a few short-duration fires are possible during wind events that follow prolonged dry periods, especially in southern Missouri over the winter. However, this is within the realm of normal activity over the next four months.

Southern Area

Despite the persistence and expected intensification of drought across much of the Southern Area, widespread soaking rain the last week of October will have lasting impacts on the fire environment heading into the traditional peak of the fall fire season. This is likely to be especially true in the Appalachians, where cool temperatures and limited drying early in the month will maintain wet conditions until later in the period. Abnormally high grass loading across the southern Great Plains will be a major concern throughout the dormant season. Similarly, fuels associated with Helene and other storm or drought damage will also come into play once drying occurs during this winter's La Niña.

The growing season was abnormally wet throughout Oklahoma and Texas, and much of the rest of the region for that matter. As a result, above normal grass loads are the most widespread in the southern Plains since the 2021-2022 dormant season. This will almost certainly lead to abnormally high wildfire risks and Southern Great Plains Wildfire Outbreaks as the fire environment aligns from November into next spring. Late summer and early fall drought-curing has already resulted in fire-receptive fuels across large portions of Oklahoma and Texas, and hard freezes will eventually put a lid on any cool season grass growth until next spring. Western Oklahoma into northwestern Texas and smaller portions of the Edwards Plateau observed a killing freeze on October 30, but areas farther south and east that saw abundant rain during the last week of the month may experience greening of roadside and cool season grasses. This will act as a buffer to unintentional human ignitions and fire spread until colder temperatures arrive later in November or December.

La Niña conditions continue to set in across the tropical Pacific, which tends to increase confidence in weather conditions during winter over the Southern Area. November is a transitional month, with the classic La Niña pattern more likely for December through February. This favors extended warm and dry periods across the southern tier and East Coast as the calendar turns to 2026. An additional consequence of La Niña is more frequent storms, which results in a higher frequency of wind events for the Plains and tends to focus heavy rain and severe thunderstorm outbreaks over the Mississippi Valley, which at times include the eastern Plains and adjacent Southeast. Source regions for air masses will of course be dependent on a pattern that becomes more uncertain with time, but until Arctic air builds up in Alaska and Canada, bone-dry air masses capable of drying out heavy fuels over the Appalachians may be short-lived until winter. Otherwise, fronts that tap into Gulf moisture may be especially prolific rainmakers this year, due to the lack of tropical activity since June that has resulted in the warmest water on record for so late in the year. Like last November, this warm water could also result in more humid conditions than normal over central and eastern portions of the region, once southerly flow and warmer temperatures return by mid-month.

With a likely dry and very warm November ahead, above normal significant fire potential for November is forecast across much of Oklahoma and Texas. Above normal significant fire potential is carried through the winter months across Texas due to the grass loading and expected periods of dry and windy conditions, though any winter storms that develop could alter subsequent outlooks as the fire environment temporarily moderates. By February, most of both states will see above normal significant fire potential as the spring pattern takes shape and high wind events become more likely. Again, unusually high grass loads are the dominant player throughout the period and will likely continue to drive increased risk into at least March.

Significant changes were warranted to the outlook for November in the Appalachians, with limited short-term drying anticipated behind widespread rainfall and drizzle that was spread out over several days. Heavy dead fuels, including in the footprint of Helene across the Appalachians, will take several weeks of drier and warmer weather to become receptive to fire. These warmer and drier conditions may eventually set in as leaf drop accelerates, but rainfall could potentially be just frequent enough to limit any longer term drying of fresh leaf litter. The progression of the pattern through the month suggests cooler temperatures will be followed by generally warmer but more humid conditions in the Southeast, which could ultimately result in a relatively calm fall fire season in the mountains if this materializes. Given low confidence in model guidance this year and the major concerns around Helene fuels and firefighting in the hurricane's wake, normal significant fire potential is forecast during November.

Because of the fuel loading from Helene and expected periods of dry and warm weather this winter, above normal significant fire potential is forecast again for December through February over the western Carolinas. Heavy fuels will eventually become more receptive to fire, and next spring may be especially problematic in the areas most severely impacted by Helene.

Portions of the coastal Southeast saw limited rainfall and worsening drought in October, and November through February on average is likely to be warmer and drier despite the inevitable wet frontal passages and cold air outbreaks. Above normal significant fire potential is forecast during November in areas that missed recent rainfall events over southern Alabama and Georgia into northern Florida, where severe to extreme drought has been expanding. Beetle kill and/or hurricane damage has increased the amount of fuel across these areas, as well. Following large fire climatology as daylight increases and temperatures warm, above normal significant fire potential is expected to become widespread by February from Louisiana to Florida, north through the areas impacted by Helene. Unless tropical activity affects Florida in November, which is certainly possible in this back-loaded hurricane season, nearly the entire state could see an early onset of the fire season this winter.

Prescribed fire this winter could be especially challenging in large parts of Arkansas, Tennessee, and Kentucky, where it is likely to be wet most of the period, in addition to the Gulf Coast and Southeast Coast, where drought may be an impediment by early next year.

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 Coordination Center at (208) 387-5400 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