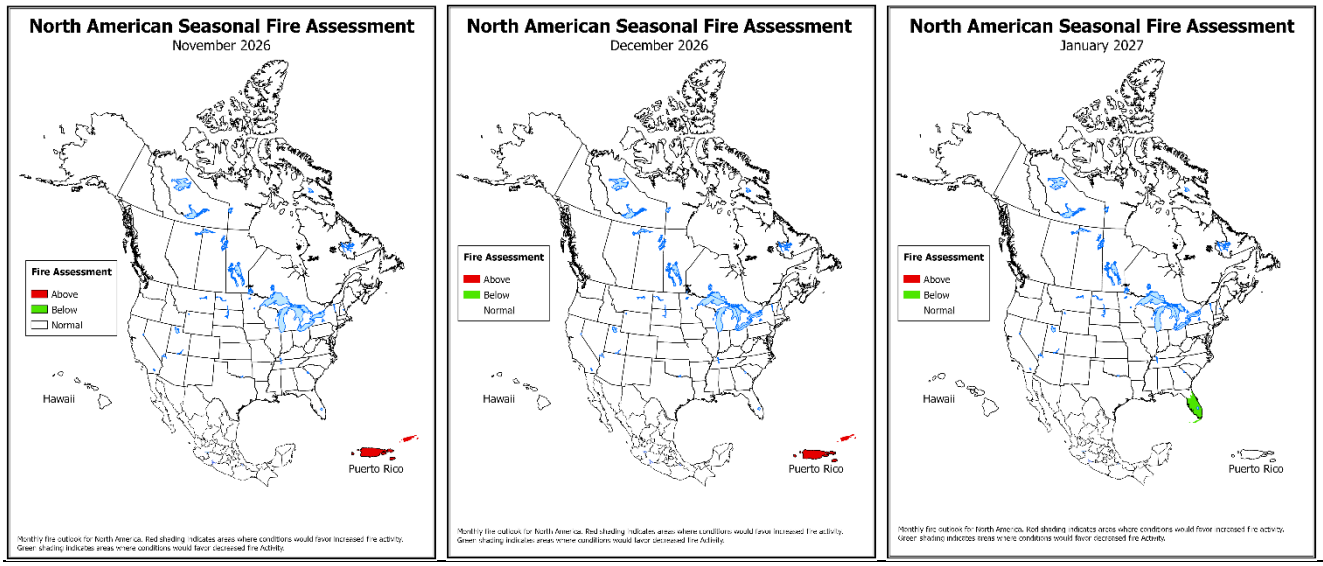
North American Seasonal Fire Assessment and Outlook

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

Outlook Period November 2026 through January 2027
Issued 12 November 2026

Executive Summary

The impacts of El Niño were felt strongly in the west, with generally dry conditions. October was warmer than normal across a significant portion of Canada. Generally, there was less than normal precipitation across the country, though some isolated regions had a wet October. On October 17, a grass fire started on CFB Wainwright, Alberta. A cold front sweeping across the province brought strong winds. The fast-moving fire resulted in the death of four soldiers and injured dozens more. There remain a few active fires, however, periodic precipitation, and cooler overnight temperatures have been sufficient to limit fire growth on all but windy days. By the end of October, Fire Weather Index calculations in the north were paused for the winter due to overnight freeze-up.



Monthly fire outlook for North America for November 2026 (left), December 2026 (middle), and January 2027 (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.*

The west coast to Alberta and southern Yukon had near-normal October temperatures. British Columbia temperatures were highly variable, driven by a more fall-like weather pattern. Temperature anomalies increased in the north, where part of Yukon and the Northwest Territories were 1-2 C above normal, with 3-4 C above normal along the Arctic coast. The eastern Prairies and northwestern Ontario were up to 3 C above normal. During a particularly warm spell on October 13, Windsor, Ontario hit 30.1 C. The central Prairies and eastern Ontario were slightly cooler, 1-2 C above normal. East of the Ontario-Quebec border, temperatures were near normal, driven by highly variable temperatures washing out any distinct signal. This is highlighted by several daytime temperature records broken in Quebec in late October. On October 24, Waskaganish hit 20.2 C and on October 29, 22.6 C in Saint-Anicet, 13 C higher than the previous record. These extreme anomalies were offset by cooler-than-normal conditions in other parts of the month.

British Columbia was drier than normal, especially along the south coast, southern interior, and in the far northeast. The only parts of British Columbia that were wetter than normal were near Dease Lake in the northwest, and in the Peace region. Wet conditions extend into north-central Alberta. The Peace region, and from Grand Prairie, east to the Saskatchewan border received 125-275% of its normal October precipitation. A small region south of Fort McMurray, Alberta received 350% of its normal October precipitation. These zones received the bulk of their precipitation during one event late in the month. Farther north, Yukon had blizzard conditions on the Dempster highway October 3-6. This system, and several others in the north resulted in an area from the Alaska border, near Dawson City east to the Fort Good Hope region, receiving 125 to nearly 300% of its normal October precipitation. Farther south, the Burwash region received less than 50% of its normal precipitation. A broad, dry region with well below normal precipitation occurred from High Level, Alberta north into southern Northwest Territories. Ontario and Quebec were generally drier than normal, though regions closer to Hudson Bay received normal precipitation. Northwest Ontario received less than 50% of its normal precipitation, worsening drought conditions. However, a daily precipitation record was set in Kemptville, Ontario, receiving 60 mm of rain on October 13. On the same day, Thetford Mines, Quebec received 33.9 mm of rain, almost doubling the previous daily record. Dry conditions were most notable in south central Quebec, extending into New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island, and Nova Scotia. The bulk of this region received less than 25% of its normal October precipitation. Only a small part of Cape Breton, Nova Scotia, received near normal precipitation. Another region with similar precipitation deficits sits in west-central and southeast Labrador, where drought continues to intensify.

Temperatures in the mountains of western Canada were near normal, allowing for snow accumulation at higher elevations. Warmer than normal temperature in southern Yukon, resulted in snow depth anomalies between less than 50% of normal by the end of October. The first significant snowfall of the season occurred across the Prairies; however, this snow has mostly melted. Later in October, elevated terrain in southern Quebec and Atlantic Canada received some snowfall, though this snow has melted at all but the highest points in the region.

In the U.S., October precipitation was well above normal in southern California into the Greater Four Corners. Above normal precipitation also occurred in portions of the northern Rockies, central and southern Plains, and much of Florida, southeast Alabama, and south Georgia. Precipitation was well below normal in the Lower Mississippi Valley, with below normal precipitation also occurring in northern California, the Northwest, northern Plains, Great Lakes, and Mid-Mississippi Valley to the Northeast. Overall drought improved the past month, with less than 50% of the country now in drought. Drought developed and/or intensified in much of the Lower and Mid-Mississippi Valley, but drought improved across much of the Southwest, Rockies, southern Plains, and Southeast, and drought removal occurred in 10% of the country. In early November, precipitation has been well above normal in the Southwest and central Rockies northeast to Minnesota, as well as southwest Texas and south Florida. Precipitation has been below normal elsewhere to start November. As fire activity continued to decrease in October to very low levels, the National Preparedness Level dropped from two to one (on a scale of 1–5) October 14.

Climate Prediction Center and Predictive Services outlooks issued in late October for the U.S. forecast temperatures that are likely to be above normal across the northern half of the country, with near normal temperatures in the Southeast and no favored outcome in the Southwest and southern Plains. Below-normal precipitation is likely in Alaska, the northern Rockies, and portions of the Great Lakes, but above normal for the southern third of the country, especially in the Southeast. Fire activity is expected to be at very low levels, typical for the time of year, except above normal fire potential is forecast through December for Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands. In January, below normal fire potential is forecast for the Florida Peninsula due to wet conditions from El Niño.

For the November through January 2026-2027 period, wildfire activity across most of Mexico is expected to mirror historical averages, remaining at minimal or very low levels. Although macro-climatic indicators are extreme, highlighted by an intense El Niño event and a strongly negative Pacific Decadal

Oscillation (PDO) phase, seasonal precipitation forecasts, alongside current drought conditions and wildfire trends, significantly mitigate the risk for the remainder of the year.

Precipitation levels during August and September were below normal nationwide, except for the states of Baja California Sur, Sonora, and Chihuahua which were affected by tropical cyclones in September, resulting in above-normal rainfall in those areas. In October, precipitation was above normal across nearly the entire country, except for some regions of Oaxaca, Veracruz, Chiapas, Tabasco, Campeche, Yucatán, and Quintana Roo, where rainfall amounts were below normal. The precipitation outlook for the November through January indicates above-normal rainfall for November, followed by below-normal rainfall for December 2026–January 2027. Regarding temperature anomalies, the trend of above-normal temperatures is expected to persist.

Recent weather conditions have had mixed impacts on drought: while precipitation was below normal in August and September, above-normal rainfall in October across most of the country helped to reduce or stabilize areas ranging from abnormally dry to extreme drought. In contrast, across the states of Veracruz, Tabasco, Chiapas, Oaxaca, and Guerrero, precipitation remained below normal, leading to an expansion of areas classified as abnormally dry to severe drought. Under these conditions, despite the emergence or expansion of abnormally dry areas, most of the country currently retains sufficient moisture to prevent the spread of fire.

Critical Factors

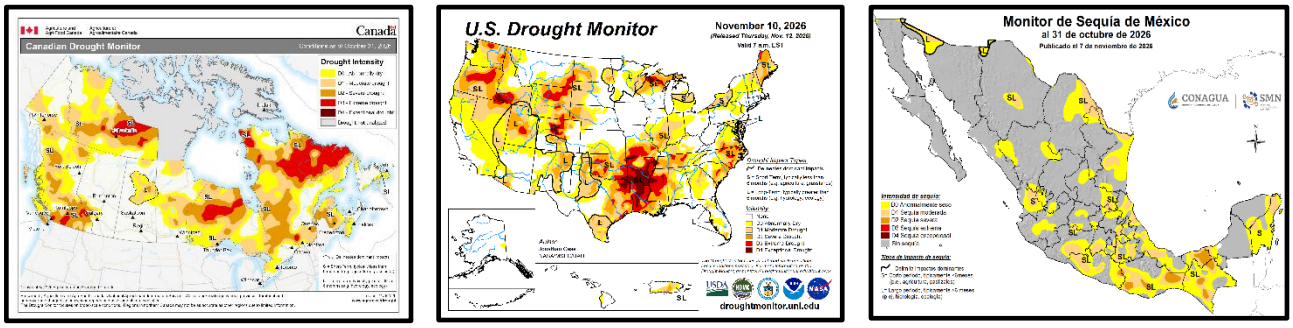
The critical factors influencing significant fire potential for this outlook period are global climate patterns related to sea surface temperatures, particularly in the Pacific Ocean, and large scale, longer-term soil moisture deficits:

El Niño-Southern Oscillation and Other Climate Teleconnections:

El Niño continues to rapidly strengthen in the equatorial Pacific Ocean. Central Tropical Pacific sea surface temperature (SST) anomalies are nearly 2.5 C above average, well past the 2°C threshold for a very strong El Niño. In the eastern Pacific off the South American coast, equatorial SST anomalies are more than 4 C above average. El Niño is forecast to continue to strengthen the next month and peak at the end of November into December by the Climate Prediction Center (CPC), with a greater than 80% chance of the very strong El Niño continuing through the winter. In fact, most of the models used by the CPC and internationally continue to show this El Niño to be the strongest on record, and the CPC forecasts an 83% chance that the strength would exceed the previous strongest El Niño since 1950.

The Pacific Decadal Oscillation (PDO) remains in a weakly negative phase and is likely to remain weakly negative through the outlook period. The Madden-Julian Oscillation (MJO) was generally weak in October except for some recent enhanced activity in the Indian Ocean. The Arctic Oscillation (AO) has been positive recently but is expected to trend neutral in early November and possibly turn negative mid to late November. The Arctic polar vortex is weakening significantly in early November, with a Sudden Stratospheric Warming (SSW) underway. This adds some uncertainty to the outlook as a SSW event has never been observed during a very strong El Niño since reliable records began in 1950. The MJO is forecast to strengthen in the Indian Ocean the next week, but its impact is often significantly less during an El Niño. The main driver for this outlook will be the very strong El Niño and how it is impacted by the AO and any potential SSW event.

Drought:



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

As of October 31, 65% of Canada is in some stage of abnormal dryness or drought. Drought conditions are most significant, including extreme drought, in southern British Columbia, east-central Northwest Territories, northwest Ontario, and along the Quebec-Labrador border and most of Labrador. Additionally, large regions of severe drought exist in many regions, including central British Columbia, central Northwest Territories, northern Ontario, much of Quebec and Labrador, and western New Brunswick. Drought expanded/intensified most significantly in southern Quebec and the western Maritimes, in northeast Quebec and western Labrador, the south coast of British Columbia, and in southwest Yukon. Improvements occurred in the southern interior and northwest of British Columbia and in the northeastern Prairies.

Many of the areas where drought emerged or expanded are in boreal or forested regions, rather than agricultural regions. Areas of ongoing drought conditions will be more susceptible to spring wildfires due to a relative absence of soil moisture and poor growing conditions for vegetation.

Temperatures in October were above normal for most of the U.S., with temperatures averaging 6-10°F above normal for much of the central Plains into the Mid-Mississippi Valley and Great Lakes. Temperatures were near normal in Arizona and much of the Northeast, as well as Florida. Near normal temperatures were observed in the northern Plains and Midwest. Temperatures in Alaska were above normal and near normal for Hawai'i, except for the Big Island which was slightly above normal. To begin November, temperatures have been above normal across almost all the country except for portions of California and Arizona.

Precipitation in October was well below normal in the Lower Mississippi Valley, with many areas receiving less than 25% of normal precipitation. Below normal precipitation also occurred in northern California, the Northwest, and western Idaho, with another stretch of below normal precipitation occurring in the northern Plains, Great Lakes, Ohio Valley, and Northeast. Well above normal precipitation occurred across southern California into Arizona, Utah, and the Greater Four Corners, with some areas receiving more than 500% of normal precipitation. Precipitation was also above normal in most of Florida, southeast Alabama, and south Georgia, largely due to Hurricane Isaias, with above normal precipitation in portions of the central and southern Plains and northern Rockies. Precipitation in Alaska was mixed, with above normal precipitation in south-central Alaska and the eastern Interior, but below normal for portions of the western Interior, southwest Alaska, and the panhandle. Hawai'i observed well-above-normal precipitation from Kauai to Maui, but Big Island precipitation was mostly below normal. Precipitation to start November has been well above normal from southeast California and Arizona northeastward into Minnesota, as well as southwest Texas and south Florida. Otherwise, precipitation has been below normal to start the month.

Overall drought in the U.S. decreased in October to early November with just over 41% of the country in drought as of November 10, a decrease of 14% since October 6. However, drought continued to develop and expand in the Lower Mississippi and Lower Ohio Valleys. In contrast, large areas of drought

improvement and/or removal were noted across much of the Southwest, Rockies, Plains, Minnesota, and Southeast. Areas of extreme to exceptional drought have also decreased with less than 8% of the country in these categories. Extreme to exceptional drought is most widespread across the Lower Mississippi Valley. Smaller areas of extreme drought are noted in Washington, Oregon, southern Idaho, southeast Montana, Wyoming, north-central Colorado, Oklahoma, east Texas, the Carolinas, northern Wisconsin, and Maine.

Drought is expected to improve in many areas of the country in the next three months, most notably in the southern half of the West, western Oregon, the southern Plains, and Lower to Mid-Mississippi Valley. Drought is also expected to improve in northern New England and continue improving in the Southeast where removal is likely. However, drought is expected to persist in the Inland Northwest, while intensifying in the northern Rockies and Upper Great Lakes.

During the second half of October, the passage of cold fronts, the proximity of Hurricanes Trudy and Vance, coupled with the presence of upper-level troughs and atmospheric rivers, resulted in above-average rainfall across northwestern, northern, and north-central Mexico, with localized areas above average in the east and the Yucatán Peninsula. These precipitation events contributed to the reduction of areas under moderate to severe drought across these areas.

Conversely, below-average rainfall anomalies were observed in Tamaulipas, as well as across extensive portions of the central-western, southern, central, and eastern Mexico, as well as the Yucatán Peninsula. Toward the end of the month, strong mid-level high pressure promoted atmospheric stability and reduced precipitation across central-western, central, and southern Mexico, favoring the persistence of moderate to severe drought in these areas. As of October 31, moderate to extreme drought affected 9.4% of the national territory, reflecting a more than 3% decrease compared to October 15.

Fire Season Status:

As of November 11, 4.51 million hectares have burned in Canada this year from 5,595 fires of which 104 remain active and 11 are classed as ‘out of control’. This is a slight decrease from the 6,148 fires recorded during the 2025 calendar year, and represents the lowest area burned since the 1.7 million hectares in 2022 and slightly less than the 10-year rolling average of 4.79 million hectares.

While new small fires continue to be reported into November, the national area burned is unlikely to change substantially until spring arrives. Provisional area-burned statistics by province or territory show that the Northwest Territories, Ontario, and Québec exceeded their 10-year average: Ontario recorded 280% of their average, while the Northwest Territories reported 150%, against a 10-year average of 1 million hectares.

Much of Canada has transitioned to seasonal fall conditions, with most northern regions having reached fall freeze-up conditions, where the ground is frozen and, in most cases, also snow-covered. Small areas of moderate to high fire danger remain in western Canada, most notably in interior British Columbia and southern Alberta. While sustained fire growth is unlikely given the time of year, small fires in light fuels remain likely through the end of the meteorological fall and into early winter, with substantial uncertainty in overwinter burning conditions due to El Nino.

Fire activity continued diminishing across the U.S. in October, with only brief periods of elevated activity occurring in California, the Southern Area, and Eastern Area mid to late month. As a result of the continued diminishing fire activity, the National Preparedness Level dropped from two to one (on a scale of 1-5) October 14. This year 3,833,480 hectares (9,472,505 acres) have burned across the country through November 11, which is 145% of the previous 10-year average. So far this year 68,679 wildfires have been reported, also above average, at 130%.

Year-to-date, a total of 5,498 wildfires has been recorded across Mexico, affecting an area of 506,786 hectares. Of this total burned area, 95% comprised of grass and brush, while the remaining 5% corresponded to timber. The states with the highest number of wildfires were Jalisco, Michoacán, State of Mexico, Mexico City, Chiapas, Chihuahua, Durango, Guerrero, Oaxaca, and Puebla, which collectively accounted for 69% of the national total. The states with the largest burned areas were Guerrero, Jalisco, Nayarit, Chiapas, Campeche, Oaxaca, San Luis Potosí, Chihuahua, Zacatecas, and Michoacán, representing 80% of the total burned area nationwide. A total of 1,212 incidents, representing 22% of all nationwide fires, occurred within fire-sensitive ecosystems. These events burned 99,665 (20%) hectares.

Canada Discussion

November: El Niño is exerting its influence on Canada's weather. While we enter unprecedented territory in the SST anomaly, forecasted patterns continue to resemble those of past strong events. Given the strength of the El Niño, other large-scale weather patterns are playing less of a role. However, a predicted stretching of the polar vortex later in the month may disrupt this.

Nearly all of Canada is forecast to have a much warmer than normal November. Temperature anomalies are highest in the central two-thirds of the country. Both the Pacific and Atlantic coasts have weaker anomalies driven by more frequent low-pressure systems. Temperatures are warm enough that the potential polar vortex stretching later in November is likely to be washed out by overall warm conditions. There are two distinct storm tracks visible in precipitation maps. First, Pacific weather systems are forecast to slide along the coast but not penetrate inland, resulting in above-normal precipitation to the British Columbia coast. The second is along the St. Lawrence Valley, with higher-than-normal precipitation to western Atlantic Canada, southern Quebec, and, with high uncertainty, along the Great Lakes in southern Ontario. Precipitation in south and west Ontario may be related to the potential polar vortex stretching event, which can often lead to low-pressure activity in this region. The remainder of Canada is set to have a dry November. The Quebec-Labrador border is forecasted to continue drying. Similarly, the south-central Northwest Territories are likely to receive less than normal snowfall.

December: In December, expect similar conditions as November, with El Niño continuing to drive large-scale weather pattern in Canada. However, weather systems moving up into southeastern Canada are forecasted to be a bit more impactful, bringing greater amounts of precipitation to Quebec and Labrador. The maritime provinces are forecast to receive regular low-pressure activity and above normal precipitation. Additionally, Pacific systems will continue to impact the coast but not move significantly inland. Much of interior British Columbia and the western Prairies are forecasted to remain drier than normal. This will delay significant snow accumulation across these regions. Warmer than normal conditions are forecasted for all of Canada, though uncertainty and variability will be higher along the west coast and southeast Canada. Given the warmer temperatures, rain will fall at higher elevations than in normal years, decreasing the areal coverage of the snowpack. This will be most notable in southern British Columbia and southwest Alberta.

January: The Canada-wide forecast for warmer than normal conditions continues. Confidence is highest over Ontario, Quebec, and Atlantic Canada and lowest over the south-central Prairies where intrusions of Arctic air are more likely. The January precipitation pattern is similar to the previous two months, except a dry forecast now emerges for the north and central coast of British Columbia. Low-pressure systems are forecasted to impact the American Pacific Northwest region and only fleetingly impact southwestern British Columbia. As such, the southwest is forecasted to have a wetter than normal month while the rest of western Canada is more likely to be drier than normal, especially the Rocky Mountains and along the British Columbia-Yukon border. Persistent dry anomalies into the middle of winter are likely to bring significant impacts to the snowpack. In eastern Canada low-pressure systems will continue to move from the U.S. into the region, bringing more precipitation than normal to much of southeast Canda and into central Quebec and Labrador.

United States Discussion

November: Predictive Services and CPC outlooks indicate that warm conditions are likely to continue in the eastern half of the country to the end of the month, with temperatures likely to cool in the southwestern U.S., but still average above normal for the month. Precipitation is likely to remain above normal in the southwestern U.S. into the southern Plains, with above normal precipitation spreading into the Southeast at the end of the month. Below-normal precipitation is likely across the Northwest and northern Rockies. Significant fire potential will be above normal for Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands, but normal elsewhere.

December: Climate outlooks indicate a pattern typical of a strong El Niño, with above normal temperatures along the Canada border from the Northwest to the Great Lakes, with precipitation near to below normal. For the southern tier of the country, equal chances of above or below normal temperatures are forecast for the Southwest and Southern Plains, but near normal temperatures are likely in the Southeast. Precipitation is likely to be above normal in the southern tier, especially in the Southeast. Significant fire potential will remain above normal for Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands, but normal elsewhere.

January: Predictive Services and CPC outlooks continue to show above normal temperatures across the northern half of the country, with near normal temperatures in the Southeast and equal chances of above or below normal temperatures in the southern half of the West and southern Plains. Precipitation is likely to be below normal for the northern Rockies and portions of the Great Lakes, but above normal for much of the southern tier of the country and East Coast, with stronger wet signals in California and the Southeast. Significant fire potential will be normal for most of the country, except for below normal potential for the Florida Peninsula.

Mexico Discussion

November: Above-normal rainfall is forecast across most of Mexico, except for portions of Coahuila, Jalisco, Puebla, Veracruz, Oaxaca, Tabasco, Chiapas, Yucatán and Quintana Roo where below-normal precipitation is anticipated. Temperatures are forecast to be above normal across most states in Mexico, contrasting with localized below-normal thermal anomalies in the states of Baja California, Chihuahua, Durango, Jalisco, and Oaxaca. With these conditions wildfire activity is expected to remain very low across Mexico, which is normal for November.

December: Below-normal rainfall is forecast across most states, except for Baja California, Chihuahua, Oaxaca, Quintana Roo, Sinaloa, Sonora, Veracruz, and Yucatán, which are projected to experience above-normal precipitation anomalies. Regarding thermal conditions, above-normal temperatures are forecast across most Mexican states, except for Baja California, Chihuahua, Durango, Jalisco, and Oaxaca, which exhibit localized below-normal temperatures. Concurrently, wildfire activity is expected to remain very low across the Mexican territory throughout December.

January: An analysis of the precipitation outlook for January 2027 indicates below-normal anomalies across most states, with the exception of Aguascalientes, Campeche, Chiapas, Nayarit, Quintana Roo, San Luis Potosí, Veracruz, Yucatán, and Zacatecas, where above-normal conditions are expected (Figure 7, left panel). Minimum temperatures are forecast to be above normal across most of the country; however, states such as Baja California, Sonora, Chihuahua, Durango, Jalisco, and Oaxaca feature localized areas where temperatures are projected to be below normal (Figure 7, right panel) Concurrently, wildfire activity is expected to remain absent across the remainder of the national territory throughout January 2027 (Figure 7).

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
https://cwfis.cfs.nrcan.gc.ca

Mexico:
Comisión Nacional Forestal and Comisión Nacional del Agua – Quarterly Wildfire Risk/Hazard Bulletin
https://smn.conagua.gob.mx/es/climatologia/diagnostico-climatico/boletin-para-incendios
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 in preparing 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.

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