National Significant Wildland Fire Potential Outlook

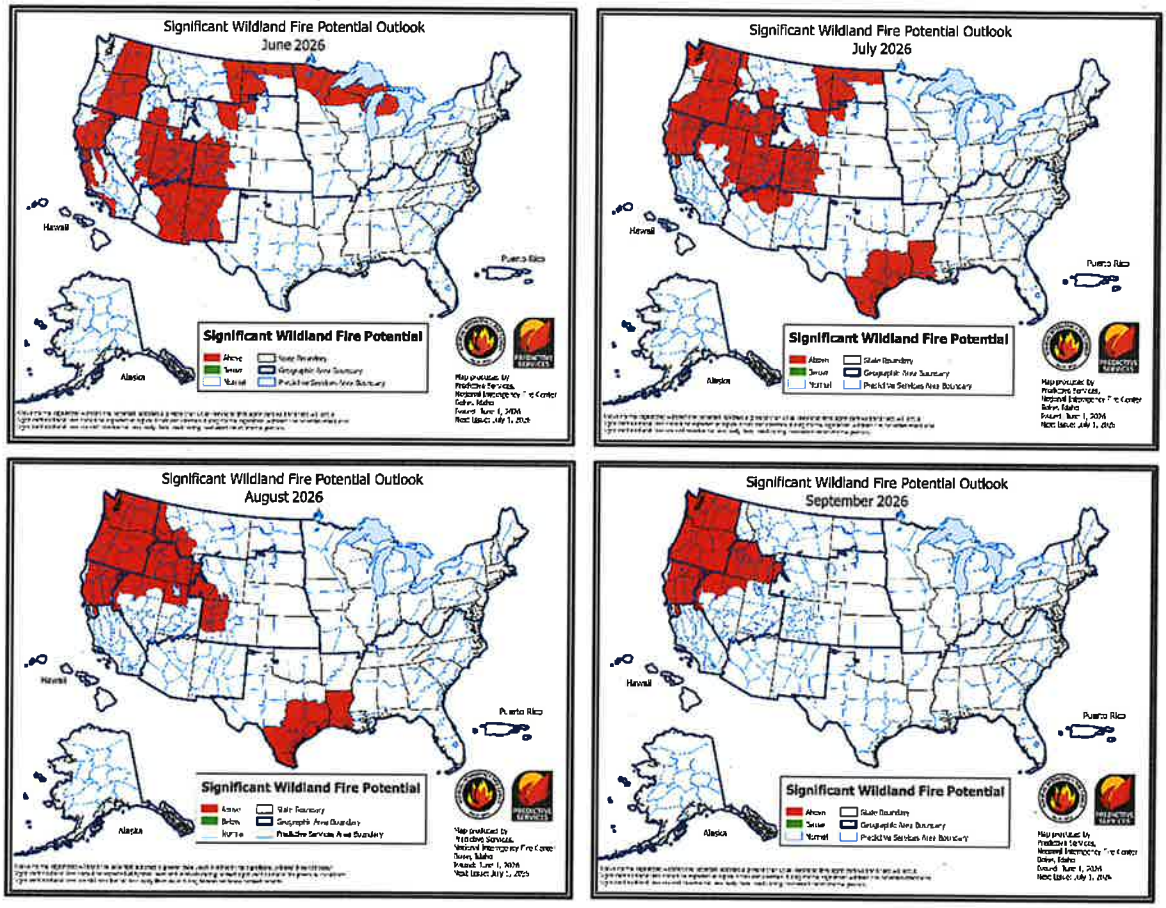
Predictive Services
National Interagency Fire Center

Issued: June 1, 2026
Next Issuance: July 1, 2026

Outlook Period – June through September 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 increased modestly across the U.S. in May, with brief periods of increased activity mid and late month. The Southern Area observed a decrease in overall activity, especially in the latter half of the month, as periods of precipitation brought relief. Elsewhere, activity overall matched the national trends. Given the low but persistent level of activity, the National Preparedness Level remained at two (on a scale of 1-5) through May. As of May 31, 2,412,214 acres have burned across the country, which is 195% of the previous 10-year average. So far this year 30,588 wildfires have been reported, also well above average, at 140%.

May precipitation anomalies were mixed across the U.S., with well below normal precipitation observed across most of the West, but local areas of near to above normal precipitation were recorded in north-central Montana, south-central Oregon, western Nevada, and portions of California, southeast Arizona, and New Mexico. Below normal precipitation was also found across the northern Plains and much of the Midwest. Above normal precipitation occurred along much of

the Gulf Coast, with 200-400% of normal precipitation falling from southern Mississippi into the Florida Panhandle and South Georgia. Other areas of above normal precipitation were found from the Upper Ohio Valley to northern New England. Overall drought decreased slightly across the country, but drought still covers nearly 61% of the U.S. Drought persisted, intensified, or developed in many areas of the western U.S., northern High Plains, and portions of the Midwest, with the greatest degradation in eastern Montana. Drought improvement occurred across much of Texas into the Lower Mississippi Valley, as well as northern Colorado.

Climate Prediction Center and Predictive Services outlooks issued in late May forecast temperatures that are likely to be above normal across the West through the central Plains into the Southeast. The most favored locations for above normal temperatures are the Pacific Northwest and the Southeast. Below normal precipitation is expected in June for the Northwest, while above normal precipitation is likely in portions of the Southwest and southern High Plains, as well as the Southeast. Transitioning to summer, above normal temperatures are likely across the West and Gulf and East coasts, with near to below temperatures more likely in the Midwest. Precipitation is more likely to be below normal in the Northwest and Midwest, as well as the northwest Gulf Coast. Precipitation is likely to be above normal near in the Northeast, and in the Greater Four Corners with an active North American Monsoon expected.

From the current and forecast conditions, above normal significant fire potential is forecast across much of the West in June, including most of the Greater Four Corners, central Great Basin, Inland Northwest, and northern California. Portions of central and southern California will have above normal potential in June, mainly in the lower elevations. Above normal potential is also forecast for the Powder River Basin in northeast Wyoming, and near the Canadian border from far eastern Montana into the northern Lower Peninsula of Michigan. In July, potential will return to normal for central and southern California, most of the Southwest, and Upper Midwest. Above normal potential is forecast to develop across southeast Texas and western Louisiana in July while persisting in portions of the northern Plains. Above normal potential will persist across the Four Corners, western Colorado, Utah, northern California, and Inland Northwest while spreading into more of the northern Great Basin, Idaho Panhandle, southwest Montana, southwest Oregon, and northwest Washington. For August, potential will return to normal in the northern Plains and Four Corners but persist in much of the northwestern U.S. while spreading to all western Washington and Oregon, all the Idaho Panhandle, and much of southwest Montana. Above normal potential will persist in southeast Texas and western Louisiana. For September, above normal potential will continue across most of the northwestern U.S. but return to normal in the Idaho Panhandle, Utah, northwest Colorado, southeast Texas, and western Louisiana.

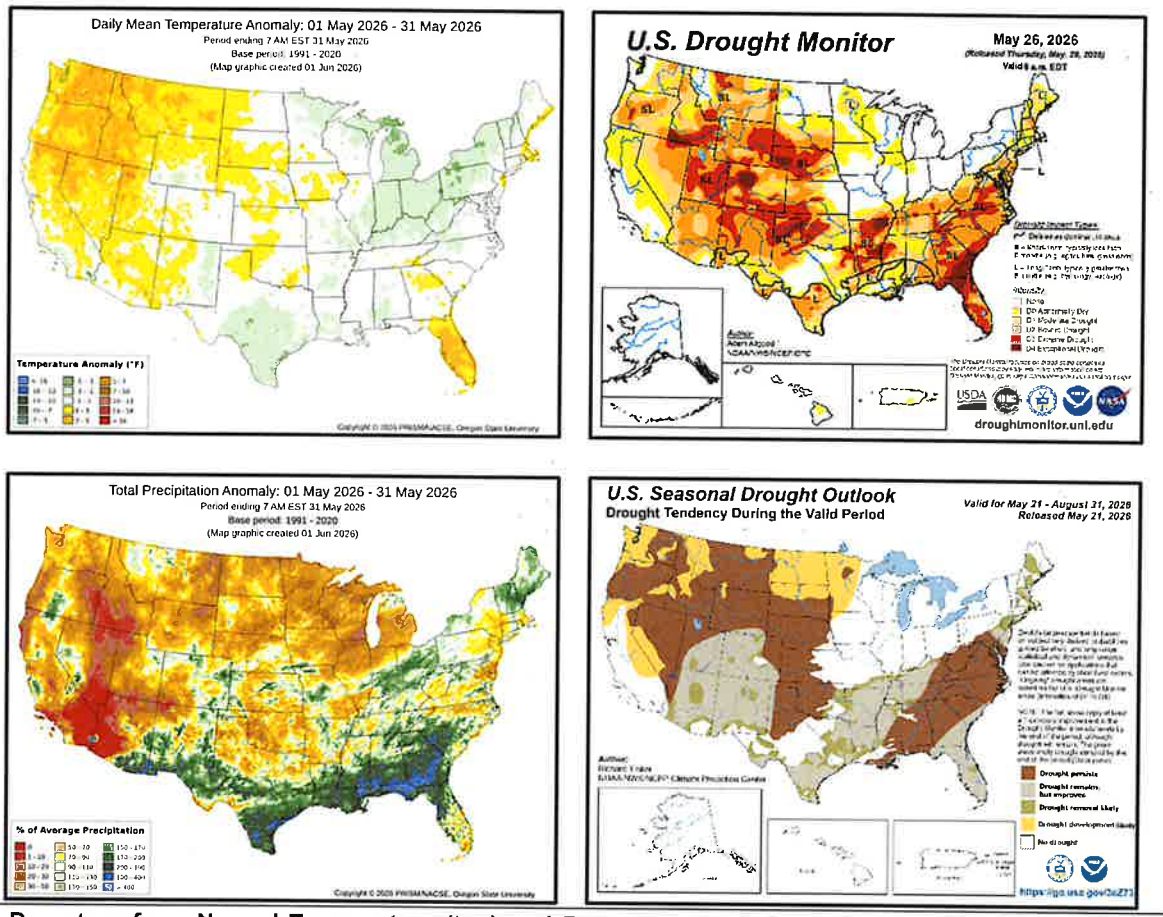
Past Weather and Drought

Temperatures in May were above normal for the northwestern U.S and Florida, with temperatures slightly above normal for inland California into the Great Basin and Southwest, west of the Divide. Temperatures were closer to normal for most of the rest of the country, with temperatures near to slightly above normal in the central and northern Plains and New England Coast. Temperatures were near to slightly below normal from Texas through the Lower/Mid-Mississippi and Ohio Valleys into the Great Lakes. Temperatures were below normal for most of Alaska except the far northwest, while temperatures in Hawai'i were closer to normal except for above normal temperatures for the northern portions of the Big Island.

Precipitation was above normal across much of the southern tier of the U.S, from southeast Arizona and southern New Mexico to much of the Gulf Coast. Above normal precipitation was also recorded from the Upper Ohio Valley to northern New England. Precipitation was largely below normal for most of the West, northern Plains, and Midwest. However, pockets of above normal precipitation were found in portions of central and northern California, western Nevada, south-central Oregon, central and eastern Colorado, and northwest to north-central Montana. Precipitation was mixed across Alaska, with above normal readings in south-central Alaska while

portions of the eastern and central Interior and much of the North Slope were below normal. Precipitation in Hawai'i was mixed as well, with above normal precipitation falling in Kauai, much of Oahu, and the eastern half of the Big Island. Below normal precipitation was observed in Molokai, Maui, and the far west of the Big Island.

The snow drought persists in the West, with almost all snow now off except for the highest elevations of the Sierra, and the higher elevations above 6,000 feet which still hold some snow but remain mostly below normal.



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).***

The lack of snow resulted in some unusual fire activity in the West for May. Lightning ignited the 254-acre Spread Creek Fire at 8,500 feet in the Bridger-Teton National Forest May 13 and was the largest ever recorded in May on that forest. Other notable wildfires greater than 1,000 acres occurred in the mid and higher elevations south of Burley, Idaho and west of Helena, Montana. A dry lightning event May 13-17 resulted in numerous fire starts across the Intermountain West and southern High Plains, with the fires burning more than 250,000 acres from the Texas Panhandle into southwest Kansas.

Overall drought slightly decreased across the U.S. during May but nearly 61% of the country remains in drought as of May 26. Drought developed and/or intensified in much of the West, especially eastern Montana, although portions of central and eastern Colorado observed drought improvement. Drought development was also noted in portions of the Midwest and northern Plains. Drought improvement was observed across much of Texas into the Lower Mississippi and Tennessee valleys as well as northern New England. Areas of extreme drought decreased across the country with less than 17% of the country in extreme drought. The most extensive extreme drought is in the Great Basin to the central and northern High Plains, with extreme drought

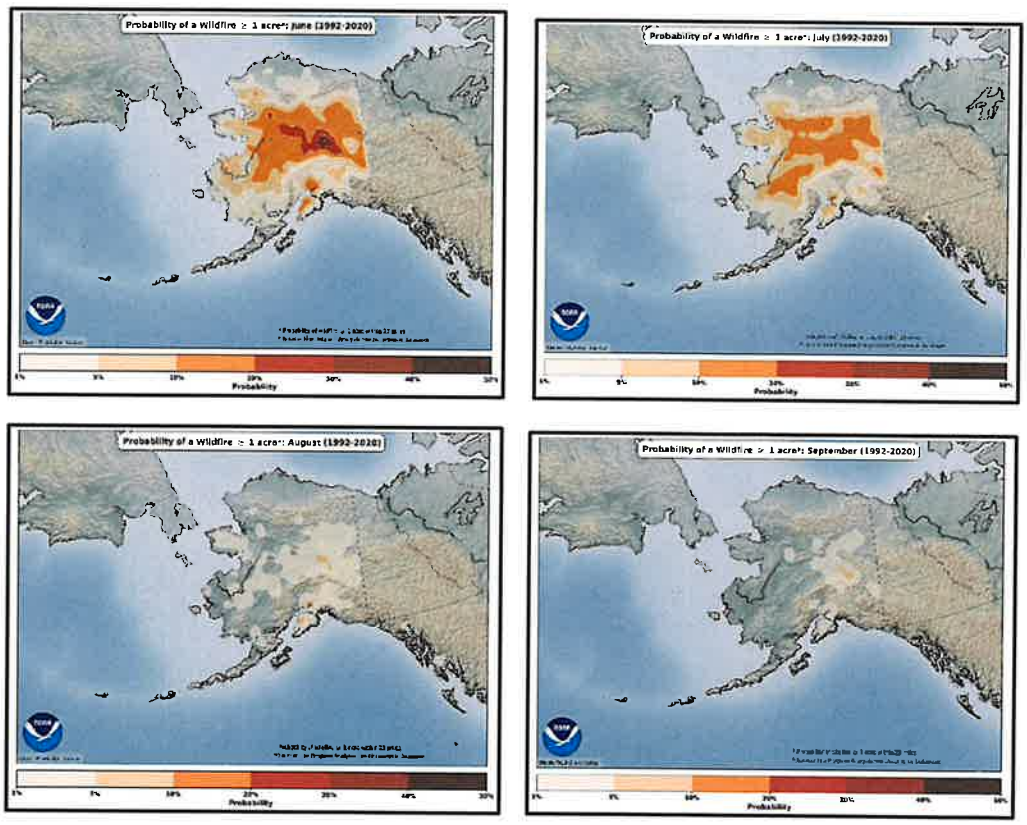
reduction in the Lower Mississippi Valley, Southeast, and South Texas. Exceptional drought decreased slightly, but the largest areas remain in southwest Idaho, northwest Colorado, western Nebraska, Arkansas, South Georgia, and North Florida. Drought is expected to persist and expand across most of the northern two-thirds of the West through August, but some improvement is expected in the Greater Four Corners due to the North American Monsoon. Drought is expected to persist in much of the Southeast, although improvement is expected in the Lower Mississippi Valley and Florida. Drought is also expected to develop in much of the northern Plains into Minnesota.

Weather and Climate Outlooks

The El Niño-Southern Oscillation (ENSO) has been in a neutral state the past month, but sea surface temperatures (SSTs) continue to warm in the central equatorial Pacific Ocean. El Niño will develop in June, and the Climate Prediction Center (CPC) forecasts El Niño to persist into the fall and winter, with chances greater than 95%. The CPC is forecasting a greater than 40% chance of a strong El Niño by August or September, and a greater than 35% chance of a very strong El Niño by late fall and winter.

The Pacific Decadal Oscillation (PDO) remains in a negative phase and is likely to remain negative through the outlook period. The Madden-Julian Oscillation (MJO) is active in the western Pacific Ocean currently and is forecast to remain active in the western Pacific before weakening as it moves into the western hemisphere in mid-June. This active phase of the MJO will have an impact on the outlook for the first half of June, but the main climate driver for the outlook will be the rapid transition to El Niño over the summer.

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.)

Alaska

Normal significant fire potential is expected for Alaska during the next four months. The landscape is now mostly snow-free. Small, human-caused fire activity has been increasing throughout May and will peak in late June. Isolated thunderstorms have started a couple of fires so far this season. Lightning activity is expected to increase throughout June, with more lightning caused fires burning on the landscape by the end of the month.

This winter saw very deep snowpack for parts of the Interior, and near to slightly below normal amounts elsewhere. However, cool April and May temperatures pushed snow-free dates slightly later than normal across much of the Interior. While most areas are now snow-free, precipitation was above normal across most areas of the state in May.

The U.S. Drought Monitor continues to show some areas of abnormally dry conditions across the Kenai Peninsula and a small area of southwest Alaska, but above normal May precipitation has reduced this area and eliminated the area over the western Interior that was present a month ago.

The Climate Prediction Center forecast for June indicates higher chances for above normal temperatures across all but a small area of southwest and south-central Alaska. There are equal chances for above and below normal precipitation for most of the state. Moving into the rest of the fire season, above normal temperatures are more likely for most of the state. There are equal chances for above and below normal precipitation across the southern and eastern portions of the state, with increased chances for above normal precipitation across the northern and western portion of Alaska. With above normal temperatures and near normal precipitation forecasted for most of the state after above normal spring precipitation, fire activity looks to be near normal throughout the peak summer season.

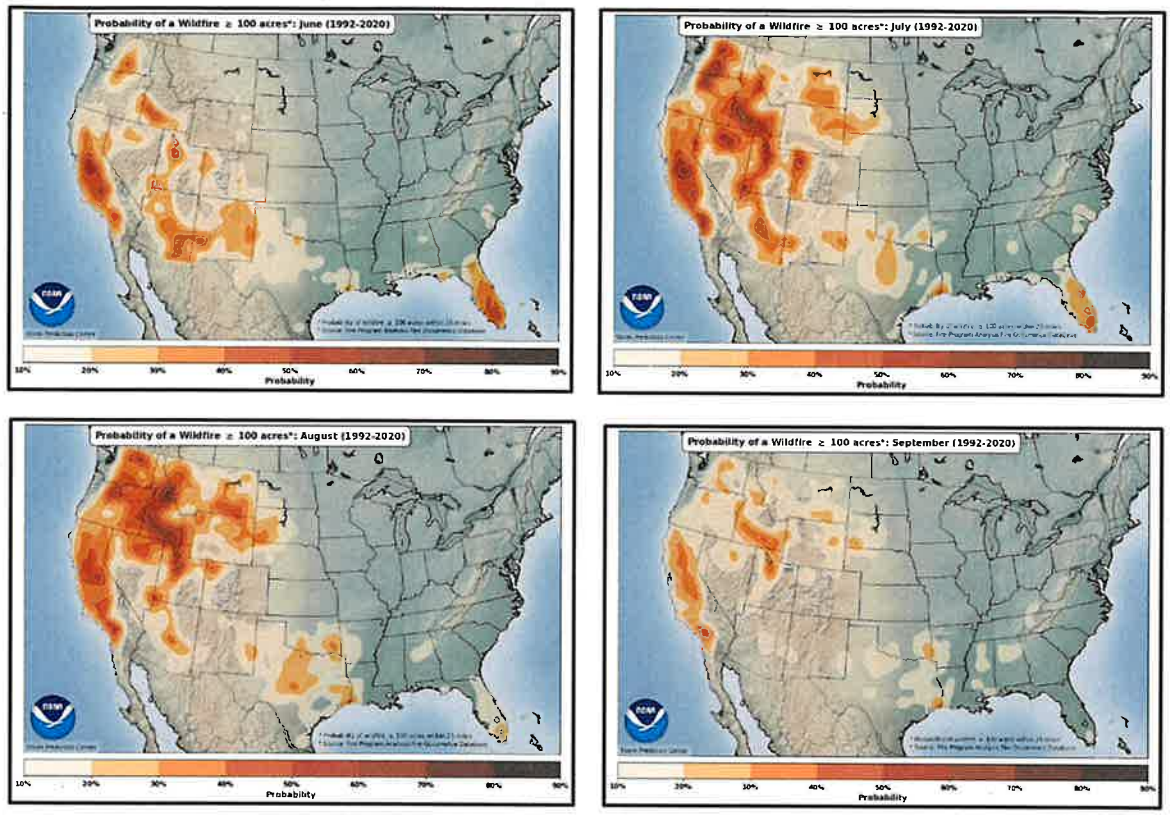
Forecasted conditions for the El Niño-Southern Oscillation (ENSO) indicate that El Niño is likely to emerge soon, then shift towards a progressively stronger El Niño throughout the summer months. The likelihood of a large fire season in Alaska increases during a strong El Niño, though most El Niño seasons remain small. El Niño is not likely to become strong until late in the Alaska fire season or after it ends.

Springtime temperatures and precipitation have an impact on snowmelt timing which determines when fire season begins. However, the intensity of summer fire season is more dependent on late spring and summer temperatures and precipitation. The date of snow-free conditions does not have a significant impact on the number of acres burned over the course of the summer.

During May, there have been about 60 small fires, mostly along the population corridor. These fires were wind driven and showed small amounts of growth. One fire was a lightning ignition that grew to 600 acres in a dry and breezy area of northwest Alaska. No fires are currently staffed.

Build Up Index (BUI) values remain below average, and green-up is slow to progress. Lightning ignition potential is currently low but will increase throughout June as fuels continue to warm and dry. Until that happens, fine dead fuels will continue to dominate overall fire behavior. Values for both BUI and Duff Moisture Code (DMC) will continue to climb through June and into late July before late summer rain arrives. These indices will continue to climb into August if late summer rain does not arrive on time around the end of July.

Moving into early June, lightning activity will increase and may cause ignitions depending on local fuel conditions. As indicated by steadily increasing DMC values, deeper duff fuels become available in mid to late June and will continue to burn until late summer rain arrives toward the end of July. Significant fire growth into August will only be possible if late summer rain does not arrive as it normally does toward the end of July. Limited fire growth may continue into September, which will be dependent on the amount of sun and daytime heating before snow covers the landscape near the end of the month. This describes normal fire conditions for Alaska.



Normal fire season progression across the contiguous U.S. 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

Significant fire potential is expected to increase across the Northwest Geographic Area during June. East-side Predictive Services Areas (PSAs, NW05–NW12) are expected to shift to above normal as live fuels cure, dead fuels dry, and early snow water equivalent (SWE) loss exposes high-elevation fuels ahead of schedule. West-side PSAs (NW01–NW04) remain normal as green-up continues, with drying accelerating during warm periods.

For the first half of May, a high-amplitude ridge parked over the Great Basin, pushing the jet stream far north into Canada and blocking most rain systems from reaching the Pacific Northwest. By late May, this ridge broke down and shifted east, allowing low pressure to return and restoring a cooler onshore flow pattern. A couple of wetting rain periods provided only brief relief from the strong early-month warming and drying.

May was warm and generally dry across Oregon and Washington. Temperatures ran 3-7°F above normal, and most locations received less than 30-50% of normal precipitation. Late-month onshore flow slowed drying briefly but did not change the overall deficit. Highlighting the ongoing concern about the poor winter snow, SWE remained well below normal in late May, with most mid-elevation basins reporting little or no remaining snowpack. Melt out below 6,000 feet was largely complete, exposing higher-elevation fuels earlier than usual.

Drought conditions expanded across both states in May. Abnormally dry and moderate drought coverage increased across central and eastern Oregon and eastern Washington, while severe drought grew across south-central and southeast Oregon and a small area of extreme drought

persists in the central Oregon Cascades. Limited late-month moisture improved conditions slightly in parts of north-central Washington, but early warmth, depleted SWE, and light May precipitation continued the short- and long-term drying trend.

May fire activity across the Northwest remained generally low, with only a handful of notable events as low-elevation fuels continued to cure. Most new starts were small and predominantly human-caused, which is typical for May. One prescribed fire in early May escaped control and transitioned to a wildland fire, ultimately growing to more than 2,500 acres. Late in the month, several low-elevation rangeland fires east of the Cascades reached over 1,000 acres as wind, slope, and dry grasses aligned to produce single-day growth events. Prescribed fire activity tapered off as the month went on, with fewer broadcast and pile burning operations occurring as conditions dried.

Energy Release Component (ERC) values peaked across the Northwest in mid to late May before trending back to average or below. Low-elevation live fuels have begun to cure and are no longer providing a reliable barrier to fire spread. Mid- and upper-elevation live fuels remain green, with curing progressing primarily on warmer and exposed aspects. Seasonal drying continued, and the lack of snowpack is evident in the extent of snow-free high-elevation fuels. The moderating effect of green-up is diminishing quickly during each warm and dry period as live fuels continue to cure.

El Niño-Southern Oscillation (ENSO) conditions in the tropical Pacific remained neutral in May, but ocean temperatures continued to warm. The Climate Prediction Center (CPC) continues its El Niño Watch, with a high chance that El Niño will develop sometime next month and persist into fall. Even if El Niño forms, it has little effect on Northwest summer weather, so patterns across Oregon and Washington through September will continue to depend mainly on regional weather events plus onshore/offshore flow patterns. Historical analysis of El Niño years indicates a very low (<10%) likelihood of strong offshore/east-wind events like 2017 or 2020.

The CPC outlooks favor above normal temperatures across Oregon and Washington from June through September. June begins with a warm tilt under early-season ridging. Seasonal guidance keeps a warm tilt through summer, with higher confidence east of the Cascades as fuel continues to dry. West-side temperatures also trend warm, though short onshore flow periods may provide temporary moderation.

The CPC guidance leans toward below normal precipitation for June across both states. The July-September seasonal outlook continues this below normal precipitation tilt over the Northwest. These dry signals indicate low confidence in any sustained wetting pattern during the main fire season.

Early-season dryness across Oregon and Washington is increasing the similarity to 2015, which is now edging ahead of 2018 as the more relevant analog for this summer's progression. The much drier-than-normal pattern continuing through May in 2026 supports this shift, though analogs remain secondary to real-time drying rates and fuel conditions.

Significant fire potential will rise quickly through June, with all east-side PSAs (NW05-NW12) shifting to above normal as low-elevation live fuels cure, dead fuels dry, and early SWE loss exposes high-elevation fuels ahead of schedule. By July, above normal potential continues for all east-side PSAs and expands to NW01 and NW04 as west-side curing completes. Portions of the high Cascades within NW02 and NW03 will also see increased vulnerability from early melt, though the broader PSAs remain normal. This progression aligns more with 2015 than 2018 due to the much drier spring and early fuel exposure. By August, above normal significant fire potential is expected across all PSAs. With no indication of late-season relief, September's significant fire potential is also expected to remain above normal across the entire Northwest Geographic Area.

Northern California and Hawai'i

Significant fire potential in northern California is projected to be near to above normal during June and mainly above normal outside of a couple of coastal Predictive Services Areas (PSAs) July through September. During June a total of 11 large fires is typically observed while 15 to 17 occur during July and August and eight in September. Hawaii's significant fire potential will be normal for June through September.

Northern California experienced two slow-moving low pressure systems in early and late May, otherwise stable ridging was observed. Precipitation anomalies were generally below normal, although localized above normal amounts occurred near the Sacramento Delta and in far north-central California. Average temperatures were near to above normal. The lows were prolific lightning producers and accounted for the majority of the nearly 3,400 strikes observed through May 27. Additional lightning through the end of the month is likely to push strike counts closer to average. The 2000-2025 Vaisala average is a little over 4,200 strikes. The first National Weather Service Red Flag Warnings of the year were issued during May, from May 16-18 due to a dry offshore wind event, and May 25 for an onshore dry wind event.

Flammability of the dead fuel bed was mixed during May, but it was generally flammable most of the month. Regional Energy Release Component (ERC) values were above average May 9-26. Record daily values were observed between May 20-24 and were near the annual 80th percentile. Herbaceous green-up is currently in a mixed state. Curing was most pronounced below 1,500 feet, away from the coast, while noticeable green-up was found above that level. The biggest exception was cheatgrass where partial to mostly cured states existed across most elevations due to the unusually early start to the growing season. Perennial grasses were greener across the mid and upper elevations at the end of the month. An above normal herbaceous crop exists from the Sacramento Valley and Sierra Foothills westward to the coast, while near to below normal loading is found across the Modoc Plateau and northeast. One sampling site in the Sierra Foothills recorded the second highest amount of growth in the 43-year period of record. Live woody fuels were generally in the green-up or less flammable phase although a few species exhibited a curing trend including chamise and sage. Flammability was also very dependent on aspect and elevation. The snowpack remained poor with most of the snow cover limited to areas above 7,500 feet by the end of the month. The amount of moisture found within the snowpack was 5% of normal or less on May 26. The moderate drought classification from the U.S. Drought Monitor grew very little between late April to late May, with most drought across the north and east. The two-month evaporative demand drought index (EDDI) value on May 26 showed the most stress across the northern and eastern tier, highlighting the areas of moderate drought.

Wildfire business increased during May compared to April. The daily wildfire ignition average through May 28 was 10.7 and more than double the April average of 4.5. The May 2008-2025 daily ignition average is 11.1. Wildfires noticeably grew during the month, mainly during the drier gustier periods with a couple of fires between 50 to 70 acres, but no large fires occurred. The regional large fire average for May based on a 1992-2025 database is two. The regional preparedness level remained at one throughout the month. Prescribed burning occurred throughout the month including large broadcast projects, but the amount of burning was limited due to environmental conditions limiting prescriptions as well as resource availability.

Both analog and dynamic climate models suggest there is a higher likelihood for warmer than normal temperatures during the next four months. There is less certainty from month to month for precipitation. Convection is likely to play a bigger role during the next several months. As of right now, the number of dry-wind events, both onshore and offshore, should be in the normal range during the next few months. Heat waves are also likely to be a big player during or just prior to significant fire events.

Based on the current fuel state and future weather predictions, near to above normal significant fire potential is projected for June. Some barriers to fire spread will be in play during June but will

be elevation dependent, with curing and increased flammability likely more evident across the low and mid elevations. The early growing season combined with strengthening drought is likely to create a heightened state of flammability within the live fuel bed as the summer progresses. This will likely allow for extended periods of critically flammable live and dead fuel alignments from July through September. This will combine with a robust mix of heat, wind, and lightning events to result in greater than normal numbers of significant fires. The one exception is likely to be found near coastal areas due to onshore influences reducing the temporal period of critically flammable dead fuels.

Sea surface temperature (SST) anomalies surrounding the Hawai'ian Islands were near average during May. Precipitation and average temperature anomalies were mixed across the island chain. The heaviest precipitation event occurred May 15 with a couple of flash flood warnings issued for Oahu. An enhanced trade wind event occurred May 20-23. Drought was removed from the island chain during the month. Herbaceous fuels were generally in a mixed phase with some curing found across the leeward sides, but the fuel bed was less flammable overall. The National Weather Service in Hawaii issued no Red Flag Warnings in May.

The El Niño-Southern Oscillation (ENSO) is expected to transition quickly to an El Niño state. Temperatures are likely to be near to above normal across the islands with precipitation anomalies likely to lean towards above normal during the bulk of the dry season. Tropical cyclone activity should be elevated across the eastern and central Pacific and will likely bring some impacts to the island chain during the summer. Drought stress is likely to be limited during the outlook period although seasonal curing will create a flammable herbaceous fuel bed at times across the leeward sides, therefore creating increased risk. Normal significant fire potential is projected for Hawai'i for the four-month outlook period.

Southern California

High pressure off the California coast brought above normal temperatures away from the coastal areas for much of May. However, a couple deep areas of low pressure brought well below normal temperatures May 3-5 and May 26-28. A deep marine layer, extending upward to 1,500-3,000 feet daily, brought near normal temperatures to the coastal areas most days this month. For the month, most inland locations received temperatures that were 2-6°F above normal, and most coastal areas received temperatures that were within 2°F on either side of normal. The two deep areas of low pressure brought scattered showers and isolated thunderstorms to the region. Otherwise, there was little or no rainfall across the region in May. Most central and southern California locations received well below normal rainfall for May. Westerly winds of 20 to 30 mph with gusts to 50 mph surfaced across the mountain ridges and desert passes with the areas of low pressure. Otherwise, there were westerly winds of 15 to 25 mph with gusts to 40 mph most afternoons across wind-prone areas. A weak to moderate Santa Ana wind event caused a significant amount of fire activity across the region May 18-19 with several new large fires.

Moderate drought now exists over eastern San Bernardino County near the Colorado River. Abnormally dry conditions exist across most other eastern and northern desert areas as well as the Sierra. Otherwise, there is no drought across central and southern California. Warm and dry conditions away from the coastal areas caused both the 100-hour and 1,000-hour dead fuel moisture to be below normal for much of May, but cool and humid conditions brought above normal values during the beginning and end of the month. There was a substantial decrease in the live fuel moisture this month, and it is now mainly between 80% and 100%. Grass is now fully cured across the lower elevations, with some of the brush now starting to cure, as well

Sea surface temperatures off the West Coast remain above normal and are forecast to remain above normal through at least September. These above normal sea surface temperatures will likely cause air temperatures to be mainly above normal from June through September. However, the marine layer may allow for near normal temperatures across the coastal areas in June. Also,

the above normal sea surface temperatures off the West Coast will likely cause fewer weak low-pressure areas to form off the coast in June, thus extending the trend of below normal rainfall. Above normal sea surface temperatures off the Mexico coast will likely bring near to above normal monsoon shower and thunderstorm activity mid-July through September. There will also be an above normal chance of remnants from hurricanes over the tropical Pacific moving into the region due to well above normal sea surface temperatures over the sub-tropical Pacific Ocean. These conditions favor a significant rainfall event across Southern California before the first Santa Ana wind event this fall. Above normal temperatures and dry conditions will likely cause the potential for significant fires to be above normal across the lower elevations in June. Otherwise, expect the potential for large fires to be near normal through September.

Northern Rockies

The June outlook indicates an early shift toward above normal significant wildland fire potential across eastern Montana and North Dakota with normal potential for the rest of the Northern Rockies Geographic Area (NRGA). Spring precipitation has been below normal across portions of eastern Montana and western North Dakota and while green-up is limiting most fire activity, green-up is still not as uniform as is normal, currently. Large fire activity in the eastern half of the NRGA that occurred during May included the Teal and Bradshaw fires in eastern Montana and the 32nd Street Fire in North Dakota. Significant fire activity typically becomes uncommon in eastern Montana and North Dakota in June. This year's dry conditions and erratic green-up will prolong the risk, and even just two or three fires greater than 100 acres are statistically above normal for the time of year.

Better precipitation fell along and west of the Continental Divide which supported a more normal spring green-up. However, the Jericho Creek Fire in west-central Montana supported concerns that the low winter snowpack could lead to earlier-than-normal higher-elevation fire activity. May was similar to previous months with a couple of days of well above normal wind and low relative humidity.

For July, above normal potential is expected to continue across eastern Montana and North Dakota as forecasts for early June do not indicate a substantial shift to a wetter pattern normally seen in June, and warm and dry conditions are likely to continue. Southwest Montana is expected to shift into above normal potential as drought expands and impacts of low snowpack are realized. Lower elevations of north Idaho are expected to move into above normal potential in response to forecasted above normal temperatures and below normal precipitation. Other areas will likely move through the typical progression in July when spring moisture begins to disappear from the landscape and fine fuels cure late in the month.

By August, eastern Montana and North Dakota are expected to return to normal as seasonal thunderstorms and increased moisture help moderate fuels. Southwest Montana will likely remain above normal due to ongoing drought and peak summer curing. Above normal conditions are also expected to persist across north Idaho and the Nez Perce/Bitterroot region where long-term dryness, reduced snowpack, and continued warming will maintain elevated potential. The rest of the NRGA is expected to remain normal in August.

At some point in August there should be an increase in monsoon moisture which typically brings a lull to fire activity leading to normal potential in September. The forecast of increased monsoon moisture is supported by the evolving El Niño pattern which accumulates warmer water over the eastern Pacific. This also increases the likelihood of eastern Pacific hurricane activity which often amplifies the impact of the moisture delivered by monsoon surges into the NRGA. However, negative impacts can also be observed due to monsoon moisture if it is a glancing blow, or if Pacific hurricanes decouple resulting in only mid and high-level moisture providing fuel for mostly dry thunderstorms.

Confidence in this outlook is moderate. The ongoing transition from La Niña to El Niño typically supports near-normal fire seasons in the NRGA, but the unusually low snowpack and a mild January and February limit the usefulness of historical analogs this year. Areas of blowdown from the wind events in December through February may add additional dead fuel components in small areas and yield greater difficulty with access and fire suppression. Uncertainty is highest for July and August due to the difficulty in predicting monsoon moisture patterns and their potential to either moderate conditions or bypass the region.

Great Basin

A much warmer and drier than normal winter and early spring has pushed fuels to record dry levels across the southern half of the Great Basin. Many mountain areas in Utah, Nevada, and the Arizona Strip had record low snowpack. Wetter conditions developed in some areas later in the spring, but warm and dry conditions are expected to continue for most areas heading into summer, so an earlier start and more severe than normal fire season is likely for many areas.

Temperatures over the last 30 days have been warm, 2-4°F above normal for most of the region, while precipitation has only been 10-20% of normal across most areas, with far southern areas just 5-10% of normal. The only wetter than normal areas were in the northern Utah mountains from one storm that occurred in mid-May. The U.S. Drought Monitor has most southern and central areas in severe to extreme drought, with far southwest Idaho and northeast Utah seeing pockets of exceptional drought. The Evaporative Demand Drought Index (EDDI) is showing three-month readings of the most extreme levels across most of the southern and eastern portions of the geographic area.

Snowpack at the late March peak was at record low levels across Utah and much of Nevada, only 10-30% of normal, with locally even lower readings in far southern mountains near the Arizona-Utah border. Farther north across the Idaho and Wyoming mountains, peak end of March snowpack was higher, 60-75% of normal, which was still significantly below normal, and much of the middle slopes in those areas that are normally snow covered had been bare for quite some time.

Fuels in the southern half of the Great Basin are near or exceeding record dry levels. Many areas in the south and east are seeing elevated Energy Release Component values that are 4-6 weeks ahead of normal. However, most lower elevation areas have a below normal grass crop this season due to the dry winter. The exceptions are across portions of northern Nevada and southern Idaho, where there are pockets of more carry-over fuels from the past two years. Heavy rain that occurred in southwest Idaho in early April has resulted in significant grass growth, which will be rapidly curing in June.

Fire activity increased in recent weeks, including several large fires in southern Idaho and northern Nevada in the 1,000-7,000-acre range. Some of the fires are burning in the heavier fuels and timber of higher elevations, which is very unusual for late May.

A hot and dry start to June is expected. Afterward, the warmest and driest conditions will shift to the northern and western areas of the Great Basin from mid-July onward as a strong El Niño unfolds. Above normal significant fire potential is expected across many southern and central areas in June, mostly in the middle to upper elevations where heavier fuels are dominant. Above normal potential will then spread steadily northward into Idaho and Wyoming by mid to late summer. The North American Monsoon should begin to take the edge off significant fire potential across southern areas from the second half of July onward.

Southwest

As May ends, temperatures across the Southwest Geographic Area remained near normal, with western Arizona experiencing slightly warmer-than-average conditions. Precipitation was more variable, with southeast Arizona, the Continental Divide, and southern New Mexico receiving the best rainfall, with many locations receiving upwards of 150% of normal rainfall for the month. In contrast, most other areas, particularly western Arizona, recorded below-normal precipitation. Lightning activity was also abundant in May, with both wet and dry thunderstorms contributing to an uptick in initial attack activity across the region.

Looking ahead to June, significant fire potential is expected to increase as the region transitions into the core of fire season. The forecast for June is trending warmer and drier, particularly across western Arizona and much of New Mexico, where fuels are already receptive. Early-season lightning activity may remain, especially before the onset of more consistent monsoon moisture.

Fire potential is expected to peak in late June through early July, when critically dry fuels, above normal temperatures, and periodic dry thunderstorms may align to support rapid growth and larger fires. As monsoon moisture gradually develops with a slightly early to on-time onset, conditions should improve across portions of New Mexico. Moving into August, the monsoon pattern is expected to shift westward, allowing Arizona to receive much needed rainfall.

Seasonal guidance for July through September provides a more encouraging signal, with ensembles leaning toward near to above normal precipitation across the Southwest. This wetter tendency is more pronounced along the Mogollon Rim, southeastern Arizona, and parts of New Mexico, suggesting the potential for a more active and beneficial monsoon period. While localized dry spells remain possible, the overall pattern favors increasing opportunities for periodic rainfall and thunderstorm activity as the monsoon matures.

Probabilities strongly favor above normal temperatures across Arizona, New Mexico, and much of the western U.S., with some areas carrying a 60-70% likelihood of warmer than average conditions in July. For August and September, the threat of above normal temperatures shifts northwest slightly each month. Even with the potential for periods of enhanced monsoon rainfall, the dominant warm anomaly suggests that evaporative demand will remain elevated through much of the season, potentially stressing live vegetation and keeping fire danger indices elevated outside of rain events and footprints.

By September, fire potential should steadily decrease across the region as widespread monsoon rainfall and shorter days help moderate fuels. However, lingering pockets of dry fuels in western Arizona and areas that experience below-average monsoon precipitation could still support isolated significant fire activity into early fall, which is normal.

Rocky Mountain

Temperatures returned to normal across the Rocky Mountain Area (RMA) in May, but precipitation remained below normal. This has continued to slow the green-up and kept most of the RMA in drought conditions. Thunderstorms have become more numerous, leading to more lightning ignitions. Fire potential will increase in June for the West Slope and the Front Range in Colorado, along with northeast Wyoming where green-up has been very slow. July will continue this increased potential but may start to decrease during the latter part of the month in Colorado. The precipitation in August is expected to expand farther north in the RMA, increasing the dry thunderstorm potential into southwest Wyoming. September will return to normal as we come out of the peak of the fire year.

The active weather pattern continued from April to May, with frequent systems moving across the area. These storms helped keep temperatures near normal for the month, with the entire RMA

within 2°F of normal. Precipitation for May was more widespread than previous months but still was generally below normal. Early in the month, much of the precipitation above 7,000 feet fell as snow, with one particularly cold low pressure system bringing snow to eastern Colorado and western Kansas. As the month progressed, more precipitation fell as rain, and thunderstorms became more widespread across the RMA. One of the areas that received above normal precipitation was northwestern Colorado, where exceptional drought has been noted on the U.S. Drought Monitor for several months. The above normal precipitation has reduced the exceptional drought to extreme drought in northwest Colorado along with reducing severe drought to moderate drought over the last month in eastern Colorado.

Consistent precipitation has moderated dead fuel moisture and fire danger across most of the RMA. Southwest Colorado was missed by this precipitation, keeping its dead fuel moisture and fire danger near critical thresholds typically seen in peak fire season. Live fuel moisture, specifically higher elevation ponderosa pine and Douglas-fir, has begun to trend downward. While much of the RMA was provided with relief due to the precipitation in May, the drought and lack of snowmelt will keep fuel moisture below average for this time of year. Windy and dry conditions continue to be the primary driver for large fire growth in the area.

May saw a continuation of the large fire activity on the eastern plains of the RMA. In the middle of the month dry thunderstorms ignited several fires in southwest Kansas and southeast Colorado due to dry thunderstorms. Their close proximity and rapid growth under high winds caused many of these fires to merge. During this time, multiple fires started in the panhandle of Oklahoma and crossed into the RMA, as well.

Short-term forecasts in early June keep the RMA in an active weather pattern, with continued chances for precipitation and warmer temperatures. However, while showers and thunderstorms are expected to continue, these will likely be localized, leaving some areas below normal. Additionally, given the amount of drought present, any periods of limited precipitation will see humidity and soil moisture decrease quickly. Ocean temperatures in the central Pacific are rapidly approaching El Niño and will likely reach criteria in June. Typical El Niño summers see the traditional North American Monsoon disrupted, resulting in the monsoon being weaker or less consistent. However, warmer water in the Pacific Ocean can bring more tropical storms into the western U.S. helping offset the potential impacts of the changes in the monsoon. Long-term forecasts continue to show the chance for increased shower and thunderstorm activity pushing farther north from the southwest U.S. into Colorado July through September. While there is potential for above normal precipitation, amounts will likely not be enough to end the drought, but there could be some improvement in the drought conditions.

June will have increasing potential for significant fire on the West Slope and Front Range due to the ongoing drought conditions and the likelihood that precipitation will be more localized. Additionally, given the limited green-up that northeast Wyoming has seen this spring, increased potential is forecast in June. This above normal potential will continue into July but may decrease later in the month as possible monsoon or tropical moisture becomes more likely for Colorado. By August, above normal potential will start to shift northward into southwestern Wyoming along the edge of any potential monsoon or tropical moisture. Activity will return to normal for September as we move out of the peak of the fire year.

Eastern Area

Normal significant fire potential is forecast for most of the Eastern Area through September. However, above normal potential is forecast for northern Minnesota into far northern Wisconsin and northern Michigan in June due to an expected heat wave the first half of the month. Areas of long-term drought in the Mid-Atlantic could have brief periods of elevated fire danger during windy days that follow dry periods, but near-normal precipitation is expected to keep overall fire potential normal, which is typically low due to green fuels.

Significant rainfall totaling 5-12 inches fell across the Mid-Mississippi region through the Ohio Valley in May, with rainfall of 3-6 inches across the Northeast. The Mid-Atlantic was drier for most of the month until a stalled front brought 2-4 inches of rain to the region May 21-24. However, much of the Great Lakes region was drier than normal, with rainfall 25-50% of average for May except for the northern Lower Peninsula of Michigan, which was near normal.

The first half of May was quite cold across most of the Eastern Area, with temperatures running 2-7°F below normal. However, a heat wave in the Mid-Atlantic and southern New England occurred May 17-20 resulting in some monthly record high temperatures being set, and overall, the month averaged near normal. In the Midwest, temperatures averaged 1-4°F below normal for the month but were 10-15°F above normal the last week of May, especially in Minnesota.

The U.S. Drought Monitor shows that overall drought has decreased across the area the past month, with improvement across northern New England and portions of Minnesota. However, drought developed and intensified in the Mid-Atlantic and southern New England due to the very dry first half of the month.

Fire activity increased in May, primarily in the Great Lakes, with decreasing activity in the southern tier. Periods of increased initial attack were also reported in the Mid-Atlantic and New England, which is normal since spring is usually the busiest part of the fire year in the Eastern Area. The busiest part of the month was from May 14-17 in the Great Lakes as very dry conditions resulted in several large fires, mostly in Minnesota, including the Flanders and Stewart Trail fires. Precipitation received May 18-20 in the Midwest eased conditions somewhat before drying conditions late in the month resulted in increased initial attack in the Upper Great Lakes.

The Climate Prediction Center (CPC) forecasted equal chances of above or below normal temperatures for June in mid-May, but model forecasts show the current above normal temperatures and dry conditions are likely to persist into mid-June. The latest outlooks from CPC for mid-June show above normal temperatures for the Great Lakes, with temperatures more likely to be near normal for the southern tier. Precipitation is also expected to be below normal for most of the Eastern Area the first half of June, with the greatest chance focused over Michigan. For July through September, temperatures are leaning toward below normal in portions of the Great Lakes, with below normal precipitation. Above normal temperatures are more likely in the Mid-Atlantic and Northeast with above normal precipitation.

With May being a cool and dry month in the Upper Great Lakes, green-up was slow to occur, but is increasing across southern Minnesota into Wisconsin and the Lower Peninsula of Michigan. However, the warm and dry start to June will be of concern farther north where green-up remains very slow. With fine fuels still available, increased initial attack is likely for the month, and with the forecast warm and dry conditions, duff may become more available by mid-month increasing suppression difficulty. In addition, the spring dip in pine fuel moisture persists and will likely continue for the first half of the month before increasing late in the month into July. Northern Minnesota into the northern half of the Lower Peninsula of Michigan will be of greatest concern, especially in pine-dominated areas. Where hardwoods dominate, fire potential will be elevated, but green-up is expected to keep any fires that occur manageable in these areas.

For the remainder of the outlook period, normal significant fire potential is forecast for all areas. The drier pattern in June creates some concern that the summer could remain active in northern Minnesota, but this dry pattern would need to persist into the summer and confidence in the drier pattern continuing beyond mid-June is low. In addition, it has been dry in the Mid-Atlantic until recently, and areas of long-term drought remain. Drier conditions extending beyond June here will also be monitored for increasing potential, as well.

Southern Area

May began warm and dry across the Southern Area. Some areas, including South Georgia and Florida, had been seeing significant fire activity for several months due to prolonged extreme drought conditions. Large areas saw near zero percent of normal precipitation over successive seven-day (and to a lesser extent 30-day) periods. Driest areas included parts of Oklahoma, north Texas, the Texas Panhandle, the Piedmont areas of Virginia, North Carolina, and South Carolina, South Georgia, and much of the Florida Peninsula, especially along the Atlantic coast.

However, by the third week in May, a significant pattern change brought widespread precipitation to most of the Southern Area. Some of the driest areas received copious amounts of rain. Most areas across the Southern Area saw their precipitation rapidly swing to wetter than normal, with seven-day periods having over 100% to nearly 200% of the normal amount of rain. These rainfall amounts significantly impacted the percent of normal for the 30-day periods as well. South Georgia, South Texas, the Florida Panhandle, Louisiana, south Alabama and much of South Carolina ended May with their 30-day precipitation anomaly at 300% of normal. Many other areas were above 100% of normal for the month as well. There are still some dry areas, mainly in Oklahoma, North Texas, the Texas Panhandle, Arkansas, Tennessee, Virginia, North Carolina, and the Florida Peninsula, which range from about 70% of normal down to 10% of normal. The forecast for beginning of June shows that these remaining dry areas may see rainfall, possibly helping resolve the lingering precipitation deficit in the holdout areas too.

With the El Niño-Southern Oscillation (ENSO) transitioning from the neutral phase to an El Niño pattern, the forecast is for below normal tropical storm activity for this year's Atlantic hurricane season. However, warm sea surface temperatures may allow for the season to be just below normal, with the beginning of the season more active than the end, as the strengthening El Niño becomes more effective in curtailing tropical storm development. The lack of tropical moisture coming into the Southern Area could have the effect of below normal rainfall later in the summer, which could lead to more drought conditions and higher than normal fire activity in some areas, especially in those areas significantly affected by drought this year already. This will lead to greater uncertainty in the forecast for fire activity through the summer.

For the month of June, the Climate Prediction Center (CPC) is forecasting most of the Southern Area to tend warmer than normal, except for central and South Texas, where temperatures are more likely to be near normal for the month. Precipitation, in contrast, is forecast to be near to above normal across the Southern Area, except for the Texas and Louisiana coasts. This should help revert significant fire potential to normal for the entire Southern Area for the month of June. This marks the first time since September 2025 when no areas are expected to have above normal significant fire potential in the first month of the outlook forecast.

For the remainder of the summer, the CPC forecast calls for temperatures to be near to warmer than normal across the Southern Area. For precipitation, the forecast is for below normal rainfall developing in July and August along the Texas Gulf Coast and expanding to the adjacent interior of Texas and further along the coast and inland into Louisiana. This could lead to above normal significant fire activity for July and continue into August. By September, conditions should become wetter in Texas and Louisiana, allowing for more normal significant fire activity for the entire Southern Area.

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