National Significant Wildland Fire Potential Outlook

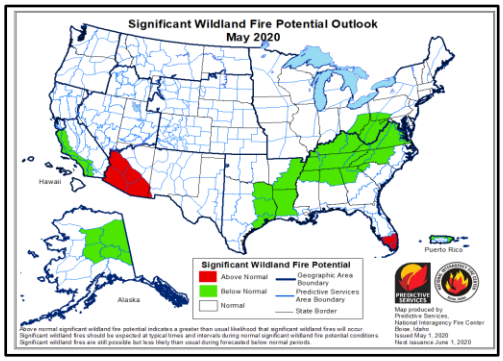
Predictive Services
National Interagency Fire Center

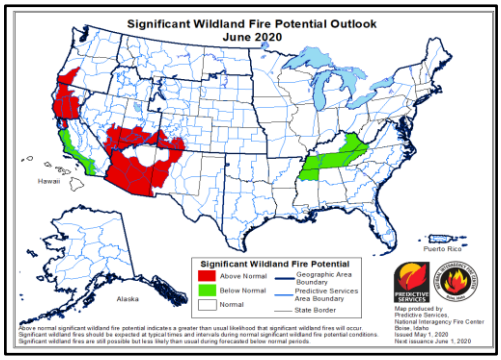
Issued: May 1, 2020
Next Issuance: June 1, 2020

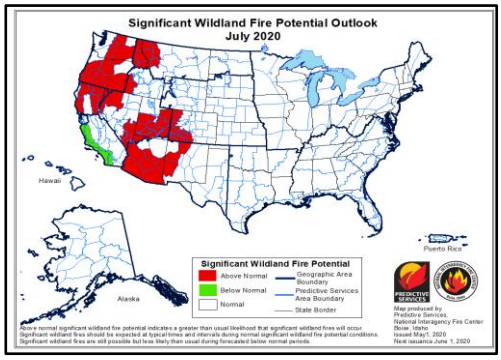
Outlook Period – May, June, July and August 2020

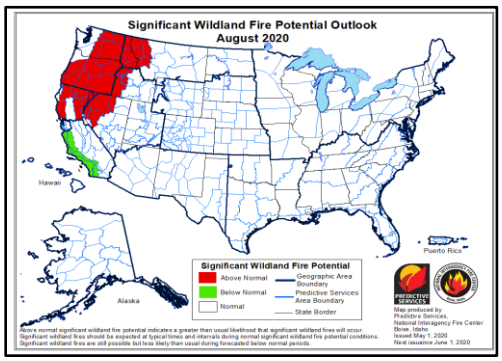
Executive Summary

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.









National fire activity remained light in April. Southern Area received the most reports of wildfire occurrence followed by the Great Basin. The Southwest began to see a slight increase in activity late in the month. Drier than average conditions developed along the Mexican Border and across the Pacific Northwest as both areas received less than 25% of average precipitation. Great improvement was observed across Southern California and far southwestern Nevada where precipitation amounts were nearly 800% of normal during the first half of the month. Florida and South Texas also experienced gradual improvement. Temperatures were generally near to below average except along the West Coast and across the Deep South where they were above average. The transition toward summer began in late April as high pressure ridge events over the West became more frequent.

Mountain snowpack remained above average on the Continental Divide, Canadian Border, and in the Alaskan Interior. It was below average across the High Sierra, Southern Cascades, Great Basin, Sawtooth Mountains, Kenai Peninsula, and the Chugach Mountains. Snowpack melting rates accelerated during late April across the Inland West, Oregon, Central Washington and the Kenai Peninsula. Drought intensification and expansion was observed in the Northwest.

May is the transitional period into the Western Fire Season. Overall, the entry into the season is expected to be normal; however, there are areas of concern emerging for the summer months. While the Pacific Northwest received beneficial precipitation in late April, the overall pattern has been warm and dry which may be problematic for Oregon and Central through Eastern Washington. Northern California and the Great Basin area are also areas to monitor closely for Above Normal significant wildland fire potential as fuels continue to dry and cure. Additionally, fine fuel loading is expected to be above average for the third consecutive year in the lower elevations. Those fuels will dry and cure, becoming receptive to fire by mid-June.

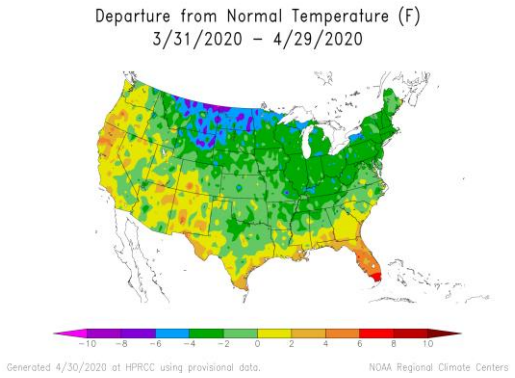
Other locations across the West and in Alaska can expect overall Normal conditions, though there could be pockets of Above Normal potential and activity along the Mexican Border in May and June before the anticipated arrival of a moderate monsoon in early July which should diminish fire activity in the Southwest while increasing activity further north across the Great Basin, Northern California, the Pacific Northwest, and the Northern Rockies by July.

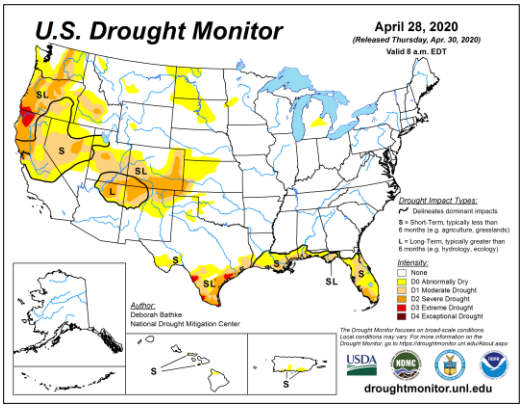
Past Weather and Drought

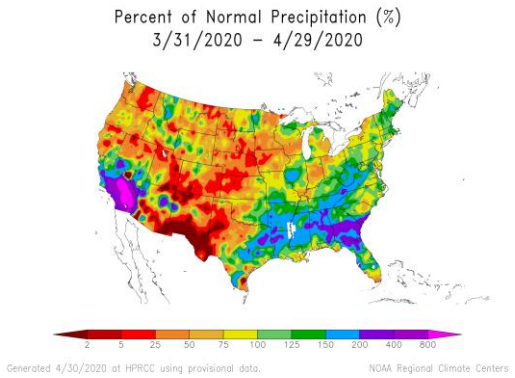
April presented an active weather pattern across the southwestern states during the first half of the month as several well-developed weather systems moved inland through California and across the Four Corners. By mid-month, most of the southern half of the state had received at least 800% of average precipitation. The border country with Mexico missed the precipitation associated with the passing systems to the north. Across the Northwest, frequent weak high pressure ridge events produced conditions that were drier than average. Locations east of the Cascade Crest received less than 25% of average precipitation during the period. Occasionally warm periods initiated the melting of the mountain snowpack. A pattern change occurred the final week of the month as the seasonal weather pattern shift began to occur. High pressure developed over the Southwest and led to a warm and dry period. An active late spring weather pattern developed across the Northwest; wet cold fronts began to impact the region. The hot, dry, and periodically breezy periods across Florida were replaced by wetter conditions. South Texas experienced relief due to influxes of moisture moving north from the Gulf of Mexico as systems passed by to the north. Dry conditions across the Carolinas and Virginia were replaced by periodically wet conditions. The interior of Alaska continued to experience average precipitation as did the south central portions of the state, though precipitation fell as rain late in the period due to warming temperatures.

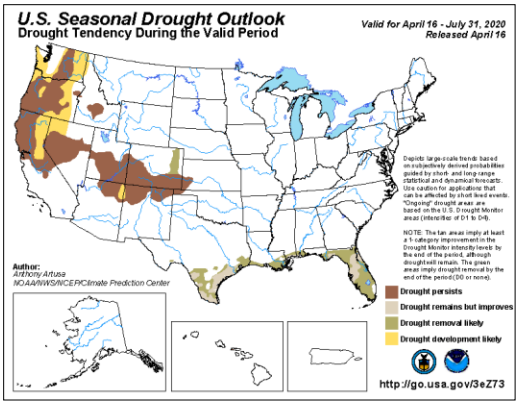
For the month, temperatures were generally normal to below normal except along the West Coast and the Gulf Coast through Florida where temperatures were above normal. The greatest departures from normal were observed across the central and northern Great Plains where the average daily temperatures were 6 to 12 degrees below normal. Across southern Florida, temperatures were 10 to 15 degrees above normal.

Drought continued to intensify and expand across the Northwest as the dry conditions amplified. Moderate to Severe drought conditions continued across the Four Corners into southeastern Colorado. The drought across Florida peaked early in the month and began to recede across most of the state as precipitation events became more frequent. An exception to this was southwestern Florida where the hot and dry conditions lingered. South Texas also showed slight improvement in its drought.









Left: Departure from Normal Temperature (top) and Percent of Normal Precipitation (bottom) *(from High Plains Regional Climate Center).* **Right: U.S. Drought Monitor (top) and Drought Outlook (bottom)** *(from National Drought Mitigation Center and the Climate Prediction Center)*

Weather and Climate Outlooks

Sea surface temperature (SST) anomalies along the equator indicate that warmer than average but still ENSO Neutral conditions continued through month's end across the equatorial Pacific Ocean at the surface. However, both temperatures at the surface and beneath the surface waters were beginning to cool. Some evidence of this is surfacing in the waters just west of Ecuador and Peru. Temperatures in the western Pacific also began to show signs of cooling. In comparison to the last several months data, little has changed with respect to ENSO.

The outlook for ENSO calls for a continuance of neutral conditions into June and possibly July. Overall temperature trends should continue to decrease. When comparing trends in past months' model data, the models continue to uniformly trend toward cooler conditions at earlier dates. As a result, confidence is increasing that a weak La Niña may gradually develop by early fall.

Geographic Area Forecasts

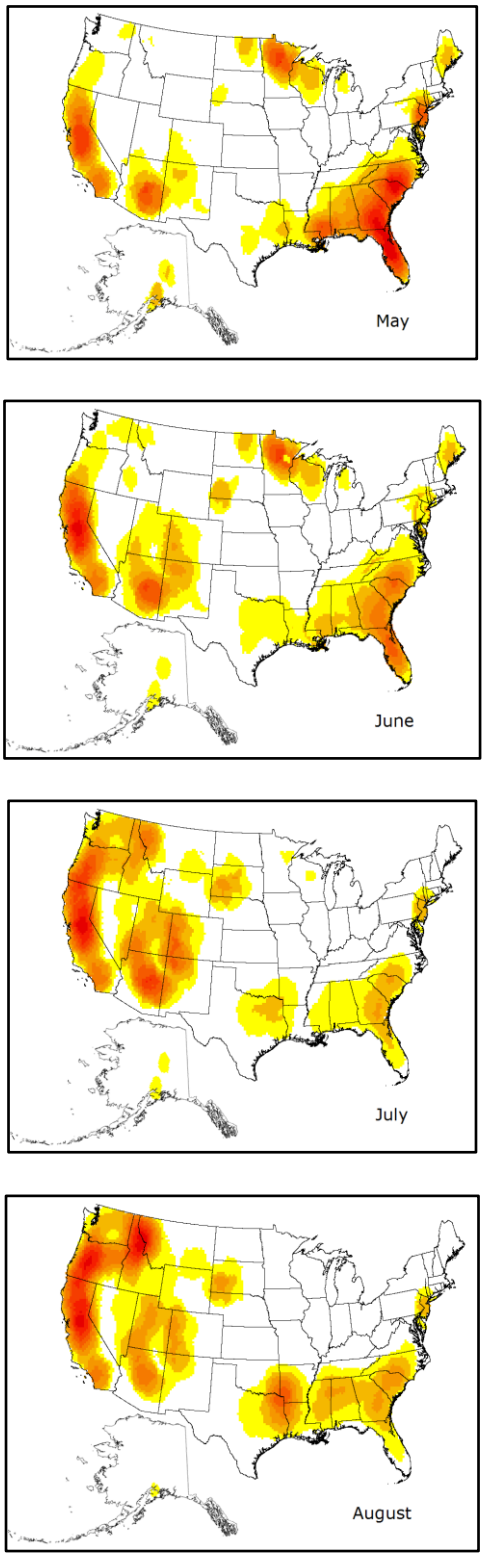
Alaska: Below Normal significant large fire potential is expected across the Interior in May due to the slow melting of a deep snowpack. All other areas during the outlook period can expect Normal significant large fire potential.

April 2020 included substantial rain and snow over portions of coastal and Interior Alaska, and now the Drought Monitor shows normal conditions across the entire state. There were drought issues in South Central Alaska as well as in the Southeast Panhandle last year, but the precipitation over the winter helped to mitigate those concerns.

As of late April, the process of melting the winter's snowpack is now underway, with bare ground appearing at the lower elevations in South Central Alaska and the southeastern Panhandle. At this time, most fuels in Alaska's Interior are still covered by snow and are not burnable. But as the melting of the snowpack progresses into the Interior and up to higher elevations through May, cured grasses left over from the previous season will be exposed and become available for burning.

Alaska is just entering fire season as May begins. Much melting of the snowpack is required before the fire season proper can begin. The timing of the beginning of fire season is expected to be normal or perhaps slightly later than normal due to the substantial snowpack over portions of Alaska's Interior.

Spring melting may lag the typical season in Alaska's Interior, as the snowpack there is generally above normal depth and has a substantial liquid water content. As the snow melts, there is an increased risk for fires first along the road system and at lower elevations. By late May and June, the boreal spruce forest will support more persistent fires. In a typical summer, a rainy pattern can settle over Alaska by late July. A weak El Niño is expected this summer, which suggests only a 20% chance of a highly active wildfire season in 2020.



Normal fire season progression across the contiguous U.S. and Alaska shown by monthly fire density (number of fires per unit area). Fire size and fire severity cannot be inferred from this analysis. (Based on 1999-2010 FPA Data)

Northwest: Above Normal significant large fire potential will begin developing across southwestern Oregon in June and then expand to include all but the northwestern quarter of the region by August. Other locations can expect Normal significant large fire potential during the outlook period.

Precipitation was quite low for April across the region. Very little precipitation fell during the first half of the month. Periodic precipitation fell in the last week of the month, but overall, the monthly rainfall totals were below normal. In contrast to March, temperatures in April warmed up back to average over much of the area west of the Cascades but remained slightly below average east of the Cascades. Overall, since the beginning of the water year in autumn 2019, the region has been drier than average except for western Washington and extreme northwestern Oregon. Elsewhere precipitation has been significantly below normal, and drought designations have expanded across the region. Melt-off is underway but snowpack remains above average for Washington and northeastern Oregon. Totals remain less than average for the remainder of Oregon except for in the vicinity of Mount Hood. Outlooks for May and beyond indicate that the weather is most likely to be warmer and drier than usual through spring and summer 2020.

The dry spell in April resulted in significant declines in dead fuel moisture. April records of NFDRS showed large dead fuels (100hr and/or 1000hr) reached record low values by the middle of the month in most areas. The onset of wetter conditions late in the month brought dead fuel moisture values back to near or above normal.

Several small fires were reported in Oregon and Washington during April, particularly in central Washington during dry, windy events. These were doubtlessly aided by the unusually low fuel moisture reported in the middle of during the month.

Northern California and Hawaii: Above Normal significant large fire potential is expected in most areas below 6000 feet in June. In July and August, the lower grass-dominated areas will return to normal due to the lack of wind events, while upper elevations experience Above Normal significant large fire potential.

Precipitation was below normal across most of the region in April, except for southern and southeastern portions and a small area of the northern Coast Range. Temperatures were mixed, but generally warmer than average in central and western areas and closer to average in eastern and southern areas. The high elevation snowpack peaked in early April at 60-70% of the normal snow to water content in the north and has rapidly diminished since then. entering May, the high elevation snowpack is near 35% for the date and 25% of the average seasonal peak. The outlook and near term forecasts call for occasional wet weather systems, but warmer and dryer than average for May. With this expectation, it is likely that the snowpack will be completely gone by early June, which would be several weeks earlier than normal. The longer term outlook calls for normal conditions to slightly warmer and drier than average conditions through August. The general pattern is for high and low pressure systems to move through the region more frequently than usual, leading to shorter heat waves. Also, more offshore wind events are expected into early July. The summer monsoon is expected to impact the North Ops region less often than most years, leading to less than the usual amount of summer lightning. However, considering the drier than average conditions of fuels in the upcoming months, any lighting will cause a high risk of new large fires at middle elevations beginning in June and at upper elevations beginning in July. The low elevation grass crop has once again grown to be above average, and due to the long-term rainfall deficit; it is expected to cure out earlier than normal. Fuels below 6000 ft will likely be able to spread fire easily starting in June. Therefore, Significant Fire Potential is Above Normal in many of these areas in June. In July and August, lower grass-dominated areas will return to normal due to the lack of wind events, while upper elevations see Above Normal Significant Fire Potential due to very dry fuel conditions.

Sea surface temperatures (SSTs) surrounding the Hawaiian Islands are warmer than normal, and the warm SSTs are expected to continue through August, leading to above average temperatures in the region. Rainfall had been mixed in recent months, but generally above normal in the central islands and normal to below normal on the outer islands. The outlook for May through August calls for normal to slightly below normal precipitation. The lee sides of the central islands still have small areas of “Abnormally Dry” and “Moderate Drought”, as shown in the Drought Monitor product, and these smaller areas have locally higher

Significant Fire Potential. Otherwise, from May through August Significant Fire Potential is Normal throughout Hawaii.

Southern California: Normal significant large fire potential is expected across the region during the outlook period except across the coastal areas and adjacent ranges where Below Normal significant large fire potential is expected.

A Pacific trough was the dominant weather feature along the West Coast through the third week of the month. A strong low pressure area moved slowly down the California Coast and eventually inland across Southern California bringing widespread significant rainfall to the entire region April 5 – April 10. The snow level was around 6,000 feet and several feet of new snow fell across both the Sierra and the mountains of Southern California above this elevation. Other quick moving, weak areas of low pressure moved inland across Central and Southern California bringing periods of light scattered showers and isolated thunderstorms. For the most part, temperatures were well below average across the region during the period. However, a couple of brief weak ridges of high pressure brought near to above normal temperatures at times. A major pattern change occurred late in the month as the trough along the West Coast moved eastward to the central part of the country and strong high pressure ridge set up off the Southern California Coast. This transfer from a trough to a ridge brought well above normal temperatures and low humidity to the region. For the month of April as a whole, rainfall was well above normal and temperatures were below normal across the entire region. The snow pack in the Sierra continued to slowly increase, but it was still well below normal exiting the month. Due to all the rain from the secend week of March through the third week in April, the moderate drought and abnormally dry condtions across Southern California are completely gone. There is still some moderate drought and abnormally dry conditions across Central California, but it is much improved compared to a month ago. Dead fuel moistures have been mostly well above normal since the second week in March, but there was a big drop during the last week of April due to the change to warm and dry conditions. The warm and dry conditions during the last week of April caused rapid curing of the fine fuels. Live fuel moistures peaked well above normal at the end of February and then remained at a plateau through the third week in April. Live fuel moistures started to decline the last week of April. This is unusual because normally right after the live fuels hit their peak, they start to decline. There was a long plateau this year due to abundant late season rainfall.

The ridge of high pressure will most likely stay closer to the California Coast May and June as sea surface temperatures in the Gulf of Alaska are now warming. This ridge of high pressure will most likely prevent new areas of low pressure from moving into Central and Southern California for the rest of the spring. Thus, widespread significant rainfall is no longer anticipated. Weak troughs will bring occasional scattered showers and isolated afternoon thunderstorms to the Sierra, but the rest of the region will only see a few days of light rainfall into June. This is usual for late spring, so expect near normal rainfall across Central and Southern California during May and June. Sea surface temperatures off the California Coast remain quite a bit below normal and are expected to remain below normal through the summer months. This will cause temperatures to be a little below normal through August. It will also cause the marine layer to remain deeper than normal when weak troughs move into the West Coast. Thunderstorm activity is still expected to be below normal across Central and Southern California during July and August. Weak troughing over the Pacific Northwest will likely cause high pressure to be centered mainly over the Desert Southwest and Texas instead of the Four Corners Area. This further south and east placement to the center of high pressure will prevent abundant monsoon moisture to come in from the southeast. Below normal thunderstorm activity suggests below normal fire activity across the mountains this summer.

Northern Rockies: Normal significant large fire potential is expected across the region during the outlook period except across northern Idaho and western Montana where Above Normal significant large fire potential is expected in August.

Over the past 30 days, it was drier than average across much of the region. The Driest areas were in northeastern Montana and southwestern North Dakota where amounts received were less than 25% of average. In contrast, there were two areas saw very moist conditions with 150% to 200% of average: Along the Bitterroot Divide and extreme eastern North Dakota in the Red River Valley. The eastern half of North Dakota has measured much more than average precipitation for the entire water year which began October

1st and has also experienced several weeks of river flooding. Very similar conditions exist across north central Montana, but elsewhere in the region it has been drier than average.

A look at the past month's temperatures show much cooler than average east of the Continental Divide, but only slightly cooler than average west of the Continental Divide in north central Idaho and western Montana. This has held snowpack in place with little melting thus far. It was also cold enough for new accumulations to occur. Entering may, snowpack is in the 100% to 130% percent of normal range.

Latest drought monitoring shows a developing area of abnormally dry conditions across western North Dakota over the last few weeks, but current monthly and seasonal drought outlooks keep the entire region drought-free through the end of July. Calculated soil moisture anomalies are still well above average from central Montana through all of North Dakota. This is a holdover from the very wet late summer and fall last year in those areas.

The Climate Prediction Center outlooks for May predict a status quo pattern east of the Continental Divide with slightly cooler and wetter than average conditions. In the western areas however, a trend is evolving with probabilities of warmer and drier than average weather beginning in late May and continuing through the outlook period. This would continue to imply accelerated snowpack melting, faster lower elevation fine fuels curing, and dead fuel moisture drying progressing through the late spring and early summer.

ENSO neutral status continues in the Pacific. Consensus remains among the climate modeling members that ENSO neutral conditions will persist through spring and into early summer. More are now suggesting the possibility of a weak La Niña developing later during peak fire season this Summer. This will be closely monitored, as that could bring the onset of warmer and drier than average pattern to the Northern Rockies during July and August, especially in the western areas. There are also signals that are beginning to emerge that the North American Monsoon will be more typical than last year's weak one, which would have implications for greater dry thunderstorm potential in the Western areas during what is anticipated to be a warmer and drier than average period there.

Lower elevations in the western areas are snow free and live fuels are fully in the greenup process. Middle and higher elevations in the western areas are generally still snow covered, but snowpacks at all but the highest elevations are fully ripe and are melting. East of the Continental Divide, fine fuels greenup has started in earnest over the southern halves of central and eastern Montana. The northern halves of these areas as well as North Dakota are just beginning to show signs of fine fuels greenup. In all the plains areas, larger live fuels, the shrubs and limited deciduous trees are still dormant, but will green up by the middle of the month. Dead fuel moistures in the western areas are at near seasonal average levels but are somewhat drier than average in the lowest elevations of North Idaho and Northwest Montana, where spring dryness has been more prominent. Further east, dead fuel moisture levels are drier than average in the 100 and 1000 hour classes in north central and northeastern Montana and western North Dakota, but not at record levels, as was seen in 2017.

Great Basin: Normal significant large fire potential is expected across the region during April in May. Above Normal significant large fire potential is expected across southeastern Nevada through southern Utah in June and along the lee side of the Sierras and Central Utah in July. This will be followed by a continuance of Above Normal potential along the lee side of the Sierras in August. Other locations not mentioned can expect Normal significant large fire potential in June through August.

Temperatures across the majority of the Great Basin have been near to just below normal over the past 30 days as low pressure systems continued to track across the Great Basin bringing periods of gusty winds, cooler temperatures, and light showers. Precipitation has been near to just above normal over parts of central and eastern Idaho into Wyoming where most of the storms have been tracking, and well above normal for the last 30 days across southern Nevada into far southwestern Utah and western areas of the Arizona Strip due to a couple of wetter storms earlier in the month tracking across the south. Precipitation since October 1, 2019 has been below normal across all but the far southern portions of Nevada into northwestern Arizona and far southwestern Utah, which is 130% to 200% of normal, accounting for wetter weather observed in November and December. Moderate drought continues over

the southern two thirds of Utah and now extends into the central areas of Nevada and parts of central through western Idaho.

Fine fuel loading is still 100% to 300% of normal across parts of Nevada, Utah, the Arizona Strip and southern Idaho. This is especially true across parts of Nevada and Utah and the Arizona Strip. Higher fuel loadings have been patchier across parts of southern Utah and Idaho. Fuels are in greenup across the northern two thirds of the region in the lower to middle elevations and are curing out in the lowest elevations of the southern Great Basin. Snow is still observed on mountains across the Great Basin at the middle to higher elevations, and this snow will continue to melt over the next four to eight weeks. Temperatures have been warming across the Great Basin over the past month. Warmer and drier than average conditions are expected for most of May. Storms will occasionally bring periods of gusty winds and cooler temperatures with some light showers and thunderstorms through May, with most light precipitation focused over the northern third of the Great Basin. June looks to be a mix of wet and dry, especially across Idaho into Wyoming and parts of northern and eastern Utah. Southern portions of the Great Basin should remain drier than average. There is a chance that the monsoon may be delayed slightly, so portions of southern Utah may remain in season a little longer than normal. By August, the monsoon should bring rain to the eastern and southern areas of the Basin as the northern and western portions remain dry.

A slow and steady increase in small fires across the Great Basin is expected in May, especially across the southern half of the region where fuels are beginning to dry and cure. A slow increase in fires in May is normal. Most fires that occur are of short duration, lasting one or two burning periods during wind events. Once winds subside, the fires are more easily managed.

Later in May into June fire potential will start to increase across parts of southern Nevada, southern Utah onto the Arizona Strip, especially in the lower to middle elevation grasses in areas that have above normal fuel loading, as the fuels continue to dry over the next several weeks. The carryover fine fuels from 2019 will likely be a concern for fire starts, along with any new growth from the recent precipitation in the south last fall. If the monsoon is delayed or weak at the onset, Above Normal significant large fire potential will extend north into central and eastern Utah in July, mainly for the first half of the month, before the monsoon takes shape. Above Normal fire potential is also expected in July across western Nevada into southwestern Idaho in the lower to middle elevation grasses. Fire potential could increase to Above Normal across parts of the central Idaho Mountains by August after a significant dry period once the snow melts and soil moisture and fuel moisture drops.

Southwest: Normal significant large fire potential is expected across the region in May except across western Arizona where Above Normal significant large fire potential is expected. The areas experiencing Above Normal significant large fire potential will expand east across Arizona and into Western New Mexico in June and early July prior to the arrival of the summer monsoon. Following the arrival of the monsoon in July, all areas will return to Normal significant large fire potential.

Over the past two months average high temperatures have been from one to five degrees below normal primarily west of the Continental Divide and generally between one to four degrees above normal further east. Some spots in far northern and northeastern New Mexico have seen high temperatures that were three to five degrees above normal. As for precipitation, both western and southwestern Arizona and the southern through southeastern quarter of the region has experienced much wetter conditions over the past 60 days. Northeastern New Mexico into northwestern Texas and the far western Oklahoma panhandle have been the driest areas across the region the past two months. Some areas of southwestern Texas have been quite dry the past 60 days.

Central Pacific oceanic conditions will generally remain in neutral conditions over the next few months before transitioning into a weak La Niña type conditions by the late summer months into the fall. Overall, this type of oceanic setup means that average high temperatures will generally be normal to above normal while precipitation will be near average with periods of significant variability across the region. Variability has been the key takeaway so far this spring as the overall cooler than average temperatures west of the Continental Divide recently shifted to become well above average. A drier signal will develop by May and June. There are indications that the eastern and southeastern Great Plains will begin to see periods of

return moisture during the first week of May. This could lead to areas of dry lightning along and near the Divide region. This trend could continue into June. In addition, wind events are likely across region, especially across the northern half into early June.

Significant Large Fire potential is anticipated to remain normal for most areas during the month of May except across southern and western Arizona where the fine fuel loading is quite significant and is curing rapidly as of late April. These areas will see Above Normal significant fire potential from now until the monsoon arrives in July. Due to a near to above normal temperature regime expected between May and June along with drier than normal conditions, areas of Above Normal significant large fire potential will expand north and east across Arizona into western and northwestern New Mexico as spring transitions into early summer.

Longer term forecast models are beginning to suggest a possibility that the summer monsoon could be delayed slightly and could perhaps be even below normal in some areas in July and August. However, confidence is low in this due to high uncertainty in the latest data.

Rocky Mountain: Normal significant large fire potential is expected during the outlook period except in June and July when Above Normal significant large fire potential is expected across portions of Southwestern and Western Colorado.

After a warmer than average month of March across much of the region, April was cooler than average in all but the southwestern portions of the area. Precipitation deficits began to intensify during April, especially from southern Colorado into western Kansas. Longer range deficits were most evident across southeastern Colorado with less than 25% of average received in the last 60 days. The Drought Mitigation Center portrayed an intensification of drought across southern Colorado.

Fuels Antecedent dead grass fuel loading as a result of the robust growing season of 2019 are most evident across southern Colorado and western Kansas where compaction from 2020 snowfall was less prevalent, and greenup has been delayed or stunted this year. Soil moisture levels in these areas are below the 30th percentile. Given short term forecasts on the dry and warm side, ERC values area predicted to be increasing significantly during early May, especially across south central and southwestern Colorado.

Weather Predictions through the first week of May indicate a progressive pattern with precipitation mainly in northern and eastern portions of the region while warm, dry, and occasionally windy conditions occur in the south. By the second week of May a potentially cooler northwesterly flow is forecast, along with rain and snow pushing into the Colorado front range. However southwestern Colorado will remain dry. CPC long range forecasts show a wetter than average regime in place across the region in May, followed by a gradual eastward shift during the summer as a drier than average area expands into western Wyoming, and to a lesser extent northwestern Colorado.

As a result of a delayed and less vigorous greenup across southern Colorado in combination with dry, warm, and windy conditions forecast in the short term, the large fire potential early in May is forecast to be above average in the lower elevations of southern Colorado. Elsewhere and at other elevations, the large fire potential forecast is forecast to be in the above average range across southwestern Colorado into south central Colorado by late May through the first half of July. Monsoon moisture later in July is predicted to bring the large fire risk back into the average range during the second half of the month in south central and southwestern Colorado. However, above average large fire risk is forecast to expand during July across west through northwestern Colorado. Otherwise expectations for the remainder of the region is for Normal significant large fire potential May through August.

Eastern Area: Normal to Below Normal significant large fire potential is expected over the Eastern Area during the outlook period.

30 day soil moisture and precipitation anomalies were near to above average across most of the region towards the end of April. Some medium range drying developed through late March into April across parts of the Upper Mississippi Valley.

Warmer than average conditions are forecast across much of the region into June. Wetter than average conditions are expected to develop over the Upper Mississippi Valley in May with drier than average trends over the southern and eastern tiers of the Eastern Area. A transition to a cooler than average weather pattern is forecasted to occur across parts of the western tier of the region in July and across the eastern states in August. Wetter than average conditions are forecast to expand further to the south and east into the Mississippi Valley and Great Lakes in June with drier than average conditions lingering over New England. Wetter than average conditions are expected across the northern tier in July.

Below normal fuel moisture levels and elevated fire danger indices were indicated over portions of the northwestern Great Lakes towards the end of April. Near to above normal fire danger index levels were indicated elsewhere. The 2020 spring fire season may persist into the early summer season across drier portions of the Upper Mississippi Valley if wetter than average weather trends do not develop in May.

Near to Below Normal fire potential is expected over much of the Eastern Area through the late spring and summer fire season. Elevated fire potential may persist into May 2020 across drier portions of the Upper Mississippi Valley if the forecast wetter weather pattern does not develop

Southern Area: Normal to Below Normal significant large fire potential is expected across the region during the outlook period except across South Florida in May where Above Normal significant large fire potential is expected.

The expectation is an ENSO neutral condition will likely persist through summer. This situation, along with a typical transition to more easterly tropical wind flow into the southeastern states, as well as more and still variable atmospheric factors (like the tropical Madden-Julian Oscillation) should produce conditions which should keep periodic rain events in the forecast for the next few months. Drier than average conditions are likely to continue into the early part of the outlook period but should transition to a wetter pattern as more humid tropical easterlies and summertime daily afternoon thunderstorm activity returns to the state. For West Texas and the desert of the Trans Pecos, it appears a continuing drier and warmer than average pattern is likely to continue through the early summer months.

Fire activity during April has been minimal with the only significant and recurring activity occurring out in far West Texas and Florida (mainly on the peninsula.) With the spring fire season wrapping up due to greenup, the drier than average locations will go into a monitoring status. These areas are highlighted on the accompanying maps accordingly. Otherwise, over all Below Normal to Normal significant large fire potential is expected across the region the next four months.

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 Fire Center at (208) 387-5050 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**