National Seasonal Assessment Workshop

Eastern and Southern States

Shepherdstown, WV
January 27–29, 2004

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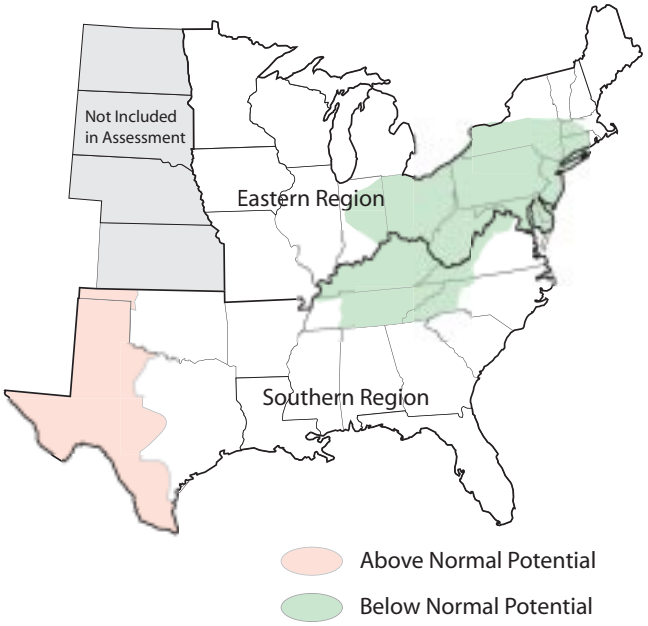
Eastern and Southern Fire Season 2004

During the week of January 27-29, 2004, the first National Seasonal Assessment Workshop devoted solely to the Eastern and Southern areas was held in Sheperdstown, West Virginia. The workshop brought together climatologists, predictive service meteorologists, wildland fire analysts, and fire managers from federal and state agencies to produce a forecast of the 2004 fire season. These assessments will allow decision makers to proactively manage wildland fire and will help to:

- Protect lives and property,
- Reduce costs,
- Improve firefighting efficiency.

The assessment map on this page shows the areas of above and below average fire potential. Potential refers to fire activity that may impact firefighting resources. While much of the area is expected to have a near to below average fire season, the areas with the greatest potential are in portions of Texas and Oklahoma. Not shown on the map is a slightly elevated risk in portions of Minnesota and Wisconsin. Updated assessments will be issued throughout the fire season.

Wildland Fire Outlook for Eastern and Southern Regions (February – July 2004)



Workshop Summary

The 2004 National Seasonal Assessment Workshop: Eastern and Southern States Meeting marks a turning point in a process to improve information available to fire management for proactive strategies. The meeting follows a highly successful 2003 national workshop, with a chiefly western U.S. focus, which will be held again in March, 2004. The needs of eastern and southern United States fire management and fire weather professionals are unique, as is the timing of the fire season in these regions.

Much of the country east of the Rockies has a bi-modal fire season (spring and fall) that is shaped by factors such as the timing and frequency of rain events, and the quick response of fuels to short-term dry weather and low humidity. Unlike the more protracted western fire seasons, eastern and southern fire seasons are often marked by infrequent and shorter episodes of elevated fire activity due to transient high pressure weather systems. By having a workshop dedicated to the eastern and southern areas that included prominent representation from state forestry officials, the discussion and ultimate outcome was focused on the challenges of forecasting fire seasons in these regions.

One of the strengths of these workshops is the variety of specialists in climate, weather, fuels, and fire management providing their respective pieces of the fire season puzzle. These individuals discuss and collectively weigh each parameter with close interaction within and among the eastern and southern groups. This coordination and sharing of climate and fuel information greatly improves the assessment process.

Climate Forecast

Facilitated by the Program for Climate, Ecosystem, and Fire Applications (CEFA), regional climate forecasts and information were merged into a set of eastern U.S. consensus forecasts for the spring and early summer 2004 fire season. Climatologists from seven federal, regional, and state organizations contributed to the forecasts. This climate decision-support tool, along with regional fire and fuels assessments prepared in advance of and during the workshop, provided the foundation for the seasonal fire danger outlooks.

Creating a seasonal forecast is challenging, requiring analyses of local and regional climate conditions, along with information about phenomena such as El Niño, La Niña, and drought. El Niño or La Niña can have impacts on the region; however, as of February 2004 neither of these have developed. The discussion between the workshop participants provided a thorough understanding of factors underpinning the forecast, as well as sharing information on fuels and the impacts of insect, wind blowdown, and ice storm damage.

Participating Agencies

Allegheny National Forest
CEFA/Desert Research Institute
CLIMAS/University of Arizona
COAPS/Florida State University
Department of Interior
Eastern Area Coordination Center
ECPC/Scripps Institution of Oceanography
Florida Division of Forestry
Georgia Forestry Commission
IRI/Columbia University
Maryland Department of Natural Resources
Michigan Department of Natural Resources
National Interagency Coordination Center
National Park Service
New Jersey Forest Fire Service
New York State Forest Rangers
NOAA Climate Diagnostics Center
NOAA Climate Prediction Center
NOAA Office of Global Programs
North Carolina Division of Forest Resources
Northeast Regional Climate Center/Cornell University
Southern Area Coordination Center
Southern Forest Research Station
Southern Regional Climate Center/Louisiana State University
Texas Forest Service
USDA-Forest Service
Washington and Jefferson National Forests

CLIMAS Climate Assessment for the Southwest

ECOSYSTEM CLIMATE CEFA FIRE APPLICATIONS Desert Research Institute

NOAA

Where to find the outlooks, updates, and more information:

Geographic Fire Season Outlooks
http://www.nifc.gov/news/pred_services/Main_page.htm

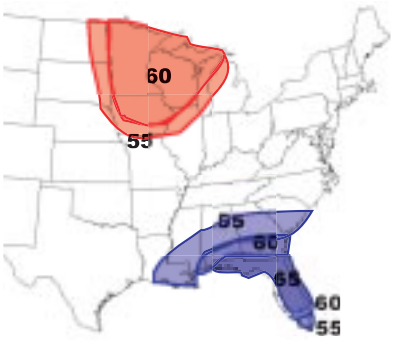
National Wildland Fire Outlook
http://www.nifc.gov/news/intell_predserv_forms/season_outlook.html

Program for Climate, Ecosystem, and Fire Applications (CEFA)
http://cefa.dri.edu/

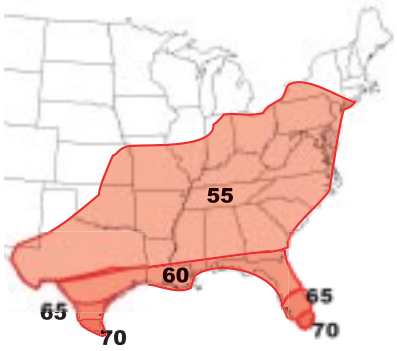
Climate Assessment for the Southwest (CLIMAS)
http://www.ispe.arizona.edu/climas/swoutlook.html

Temperature

February – April 2004



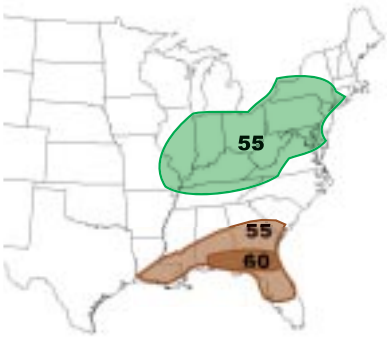
May – July 2004



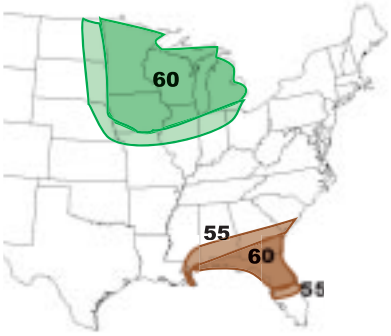
Warm Cool

Precipitation

February – April 2004



May – July 2004



Wet Dry