



National Seasonal Assessment Workshop

Eastern, Southern, & Southwest Geographic Areas

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Eastern, Southern, & Southwest Fire Season 2006

Fire managers, wildland fire analysts, climatologists, predictive service meteorologists and intelligence personnel from federal and state agencies convened at the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service National Conservation Training Center. They produced a preliminary assessment and outlook of the 2006 fire season for the Eastern, Southern, and Southwest Geographic Areas (see map below) based on information available through January 19. This report is a short synopsis of their findings. Complete geographic area reports are available at: <http://www.nifc.gov/nicc/predictive/outlooks/outlooks.htm>. Updated assessments will be issued throughout the fire season.

Outlooks

Eastern Area: Significant fire potential is expected for southwestern Missouri, central Iowa east to Lake Michigan, and northern Illinois. Below normal fire potential is forecast from the Cincinnati area extending northeast into New England.

Southern Area: Significant fire potential is expected over the Southern Plains, Texas, and much of Florida. Normal potential is forecast for the remainder of the area.

Southwest Area: Significant fire potential is expected for the entire Southwest with an earlier-than-normal start to the season. Low snowpack this winter may cause an early monsoon onset.

Fuels Assessment

Eastern Area: Dry fuel conditions from recent below-normal precipitation totals extend from southwestern Missouri, through Iowa, and into northern Illinois.

Southern Area: Moderate to heavy blowdown from hurricane damage exists along the Gulf Coast from eastern Texas through the western panhandle of Florida, and in portions of southern Florida. Previous hurricane damage and bug kill have created hazardous fuels throughout much of North Carolina and the coast of Virginia. Dry fuel conditions over the Southern Plains, Texas, and the Florida peninsula have led to an early and active start to the fire season.

Southwest Area: An abundance of herbaceous fine fuels remain across much of the Southwest from the wet winter of 2004–2005. The significant lack of precipitation since fall 2005 has led to extremely low mountain snowpack and very dry fuel conditions. An early start to the fire season with a high likelihood for early season timber fires is expected as a result of these factors.

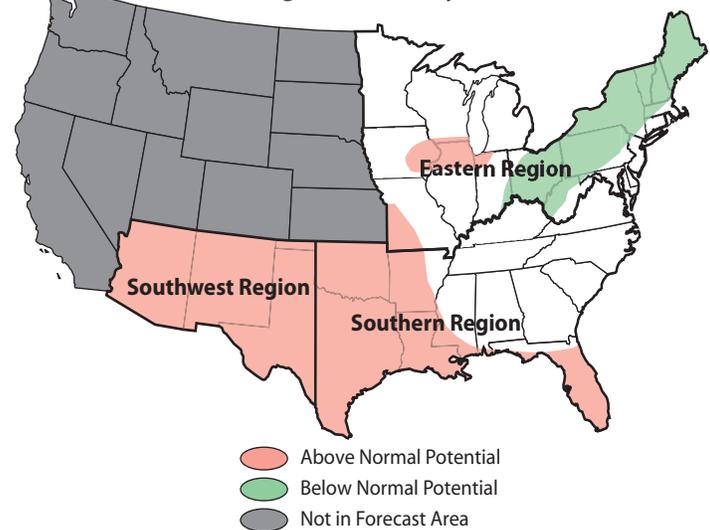
Resource Summary

Eastern Area: No problems are anticipated. Resources should be available to support other areas.

Southern Area: Additional resources may be needed in order to maintain capability of initial response to early season fires across the Southern Plains, Texas, and Florida, while at the same time meeting resource needs for prescribed burning. Elevated risk of landfalling hurricanes this summer could result in resource mobilization for recovery efforts.

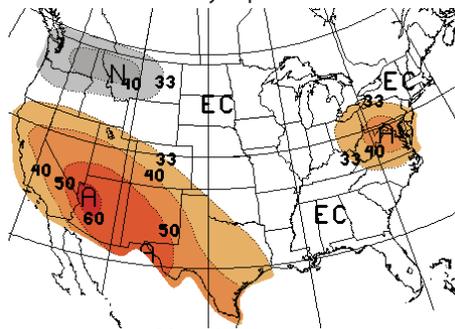
Southwest Area: An early and active fire season will require response resources to be trained and available earlier than normal. Aviation and initial response resources may need to be pre-positioned as early as March. An increased need for Type-1 and -2 Incident Management Teams is anticipated.

Wildland Fire Outlook for Eastern, Southern & Southwest Regions (February–June 2006)

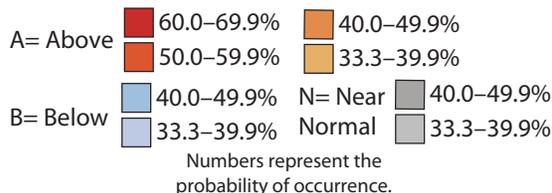
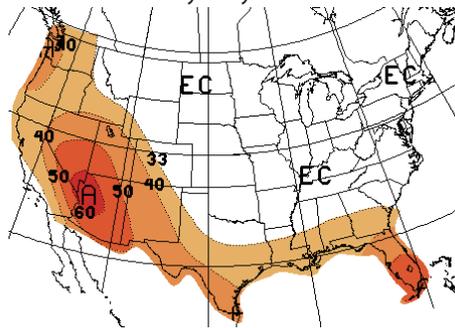


Temperature Forecasts

February–April 2006

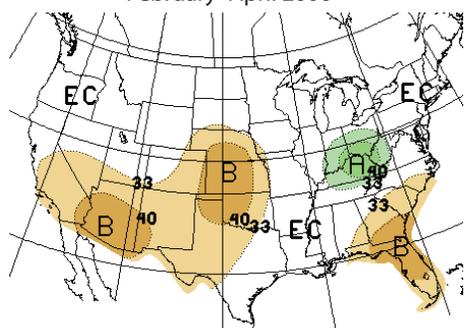


May–July 2006

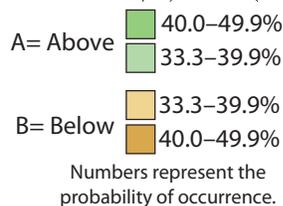
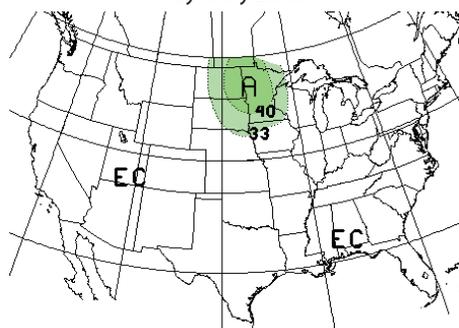


Precipitation Forecasts

February–April 2006



May–July 2006



Climate Assessment

Southern Area: Significant drought exists west of the Mississippi River Valley. Drought also exists across Kentucky, Tennessee, and western Mississippi. There have been moderate precipitation deficits in central and southern Florida this winter. The central and western portions of the area have registered consistently above-average temperatures since June 2005.

Eastern Area: New England has been exceptionally wet this winter. Above-average temperatures in the northern tier of the area have caused average or below-average snow depths in the upper Midwest.

Southwest Area: Dry and warm conditions have dominated the Southwest since a relatively weak 2005 summer monsoon. The area has experienced exceptional dryness and very little snow this winter.

Forecast

Southern Area: Continued above-average temperatures are expected for the Southwest, Texas, and southern Florida through early summer. Below-average precipitation is expected for the Southern Plains and West Texas through late winter and early spring, and for Florida through the spring season.*

Eastern Area: Above-average precipitation is expected for the Ohio River Valley for February–May, and for the northern Midwest for late spring and early summer.*

Southwest Area: Below-average precipitation is expected for the Southwest.*

* If Pacific Ocean conditions continue to meet the criteria for a La Niña episode, then we can expect drier-than-average conditions in much of the southern tier of the U.S.

Workshop Summary

These annual assessments are designed to allow decision makers to proactively manage wildland and prescribed fire, thus better protecting lives and property, reducing fire fighting costs, and improving fire fighting efficiency.

The 2006 workshop was part of the fourth national assessment organized by the National Predictive Services Group (NSPG), the Climate Assessment for the Southwest (CLIMAS), and the Program for Climate, Ecosystem and Fire Applications (CEFA). Other participating agencies are listed below. An assessment workshop for the western United States and Alaska will be held in April 2006.



Participating Agencies

Bureau of Indian Affairs
 Bureau of Land Management
 CLIMAS/University of Arizona
 COAPS/Florida State University
 Department of Interior
 Eastern Area Coordination Center
 Florida Division of Forestry
 Georgia Forestry Commission
 Maine Forest Service
 Michigan Department of Natural Resources
 Minnesota Department of Natural Resources
 National Interagency Coordination Center
 National Park Service
 New Jersey Assistant State Fire Warden

New York State Forest Rangers
 NOAA Climate Prediction Center
 NOAA Office of Global Programs
 North Carolina Division of Forest Resources
 Northeast Regional Climate Center/Cornell University
 Southeast Climate Consortium
 Southern Area Coordination Center
 Southwest Coordination Center
 State of Connecticut Forest Service
 State of New Hampshire Fire Service
 State of Vermont Department of Forests, Parks & Recreation
 Texas Fire Service
 U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service
 USDA-Forest Service