2008 ROCKY MOUNTAIN AREA FIRE SEASON OUTLOOK

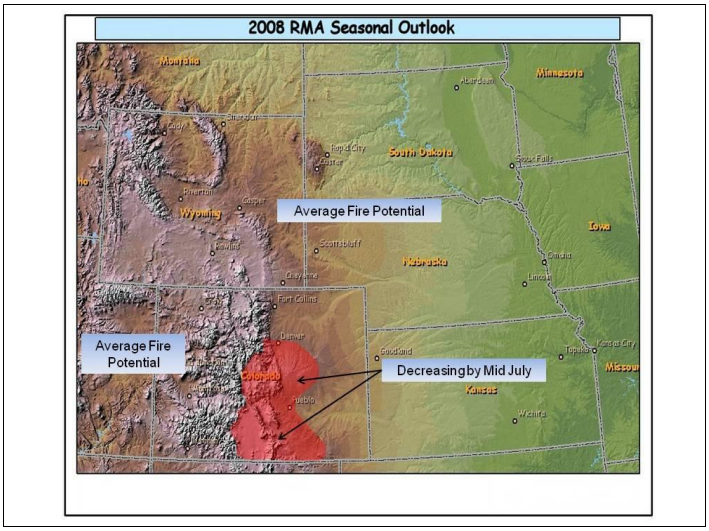
PRODUCT INTENT & DESCRIPTION

Valid: Mid June-August 2008

Fire season potential is predicted for the period mid June – August, in terms of the "Potential" for significant fire events that may require mobilization of additional resources from outside the area in which they originate.

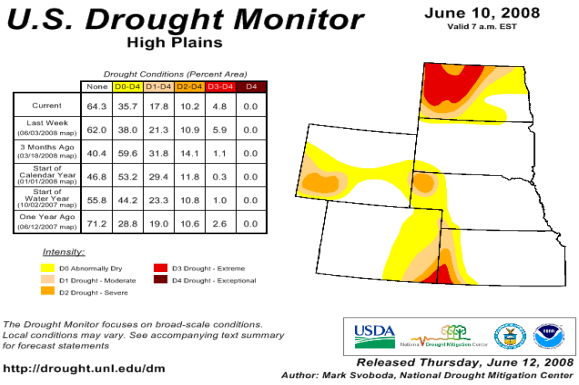
SUMMARY

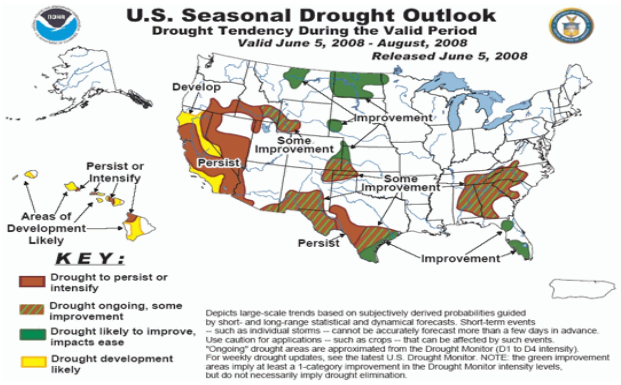
Mid June-August: Above average fire potential is forecast to continue across southeast Colorado (east of the divide below 8000 feet), with some moisture relief anticipated by mid July from the monsoon. Climate outlooks continue indicate below average precipitation for Wyoming and western South Dakota July through August, however recent precipitation and temperature trends have decreased the threat for long periods of above average potential for that area. Average fire potential is also forecast for western sections of Colorado. Average fire potential from mid June through August means that these areas will likely experience short periods of fuel and fire weather conditions that support large fire activity, and not long periods of fuel and fire weather conditions that support multiple large fires for several weeks.

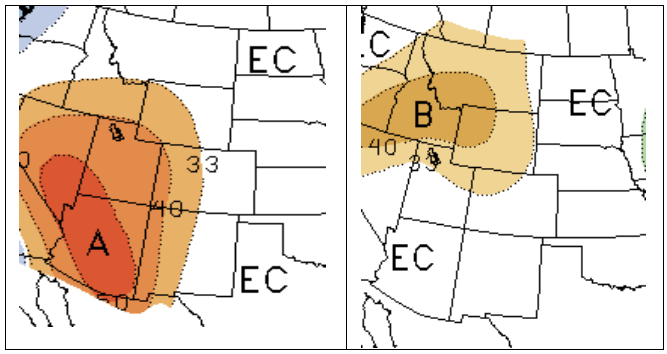


- Drought conditions have worsened over eastern sections of Colorado and western Kansas during the last 6 months, due to drier than average precipitation trends beginning in January. Drought conditions have improved or have stayed the same during the last 12 months across Wyoming, Nebraska and South Dakota with abnormally dry to moderate values.
- Precipitation trends during the last 30-days have been average to above across much of the area, except for precipitation deficits across southeast sections of Colorado.
- Abundant fine dead fuel is available to burn at lower elevations, especially across foothill regions and plains east of the divide across eastern Colorado and western Kansas. This extensive 1-hour fuel coverage is a result of last year's record snowpack east of the divide. Average to above average grass crop is expected this year over portions of Wyoming and South Dakota due to wet trends during the winter and spring months.
- La Nina is forecast to continue weakening through the summer.
- Below average precipitation is forecast for northern sections of the RMA July through August, however recent precipitation and temperature trends have reduced the fire potential across Wyoming and South Dakota. Average precipitation is forecast for southern sections of the RMA.
- Above average temperatures are forecast mainly west of the divide during June, and becoming more widespread in July and August over Wyoming and Colorado. Weather patterns will likely support windier than average conditions through early summer. Pre-frontal weather (windy, warm and dry) will offer periods of extreme burning conditions, especially east of the divide.
- Above average snowpack and a slow snowpack melt at the higher elevations promises extensive green-up conditions and a minimal fire season for most mountain locations.
- Ignition is unknown. Natural ignition (lightning) becomes a factor in early June for the southern RMA, and late June through August for northern sections of the RMA.
- **Bottlomline**: The 2008 fire season is not expected to be as severe as 2000 or 2002. Fire potential will remain above average across southeast sections of Colorado until possibly mid July, before the southwest monsoon brings moisture relief. Above average fire potential means this area will continue to experience drier than average fuel conditions and fire weather conditions that support long periods of above average fire potential, large fire activity and drains on local resources. Average fire potential is forecast for the remainder of the RMA through August. Average fire potential means that these areas may experience their typical *short periods* of above average fire potential and fire activity during the outlook period.

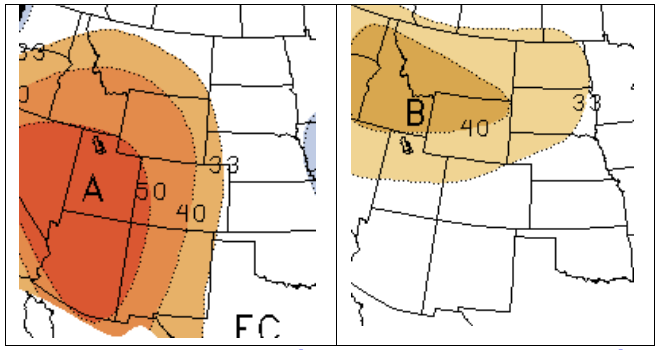
SUPPORTING DATA







Jun Temp. Anomaly Jun PCP. Anomaly



Jun-Aug Temp. Anomaly Jun-Aug PCP. Anomaly

Most recent (June 10, 2008) RMA Drought Monitor image shows severe drought in portions of southwest Wyoming, and western Nebraska. Intensifying drought is depicted across portions of eastern Colorado and western Kansas. Long term drought acts to increase dead fuel loadings, deplete fuel moisture values in dead fuels (especially heavier fuels), and can also lead to unusually low fuel moisture values in live fuels. Drought conditions in portions of the RMA are improved from a year ago; however, conditions worsened over eastern Colorado and western Kansas. Extreme drought values have emerged in southeast Colorado and southwest Kansas.

Drought Forecast-June 5, 2008. Indicates improving drought conditions across eastern sections of Colorado, western Nebraska and southwest Wyoming through August.

Temperature outlook for the month of June from the Climate Prediction Center shows warmer than average conditions forecast for western sections of the RMA. The precipitation anomalies suggest drier than average across mainly northwest Wyoming, and to lesser extent the remaining portions of Wyoming and northwest Colorado. Weak La-Nina Tropical Pacific Ocean conditions combined with various other ocean indices and past weather trends results in the dry and warm forecast for the month.

Outlook for the months of June-July-August is similar to June. However, more extensive warming is depicted over western sections of the RMA. The dry signal is still prevalent over northwest portions of the region, but also extends into eastern Wyoming, western Nebraska, and much of South Dakota. An expected weakening of La-Nina conditions in June and the possibility of an end to the La-Nina pattern during the second half of summer could constrain the driest conditions over mainly northern portions of the RMA. The above average temperature forecast is highly weighted from long term trends.

Predictive Services Group
Rocky Mountain Area Coordination Center