

National Wildland Significant Fire Potential Outlook



National Interagency Fire Center Predictive Services



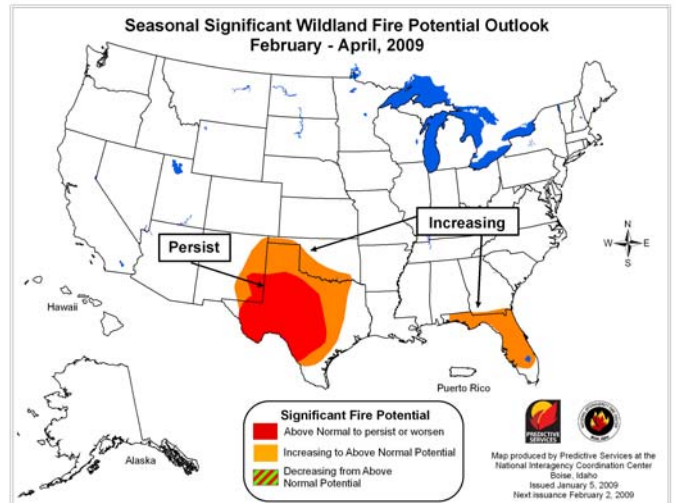
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Next Issue: February 2, 2009

Wildland Fire Outlook – January through April 2009

During January, above normal significant fire potential is expected over southeast New Mexico and much of central and western Texas. Below normal significant fire potential is expected over most of the Southeast and Puerto Rico. For February through April, significant fire potential is forecast to increase and/or persist in eastern New Mexico, Texas, and southern Oklahoma. Increasing significant fire potential is projected across Florida during late March or April. The primary factors influencing fire potential this outlook period are:

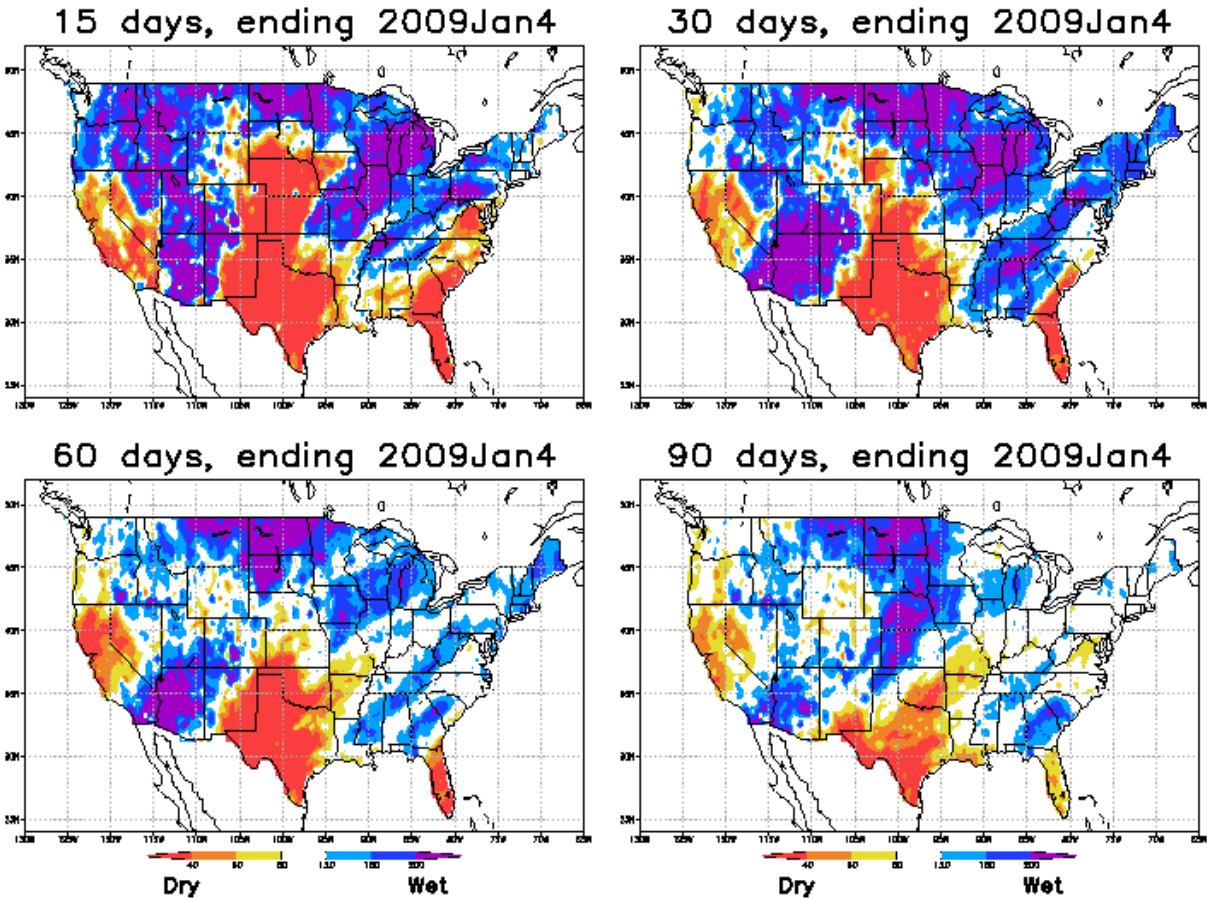
- The onset of La Niña conditions increases the chances of warmer and drier than normal weather over portions of the southern tier of states.
- Much of the Southern Plains has been quite dry this winter. Drier than normal conditions have persisted since last fall from south-central Texas northward into Oklahoma. Periods of increased fire activity are expected during the passage of cold fronts during the next few months.
- Warm, dry weather forecasted across Florida in conjunction with La Niña will cause drought conditions to worsen, elevate fire danger, and increase fire activity during the spring.



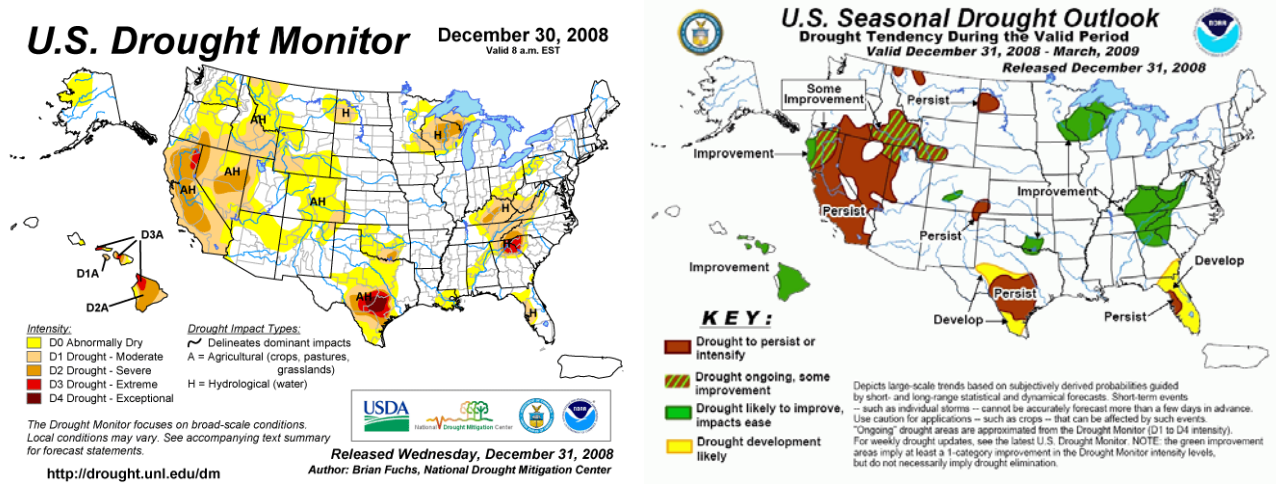
Note: Significant fire potential is defined as the likelihood that a wildland fire event will require mobilization of additional resources from outside the area in which the fire situation originates.

Past Weather and Drought

December was generally drier than normal over much of California, the southern/central Plains as well as Florida and the southeast coast. Temperatures were mostly below normal across the country except for warmer than normal conditions extending from the southern Rockies to the Southeast. Most western snowpacks are running near normal to well above normal. December started with rather mild weather in the interior of Alaska, but an intense cold spell took hold over much of the state by the end of the month. The latest Drought Monitor and Outlook products are shown below.



www.cdc.noaa.gov/Drought/images/prec4.gif

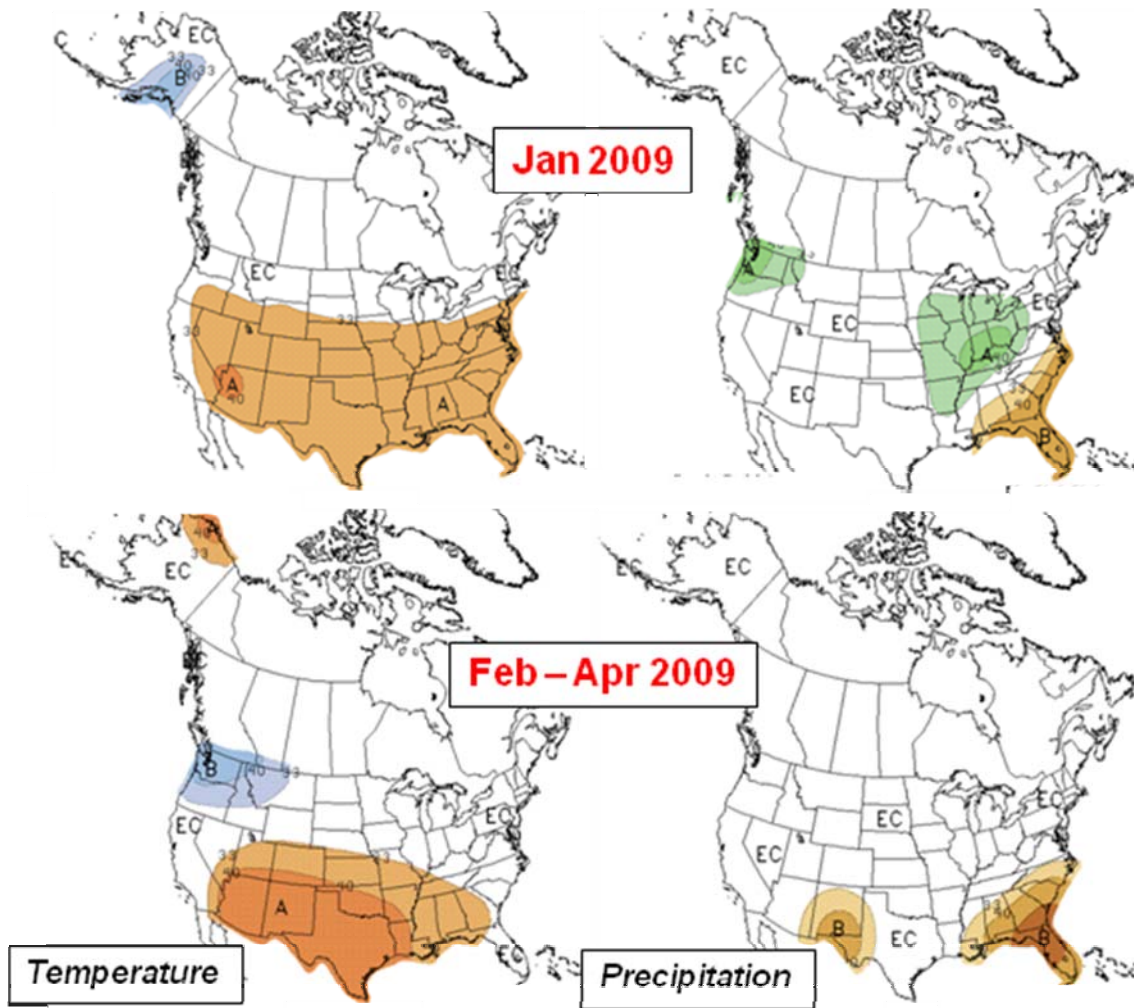


<http://drought.unl.edu/dm>

www.drought.unl.edu/dm/monitor.html

Weather and Climate Outlooks

According to the National Weather Service (NWS) Climate Prediction Center, atmospheric and oceanic conditions are rapidly transitioning into a La Niña pattern. La Niña conditions are expected to continue into the early spring. Last winter/spring was also strongly influenced by a moderate La Niña which resulted in very dry conditions across California. The monthly and seasonal outlooks shown below reflect the usual impacts from La Niña.



A = Above normal, **B = Below** normal, **N = Normal**, **EC = Equal Chances** of Above/Below/Normal.
www.cpc.ncep.noaa.gov/products/predictions/multi_season/13_seasonal_outlooks/color/page2.gif

Area Discussions

Alaska: Alaska is out of fire season; significant fire potential is projected to be normal, with little if any fire activity, through April. Extremely cold weather is projected for the first half of January and winter precipitation accumulation amounts to date are running below normal to near normal across the State.

Southwest: Above normal significant fire potential is projected across southeastern New Mexico and western Texas during January where dry conditions combined with abundant fine fuels exist. Elsewhere normal significant fire potential is expected. The most likely areas to receive normal to above normal moisture amounts will be across the northern third of Arizona extending into the Four Corners region and into the northern New Mexico Mountains. Far southern, and especially eastern areas, are expected to be mostly dry. A brief period or two of unusual cold weather is likely. Active weather patterns during early spring will likely bring storms across the Four Corners region with northern areas expected to be moist and areas further to the south and east more on the dry side. Significant fire potential will remain normal in most areas, but the above normal area in eastern New Mexico and west Texas will expand north and westward during February through April.

Northern Rockies: The Area is out of fire season and normal significant fire potential is expected for the entire outlook period. There has been abundant snowfall and very cold temperatures since the middle of December. Currently, snow pack amounts are generally running between 75% and 120% of normal. Long range climate models suggest colder than normal temperatures will persist across much of the Area from February through April.

Great Basin: Significant fire potential is expected to be normal across the Area through April. Precipitation has been above normal over most areas this winter. The Seasonal US Drought Outlook calls for drought to persist across Nevada and western Utah, with “some improvement” across most of southern Idaho and portions of western Wyoming through March.

Northwest: The Area is out of fire season; normal significant fire potential is expected through April. Very cold weather predominated across the area the second half of December and sections of eastern Washington and eastern and southwest Oregon were unusually wet. Climate forecast models suggest wetter than normal conditions in January with temperatures across the Area lower than normal February through April. Large fire activity is very unlikely through April.

California: Normal significant fire potential is projected for California through April. The first two weeks of December were warmer and drier than normal for northern California with a ridge of high pressure dominating the weather pattern. Some locations did not receive their first measurable precipitation until the 14th of December. Southern California received good precipitation amounts across the southern mountains and desert areas; however the Sierras and central coastal mountains and valleys remained drier than normal through December. Moderate to severe drought continues across the state and is expected to persist across the southern two-thirds with some improvement in the northern sections this winter. Precipitation will likely remain below normal this winter, especially across southern California, given the onset of La Niña conditions.

Rocky Mountain: Normal significant fire potential is expected across the Area through April. Mountain snow water equivalent as of late December is near normal to slightly below normal over much of the Area, except in southern Colorado and the Black Hills where it is above normal. Precipitation amounts continue to remain below average in lower elevations east of the Continental Divide in southeast Colorado and western Kansas. Climate forecast models suggest above average temperatures will prevail across much of the Area through April.

Eastern Area: Normal significant fire potential is forecast through April. Improvement to the drought conditions across eastern Minnesota, Wisconsin, and the Upper Peninsula of Michigan is expected this winter. Some longer term negative soil moisture anomalies remain across south central portions of the Area; however winter precipitation is beginning to bring improvement to these areas. Snowfall amounts and water content will be monitored this winter to assess the impact on spring fire season.

Southern Area: Above normal significant fire potential is forecast for portions of central Texas where abnormally dry to extreme drought conditions exist and are either expected to persist or increase. Meanwhile, below normal significant fire potential is forecast for Puerto Rico and across a large area extending from central Arkansas and Louisiana eastward to the Atlantic coast, excluding Florida and portions of the southern tier. Very dry conditions along with the presence of abundant fine fuels will cause fire danger to spike in central Texas, especially during windy periods combined with low relative humidity often occurring in conjunction with cold fronts. Farther east, soil moistures have improved significantly in the Appalachian Mountain areas. This improvement is expected to continue into January with a higher frequency of rain events than was seen in the fall of 2008. During February through April, significant fire potential is expected to persist and expand somewhat in central Texas. Developing drought in Florida is expected to result in above normal initial attack activity and significant fire potential, especially during late March and April. Normal significant fire potential is expected elsewhere February through April.

Historic and Predicted Wildland Fires and Acres Burned Data

Based on data reported in 2009, nationally there were 101% of the average numbers of fires burning approximately 76% of the average acres. The following table displays 10 year historical, current and predicted information pertaining to fire statistics.

DEC 26, 2008 Reported Year-To-Date	Average reported for JAN	Projection for January YTD+Forecast	Average Reported YTD JAN 31	Historical Low YTD JAN 31	Year of Low	Historical High YTD JAN 31	Year of High
ALASKA							
Fires	337	1	0	0	0	many	1
Acres	62,647	43	0	43	0	many	433
NORTHWEST							
Fires	2,989	1	0	1	0	many	2
Acres	282,959	1	1	1	0	many	3
NORTH OPS							
Fires	4,806	5	3	5	0	many	16
Acres	943,155	255	255	255	0	many	2,499
SOUTH OPS							
Fires	5,131	58	43	58	3	2005	151
Acres	396,265	950	750	950	0	many	8,382
NORTHERN ROCKIES							
Fires	2,636	1	1	0	0	many	2
Acres	228,437	78	78	78	0	many	600
EAST BASIN							
Fires	1,662	0	0	0	0	many	2
Acres	145,710	0	0	0	0	many	3
WEST BASIN							
Fires	451	1	1	1	0	many	3
Acres	71,930	8	8	8	0	many	77
SOUTHWEST							
Fires	3,040	20	31	20	0	many	73
Acres	573,532	6,068	10,315	6,068	0	many	43,149
ROCKY MOUNTAIN							
Fires	2,455	8	8	8	0	many	31
Acres	227,788	2,476	3,219	2,476	0	many	14,842
EASTERN AREA							
Fires	11,317	41	41	41	0	1999	97
Acres	69,323	723	723	723	0	1999	2,654
SOUTHERN AREA							
Fires	46,055	1,731	2,596	1,731	805	2007	2,986
Acres	2,217,086	43,645	56,738	43,645	5,253	2007	262,802
NATIONALLY							
Fires	80,879	1,867	2,723	1,865	933	2007	3,171
Acres	5,218,832	54,246	72,087	54,246	6,586	1999	322,199

Prepared January 5, 2009 by the National Interagency Coordination Center Predictive Services Staff. The information above was obtained *primarily* from Incident Management Situation Reports from 1998-2007, however some inaccuracies and inconsistencies have been corrected. Therefore, the data may not reflect other historic records and should not be considered for official statistical purposes.

Note: This national outlook and some geographic area assessments are currently available at the NICC and GACC websites. The GACC websites can also be accessed through the NICC webpage at: <http://www.nifc.gov/nicc/predictive/outlooks/outlooks.htm>