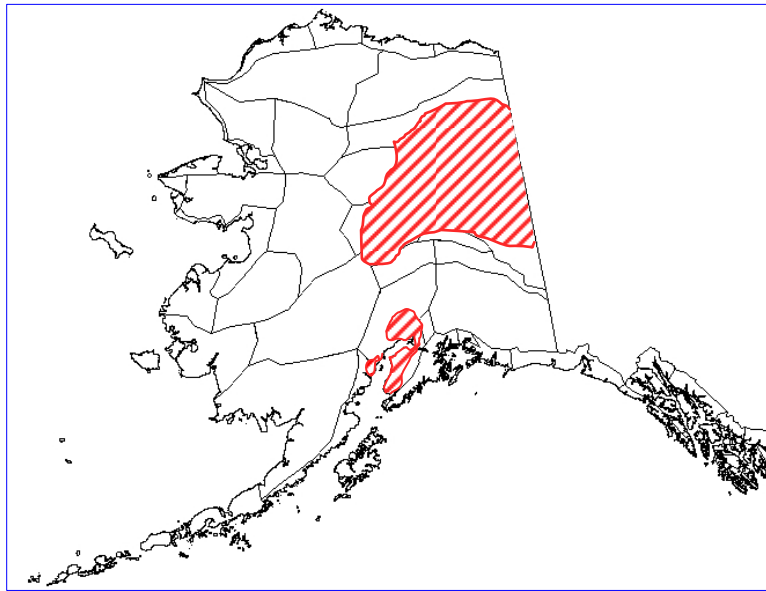




Alaska Seasonal Fire Weather/Fire Danger Outlook 2008

Predictive Services AICC

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- Fire Potential in several areas in Alaska is above normal. This outlook is based on fuel conditions, human activity and expected weather.
- The Central Tanana Valley and Upper Yukon Valley
 - Dry fuel conditions last fall
 - Very low snow pack
 - Over-wintered fires
- The Matanuska and Susitna Valleys
 - Population boom and land clearing/burning
 - Spruce bark beetle-killed timber stands
- Southwestern Kenai Peninsula and a portion of western Cook Inlet
 - Spruce bark beetle-killed timber stands
- Warmer than normal in much of southwest Alaska
- Expectation of normal season ending rains by early August
- Confidence level is moderate

Executive Summary

Several areas in Alaska are expected to have higher than normal fire potential. However a strong La Nina (the cool phase of the El Nino/Southern Oscillation) this spring and other climatological indicators suggest a near normal number of acres burned in Alaska in 2008.

Much of the eastern interior of Alaska will have above normal fire potential for the 2008 season. This is due to the dry conditions as the conclusion of the 2007 season and low snow pack. This is also indicated on the national drought monitor with an area classified as "Abnormally Dry." This has been demonstrated already this spring with reports of smoke from 2007 fires in the Upper

Yukon Valley that have apparently been able to over winter in the dry duff under the snow. This occasionally happens in dry years but is not common.

The Matanuska and Susitna Valleys in south central Alaska are undergoing a population boom and a dramatic increase in construction and land clearing that is creating an expanding wildland-urban interface. This has brought an increase in fire potential based on human activity and the potential for human caused ignitions in the interface areas. The Spruce bark beetle is also continuing to spread into these areas and particularly along the notoriously windy Anchorage hillside.

Spruce bark beetle on the Kenai Peninsula and along Cook Inlet (also in the Copper River Basin) has caused nearly 2 million acres of beetle-killed timber. Though south central Alaska had normal to above normal snowpack and a mid April snowfall episode, these fuels will continue to be a problem on the Kenai Peninsula as they have evolved into a fuel type of slash and grass mixed with snags. This poses a dangerous and complex environment for fire-fighters and land managers. Higher fire potential is indicated on the southwest Kenai Peninsula and a small area across the Cook Inlet. These areas of hazardous fuels will persist and are only waiting for the right weather and ignition opportunities to cause large fire problems as we have seen in the past few years. (Tracy Avenue Fire 2005-5,400 acres, Caribou Hills Fire 2007-56,254 acres)

Weather forecasts from the Climate Prediction Center indicate warmer than normal in southwestern Alaska with no indication of wetter or drier than normal conditions through the summer. Currently the equatorial Pacific is shifting from a strong to a weakening La Nina. In the past this pattern has been associated with a timely arrival of the end of season weather pattern of rainfall in August. For this reason the areas of above normal fire potential will decrease by August. Additionally, recent research into the size of area burned seasonally in Alaska based on global weather patterns suggests a below normal number of acres burned statewide. This however does not eliminate the chance of large or problem fires in those specific areas outlined above.

The confidence level of this assessment is moderate. The timing and duration of precipitation and length of dry periods can make a big difference in developing conditions that are conducive to significant fire growth or an active fire season. The lightning season in Alaska does not normally begin until late May, and the prognosis for lightning occurrence accompanied by dry weather is not clear at this time.

