



Preliminary 2010 Seasonal Wildland Fire Assessment April, 2010

Executive Summary

Significant Fire Potential is defined as “the likelihood a wildfire event will require mobilization of additional resources from outside the area in which the fire situation originates”. Fire season potential is predicted for the season beginning late June and lasting until a normal season ending event in late September. A late fire season occurs across the plains of eastern Montana and North Dakota in late fall and is associated with strong wind events.

Significant Fire Potential is assessed as ABOVE NORMAL west of the Continental Divide and normal elsewhere.

The most critical factors influencing fire potential this outlook period are:

- A strong El Nino winter 2009-2010 resulted in overall above normal temperatures and below normal precipitation for most of Idaho and Montana. Below normal temperatures and much above normal precipitation were realized across eastern North Dakota.
- Below normal snow pack to date (April 21). State averages: 50-70% Montana and Idaho.
- El Nino conditions have weakened with ENSO Neutral to weak La Nina conditions forecast for the summer.
- Much drier than normal along and west of the Divide and Yellowstone NP.
- Early spring precipitation is running below normal across most of the Geographic region with the exception of east North Dakota.
- Fine fuel loading continues to be above normal most locations from two previous wet springs and limited fire coverage.

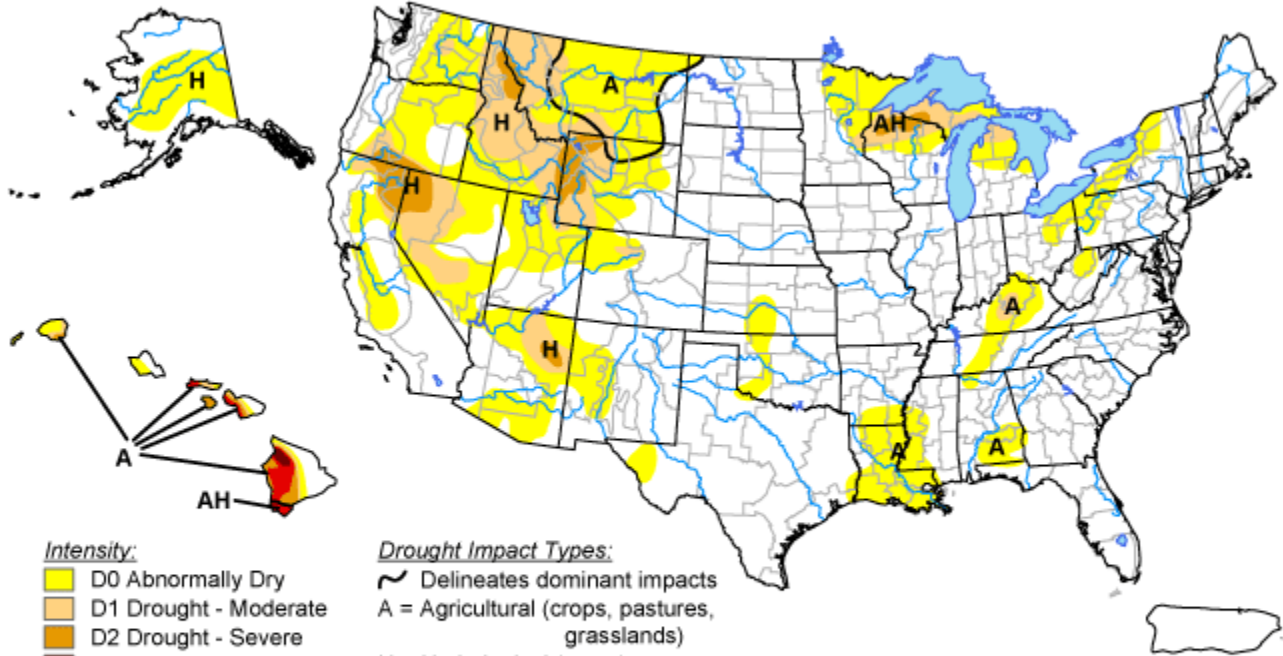
Expectations:

- Remainder of Spring (May, June): Above normal temperatures and normal precipitation are anticipated for Idaho and Montana. North Dakota may see below normal temperatures and normal precipitation.
- Below average snow pack may melt earlier in response to above normal spring temperatures.
- Summer (July, August, September): Above normal temperatures and below normal precipitation especially Idaho and western Montana with a relatively high confidence due to persistence of forecast trends.
- Fuels at all elevations should become receptive to fire by mid to late July with an above normal fire activity anticipated for August into September.
- Confident that the Northern Rockies will need additional resources this summer due to anticipated fire activity.

Confidence in precipitation forecasts and potential lightning estimates this far in advance must be assessed as low. However, overall confidence in this seasonal assessment is relatively high. One unknown will be the onset of La Nina conditions. Current thinking is that a weak La Nina should develop by mid to end of September. Even if this event is delayed, the Northern Rockies should experience a warm and dry summer.

U.S. Drought Monitor

April 13, 2010
Valid 8 a.m. EDT



- Intensity:**
- D0 Abnormally Dry
 - D1 Drought - Moderate
 - D2 Drought - Severe
 - D3 Drought - Extreme
 - D4 Drought - Exceptional

- Drought Impact Types:**
- Delineates dominant impacts
 - A = Agricultural (crops, pastures, grasslands)
 - H = Hydrological (water)

The Drought Monitor focuses on broad-scale conditions. Local conditions may vary. See accompanying text summary for forecast statements.

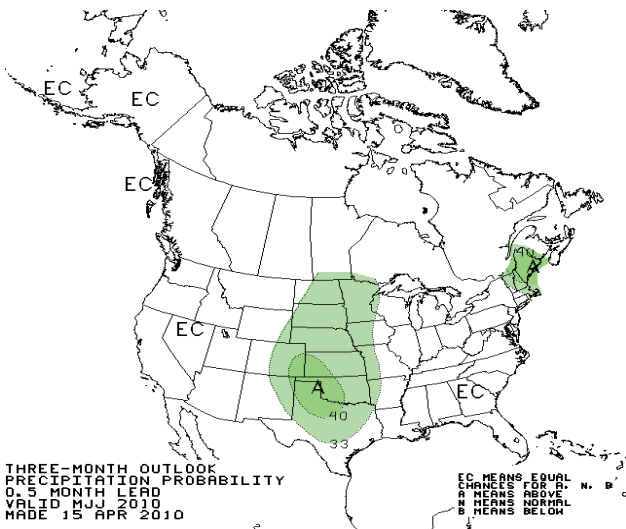
<http://drought.unl.edu/dm>



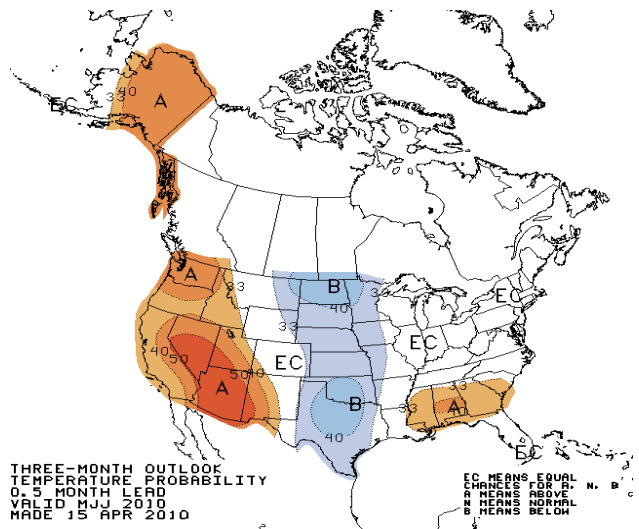
Released Thursday, April 15, 2010
Author: David Miskus, CPC/NCEP/NWS/NOAA

May, June, July

Precipitation Outlook



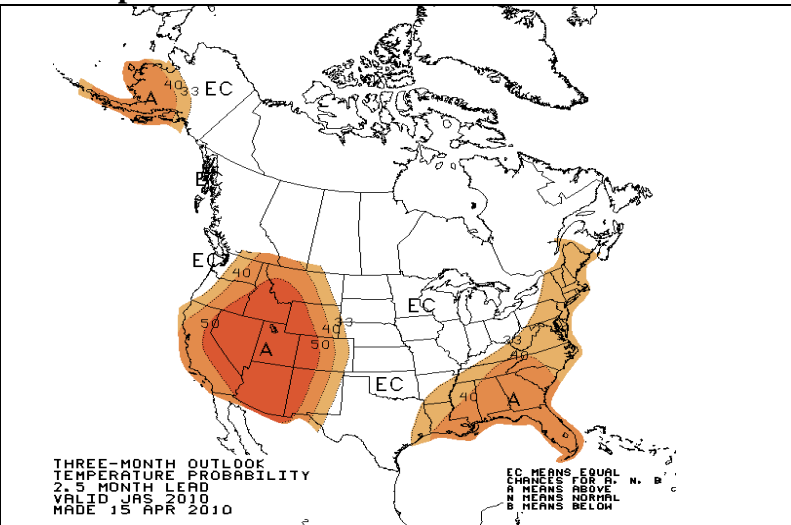
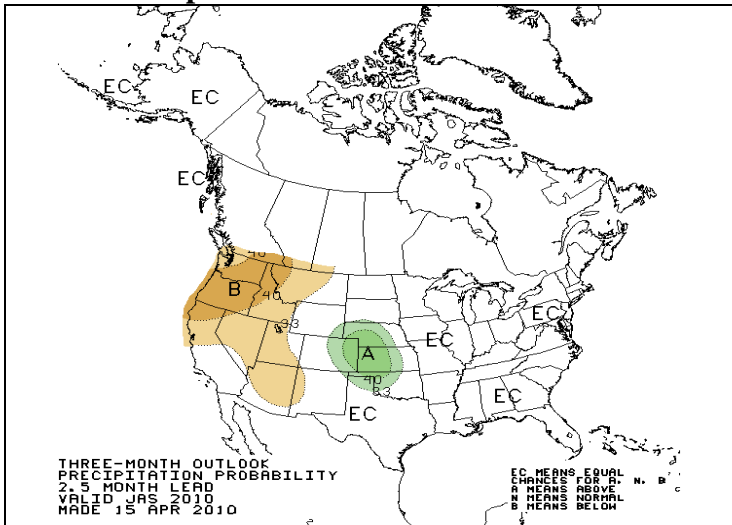
Temperature Outlook



July, August, September

Precipitation Outlook

Temperature Outlook



Drier than Normal

Warmer than normal