

North American Seasonal Fire Assessment and Outlook

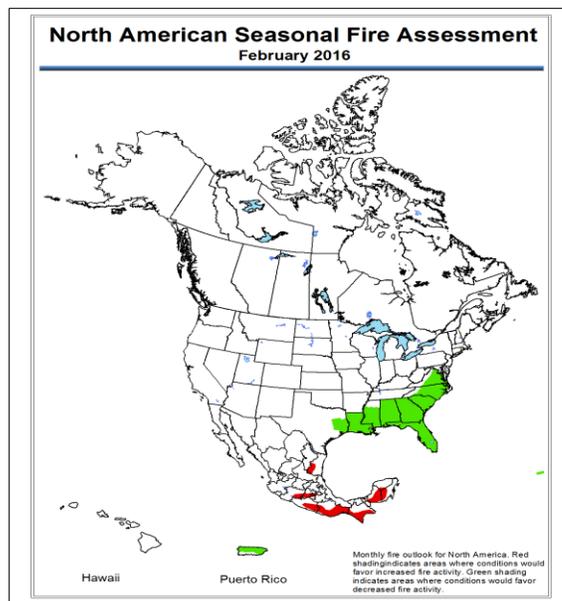
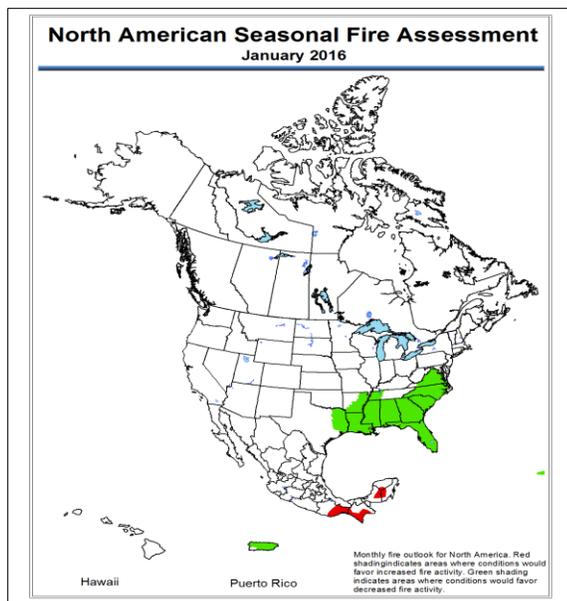
National Interagency Fire Center • Natural Resources Canada • Servicio Meteorológico Nacional
United States Canada Mexico

Outlook Period January and February 2016 Issued on 07 January 2016

Executive Summary

Warm conditions continued across most of Canada through late December before dropping closer to normal near Christmas. Nevertheless, the potential for wildland fire across Canada in January is very low. The United States experienced above normal precipitation across much of the drought-stricken West with snow in the mountains and heavy rain in lower elevations. Much warmer-than-normal conditions in the central and eastern U.S. were accompanied by heavy rain from the Gulf Coast region of Texas to the Upper Midwest, causing severe flooding along the Mississippi River. Heavy rain also fell across the Southeast while above normal precipitation spread throughout most of the East. Seasonal conditions in the West typically do not support much wildfire and early January storms should further reduce the potential. Ongoing wet conditions across the Gulf and southern and middle Atlantic states will lower winter burning potential, as well as across Puerto Rico. In Mexico, cold and wet December suppressed fire activity across the country. Cold fronts will continue to push deep into the country in January, reducing fire potential over northern and central Mexico. Entering the dry season, southern Mexico will have areas of increased potential for wildland fires.

February brings little change as Canada and most of the United States are in winter and typically have low potential for significant wildfire activity. The southeastern U.S. will continue to see wet weather that will reduce the potential for winter wildfires. Dry season conditions in Mexico will cause increases in wildland fire potential across southern and central Mexico.



Monthly fire outlook for North America for January (left) and February 2016 (right). Red shading indicates areas where conditions would favor increased fire activity. Green shading indicates areas where conditions would favor decreased fire activity.



National Interagency Fire Center
Predictive Services



Natural Resources Canada
Resources naturelles Canada

CONAGUA
COMISION NACIONAL DEL AGUA

Servicio Meteorológico
Nacional

Critical Factors

The critical factors influencing significant fire potential for this outlook period are:

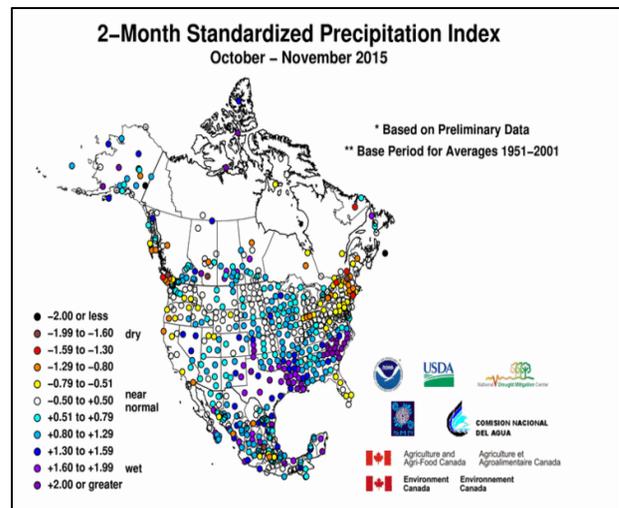
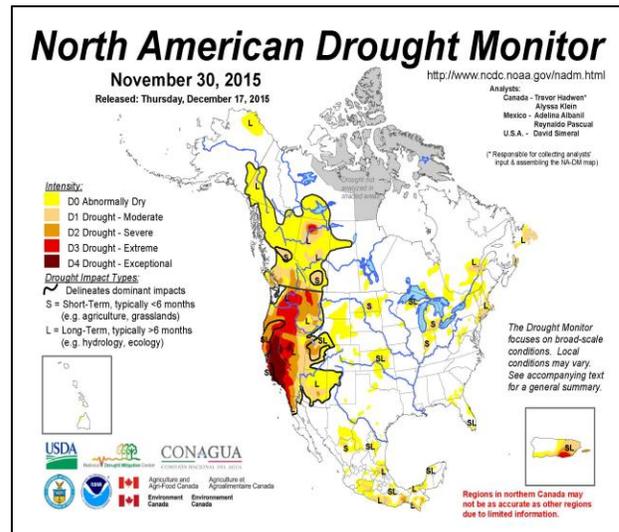
El Niño-Southern Oscillation: El Niño conditions (warming of the equatorial Pacific Ocean) are at or near the forecast peak heading into the Northern Hemisphere winter season. The latest long-range forecasts indicate a weakening of ENSO conditions during the remainder of winter and into the spring. Canada and most of the United States remain out of fire season as winter weather conditions take hold. Persistent wet conditions in the southeastern U.S., including Puerto Rico, will continue decreasing wildland fire activity. Wet and cold December conditions across much of northern and central Mexico associated with winter storms and increasing frontal incursions have greatly reduced wildfire activity.

Drought: The North American Drought Monitor from 30 November 2015 (top right) shows severe to exceptional drought over most of the western U.S. with the worst conditions in California, Oregon, Washington, Nevada, western and northern Idaho, western Montana, and western Utah. Recent heavy rains and snow along the West Coast reduced some of the western drought, especially in southwestern Canada, Washington, Oregon and northern California. December storms in the central and southeastern U.S. eliminated drought from the region. Small pockets of severe drought are scattered across Mexico.

Fire Season Status: Winter months are generally characterized by very little wildfire activity across Canada, most of the United States and much of northern and central Mexico. Dry and very warm December weather across the central and eastern U.S. and extending into central and eastern Canada was offset by late month snow and rain events. In Mexico, frontal intrusions pushed well into Mexico and kept wet conditions over much of northern and central regions. Only a few fires were observed in southern Mexico in December.

Canada Discussion

January and February 2016: Winter conditions are in place throughout Canada. Recent winter storms have brought normal to above normal precipitation to the mountains of British Columbia and Alberta. However, much below normal precipitation fell across most of Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba. Precipitation values were near normal from Ontario eastward. Temperatures are expected to be above normal through February with dry conditions returning to most of the country. This scenario raises concerns for an early start to the 2016 fire season.



Top: North American Drought Monitor from 30 November 2015. **Bottom:** 2-month Standardized Precipitation Index for October-November 2015. (Both from U.S National Centers for Environmental Information, NCEI/NOAA)

United States Discussion

January and February 2016: Most of the western and northern states are in winter and are generally considered out of fire season through February. Latest forecast trends indicate a continuation of very wet conditions across most of the Southwest, the southern Rockies states, and along the Gulf Coast and Atlantic Coast states. Some fire activity is typical during the winter months in the southern half of the U.S. but wet conditions will continue to keep fire potential low. Dry conditions are expected across the Northwest, the northern Rockies, and the Great Lakes and Mississippi Valley regions. Continuation of these dry conditions could contribute to an early start to burning conditions across the Great Lakes region and in parts of the Northwest.

Mexico Discussion

January 2016: Much of Mexico typically enters a dry period in late winter but stronger and more frequent cold fronts are expected to push well into Mexico, keeping the potential for cooler and wetter conditions high across northern Mexico. This will keep wildland fire potential low for much of northern and central Mexico in January. However, as dry season conditions take hold farther south, fine fuels from recent rains will dry out and contribute to an increased potential for wildland fire in the southern states of Chiapas, Oaxaca, and the Yucatan Peninsula states of Campeche, Quintana Roo and Yucatan.

February 2016: Near to above normal precipitation is expected in much of northern and central Mexico. However, expanding dry season conditions in the south will increase wildland fire potential farther north and west from January conditions. This will affect parts of the central Yucatan Peninsula, Chiapas, Oaxaca, Guerrero, Michoacán, Morelos, the State of Mexico including the Federal District, and Puebla. Some increase in fire activity is also expected in parts of Tamaulipas.

Additional Information

Additional and supplemental information for this outlook can be obtained at:

United States:

National Significant Wildland Fire Potential Outlook

http://www.predictiveservices.nifc.gov/outlooks/monthly_seasonal_outlook.pdf

Canada:

Canadian Wildland Fire Information System

<http://cwfis.cfs.nrcan.gc.ca/home>

Mexico:

Servicio Meteorológico Nacional

http://smn.cna.gob.mx/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=156&Itemid=113

Outlook Objective

The North American Seasonal Fire Assessment and Outlook is a general discussion of conditions that will affect the occurrence of wildland fires across Canada, the United States, and Mexico. Wildland fire is a natural part of many ecosystems across North America. This document provides a broad assessment of those factors that will contribute to an increase or decrease of seasonal fire activity. The objective is to assist wildland fire managers prepare for the potential variations in a typical fire season. It is not intended as a prediction of where and when wildland fires will occur nor is it intended to suggest any area is safe from the hazards of wildfire.

Acknowledgements

Contributions to this document were made by:

Canada: Kerry Anderson, Natural Resources Canada
Richard Carr, Natural Resources Canada

United States: Ed Delgado, Predictive Services, Bureau of Land Management
Jeremy Sullens, Predictive Services, USDA Forest Service
Coleen Haskell, Predictive Services, USDA Forest Service

Mexico: Hector Robles, Servicio Meteorológico Nacional
Juan Carlos Ramos, Servicio Meteorológico Nacional
Yesenia Alejandro, Servicio Meteorológico Nacional
Angel Teran, Servicio Meteorológico Nacional
Dario Rodriguez, Servicio Meteorológico Nacional