

North American Seasonal Fire Assessment and Outlook

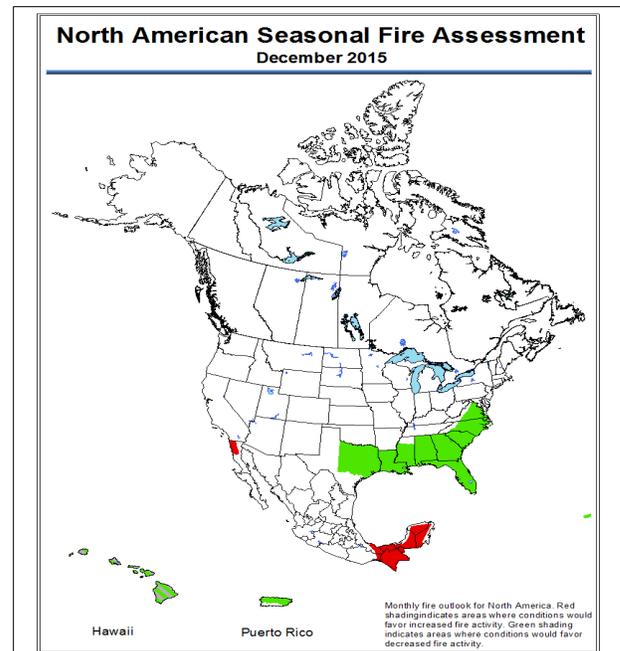
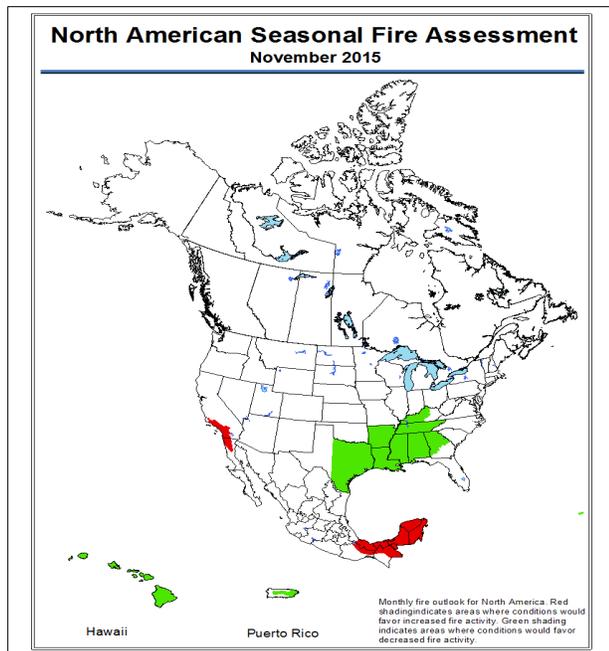
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United States Canada Mexico

Outlook Period November and December 2015 Issued on 10 November 2015

Executive Summary

Moving into late fall and early winter, Canada is essentially out of fire season and the potential for additional wildland fire is very low. In the United States, the central and southern mountains of California will gradually lose potential for significant wildland fire as precipitation events increase and moisten fuels in the region. Generally, most of the northern and western U.S. are out of fire season in November but some fire activity is possible where dry fuels and dry, windy weather are present. However, those fires are typically of short duration. The southeastern U.S. will likely have a decrease in fall fire activity as wet conditions persist through the month. Hawaii and Puerto Rico will also see a decrease in seasonal fire activity due to wet conditions. In Mexico, fire potential remains elevated in the northern portion of Baja California and in the southern Veracruz, the Yucatan Peninsula, Chiapas, and Tabasco.

By December, Canada remains out of fire season. The northern and western U.S. typically have little fire in the winter. In the southeastern U.S., wet conditions will continue to keep fire activity suppressed along the Gulf coast and Atlantic coast regions from central Texas to Virginia. In Mexico, elevated fire potential will continue in the south over most of the Yucatan Peninsula, southern Veracruz, eastern Oaxaca, Chiapas, and Tabasco.



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



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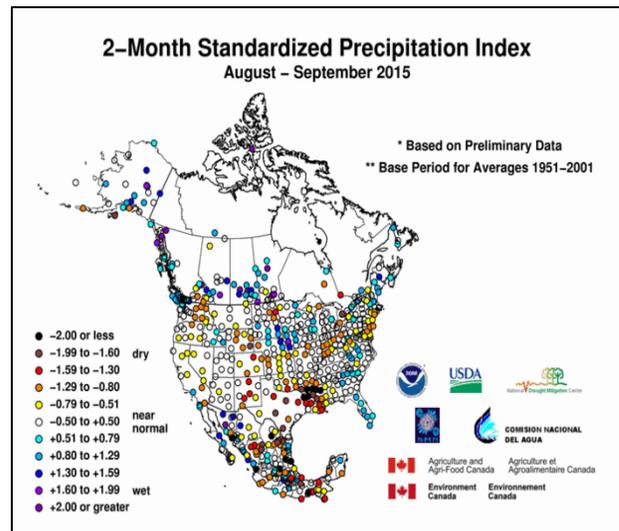
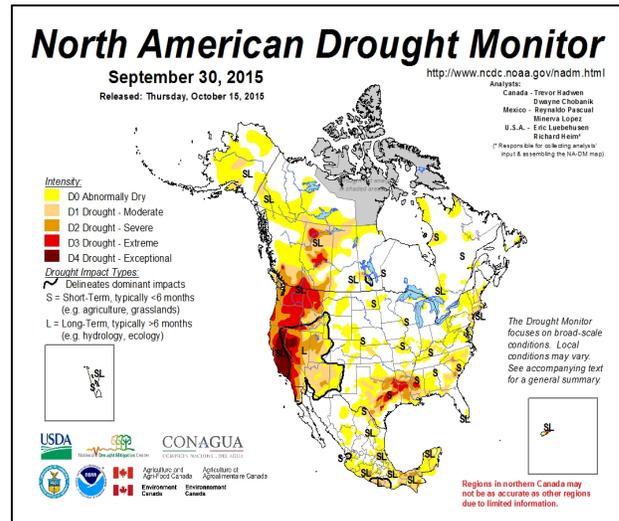
Critical Factors

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. November and December typically plunge Canada and most of the northern and western U.S. into winter conditions, essentially ending fire season in those regions. The southeastern U.S. still has potential for fire into the early winter but El Niño conditions often leave the region very wet, decreasing wildland fire activity. Hawaii and Puerto Rico are also expected to see a decrease in fire activity. Latest projections suggests continued above normal precipitation through much of central and northeastern Mexico, keeping wildland fire activity down. In the southern states, dry and warm conditions are expected at least through November.

Drought: The North American Drought Monitor from 30 September 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 in the Gulf states region erased the severe to extreme drought conditions present from central Texas to Mississippi in late September. Pockets of severe to extreme drought continue in southern British Columbia, Alberta and northern Saskatchewan. Small pockets of severe drought remain in southern Mexico.

Fire Season Status: The transition to fall conditions brought a more progressive pattern to the U.S. and Canada as a series of troughs moved across the West and brought periodic precipitation, easing dry conditions and all but ending the fire season over most of western North America. An early snowstorm covered parts of the northern and Canadian Rockies but more significantly brought several inches to the Prairie provinces, the northern Plains states, and Great Lakes region in mid-October. Farther south, tropical moisture fed frontal systems crossing into the Gulf of Mexico, producing heavy rain across northern and central Mexico and the U.S. Gulf coast region. Hurricane Patricia also brought severe flooding to much of central Mexico, Texas and Louisiana late in the month. Parts of southern Mexico, especially the Yucatan, received below normal precipitation. Only a few fires were observed in Mexico in October, mainly during the first half of the month.



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

Canada Discussion

November and December: Winter conditions are expected throughout Canada. Western Canada is expected to receive above average temperatures and below normal snow amounts as El Niño conditions persist through the winter. This will contribute to an early start to the 2016 fire season. Eastern Canada may similarly experience a warmer winter due to El Niño though precipitation should be sufficient to recharge the moisture levels in the forest floor.

United States Discussion

November and December: Fire potential will gradually decrease across the mountains of southern and central California as an increasing number of wet storms bring much needed precipitation to the drought-stricken region and mitigate dry fuels conditions. The western and northern parts of the country are typically out of fire season but some short duration fires are always possible during the dry fall months associated with cured grasses. The southeastern U.S. typically sees a short surge in fires during the fall leaf drop but a continuation of recent wet conditions will reduce the potential for wildland fire activity in November and December. Hawaii and Puerto Rico have also experienced wet conditions associated with tropical activity, reducing the potential for wildland fire activity.

Mexico Discussion

November: Negative precipitation anomalies are projected for the southern states of Chiapas, Tabasco, and the states of the Yucatan Peninsula. Southern Veracruz is also expected to see below normal precipitation. The prolonged dry conditions will contribute to above normal potential for wildland fires. Wet trends in central and northeastern Mexico will continue, keeping fire activity at normal levels. Lingering dryness in the far northern region of Baja California will keep the potential for wildland fires elevated at least through early November.

December: An increase in precipitation across northern Baja California should return the fire potential to normal for the region in line with western, central and northern states. Continued precipitation deficits in the southern states will keep fire potential somewhat elevated in the Yucatan Peninsula, southern Veracruz, eastern Oaxaca, Chiapas and Tabasco.

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

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