

# North American Seasonal Fire Assessment and Outlook

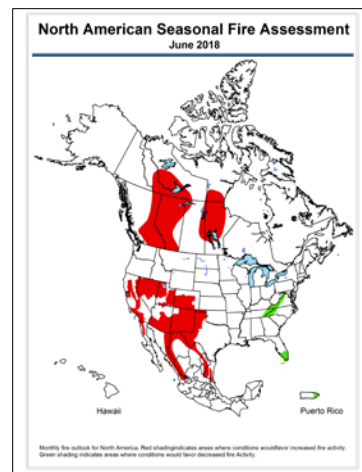
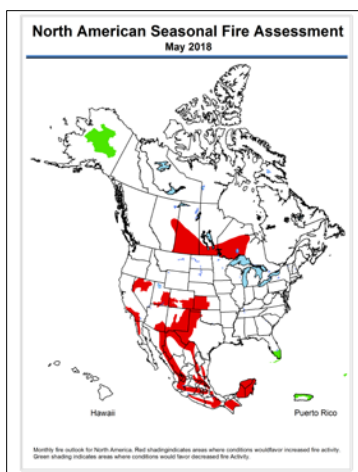
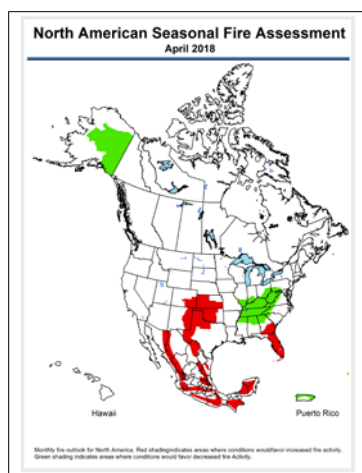
National Interagency Fire Center • Natural Resources Canada • Servicio Meteorológico Nacional  
United States Canada Mexico

## Outlook Period April, May, and June 2018 Issued 13 April 2018

### Executive Summary

Strong winter storms continued to cross North America. Storms developed along the western Canada-United States coast, strengthened across the central Rockies, then barreled through the eastern seaboard. Systems brought very cold temperatures and heavy snow or rain to many areas. Above normal precipitation fell across the southern Prairie provinces in Canada. In the U.S., heavy rain or snow fell over much of California, the northern Rockies, the northern Plains, the Midwest, the Mississippi Valley, southeastern Texas, the southern Appalachians, and parts of the New England coast. Parts of southeastern and central Alaska also had normal to above normal precipitation. Below normal precipitation occurred over parts of Ontario and the northwestern provinces, the U.S. Southwest and central Plains, and northern Mexico and the Yucatán.

Elevated fire potential in April covers much of the central and southern Plains, Florida, and southern Georgia in the U.S. In Mexico, generally the major eastern and western mountain ranges will be in elevated fire potential as well as the Yucatán and the southern coast. In May, elevated fire potential develops from western Ontario to eastern Alberta. U.S. elevated fire potential expands across the southern and central Plains into southern parts of the Southwest, the southern California coastal mountains, and parts of the Great Basin. Elevated conditions in Mexico remain unchanged from April. By June, elevated fire potential in Canada covers most of the Alberta, eastern British Columbia, southwestern Northwest Territories, and northern Manitoba. In the U.S., potential expands through much of the Southwest, the Great Basin, and the California mountains. Elevated fire potential in Mexico decreases to only the mountains and deserts of the northern states.



Monthly fire outlook for North America for April (left), May (middle), and June 2018 (right). Red shading indicates areas where conditions would favor increased fire activity. Green shading indicates areas where conditions would favor decreased fire activity. *Click on each image to see larger versions.*



National Interagency Fire Center  
Predictive Services



Natural Resources Canada  
Resources naturelles Canada



Servicio Meteorológico Nacional

## Critical Factors

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

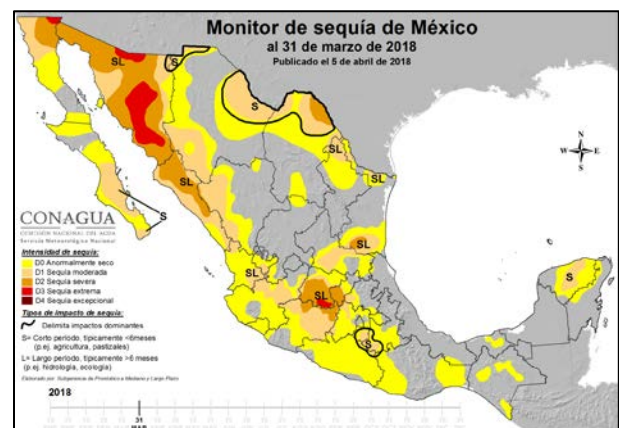
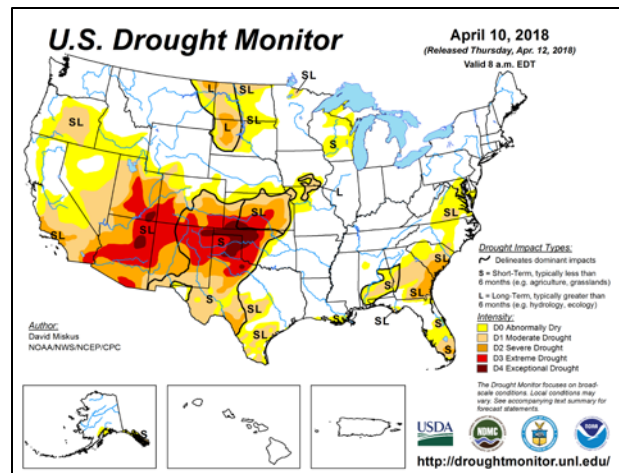
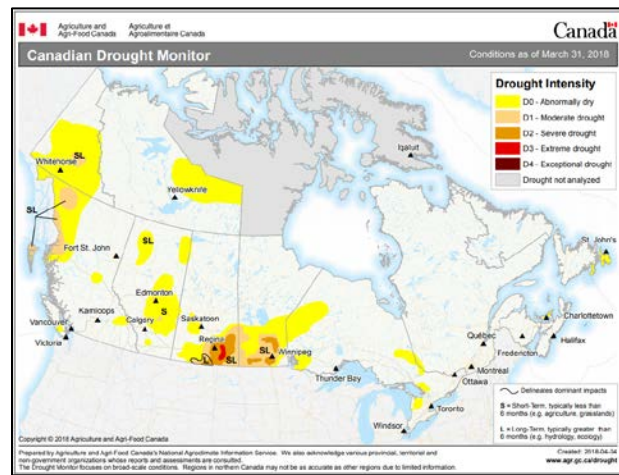
**El Niño-Southern Oscillation:** Equatorial Pacific sea-surface temperatures were still slightly below normal but overall conditions were still ENSO neutral. Conditions are expected to remain in the neutral category through early boreal summer, slowly warming toward normal levels

**Drought:** Drought conditions improved slightly in western and central Canada with only a small area of severe to extreme drought in southern Saskatchewan showing a small expansion south of Regina. In the U.S., exceptional drought expanded in the southern and central Plains while extreme conditions expanded across the southern Rockies and the southwestern deserts. Severe drought grew across southern California. Severe conditions decreased in the northern Plains and the Southeast. Drought severity decreased slightly in northwestern Mexico where only small pockets of extreme drought persisted in the state of Sonora. Moderate to severe conditions remained over most of the west coast and central Mexico. Some expansion and intensification of conditions occurred in northern Mexico along the Rio Grande/Rio Bravo region.

**Fire Season Status:** Winter patterns will prolong snow cover and cooler temperatures across most of Canada. Much of the boreal forest has above normal snowpack, but lighter snow conditions exist through central Yukon, northern British Columbia, and southern Manitoba. Some northern regions have below normal snow cover but it is still too early for the primary drivers of ignitions in the region. Increased fire activity across the southern Plains and the Southwest is mainly driven by abundant fine fuels and warm, dry, and windy conditions typical of the region this time of year. Fire activity showed increases through March in central and southern Mexico. Numbers of fires were highest around Mexico City, while area burned was highest along the southern coast from Jalisco to Oaxaca.

## Canada Discussion

**April:** Conditions favor normal or below normal fire activity levels for the month.



**Top:** Canadian Drought Monitor for 31 March 2018 (from Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada). **Middle:** United States Drought Monitor for 10 April 2018 (from U.S. National Center for Environmental Information). **Bottom:** Mexican Drought Monitor for 31 March 2018 (from CONAGUA-Servicio Meteorológico Nacional).

**May:** Increased fire potential develops in western Ontario, stretching west through the Prairie provinces to eastern Alberta.

**June:** Increased fire potential expands across most of Alberta, southwestern Northwest Territories, and southern British Columbia. The interior valleys and rain shadow region of the Coastal Mountains of British Columbia may be prone to fire as autumn conditions were dry and winter precipitation usually does not recharge moisture in the deep organic layer of the forest floor in these regions.

## **United States Discussion**

**April:** The southern and central Plains will experience increased fire potential where abundant fuels, both carryover and new growth, become available for burning. Strong spring storms crossing the Rockies will produce warm, dry, and windy conditions for the region, increasing the potential for fires to grow rapidly. Very dry condition over Florida and southern Georgia will also support an increased potential for fires.

**May:** Elevated fire potential will continue in the southern and central Plains, although retreating more toward the high plains of Colorado, western Oklahoma, West Texas, and eastern New Mexico. However, as summer conditions increase, higher potential expands across southern New Mexico and southern Arizona. Parts of the Great Basin will also see an elevated potential where fuels are abundant and dry enough to support fire.

**June:** Elevated potential expands rapidly in the heat of summer across the southern Rockies into most of the northern Great Basin and across most of the mountains of California.

## **Mexico Discussion**

**April/May:** Long-range models continue to show increasing hot and dry conditions over most of northern and central Mexico in April and May. This will worsen drought conditions in the northwest and central parts of the country while expanding dry conditions into the eastern mountain areas. Fire potential will remain elevated across the western and eastern mountain chains with some elevated potential in the central states. Fire potential will also be elevated in the Yucatán, Chiapas, and Oaxaca where above normal temperatures and below normal precipitation are expected.

**June:** By June, summer rain season is expected to spread through central and southern Mexico. This will mitigate fire conditions in the southern half of the country. Hot and dry conditions will remain at least through the early part of the month across the northern states. Fire potential will remain elevated across Sonora, northern Chihuahua, northern Coahuila, Nuevo León, and Tamaulipas. A small areas of northern Baja California will also have elevated fire potential.

## **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](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](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: Richard Carr, Natural Resources Canada  
Ginny Marshall, Natural Resources Canada

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

Mexico: Martín Ibarra, Servicio Meteorológico Nacional  
Dario Rodríguez, Servicio Meteorológico Nacional