Executive Summary

A deep trough continued across North America in February, keeping cold air over most of western and central Canada and the central United States. Cooler conditions also filtered into the western U.S. The eastern provinces and states were warmer than normal for the month. Mexico was near to slightly warmer than normal. Precipitation was well above normal across the eastern U.S from Texas to New England, parts of eastern Canada, and north to the U.S. Upper Midwest. Above normal snow fell over the central and northern U.S. Rockies and into the southern Canadian Rockies. Wetter conditions also occurred in the southern Rockies but not much snow. Central Mexico was near to above normal on rainfall. Very dry conditions occurred over California and western Mexico. The U.S. southern Plains and the southeastern U.S. coast were also very dry and parts of the Mexican Gulf Coast region were below normal.

Fire potential will be normal across Canada for March and April but will increase in May across southern Ontario, Manitoba, Saskatchewan, and central Alberta after snow melts away and weather becomes warmer. In the U.S., elevated potential across the southern Plains will expand to the Mid-Mississippi Valley to the east and to the Southwest deserts to the west by May. The mountains of California will also experience an increase in potential late in the spring. Fire potential in the northern Plains will increase in April with warmer and windier weather. Precipitation deficits are expected to continue in Florida, increasing fire potential for the peninsula through spring. Mexico will have elevated fire potential across the mountains in the west and east with increasing potential in the southern states and the Yucatán.
Critical Factors

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

**El Niño-Southern Oscillation:** Equatorial Pacific sea-surface temperatures slowly warming toward normal levels. The latest forecasts indicate La Niña conditions will continue to decrease, returning the ENSO pattern to a more neutral state through boreal spring.

**Drought:** Conditions worsened slight in southern Saskatchewan and Manitoba with pockets of extreme to severe drought around Regina and Winnipeg. Abnormally dry to moderate drought conditions remained in parts of Alberta, British Columbia, Yukon, and Northwest Territories. The U.S. drought The U.S. drought continued to worsen across the southwest and south central states. Severe to extreme conditions expanded across southern California, Utah, Arizona, Colorado, New Mexico, Kansas, Oklahoma, and Texas. Much of the Mississippi Valley and the Southeast received some relief in February with only pockets of moderate drought lingering in the southeastern states. Some decrease also occurred in the Northern Plains but moderate to severe conditions remain in parts of eastern Montana and the western Dakotas. Drought in Mexico continued to expand across the western part of the nation with worsening conditions in Baja, Sonora, Durango, and Sinaloa. Areas of severe to extreme drought continued in central Mexico.

**Fire Season Status:** Winter conditions remain across Canada and most of the U.S. However, dry conditions in the south central U.S. was supporting increased fire activity in the southern Plains states. A few fires were also occurring the dry desert areas of the Southwest and the western Great Basin. Some fire activity was observed in parts of central Mexico near the capital.

**Canada Discussion**

**March/April:** A weakening La Niña should prolong snow cover and cool temperatures in most of Canada over the next few weeks. Much of the boreal forest has greater than normal snowpack, although a broken line with lighter snow cover exists through Yukon, northern British Columbia, southeast through the Prairie Provinces to the south side of Lake Winnipeg, and east along the St Lawrence Valley into the Atlantic Provinces. Although some northern regions have less than normal
snow cover, population is sparse, and lightning, which is the main driver of fire starts, does not occur frequently until late spring.

**May:** An area of increased fire risk develops in southern Ontario, stretching west through the Prairie Provinces and into north-central Alberta.

**United States Discussion**

**March:** Worsening drought conditions over the southern Plains will likely expand during the month. Dry pre-greenup fuels bases coupled with windy and dry spring conditions will increase the potential for ignitions and rapid rates of spread. The coastal ranges of southern California remain dry and maintain a higher potential for fires. Recent storms moving into the eastern U.S. have reduced drought conditions over most of the southeastern states.

**April/May:** Drought conditions over the south central states will expand eastward into the Mid-Mississippi Valley and westward into the southern Rockies and the Southwest deserts. Poor snowpack will likely be gone by this period and dry conditions will support increased potential for ignitions and large fires. As the heat of summer approaches, dry conditions will spread quickly into the Sierras of California and Nevada, increasing the potential for early fires. Windy spring conditions in the northern Plains where drought conditions persist will increase fire potential and spread. In the Southeast, Florida fire potential will increase as dry spring conditions continue.

**Mexico Discussion**

**March/April/May:** Model forecasts of increasing hot and dry conditions across much of northern and central Mexico will worsen and expand drought conditions across the country. Fire potential will remain elevated across the west and the east. Increasing potential will develop in the southern states and across the Yucatán.
Additional Information
Additional and supplemental information for this outlook can be obtained at:

United States:
National Significant Wildland Fire Potential Outlook

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.

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