

North American Seasonal Fire Assessment and Outlook

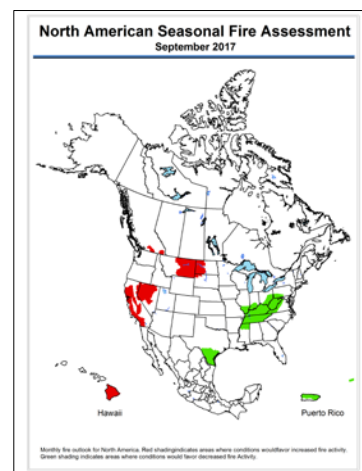
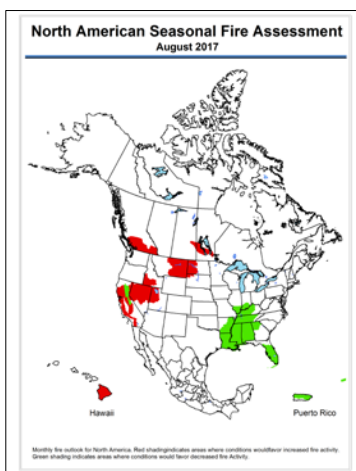
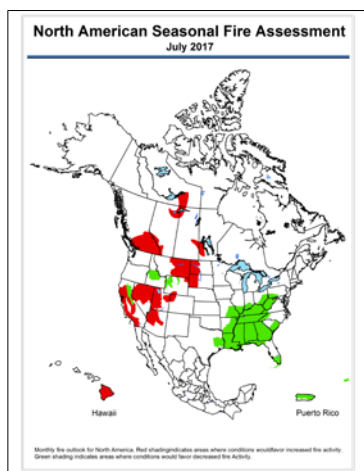
National Interagency Fire Center • Natural Resources Canada • Servicio Meteorológico Nacional
United States Canada Mexico

Outlook Period July, August, and September 2017
Issued 12 July 2017

Executive Summary

Strong high pressure developed over the western half of North America while a broad trough remained over the East. Warm and dry conditions in the West slowly increased fire potential as fuels dried but a few troughs weakened the western ridge enough to bring significant precipitation to western Canada and the northwestern quarter of the U.S., slowing the drying at mid and higher elevations while lower elevations continued to dry. The eastern Canadian provinces and the eastern U.S. states received above normal precipitation along with the northwestern U.S. However, very dry conditions occurred across the southern halves of the western Provinces from British Columbia to Saskatchewan, and across the northwestern Provinces. The northern U.S. Plains, the central U.S. Rockies, the desert Southwest, and southern California were also much drier-than-normal. Most of northern Mexico received below normal precipitation while the far southern states had above normal rainfall.

Fire activity will peak in Canada in July and August over southern Northwest Territories, northern Alberta, southern Saskatchewan, and southern British Columbia before decreasing quickly in September. High potential will continue in the U.S. into September across much of the Great Basin, the valleys and foothills of California, and the High Plains of Montana and the Dakotas. Hawaii will also maintain a high potential into September. .



Monthly fire outlook for North America for July (left), August (middle), and September 2017 (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.*



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Natural Resources Canada
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Critical Factors

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

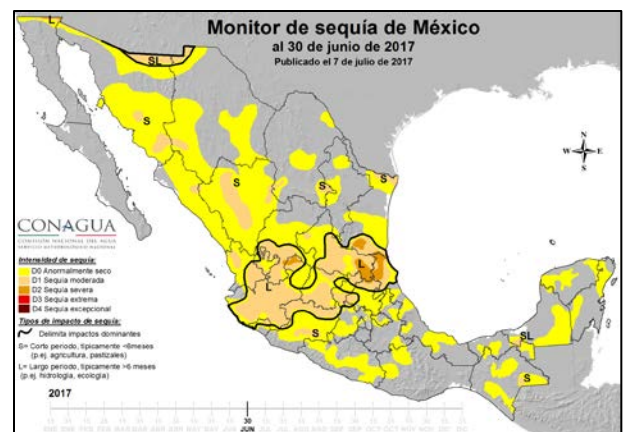
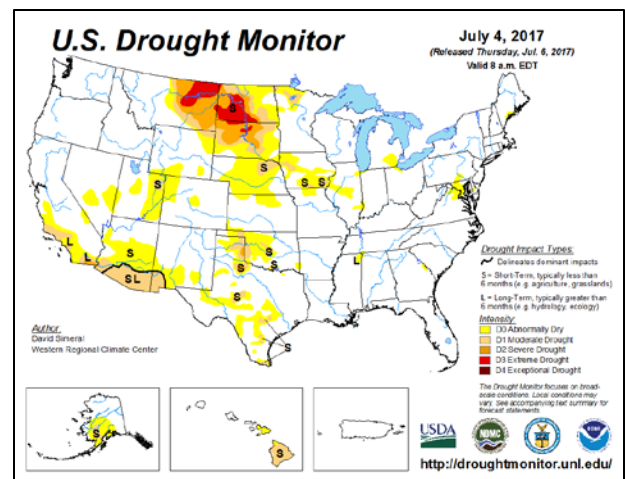
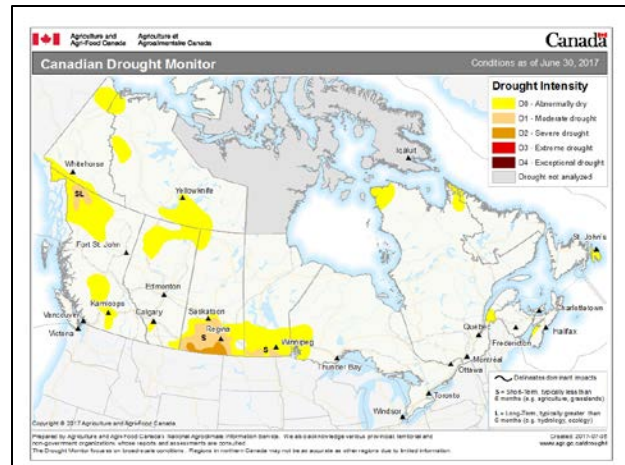
El Niño-Southern Oscillation: Equatorial Pacific sea-surface temperatures remain slightly above normal in the central Pacific but some cooling has occurred in the eastern equatorial regions. ENSO remains in a neutral state. The latest forecasts continue to indicate this neutral pattern will continue through the northern hemisphere summer and into the fall.

Drought: Drought remains sparse across Canada with areas of abnormally dry to moderate drought in northern and south central British Columbia, northern Alberta, and southern Manitoba. Southern Saskatchewan was rapidly developing moderate to severe drought conditions. These extended into the northern U.S. Plains with severe to extreme drought in eastern Montana, western North Dakota and northern South Dakota. Other areas of abnormally dry to moderate drought were forming over Nebraska, Iowa, Oklahoma, Texas, southern California, and southern Arizona. However, increasing summer thunderstorms in the Southwest should mitigate some of those dry conditions. Dry areas expanded across much of western and central Mexico with moderate to severe drought conditions spreading from the state of Jalisco on the west coast to Veracruz on the east coast. Pockets of dry conditions were scattered across the Yucatán and southern Mexico.

Fire Season Status: Wildfire activity across Canada was well below average through June. Fire activity in the U.S. was mainly concentrated in the Southwest and the Great Basin as hot and dry conditions took over. The Northwest and the Rocky Mountains also reported some fire activity in June. At the end of the month, the number of fires was near the 10-year average while acres were about 30 percent higher. In Mexico through early July, over 67,000 hectares burned, second only to 2011 in the last 17 years. The states of Jalisco, Chihuahua, Oaxaca, and Durango recorded the most acres burned to date.

Canada Discussion

July: Parts of eastern Northwest Territories and northern Alberta are expected to have increased fire risk due to continuing dry conditions and above-average temperatures. Hot weather and a lack of precipitation have led to extreme fire risk in southern British Columbia.



Top: Canadian Drought Monitor for 30 June 2017 (from Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada). **Middle:** United States Drought Monitor for 4 July 2017 (from U.S. National Center for Environmental Information). **Bottom:** Mexican Drought Monitor for 30 June 2017 (from CONAGUA-Servicio Meteorológico Nacional).

August: The increased fire risk in southern British Columbia is expected to continue into August. High temperatures in southern Saskatchewan and Manitoba are expected to gradually increase fire risk along the southern edge of the boreal forest.

September: With cooling temperatures across Canada, fire activity is anticipated to be low. Elevated fire danger may continue in southern British Columbia.

United States Discussion

July/August/September: July and August typically represent the peak of fire season in the West. Heavy fuel loads of fine fuels (grasses, brush) in the interior West, in the California foothills and valleys, and the High Plains of Montana and the Dakotas, will raise fire potential through August in the heat of summer. Conditions favorable to fire will gradually decrease in September but potential will remain above normal through most of the month. Moisture from Mexico is well entrenched across the southwestern states and while ignitions remain likely, fire spread in the higher humidity and scattered precipitation is largely reduced. Higher elevations of the Sierras remain relatively moist from a late-melting snowpack and will likely have below normal fire potential. Wet spring and summer conditions in the southeastern U.S. will mitigate fire conditions. Warm and dry conditions will persist in the Pacific, keeping an elevated potential for fires in Hawaii.

Mexico Discussion

July/August/September: No forecast available this month.

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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