

North American Seasonal Fire Assessment and Outlook

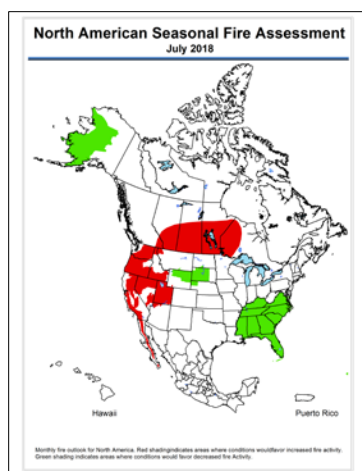
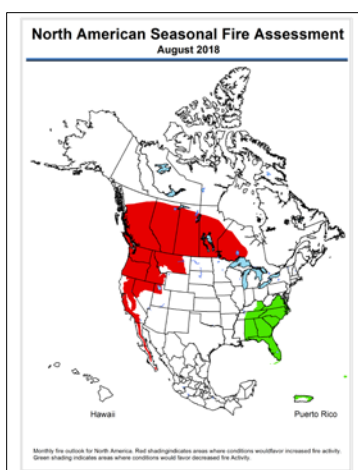
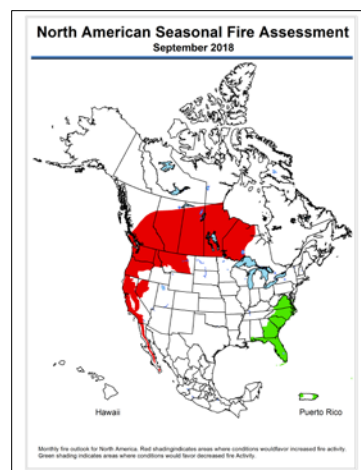
National Interagency Fire Center • Natural Resources Canada • Servicio Meteorológico Nacional
United States Canada Mexico

Outlook Period July, August, and September 2018
Issued 16 July 2018

Executive Summary

Strong high pressure settled over much of central North America, driving temperatures much above normal through most of the U.S. and Canada. Only the New England states and the higher elevations of the Pacific Northwest in the U.S., and the Maritime provinces of Canada had cooler than normal conditions in June. Despite the warm conditions, precipitation was much above normal throughout the U.S. Northern Rockies, the Upper Mississippi, Ohio, and Tennessee Valleys, and the Appalachians. Parts of the central Canadian Prairies also received normal and above rainfall. Central Mexico received above normal rainfall as the monsoon commenced. Very dry conditions across the U.S. Interior West, the central Rockies, and northern California worsened drought conditions.

Elevated fire potential in July will continue across the southern Prairie provinces in Canada, across much of the northwestern U.S. and California mountains, and into Baja California, Mexico. By August, hot and dry conditions will expand the high fire potential across much of the western and central Canada from British Columbia to Ontario, through the northwestern quarter of the U.S. and along the California mountains, and the Baja Peninsula. September will continue high fire potential across much of Canada from British Columbia to Ontario but will quickly moderate mid to late month as cooler conditions and better chances of precipitation develop. In the U.S., the Northwest and the northern Rockies remain at elevated potential but will also moderate later in the month. California and the Baja Peninsula will remain at high fire potential.



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



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Critical Factors

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

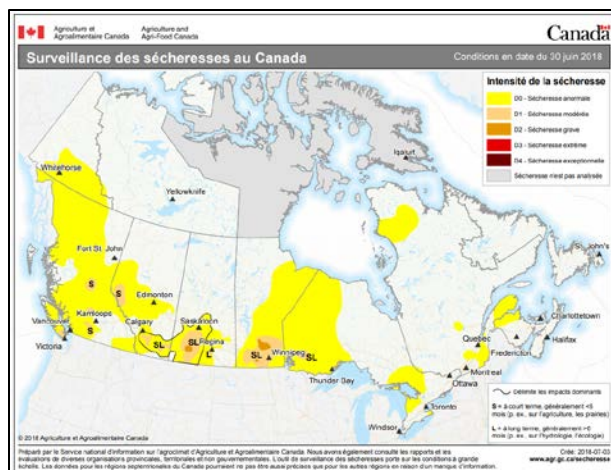
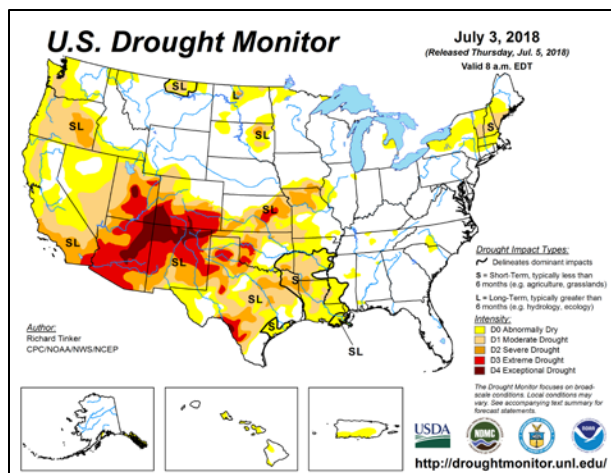
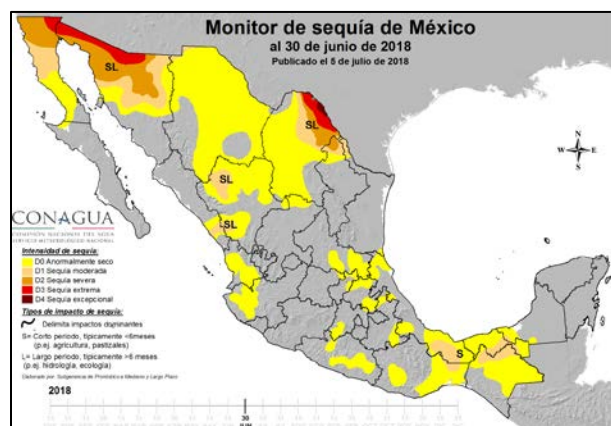
El Niño-Southern Oscillation: Equatorial Pacific sea-surface temperatures continued to warm slowly to just above normal but overall conditions were still ENSO neutral. Conditions will likely remain neutral through boreal summer but the trend is for conditions to move toward El Niño signals later this year.

Drought: Drought decreased across most of Canada with abnormally dry conditions over central and northern British Columbia, southern Yukon, southern Alberta, southern Saskatchewan, southern and eastern Manitoba, and western Ontario. Small pockets of moderate to severe drought remained in southern Saskatchewan and Manitoba. In the U.S, severe to exceptional drought remained across the Four Corners and the southern Plains states. Abnormally dry to severe drought continued along the West Coast to the interior of Oregon. Some improvement occurred in the northern Plains where only pockets of abnormally dry conditions remain. In Mexico, monsoon rains reduced drought across the West Coast and in central Mexico. Severe to extreme conditions remain in the northern states of Baja California, Sonora, Coahuila, Nuevo León, and Tamaulipas.

Fire Season Status: Canadian fire numbers were close to average for early July—approximately 3400 fires. Area burned was up to 440,000 hectares (1,087,263 acres, about 50 percent of normal). Of the agencies reporting, Alberta recorded the most fires and Manitoba the most area burned to date. Most climate models were forecasting warmer than normal temperatures across much of the country with a few areas expected to have below normal rainfall through the summer, so fire indices and risk will likely continue a slow climb over the next few weeks.

Fire activity in the U.S. continued a slow increase through June. Through June, there were about 29,000 fires (30,970 average) and 1,010,337 hectares burned (2,496,598 acres) (858,419 hectares/2,121,202 acres average).

Fire activity was decreasing across Mexico as the summer monsoons moderated burning conditions late in June but not before burning approximately 170,000 hectares (420,000 acres) since late May. Most of the area burned was in the northern state of Chihuahua where 128,000 hectares (316,295 acres) burned to through the end of June, an increase of 67,000 hectares (165,560 acres) in the last month. Nationwide total area burned through the end of June was 425,955 hectares (1,052,557 acres).



Top: Canadian Drought Monitor for 30 June 2018 (from Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada). **Middle:** United States Drought Monitor for 3 July 2018 (from U.S. National Center for Environmental Information).

Bottom: Mexican Drought Monitor for 30 June 2018 (from CONAGUA-Servicio Meteorológico Nacional).

Canada Discussion

July: Elevated fire potential extends across southeastern British Columbia, the central and southern Prairies Provinces, and Ontario west of Lake Nipigon. Recent rain in much of the country has kept fire activity low, although moisture deficits deep in the forest floor indicate a few days of drying could increase fire activity and intensity within a short time period.

August: Expected warm and dry conditions in August will keep high fire potential over most of British Columbia, the Prairie Provinces, and western Ontario.

September: The area of high fire potential extends across southern British Columbia, most of Alberta, Manitoba, and Ontario. By September, levels of fire activity usually diminish, so elevated fire severity ratings may not result in widespread activity, although grassland, shrubland, or open forest areas may still remain more prone to fire than dense forest.

United States Discussion

July: July marks the increase in lightning activity across the northwestern U.S., putting most of the region at higher risk. Elevated fire potential will extend from the higher elevations of California, across most of the Northwest, and most of the Great Basin.

August: The peak of the fire season usually occurs in August and hot and dry conditions will extend elevated fire potential across most of the northwestern quarter of the U.S. The mountains of California remain at higher risk as well.

September: Conditions begin to moderate quickly across most of the West in September. Monsoon precipitation will reduce fire conditions in the Great Basin but existing fire activity across the Northwest and California will carry into the September. By the end of the month, conditions across the Northwest and northern Rockies will also start to moderate.

Mexico Discussion

July/August/September: As summer monsoon rains continue to migrate northward, elevated fire potential will decrease. Only a small area along the central Baja California peninsula will remain at elevated risk for the remainder of the summer.

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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