National Seasonal Assessment Workshop

Eastern & Southern States

Shepherdstown, WV
January 19–21, 2005

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Eastern and Southern States Fire Season 2005

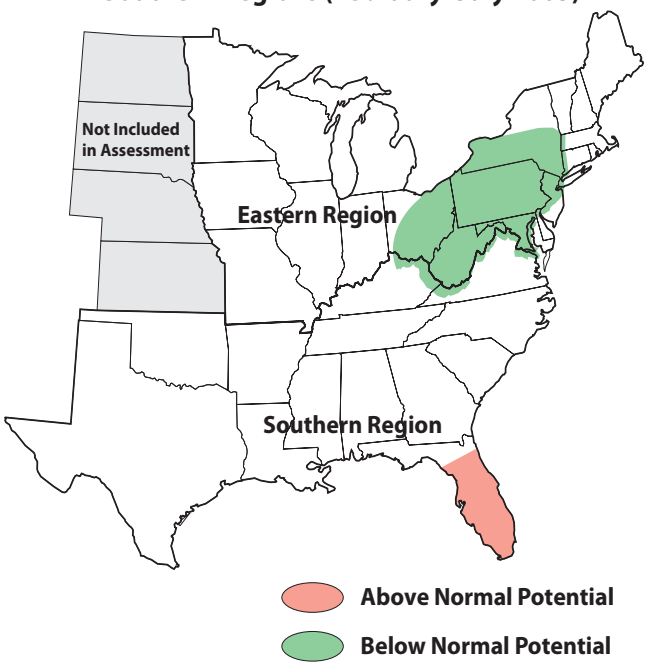
During January 19–21, 2005, a workshop was convened at the U.S. Fish and Wildife Service National Conservation Training Center in Shepherdstown, West Virginia, involving 21 fire managers, wildland fire analysts, climatologists, and predictive service meteorologists from federal and eastern and southern state agencies. The result of the workshop was an assessment and outlook of the 2005 fire season for the eastern and southern United States. Updated assessments will be issued throughout the fire season.

Outlooks

Southern Area: Significant fire potential over peninsular Florida is expected to be above normal (see map at right).

Eastern Area: Significant fire potential over most of the eastern United States is expected to be normal to below normal, but the season might begin earlier than usual (see map at right).

Wildland Fire Outlook for Eastern and Southern Regions (February–July 2005)



Potential Impacts

Southern Area: Downed fuel buildup from Florida hurricanes and localized insect mortality could intensify fires and increase spotting.

Eastern Area: Below-average snow cover in northern states could make fine fuels available for ignition earlier in the season than usual.

Both Areas: Occurrence of 7–30 day dry spells in either area could increase local fire potential throughout season.

Fuels Assessment

Southern Area: Hurricane blowdown affecting millions of acres in Florida and Alabama is a major source of concern for the southern area. Southern pine beetle has affected more than 10,000 acres of mountain forest from North Carolina through Virginia.

Eastern Area: Jack pine budworm infested more than 43,000 acres in the Bemidji/Park Rapids area of Minnesota, causing significant mortality. A 15,000-acre blowdown in northwestern Pennsylvania from 2003 is cured and increasing fuel load.

Resource Summary

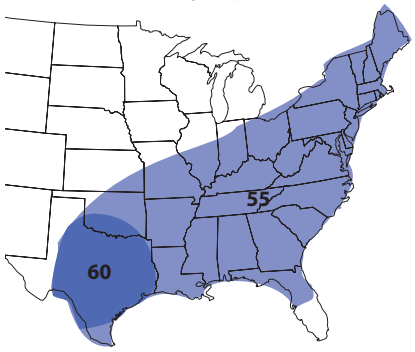
Southern Area: Florida, parts of Alabama, and the Appalachian Mountains are expected to have increased resource demands. There is a potential need for sharing heavy equipment with Florida to reach fires blocked by jackknifed piles of downed trees.

Eastern Area: For most of the eastern region, management implications are anticipated to be routine. Regions with far below-normal snow cover may require above-average firefighting resources early in the season if fine fuels remain uncompacted.

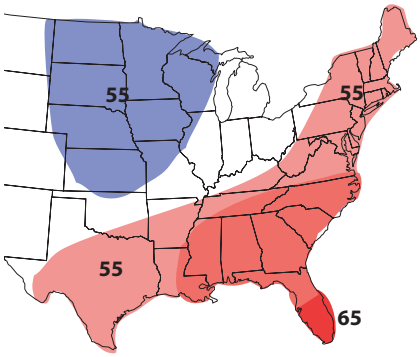
Both Areas: The fall 2005 season is expected to require fewer resources for hurricane response compared to 2004.

Temperature Forecast

February–April 2005



May–July 2005

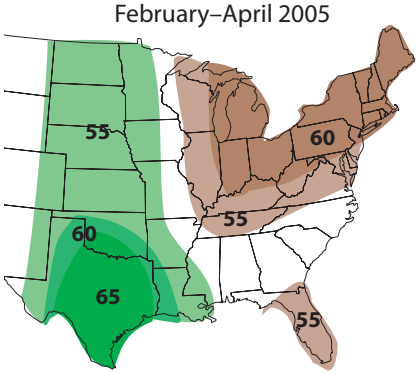


Warm **Cool**

Numbers represent the probability of occurrence.

Precipitation Forecast

February–April 2005



May–July 2005

Wet **Dry**

Numbers represent the probability of occurrence.

Climate Assessment

Southern Area: Florida experienced below-average precipitation October–December 2004. Southern Florida and parts of the Carolinas are registering elevated values of fire danger.

Eastern Area: Portions of the Great Lakes and mid-Atlantic regions are experiencing below-average snow cover.

Both Areas: The weak El Niño in progress is not impacting the eastern and southern United States.

Forecast

Southern Area: Increased chances of below-average precipitation are expected for the Florida peninsula through spring (see precipitation maps, bottom left).

Eastern Areas: Wetter-than-average current conditions are expected to outweigh the forecast for increased chances of drier-than-average conditions in the Northeast (see precipitation maps, bottom left).

Both Areas: Increased chances of below-average temperatures are expected for early spring in portions of the Southeast, giving way to increased chances of above-average temperatures in late spring for much of the southeastern United States (see temperature maps, top left). The weak El Niño event is not expected to affect the Eastern and Southern regions.

Workshop Summary

These annual assessments are designed to allow decision makers to proactively manage wildland and prescribed fire, thus better protecting lives and property, reducing firefighting costs, and improving firefighting efficiency and land management objectives.

The 2005 workshop was part of the third national assessment organized by the Program for Climate, Ecosystem and Fire Applications, the National Predictive Services Group (NSPG), and the Climate Assessment for the Southwest. Other participating agencies are listed below. This was the second workshop devoted specifically to the NPSG's Eastern and Southern areas. An assessment workshop for the western United States and Alaska will be held in late March 2005.

Participating Agencies

Allegheny National Forest
Bureau of Indian Affairs
Bureau of Land Management
CEFA/Desert Research Institute
CLIMAS/University of Arizona
COAPS/Florida State University
Department of Interior
Eastern Area Coordination Center
Florida Division of Forestry
Georgia Forestry Commission
Institute for the Study of Planet Earth/University of Arizona
Minnesota Department of Natural Resources
National Interagency Coordination Center
National Park Service
New Jersey Forest Fire Service
New York State Forest Rangers
NOAA Climate Prediction Center
NOAA Office of Global Programs
North Carolina Division of Forest Resources
Northeast Regional Climate Center/Cornell University
Southern Area Coordination Center
USDA-Forest Service
Washington and Jefferson National Forests

More Information

Climate Assessment for the Southwest (CLIMAS)
http://www.ispe.arizona.edu/climas/conferences/NSAW/details.html

National Wildland Fire Outlook
http://www.nifc.gov/

Program for Climate, Ecosystem, and Fire Applications
http://cefa.dri.edu/