

Wildfire Season 2010



Wildfire at Great Sand Dunes National Park and Preserve spreads to nearby Sangre de Cristo mountain range
(Photo: Wendy Kingery / June 18, 2010)

- There have been several large wildfires in the past month, but recent moisture has reduced ignitions
- Warmer & Drier Conditions as we move into late June & July are expected to bring increased fire activity
- Fine fuels (grasses and brush) that are abundant due to seasonal precipitation will dry out in the fall and add to fuel loading
- State has resources available
- CSFS currently has resources assigned to fires in Alaska, Texas and New Mexico

Outlook for the Fire Season

- average fire potential is predicted for the Rocky Mountain Area through September
- late spring precipitation reversed a dry start to the 2010 spring season in much of Colorado
- Grass fire season has been much quieter than in 2008 and 2009.
- Green up of fine fuels as a result of April precipitation alleviated concerns for above normal fire potential through May

Outlook Continued...

- Significant fine fuel loading and insect caused tree mortality across the RM area will support large fire growth during hot and dry periods
- NW Colorado will need to be monitored closely this summer as climate outlooks suggest a drier than average summer and above avg .temperatures through July and Aug.
- Wetter than avg. conditions are forecast east of the divide
- Colorado Fire season will likely begin to take shape in June and early July
- 10 days of hot and dry weather can lead to wildfires regardless of the amount of prior precipitation

2010 Wildfire Potential in Beetle Killed Areas

- Despite vast expanses of dead and dying trees which create large fire hazard, weather will largely determine the likelihood of fires
- Most beetle damage is in higher elevations where conditions remain wetter later into the years
- Hot & dry periods make beetle killed forest more susceptible to large fire potential (if red needles remain)

Questions?

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COLORADO STATE FOREST SERVICE 2010 FIRE SEASON TALKING POINTS



JUNE 16, 2010

2010 FIRE SEASON OUTLOOK:

- Overall, average fire potential is predicted for the Rocky Mountain Area through September. This area includes Colorado, Kansas, Nebraska, and most of South Dakota and Wyoming.
- Average fire potential means that the region likely will experience short durations of fuel and fire weather conditions that support large fire activity during the period, but not extended periods of fuel and fire weather conditions that result in multiple large fires for several consecutive weeks.
- Colorado received near-average precipitation in the 2009-2010 winter season, with below-average precipitation in southwest Colorado.
- Late-spring precipitation reversed a dry start to the 2010 spring season in much of Colorado.
- Given the reasonably active winter weather and spring precipitation, the grass fire season was much quieter than in the 2008 and 2009 seasons. The green-up of fine fuels as a result of April precipitation alleviated concerns for above-normal fire potential through May.
- Significant fine fuel loading and insect-caused tree mortality across the Rocky Mountain Area will support large fire growth during hot and dry periods that typically occur during the summer months.
- Northwest Colorado will need to be monitored closely this summer, as climate outlooks suggest drier than average summer conditions and above average temperatures from July through August. This area could pose the greatest risk for large fires in July and August.
- Wetter than average summer conditions are forecast east of the Continental Divide.
- As it normally does, Colorado's fire season will likely begin to take shape in June through early July.
- Ten days of hot, dry weather can lead to wildfires, regardless of the amount of prior precipitation.

FIRE CONDITIONS/THEMES:

- Due to fuels build-up and increased population in wildland-urban interface areas, wildfires that exceed the control efforts of local and county resources are becoming more common and more complex.
- As wildfires and firefighting conditions become more and more challenging, the critical role of preventing loss of life remains our highest priority. No structure or natural resource is worth a human life.
- CSFS firefighters work with local, tribal and federal firefighters to keep the public safe and natural resources protected. Combining our resources and experience improves our effectiveness and keeps our costs down.
- Those who live in fire-prone areas are responsible for taking simple steps to make their property more defensible. This will increase their safety and the safety of firefighters.
- Fire management decisions are based on many factors, and not all fires are managed the same way. Decisions are based on safety for the public and firefighters, as well as forecasted weather, fire behavior, resources at risk, and other factors.
- In general, fire seasons are becoming longer and many fires are becoming more difficult to suppress due to an abundance of fuels, climate change, and more homes and buildings in fire-prone areas.
- Wildfire is an essential, natural process, but society's influence has altered historic fire cycles and led to the dangerous build up of fuels in some wildland areas.

2010 WILDFIRE POTENTIAL IN BEETLE-KILLED AREAS:

- Although vast expanses of dead and dying trees create a large fire hazard, the weather will largely determine the likelihood of wildfires in high country beetle-killed forests.
- The higher elevations where most of the mountain pine beetle damage has occurred typically remain wetter later into the year than the rest of the state, helping prevent early-season wildfires.
- Hot and dry periods may make forests recently killed by mountain pine beetle more susceptible to large fire potential, particularly if red needles remain on the trees.
- In addition to summer weather patterns, reducing the number of human-caused fires and continued swift firefighter responses will affect wildfire activity in beetle-killed areas this year.

FIRE PREVENTION:

- Ensure that fires are dead out, regardless of the time of year. Many wildfires start when high winds rekindle smoldering ashes or blow embers out of campfire grates.
- To prevent loss of life and property, it is critical that everyone is careful with fire throughout the year.

FIRE STATISTICS:

1. Review of 2009 Fire Season
 - Colorado's 2009 fire season was much slower than an average fire season, with fewer acres burned than in the fire seasons of the past decade.
 - Colorado's four largest wildfires burned 3,583 acres, cost \$750,000, destroyed four structures, and threatened an additional 720 structures.
 - The CSFS contracted for five Single Engine Air Tankers (SEATs) that assisted on 59 wildfires, flew 166 flight hours and dropped 148,556 gallons of retardant.
 - The CSFS supplied 16 State Wildland Engines that assisted on 32 in-state wildfires and numerous mitigation projects. The CSFS staffed four and pre positioned 12 engines at CSFS districts or fire departments.
2. Available Firefighting Resources
 - Emergency Fire Fund — Participating counties contribute a total of \$1 million annually and the funds are used toward wildfire expenses in these counties until the fund is depleted. Currently, there is \$1.3 million in the fund.
 - Colorado's Preparedness Fund — This fund covers the SEAT contracts that enable these small firefighting planes to be pre-positioned at high fire danger areas and fight fires. This fund also covers staffing on 10 wildland-urban interface engines.
 - WERF (Wildfire Emergency Response Fund) — Colorado pays for the first SEAT or heavy tanker drop, or one hour of helicopter time, on initial attack fires on state and private land at the request of the county sheriff or fire district. WERF may also cover the cost of a fire crew for the first two days of a wildfire. 2010 available funds are \$657,000.
3. Aviation and SEAT Info:
 - The Interagency SEAT Operations Guide offers guidelines for safe flight operations. Under these guidelines, aerial operations should cease when winds exceed 30 knots (34.6 mph), or when the wind gust spread exceeds 15 knots (17.3 mph) in the fire suppression area.
 - These guidelines do not limit or prevent the pilot from refusing to accept any flight, landing site or drop based on his or her personal experience and intuition. Ultimately, pilots are responsible for the safety of their aircraft and cargo.
 - Colorado's extensive network of SEAT bases enables aircraft to respond within a 50-mile radius of a base. This system reduces turn-around times, thus increasing effectiveness.
4. Other Reference Information

Rocky Mountain Area Coordination Center Fire Season Forecast
<http://gacc.nifc.gov/rmcc/predictive/outlooks.html> or 303-445-4300
Rocky Mountain Area Coordination Center: <http://gacc.nifc.gov/rmcc/>

National Sit Report: <http://www.nifc.gov/nicc/sitreprt.pdf>
NIFC: <http://www.nifc.gov/>
Incident Information System: <http://www.inciweb.org/state/6/>

If you get a media call about a specific fire that is burning on federal land, refer the reporter to the Rocky Mountain Area Coordination Center at 303-445-4300 or the assigned fire team's public information officer.

2010 STATE FIREFIGHTING RESOURCES

Single Engine Air Tankers

- Two SEATs are currently under contract.
- Additional SEATs can be brought on when fire activity increases.
- Arrangements are in place for SEAT availability in the winter months.
- Seventeen interagency SEAT re-load bases are located in the state

State Interface Engines - Locations

- CSFS fully staffs four WUI Engines in Fort Collins, Boulder, Golden, and Canon City.
- Other State WUI Engines are staffed with combination crews composed of CSFS, fire department, county, and federal partners, and are located in Alamosa, Aspen, Teller County, El Paso County, and Larimer County.

State Wildland Engines on loan to Fire Departments

- CSFS supports 140 wildland engines on loan to fire departments and counties.

State Inmate Crews – Locations

- | | |
|---------------|-------------------------|
| • Canon City | 20-person wildland crew |
| • Rifle | 20-person wildland crew |
| • Buena Vista | 20-person wildland crew |

National Guard (available but contingent upon national priorities)

- | | |
|------------------------------|----------------------------|
| • Five Blackhawk Helicopters | 400 gallons of retardant |
| • Two Chinook Helicopters | 2,000 gallons of retardant |

2010 NATIONAL FIREFIGHTING RESOURCES

- 19 Large Air Tankers
- 214 Helicopters
- 479 Smokejumpers
- 112 Interagency Hot Shot Crews
- Incident Management Teams:
 - 17 Type 1 Teams
 - 52 Type 2 Teams
- 85 SEATs

OTHER 2010 COLORADO FIGURES

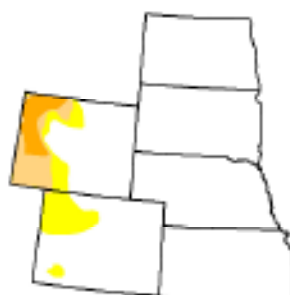
- More than 400 fire departments in Colorado
- 3 large air tanker bases are located in Grand Junction, JeffCo (Broomfield) and Durango
- 149 Community Wildfire Protection Plans completed in Colorado with 29 more in progress (May 2010)

U.S. Drought Monitor High Plains

May 25, 2010
N007 AM EDT

Drought Conditions (Percent Area)						
	None	D0	D1	D2	D3	D4
Current	88.9	11.1	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Last Week (4/18/2010)	88.3	11.7	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
30 Days Ago (4/15/2009)	91.0	9.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Year of Onset (Year of Onset)	88.7	12.3	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Year of Onset (Year of Onset)	88.3	11.7	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Year of Onset (Year of Onset)	88.9	11.1	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0

Legend:
 D0 Drought - Extreme
 D1 Drought - Severe
 D2 Drought - Moderate
 D3 Drought - Significant
 D4 Drought - Extreme



The Drought Monitor focuses on broad-scale conditions. Local conditions may vary. See accompanying text summary for more information.

<http://drought.unl.edu/dm>

Released Thursday, May 27, 2010
 Author: Eric Carlschoven, U.S. Department of Agriculture

Figure 4. U.S. Drought Monitor-April 27, 2010

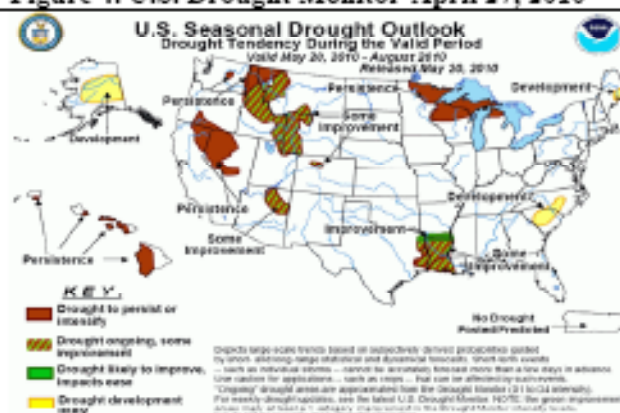
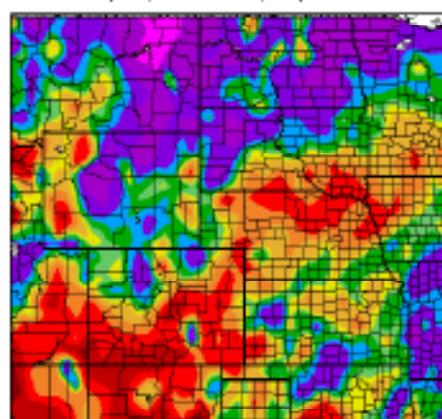


Figure 5. Drought Outlook

Percent of Normal Precipitation (%)
 4/29/2010 - 5/28/2010



Generated 5/29/2010 at 10:00 AM using precipitation data.

NOAA Regional Climate Centers

Figure 6. 30-Day % of Normal Precipitation

U.S. Drought Monitor

Drought conditions have worsened over the past year across western Wyoming. **"Moderate" to "Severe"** drought indices were noted over western Wyoming, with abnormally dry conditions across central northwest Colorado, and now portions of southwest Colorado. Long term drought acts to increase dead fuel loadings, deplete fuel moisture values in dead fuels (especially heavier fuels), and can also lead to unusually low fuel moisture values in live fuels.

Drought Outlook

Drought Forecast from the Climate Prediction Center-April 27, 2010. "Severe" drought conditions are expected to improve slightly over western Wyoming through August 2010.

30-Day Percent of Normal Precipitation

Wetter than average conditions occurred over much of central and eastern Wyoming, portions of South Dakota, Kansas, and northern Colorado. Precipitation deficits are noted over the southern half of Colorado extending into Nebraska.

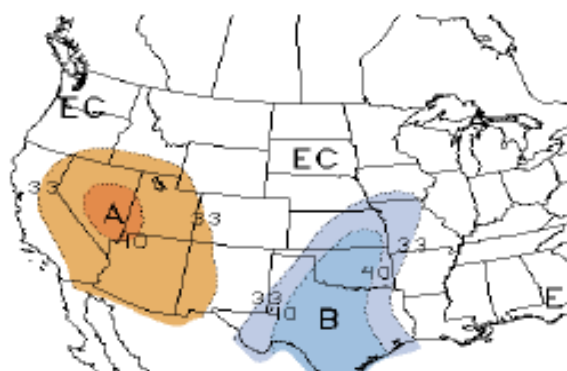


Figure 7. Temperature Outlook: June 2010

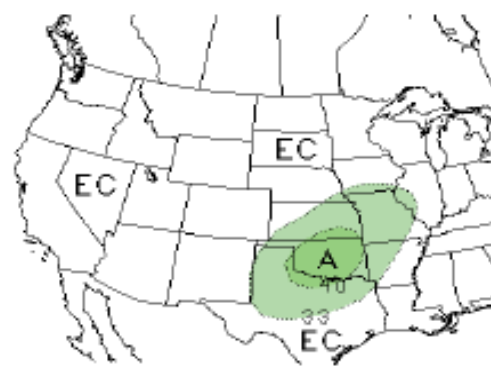


Figure 8. Precipitation Outlook: June 2010

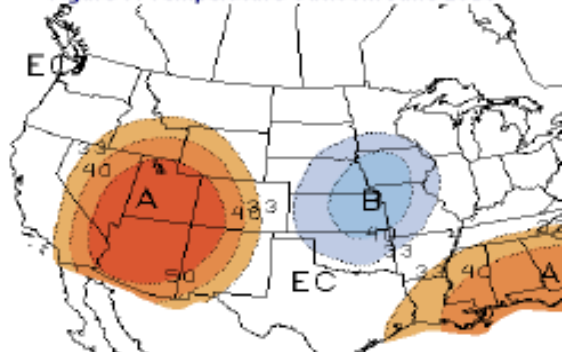


Figure 10. Temperature Outlook: July-September 2010

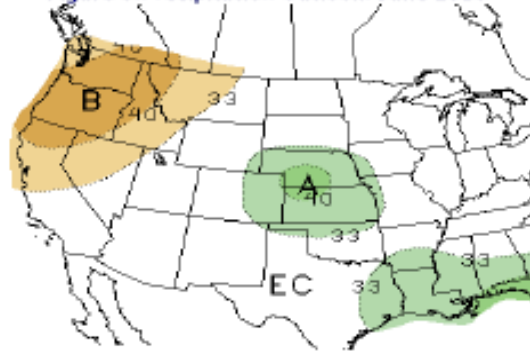


Figure 11. Precipitation Outlook: July-September 2010

Temperature outlooks from the Climate Prediction Center indicate near average readings through June (Figure 7), with increasing odds for above average temperatures July through September (Figure 10) across western sections of the Rocky Mountain Area. Precipitation outlooks (Figures 8 and 11) indicate near average values in the month of June, with increasing odds toward wet across eastern portions of the RMA July through September. Other outlooks support drier than average conditions from northwest Colorado into western Wyoming from July through September.



Figure 12. 90-Day Seasonal Outlook-June through August 2010

Predictive Services Group
Rocky Mountain Area Coordination Center