

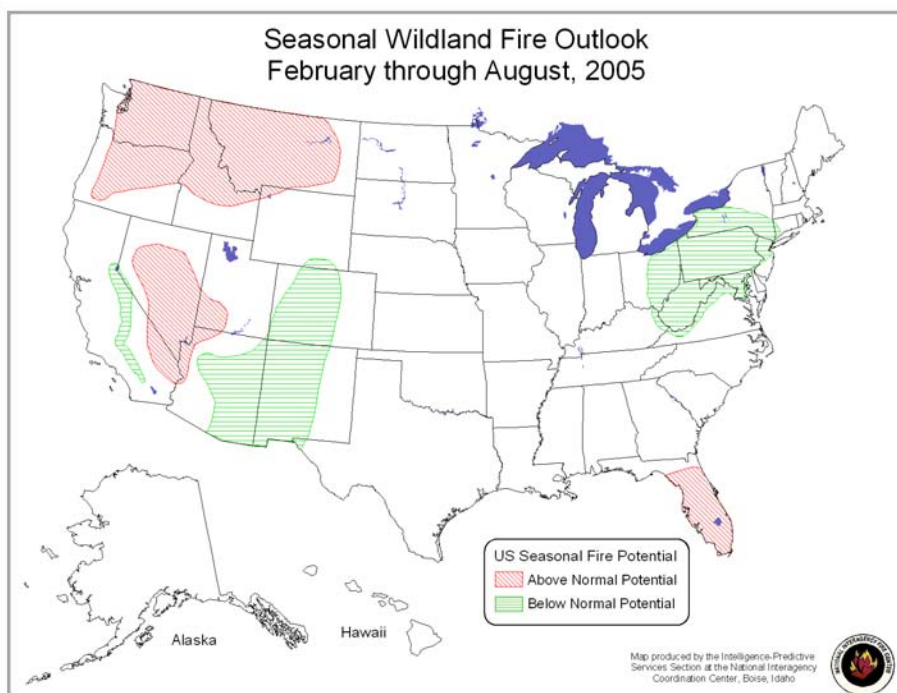


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Wildland Fire Outlook – February through August, 2005

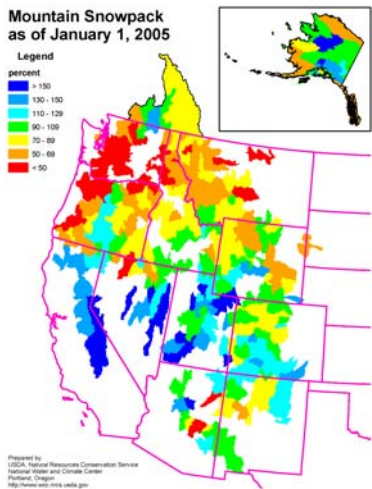
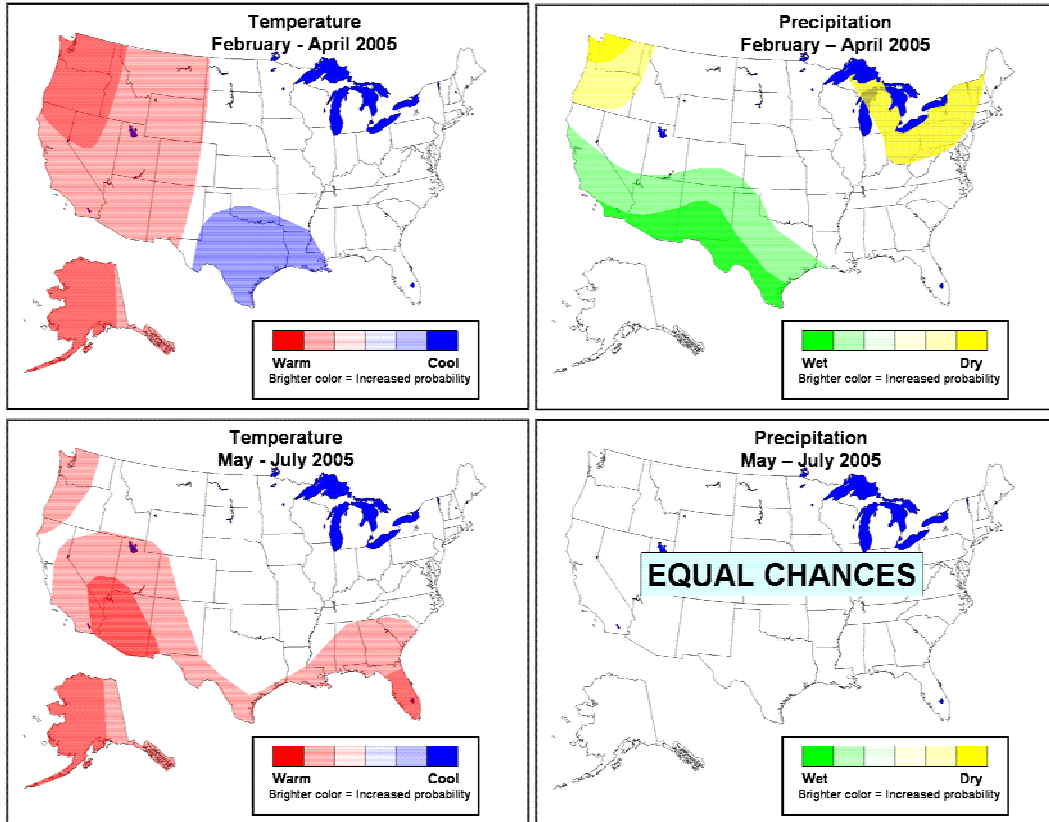
The preliminary outlook for this year's fire season shows **above normal fire potential in the Pacific Northwest, Northern Rockies, the lower elevations of the Great Basin and over much of Florida**. Some key points of the upcoming season include:

- Mountain snowpacks are at or near record low levels in portions of Washington, Oregon, Idaho, Montana and northwest Wyoming. This combined with long term drought and vegetation mortality from insect damage will increase fire potential in portions of the West.
- Winter storms have brought heavy rain and snow in California, Colorado and the Southwest. This will help moderate the fire season in the mountains but will increase fire potential in the lower elevations of Nevada, Utah and the California deserts, due to heavier concentrations of fine fuels.
- Florida has been drier than normal so far this winter. This combined with downed trees from the 2004 hurricanes will lead to the potential for an active fire season.
- Predicting the Alaska fire season is very difficult this early in the year. However, preliminary indications point to a less active season compared to last year's record breaking fire season.

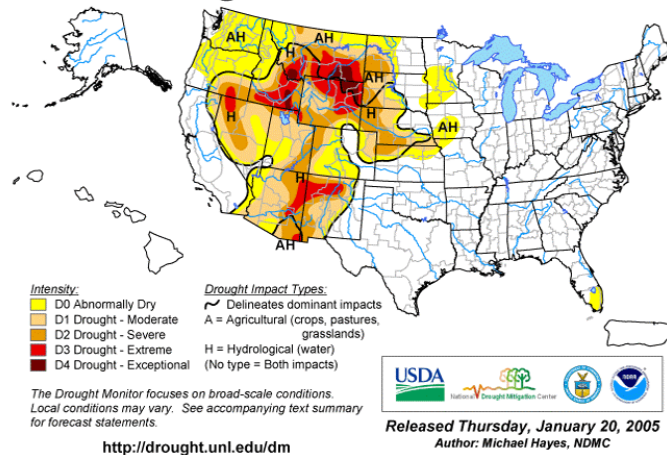


Weather

Even though there is a weak El Niño in progress, there has been little if any impact on the weather patterns across the country. However, other climate factors have played a significant role in shaping this winter's weather. Precipitation has been above normal in a band stretching from southern California to the Great Lakes. Meanwhile, it has been quite dry from the Pacific Northwest to the Dakotas and also over portions of the Southeast. The National Weather Service outlook through July shows the continuation of wet weather in the Southwest and dry weather in the Pacific Northwest. Alaska should be warmer than normal with equal chance of above, below and normal precipitation.



U.S. Drought Monitor January 18, 2005



Area Discussions

Alaska: Snowpacks are currently running near to well above normal over most of the state. However, snowpack plays only a small part in determining the intensity of the summer fire season. At this time, the fire season outlook calls for equal chances of an above, below and normal fire season. If the late spring through June temperatures turn out to be warmer than normal, then the potential for an active fire season would increase.

West: The abundant winter precipitation should result in a later start and the potential for a less severe fire season in the Southwest. The areas with the highest fire potential extend from the Cascades across Idaho and into Montana and northwest Wyoming. This is primarily due to the very low snowpack and a warmer than normal spring forecast. However, there are still many unknowns such as the character of the snowmelt and summer lightning pattern.

South and East: In the South, the main area of concern is in Florida where a dry winter, downed fuel buildup from the hurricanes and localized insect mortality has lead to the potential for an active fire season. The fire season in the East is expected to be normal to below normal, but may begin earlier than normal. This is due to below average snow cover in north-central states which could make fine fuels available for ignition earlier in the season than usual.