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National Interagency Fire Center releases seasonal fire outlook

By PRESS RELEASE

COLUMBIA, SC- South Carolina's wildfire season usually occurs during late winter/early spring. The wildfire predictive services group in Boise releases stats in early November.

Due to La Nina strengthening in the Pacific, the general prediction for our part of the U.S. is a warmer/drier-than-normal weather pattern now through February.

Due to current drought conditions, please be reminded to take extra precautions while cooking outdoors, (grilling or frying that turkey!)camping/recreation, or while conducting outdoor debris burning.

For November, most of the state is in the area predicted to have above normal potential for significant wildfires.

For December through February, everywhere except the upper piedmont are in the area predicted to have increasing to above normal significant wildfire potential.

For this predictive product, a significant wildfire is one that would require mobilization of resources from outside the area.

The effects of La Nina are normally more intense within 100 miles of the coast.

Drought status:

Each South Carolina county has officially been in a moderate drought since July.

This month, the following counties were upgraded to severe drought status: Oconee, Pickens, Abbeville, Anderson, McCormick, and Edgefield.

These counties' status changed primarily due to very low lake levels in Lakes Jocasee, Keowee, Hartwell, and Thurmond.

These lakes are at the upper end of the water supply chain for the entire Savannah River system.

Lake Jocasee is more than 26 feet below normal.

The main concern is that we are in the driest part of the year, and if these lakes continue to drop, all of the downstream

lakes and water systems will be impacted.

Southern Area: West of the Mississippi River long term exceptional and historic drought conditions for Oklahoma and Texas remain in place and are expected to persist.

Above normal significant fire potential will continue due to fuel moistures remaining near or worse than critical thresholds.

Vegetation mortality and damage from long term drought will provide increased fuel loading as well.

Seasonal increases in cold frontal activity, higher surface wind speeds, post cold frontal low humidities, and drier than average precipitation trends will all be exacerbated by a re-strengthening La Niña.

Significant fire potential is expected to increase across southern Georgia and the coastal sections of North and South Carolina.

Tropical moisture through the first half of November is expected to keep central and southern Florida below normal significant fire potential.

Water tables still remain low in many marsh areas of the coastal Atlantic and areas of the Gulf Coast so these areas will be of concern as lightning remains a fall ignition threat.

For the Okefenokee Swamp and the site of the previous Honey Prairie Fire, the threat for fire reemergence will remain in place.

Post frontal humidities will drop into the 15 to 25 percent range, and allow for brief periods of increased initial attack.

Snow in November in the northern Appalachian Mountains is anticipated to mitigate the threat of significant fires.

Robust tropical easterlies, very wet ground conditions, and the threat of additional rain will keep Puerto Rico in below normal significant fire potential.

An anticipated wider spread pattern of below average precipitation is expected to provide a drying condition during leaf drop across the bulk of the Southern Area.

Combined with recent drying trends, this will increase significant fire potential for most of the South to above normal from December through February.

No significant improvement for Texas or Oklahoma is expected.

Above normal significant fire potential will continue over most of Texas, southern Oklahoma, western Louisiana, and southern Arkansas, but this condition will be present only in December and possibly into early January.

January will see this area transition to lower significant fire potential as vigorous fronts provide moisture.

Most of Texas will drop to an average condition by February. Eastern Texas, most of Louisiana, eastern Oklahoma, and southern Arkansas will see significant fire potential drop to below average in February as moisture returns.

Thus the significant divergence as above normal significant fire potential conditions present in east Texas, Louisiana, and Arkansas make a major change toward normal or below normal conditions later in the winter.

There currently is NO Red Flag Fire Alert or Burning Ban in effect in South Carolina.