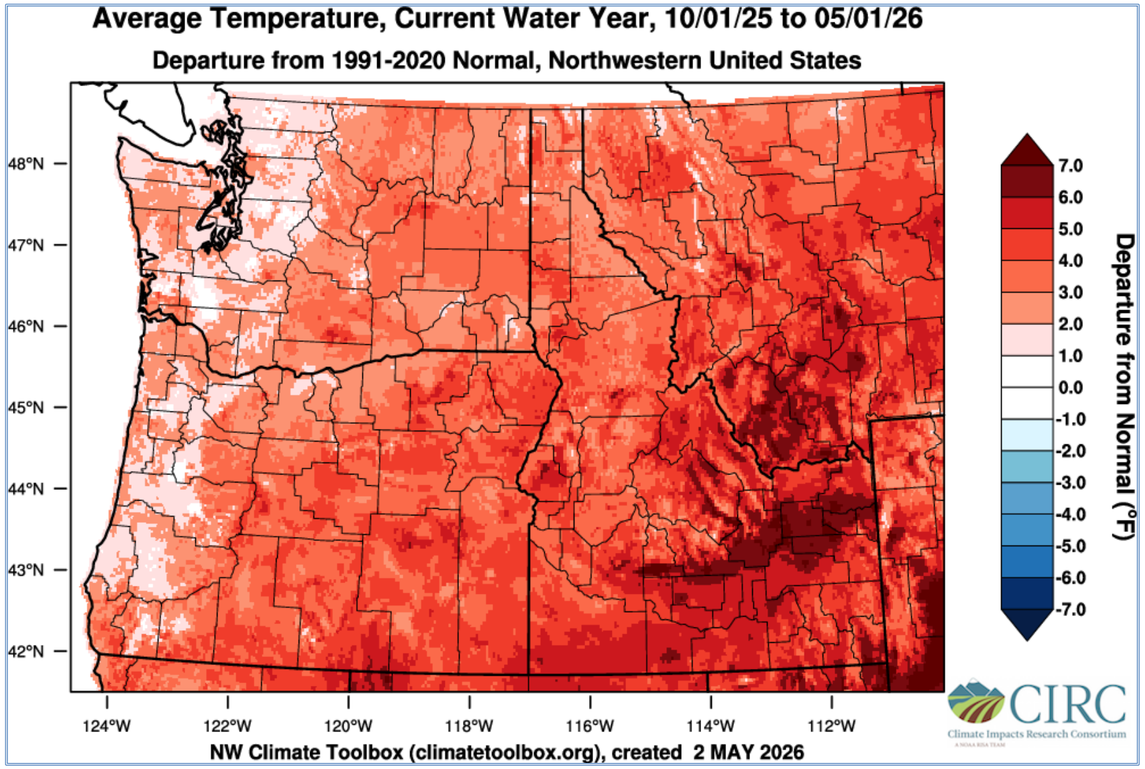
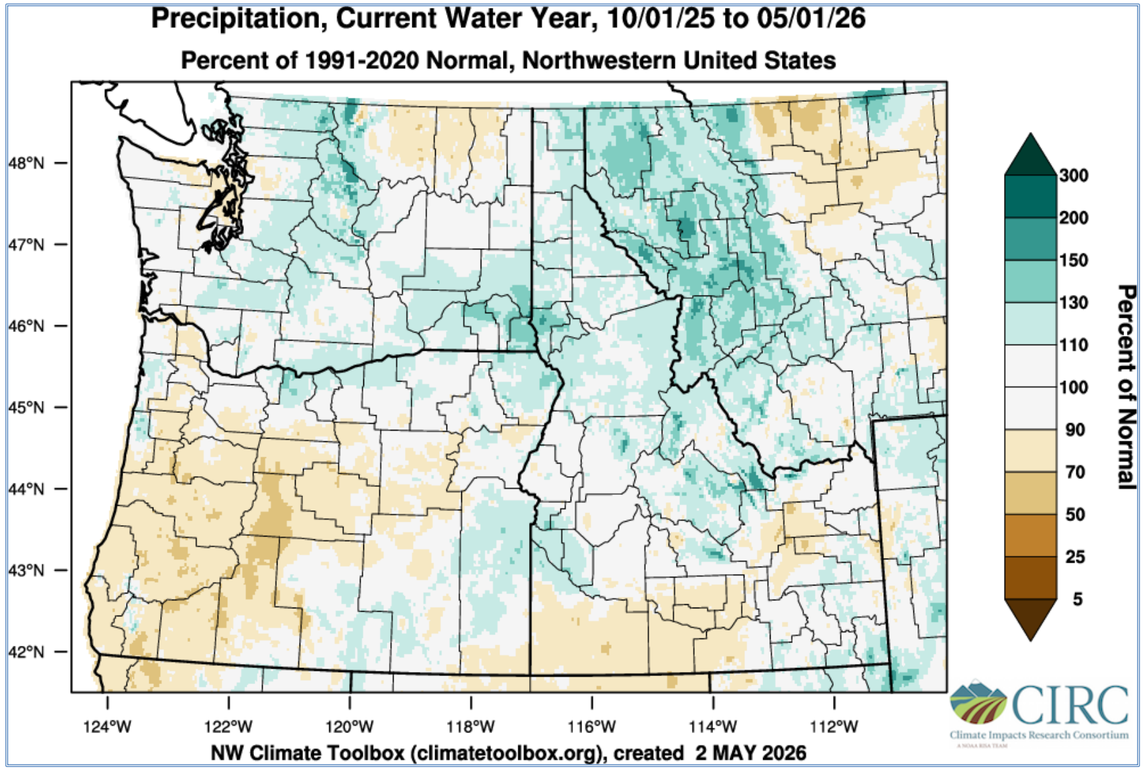
Town Hall | June 8, 2026

Mariana Ruiz-Temple
State Fire Marshal

Pacific Northwest Water Year Observations to Date

Under a weak La Niña episode, the Pacific Northwest commonly expects a slightly cooler and wetter than average winter. Snow should often accumulate at the mid and upper elevations.





Characterization: **Since October 1, this season has run atypical of typical La Niña expectations with widespread above average temperatures and a mixture of precipitation anomalies. Most notably dry across most of Oregon though parts of Washington leaned dry as well.**

Snow Water Equivalent

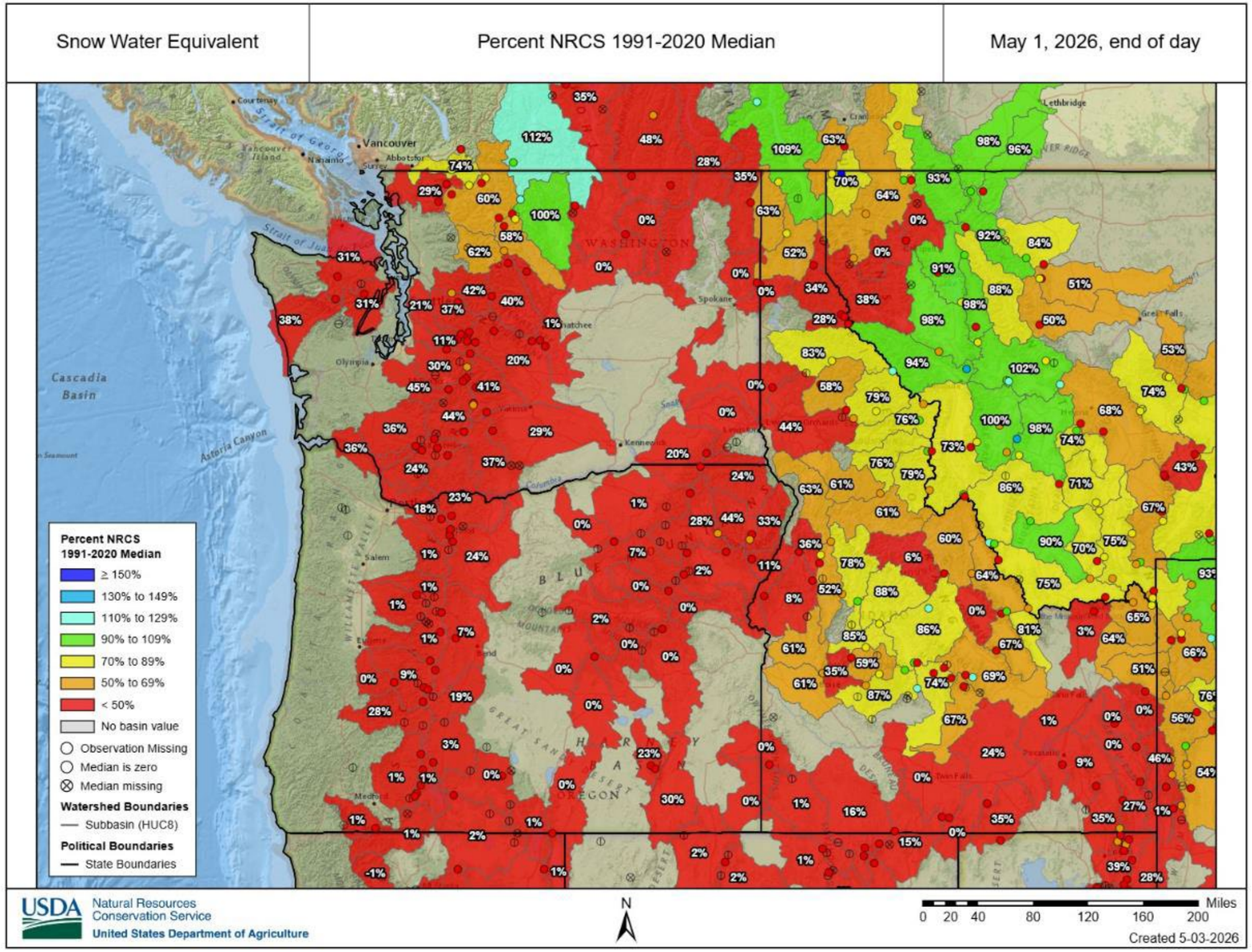
A "snow drought"…

Oregon experienced an April 1st snowpack as one of the lowest on record dating back to 1981

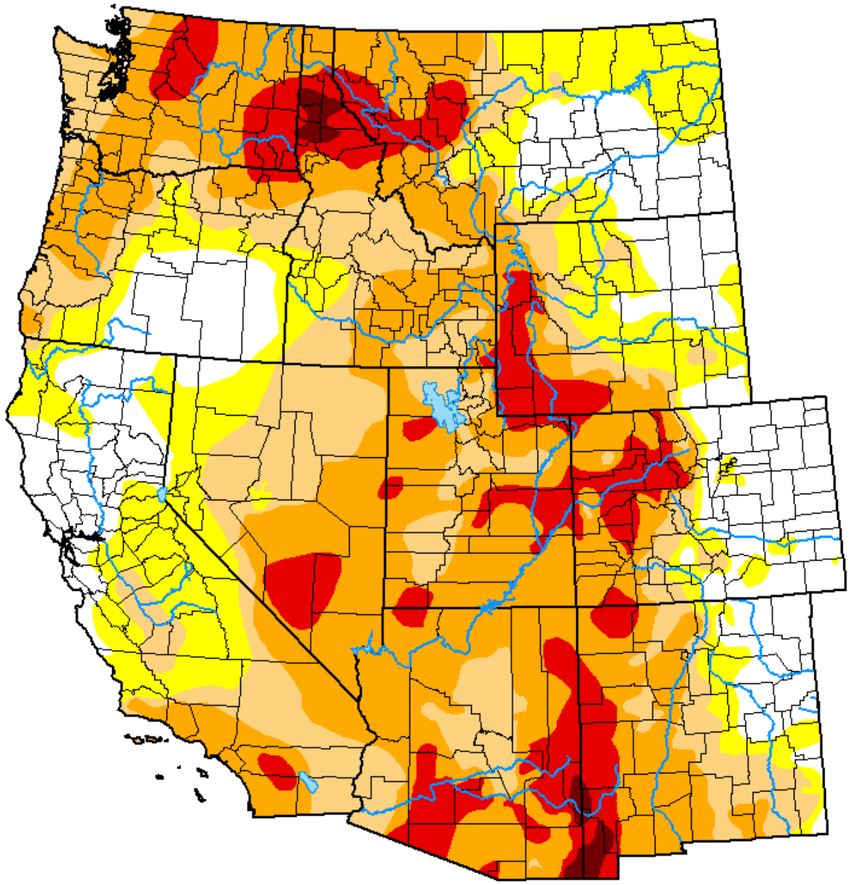
Washington was somewhat better, but still well below the latest 30-year median

April brought a rapid low and middle elevation melt-off and much earlier than typical.

Low snowpack does not necessarily relate to fire season intensity (WA-2024, PNW-2025), but more to an earlier burn window start.



U.S. Drought Monitor

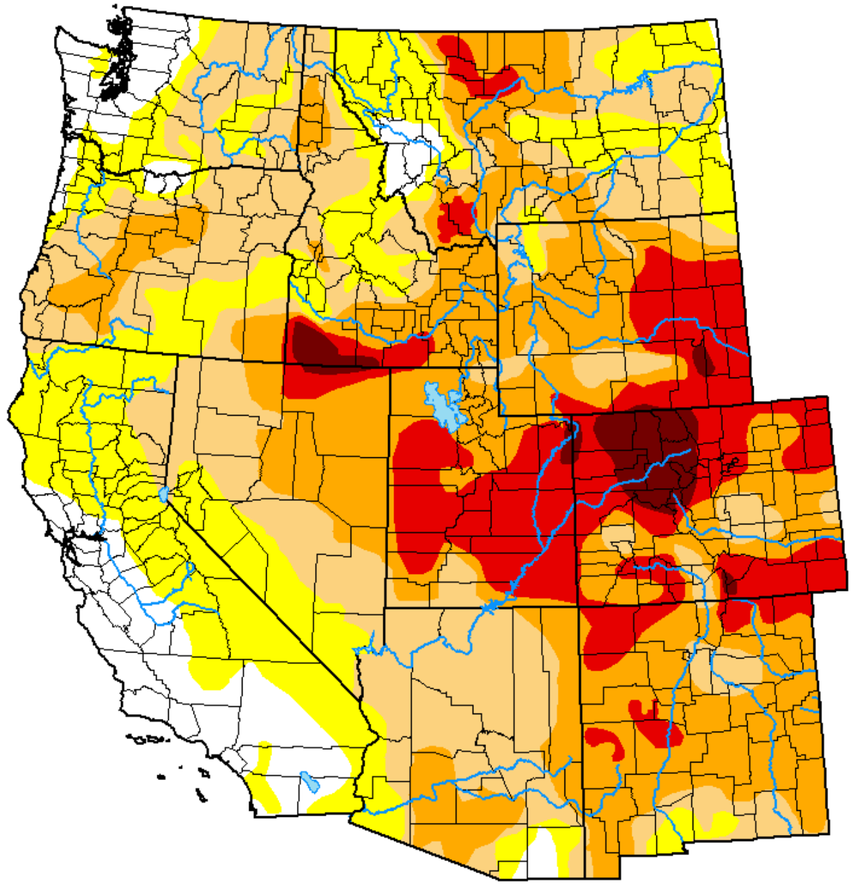


September 30, 2025

Intensity

- None
- **D0** (Abnormally Dry)
- **D1** (Moderate Drought)
- **D2** (Severe Drought)
- **D3** (Extreme Drought)
- **D4** (Exceptional Drought)
- No Data

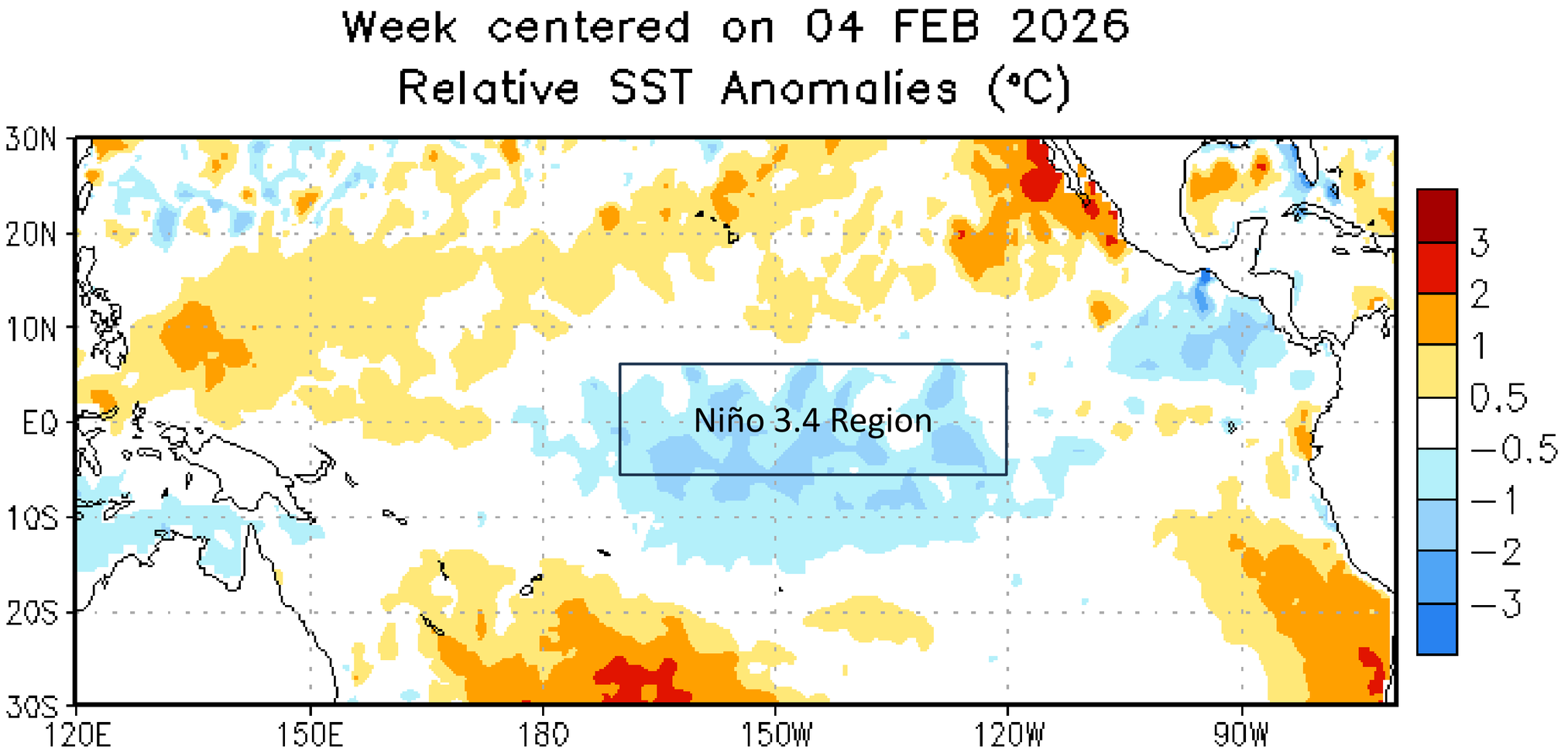
Mixed trends depending on winter rainfall and snow accumulations



April 28, 2026

EL NIÑO/SOUTHERN OSCILLATION (ENSO) Status and Predictions

NOAA Climate Prediction Center from 30 March 2026



ENSO Alert System Status: La Niña Advisory Ended / El Niño Watch Issued

ENSO-neutral conditions (near average sea surface temperatures) persist across the central Niño 3.4 region, though general equatorial Pacific SST warming continues. Atmospheric conditions over the tropical Pacific Ocean are consistent with ENSO-neutral.

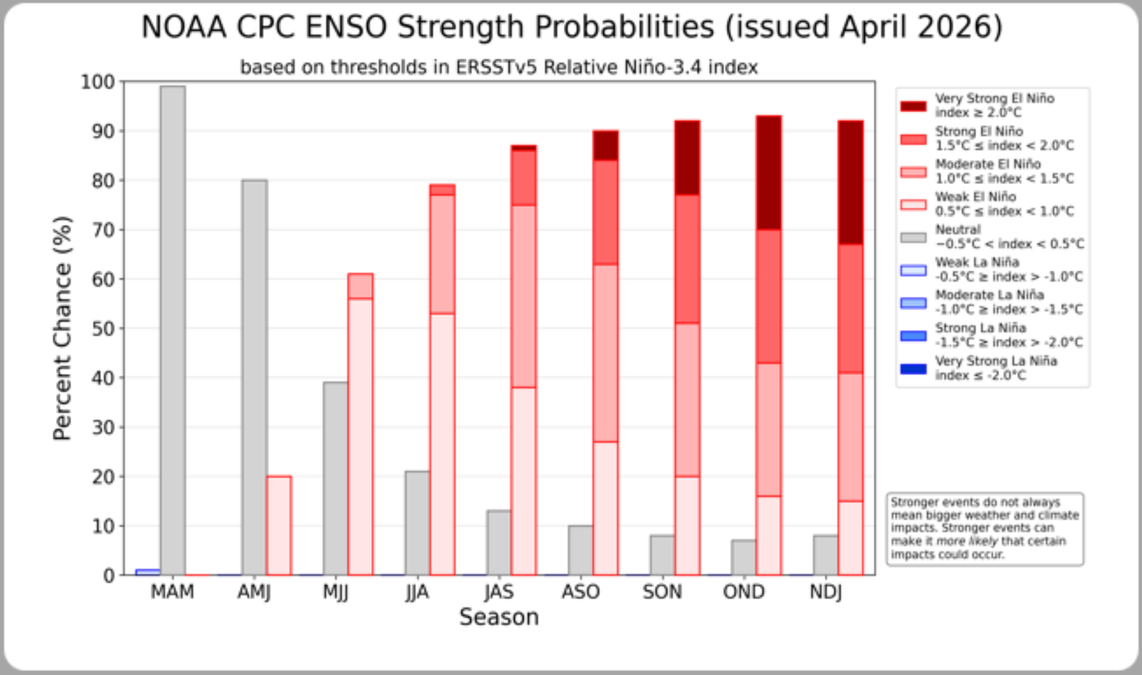
EL NIÑO/SOUTHERN OSCILLATION (ENSO) Status and Predictions

NOAA Climate Prediction Center (CPC) from 27 April 2026 update

CPC Probabilistic ENSO Strength Outlook

Updated: 9 April 2026

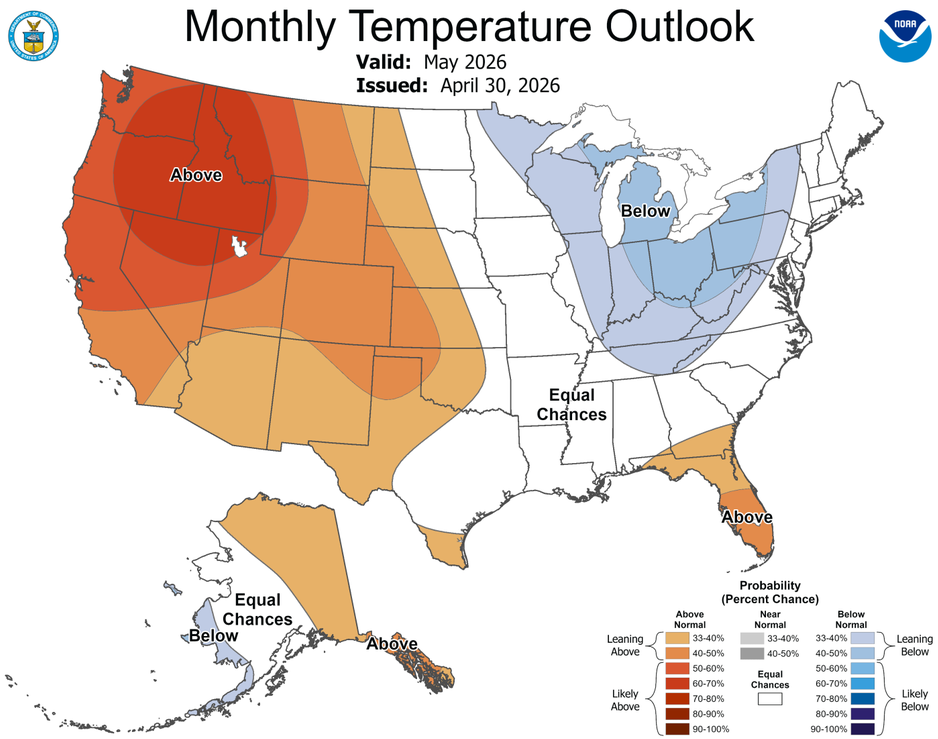
In November 2026- January 2027, there are nearly equal chances (25%) of a very strong, strong, or moderate strength El Niño. There is nearly a 1-in-10 chance of ENSO-neutral.



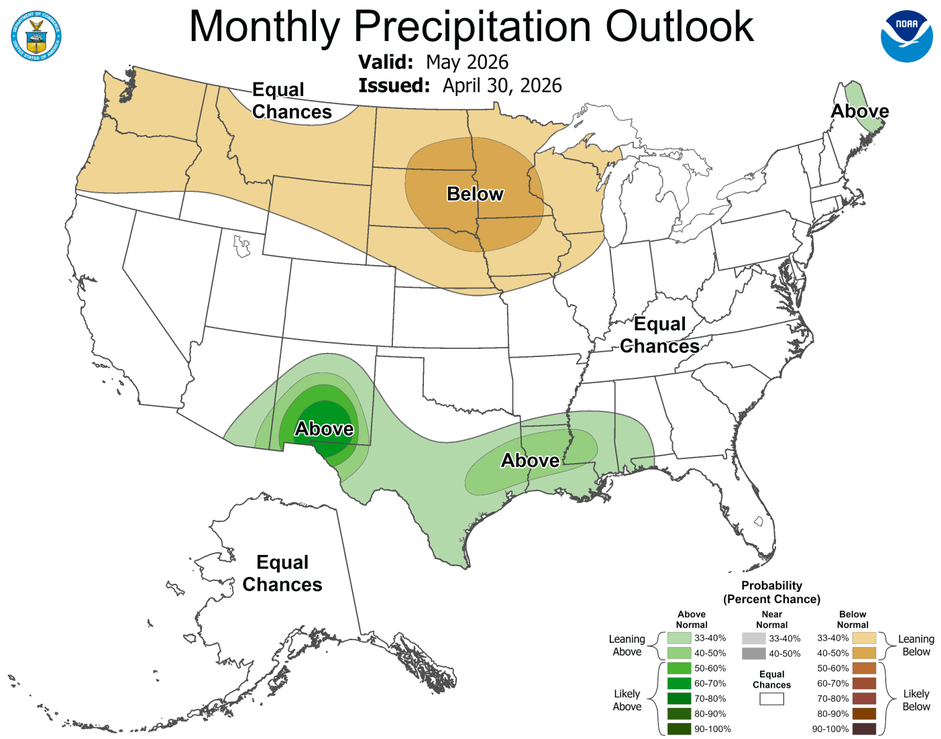
Winter ENSO Jetstream Tracks

El Niño often brings warmer, drier fall and winter conditions to the Pacific Northwest by shifting the storm track south, leading to more sunny days and fewer precipitation days. However, other climate signals can also influence the outcome.

May 2026 Outlook



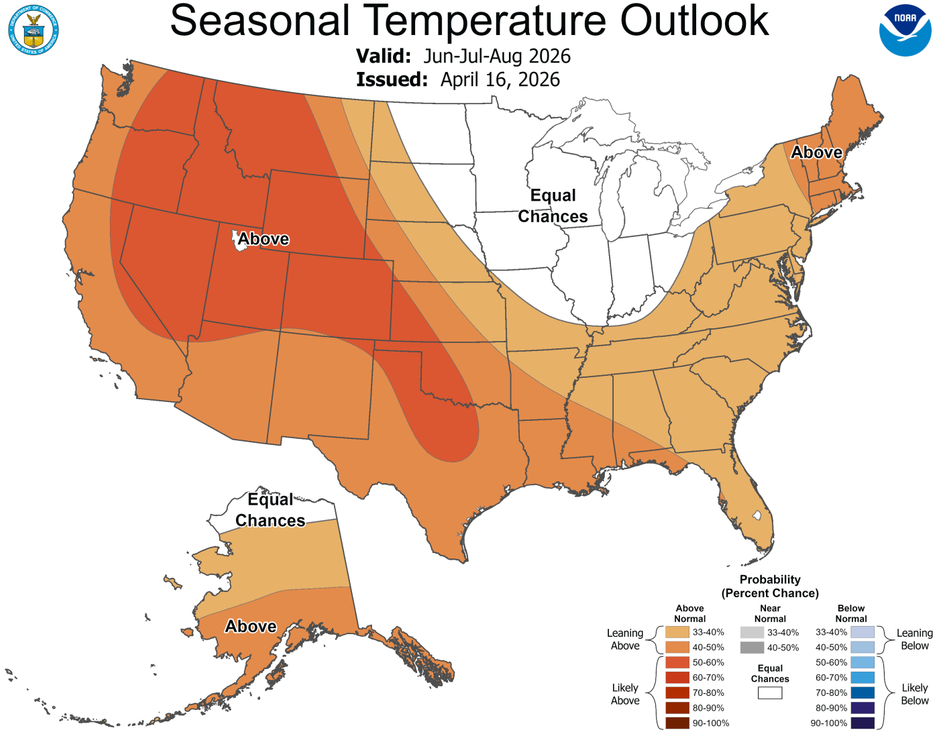
Temperature



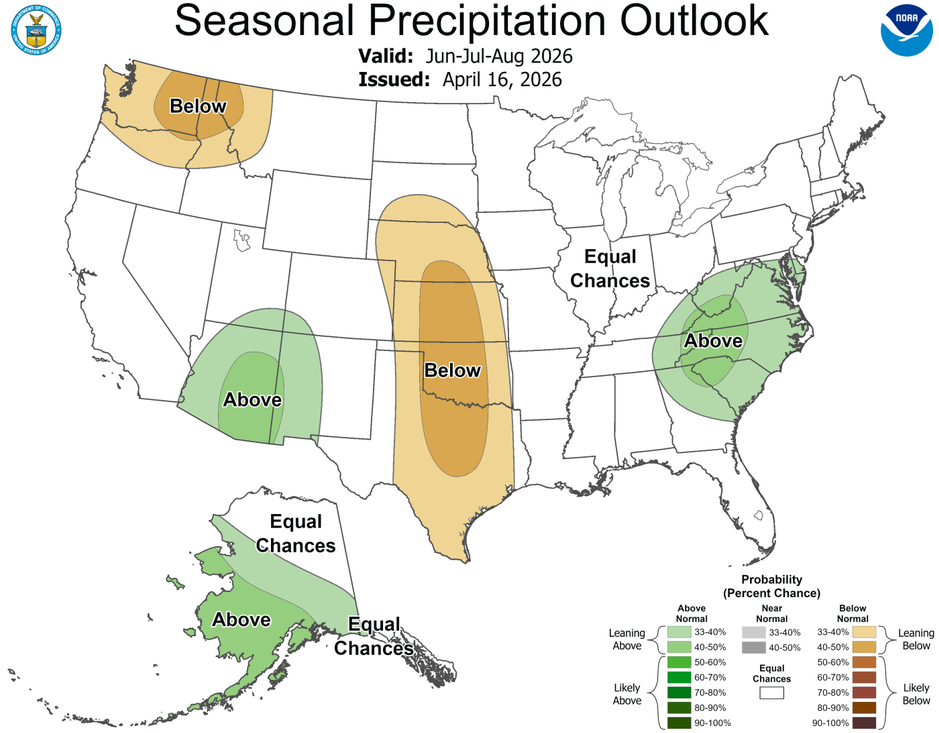
Precipitation

Characterization: **The CPC outlook shows the strongest national signal for above-normal temperatures in Oregon and Washington. CPC also favors below-normal precipitation across the Pacific Northwest. Nationally, the East starts cool before warming mid-month. The southern tier trends wetter, while much of the northern and central U.S. trends drier.**

Jun-Jul-Aug 2026 Outlook



Temperature



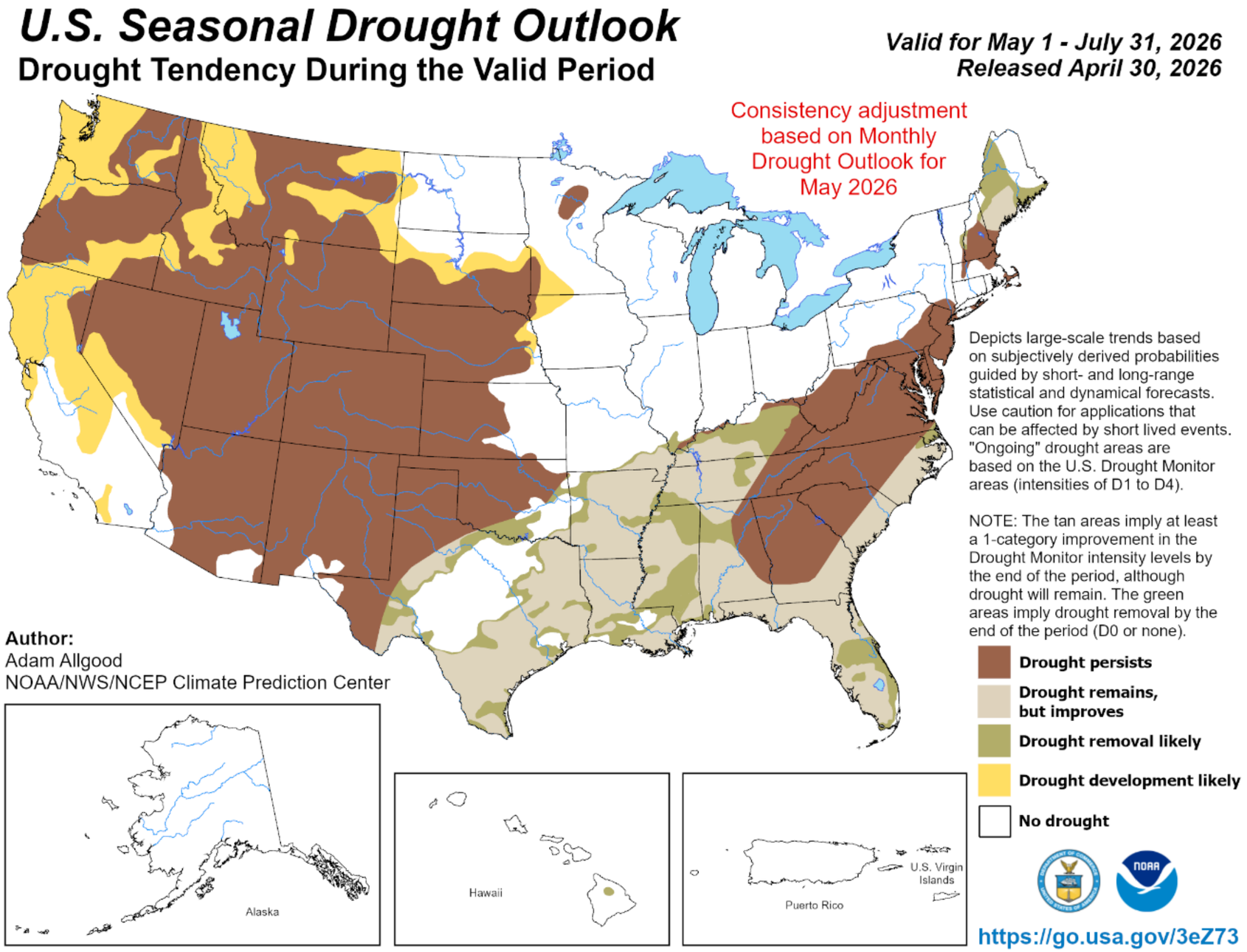
Precipitation

Characterization: **Signals have strengthened for a warmer and drier start to the Pacific Northwest summer. CPC increased confidence for above-average temperatures for most of the western interior. Drier than typical conditions expected for the Northwest. Perhaps this pattern also brings less thunderstorm occurrence? Much needed rain potential for the far Southwest and parts of the eastern seaboard.**

CPC Seasonal Drought Outlook

CPC continues to show increasing concern for drought development across the Pacific Northwest, with yellow areas indicating potential drought emergence through the end of July 2026.

Much of the rest of CONUS is also expected to see persistent or worsening drought, while parts of the Mississippi Basin and the eastern seaboard show signs of improvement.



Chosen Weather and Climate Analog Years

- For ENSO analogs
  - 2015 and 2018
    - Seem to be progressing closer to 2018 La Niña to El Niño shift
      - Can prolong fire season as fall and winter precipitation is weaker and warmer sourced
- For Snowpack analogs
  - 2005 and 2015
    - 2015 lowest on modern automated station record
    - 2026 closer to 2005; better off than modern record lowest 2015
- Overall preference
  - A blend of 2005 snowpack and 2018 climate signals with current weather more favoring 2018

COMPARISONS

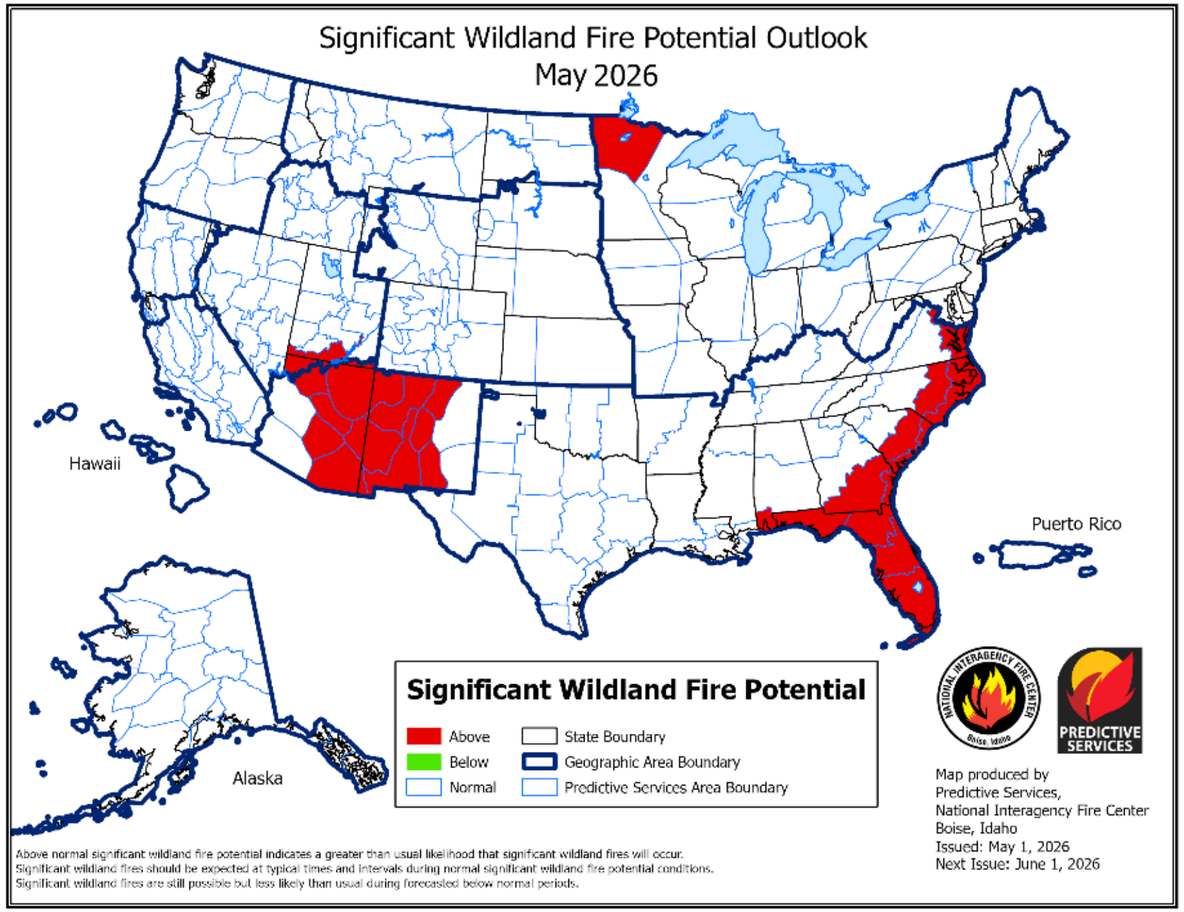
2015

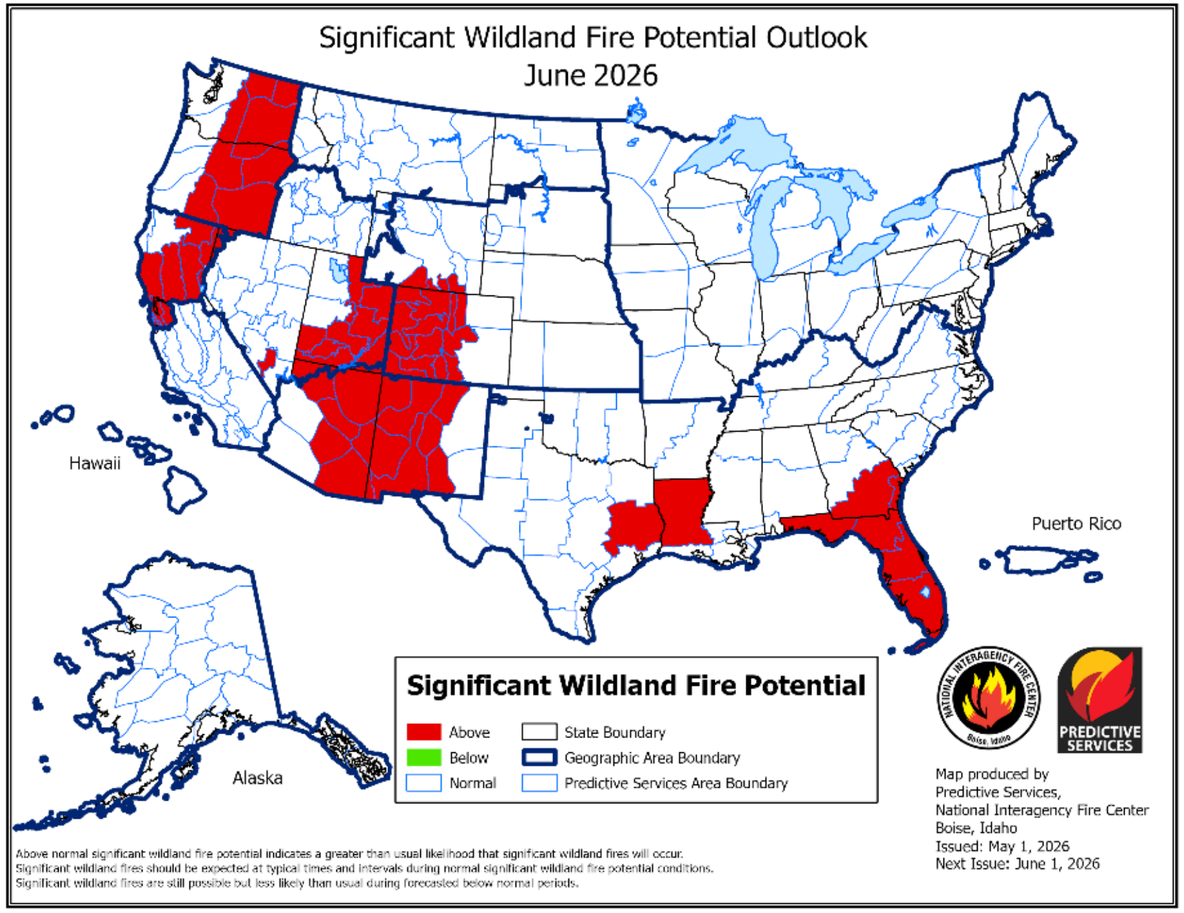
- 685,809 acres
- $76.6 million
- Canyon Creek, Coronet-Windy, Stouts Creek, Oregon Gulch

2018

- 897,263 acres
- $99.1 million
- Klamathon, Klondike, Taylor Creek, Garner, Stubble Field

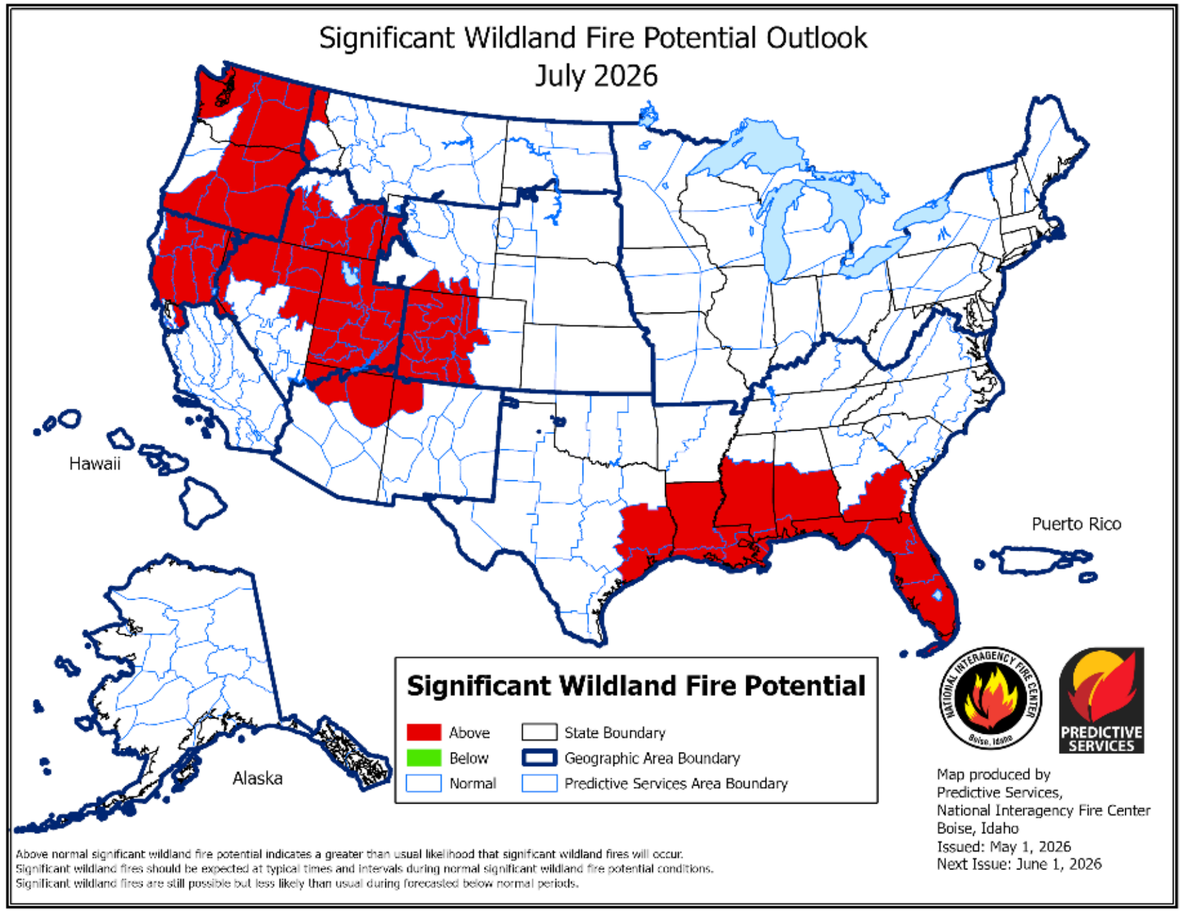
Significant Fire Potential Outlooks: May and June 2026

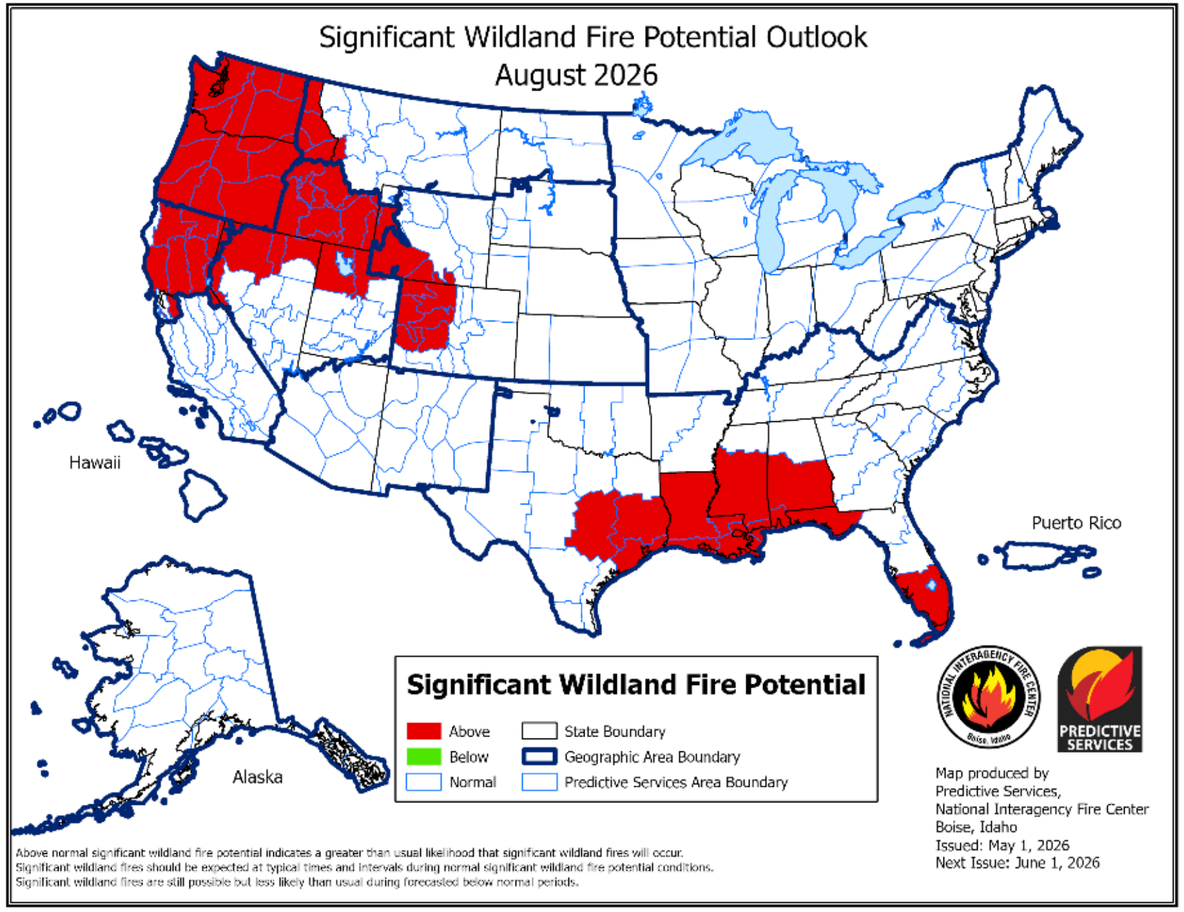




Green-up of live fuels will mostly keep May Significant Fire risk projections as normal across the western states. More recent analogs (2015 and 2018) improve confidence to bring central and eastern OR/WA PSAs to above normal Significant Fire Risk beginning in June.

Significant Fire Potential Outlooks: June and July 2026





July and August see further expansion of above normal Significant Fire risk across the western states. Monsoon effects and lightning will be wildcards, particularly for the NWCC and SWCC areas. The southern Plains trends back toward normal risk while the Gulf states may continue as a resource sink during the west's primary season.

CLOSING THOUGHTS & PREPAREDNESS

Early Start: Warm temps, low snowpack, and abundant grasses point to fires beginning late May–early June; activity builds through July.

Season Length: Long, challenging fire season—early start, late finish. East Wind events remain a key concern.

Capacity Concerns: Region experiencing similar conditions

Preparedness: Immediate response, pre-positioning, aircraft resources

Contact Information

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