



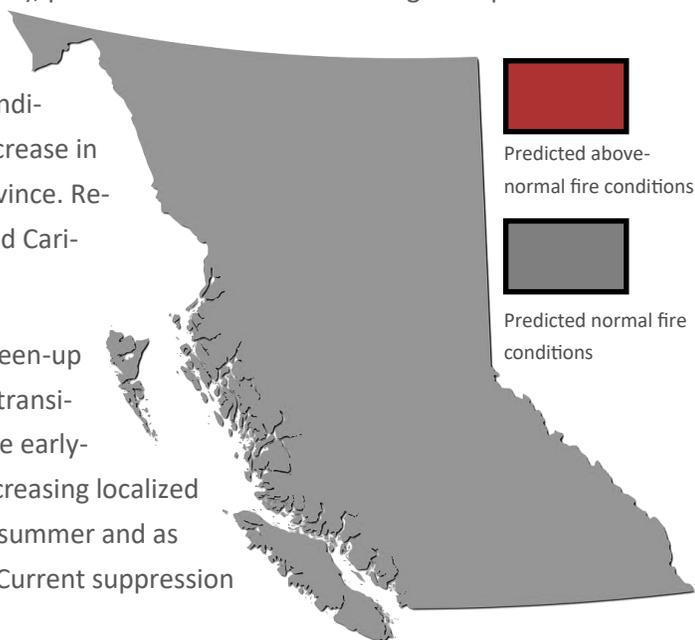
BRITISH
COLUMBIA
SEASONAL OUTLOOK

As of May 8, 2020

Spring Outlook: April was drier than normal in British Columbia, with Prince George experiencing its driest April on record. Despite several active wildfires early in the season (due to low humidity and high wind speeds in valley bottoms), periodic rain and the remaining snowpack have helped keep the total number of ignitions low.

At this point in May, British Columbians can expect normal spring fire conditions. Fuels are drying as temperatures continue to rise, leading to an increase in the amount of available forest fuels in many regions throughout the province. Regions that are especially vulnerable at this time include the Okanagan and Cariboo, the far southeast, and the east side of the Rocky Mountains.

Over the next two months, vegetation in B.C. will be going through its green-up phase. Green-up refers to the stage of vegetation growth when a forest transitions from a leafless state to a leafed state. This new growth helps reduce early-season fire behaviour by mixing with the accumulated dead fuels and increasing localized humidity. Grassfire activity is expected to continue as we transition into summer and as fine fuels dry out quickly due to high temperatures and lower humidity. Current suppression tactics are successfully holding most wildfires to small sizes.



According to seasonal temperature forecasts for the month of May, temperature extremes are unlikely. Although precipitation patterns are more difficult to predict, we anticipate “normal” to “dry” weather patterns (on average) throughout the province in May. The summer wildfire season in B.C. is strongly influenced by the June rainfall cycle, which is currently too far away to reliably predict. Since April 1, 2020, B.C. has experienced 111 wildfires, about 83% of which have been confirmed as human-caused. Based on current forecasts and activity levels, we are expecting the spring wildfire season to be consistent with long-term patterns in B.C.

How does the BC Wildfire Service make predictions about a fire season?

Fire season forecasts are determined by meteorologists and fire behaviour specialists, based on the analysis and monitoring of a range of environmental factors and observed weather data. Conditions that affect soil moisture, fine fuel moisture content, and vegetation growth are also considered, since they influence the amount of fuel available for wildfires.

Ultimately, the severity of a fire season is highly dependent on local weather patterns, such as the timing and amount of precipitation, length of dry periods, lightning, and wind events. Although climate models are useful for assessing trends and patterns over long periods of time, daily weather cannot be reliably forecast beyond a few days. The BC Wildfire Service maintains its levels of preparedness by studying forecasts, reflecting on previous fire seasons, and analyzing trends to provide a good indication of what to expect. As we get closer to the peak fire season, the BC Wildfire Service continues to collect data and use forecasting models to produce monthly updates for the Season Outlook.

What can British Columbians do to prepare for the wildfire season?

Most wildfires at this time of year are human-caused and therefore preventable. This is a good time to review how we can all prevent wildfires in the 2020 season. For more information, including resources on how you can foster wildfire resiliency within our forests and communities, visit: www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/safety/wildfire-status/prevention and www.firesmartbc.ca

