

WILDFIRE Seasonal Outlook



BC Wildfire
Service

MONTHLY UPDATE

May 4, 2022

OUTLOOK THIS MONTH

The 2021 fire season ended with elevated drought conditions in the far north, southeast, and central interior of B.C. Areas with prolonged drought at the end of a fire season have increased potential for fire activity the following spring. Fortunately, there was sufficient overwinter precipitation to recover drought conditions throughout most of the province.

Temperatures in April were below normal and northern regions received above normal precipitation. Increased snowpack and delayed melt will subsequently delay the receptivity of mid and upper elevations to lightning ignitions. Cooler than normal temperatures are forecast to continue through May with wetter than normal precipitation over coastal and western regions of the province. The BC Wildfire Service is carefully monitoring areas surrounding Kamloops, Kelowna, and Cranbrook where April precipitation amounts were well below normal.

Numerous fires have occurred in valley bottoms this spring where light fuels such as grass and leaf litter dry out quickly in warm and windy conditions. The number of April 2022 wildfires matched historical averages, but total area burned was only 35% of the 25-year average. Below-average area burned is expected when weather conditions are cool and wet. Spring fire hazard will decrease over the coming weeks as grass becomes greener and deciduous trees and shrubs leaf out. While the provincial outlook is favorable for May, wildfire activity could increase in locations that continue to receive below normal precipitation and at mid elevations as snow melts.



PREDICTED FIRE CONDITIONS



Normal



Above normal

HOW DO RAINFALL PATTERNS INFLUENCE THE WILDFIRE SEASON IN B.C.?

Rainfall patterns during the spring and summer months have a significant influence on the severity of the wildfire season in B.C. In the spring, as snow melts, light surface fuels tend to dry quickly. So, despite cooler conditions and some influence from spring freshet, fires in pine needles and grasses can travel quickly under strong, dry winds. If rainfall is received periodically throughout the spring and into June, larger fuels, requiring longer drying periods, are much less likely to ignite limiting fires to mostly fine fuels.

PREDICTING FIRE SEASONS

Forecasts are assessed by meteorologists and fire behaviour specialists who consider a range of environmental factors and observed weather data. This includes accounting for conditions that affect soil moisture, fine fuel dryness and vegetation growth which influence the amount of fuel available for wildfires.

The severity of a fire season is highly dependent on local weather patterns such as timing and amount of precipitation, length of dry periods, thunderstorms, and wind events. Long-term weather models are useful to indicate trends and patterns over time, however daily weather cannot be reliably forecast beyond a few days in advance. The BC Wildfire Service maintains its level of preparedness by studying forecasts, using the experience of previous fire seasons, and analyzing trends to give us a good indication of what to expect.



PREPARE FOR FIRE SEASON

Consider implementing FireSmart homeowner guidelines. Simple measures, such as clearing leaves and other debris from gutters, eaves, porches and decks, prevents embers from igniting your home. Implementing FireSmart guidelines around the structure ignition zones can make a significant difference to the resiliency of homes and communities when faced with a wildfire event.

For more information on how to establish wildfire resiliency in our forests and communities, visit:



bcwildfire.ca



firesmartbc.ca



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