



2025 Wildfire Outlook

Presentation to
Legislative Finance
Committee

May 13, 2025



Seasonal Fire Potential Main Factors

1. Drought

Big Picture Fuels Complex Conditions

2. Fine Fuels Condition

Fine Fuels Component

3. Seasonal Temperature & Precipitation

Season Setup

4. Spring & early Summer Weather Patterns

Fire Ignition & Spread

5. Monsoon

Season End



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Fire Season 2025: Drought

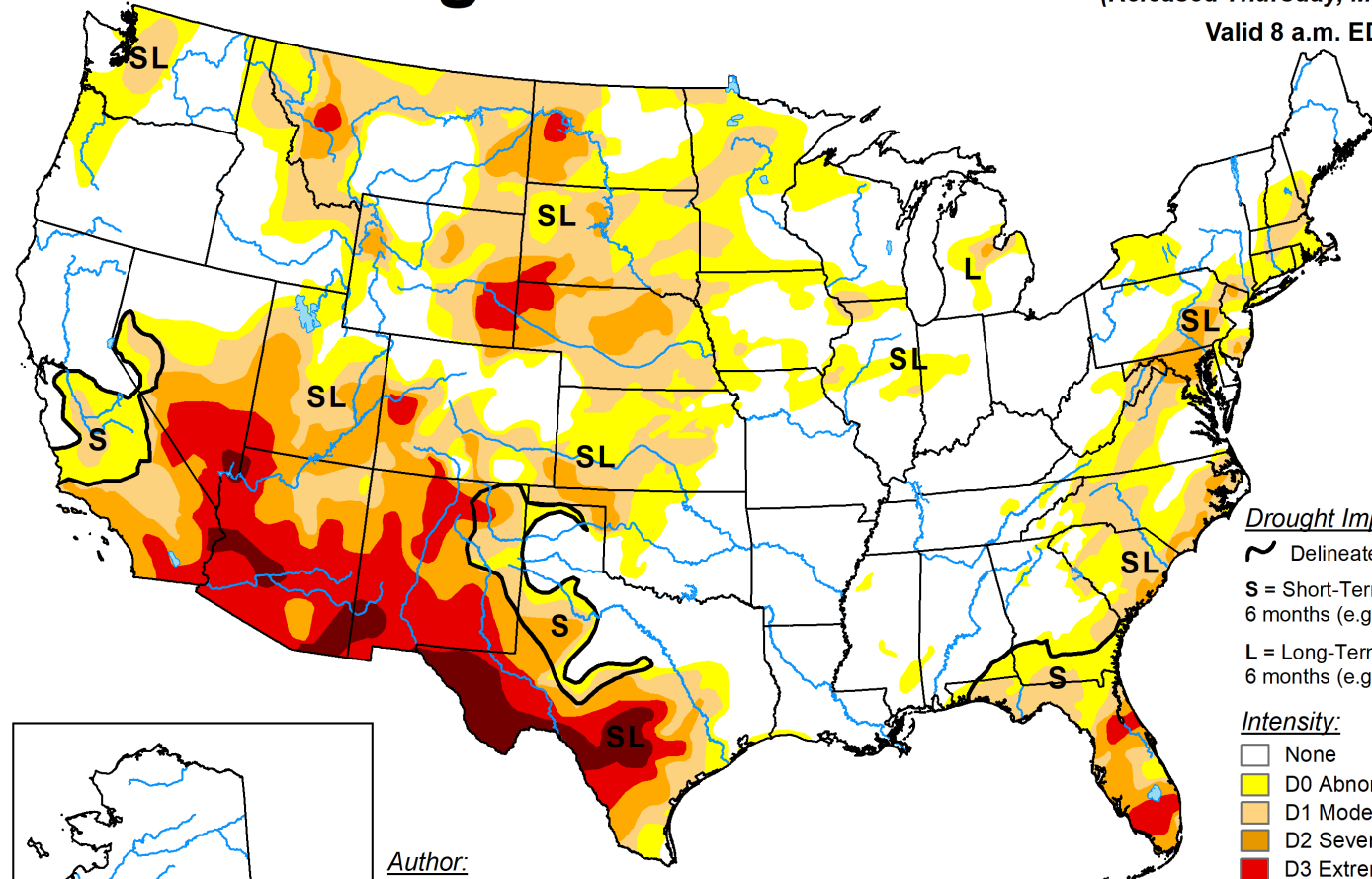
- Overall worsening drought conditions over the past 6 months, except in the east.
- Areas of **Extreme** Drought are south/west, with portions of north/central.
- Most of Rio Grande passage (bosque areas) is experiencing extreme drought
- **Severe** Drought is throughout much of the rest of NM.

U.S. Drought Monitor

April 29, 2025

(Released Thursday, May 1, 2025)

Valid 8 a.m. EDT



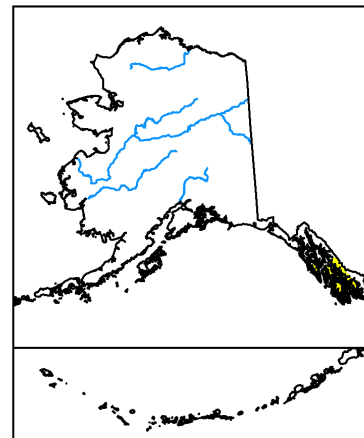
Drought Impact Types:

- ~ Delineates dominant impacts
- S = Short-Term, typically less than 6 months (e.g. agriculture, grasslands)
- L = Long-Term, typically greater than 6 months (e.g. hydrology, ecology)

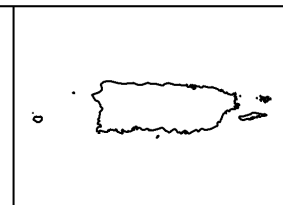
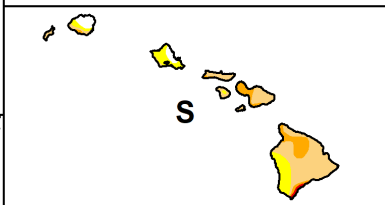
Intensity:

- None
- D0 Abnormally Dry
- D1 Moderate Drought
- D2 Severe Drought
- D3 Extreme Drought
- D4 Exceptional Drought

The Drought Monitor focuses on broad-scale conditions. Local conditions may vary. For more information on the Drought Monitor, go to <https://droughtmonitor.unl.edu/About.aspx>



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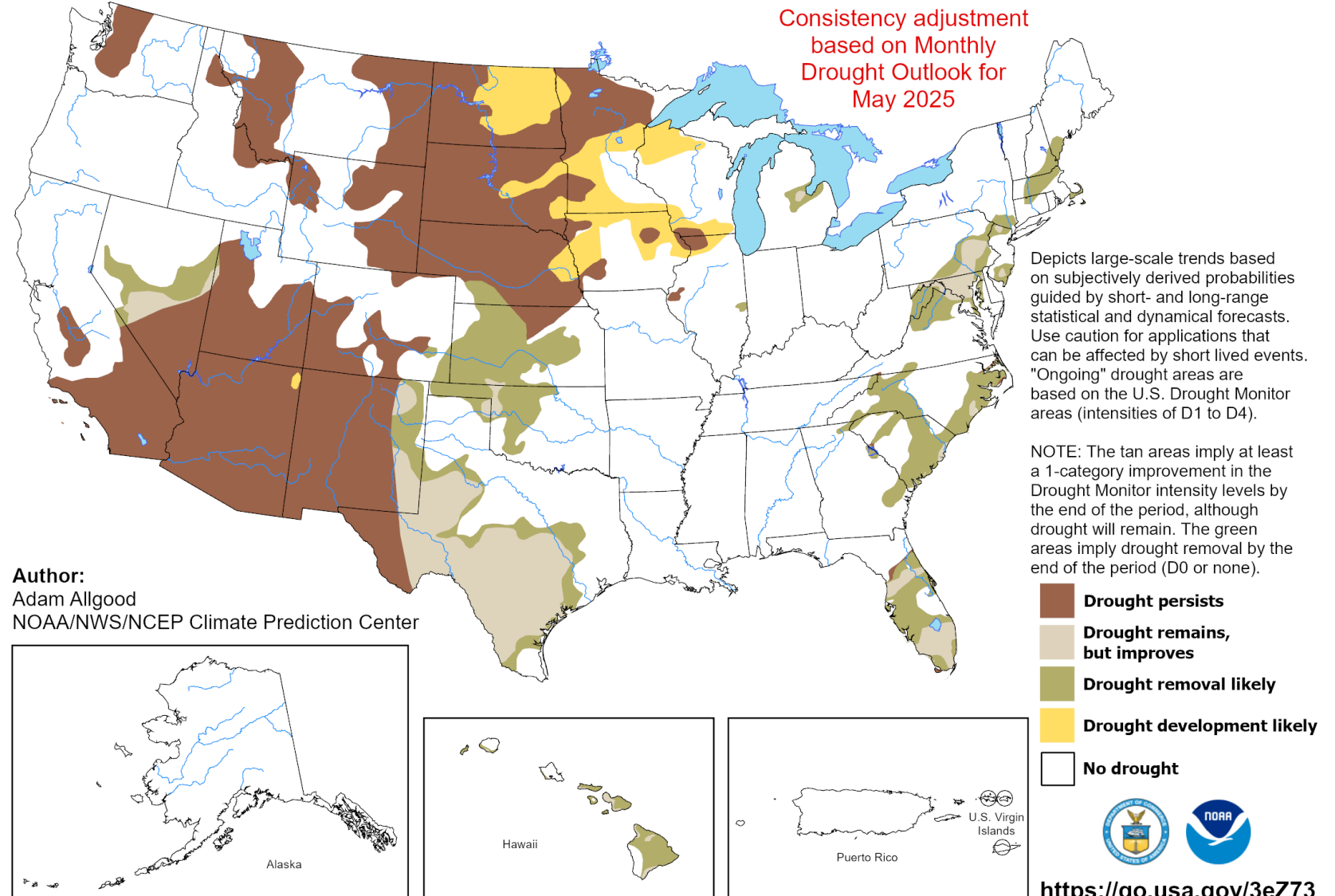


Fire Season 2025: Drought

- Outlook anticipates **persistent drought throughout the state**
- A strip of drought improvement likely along eastern edge of the state

U.S. Seasonal Drought Outlook Drought Tendency During the Valid Period

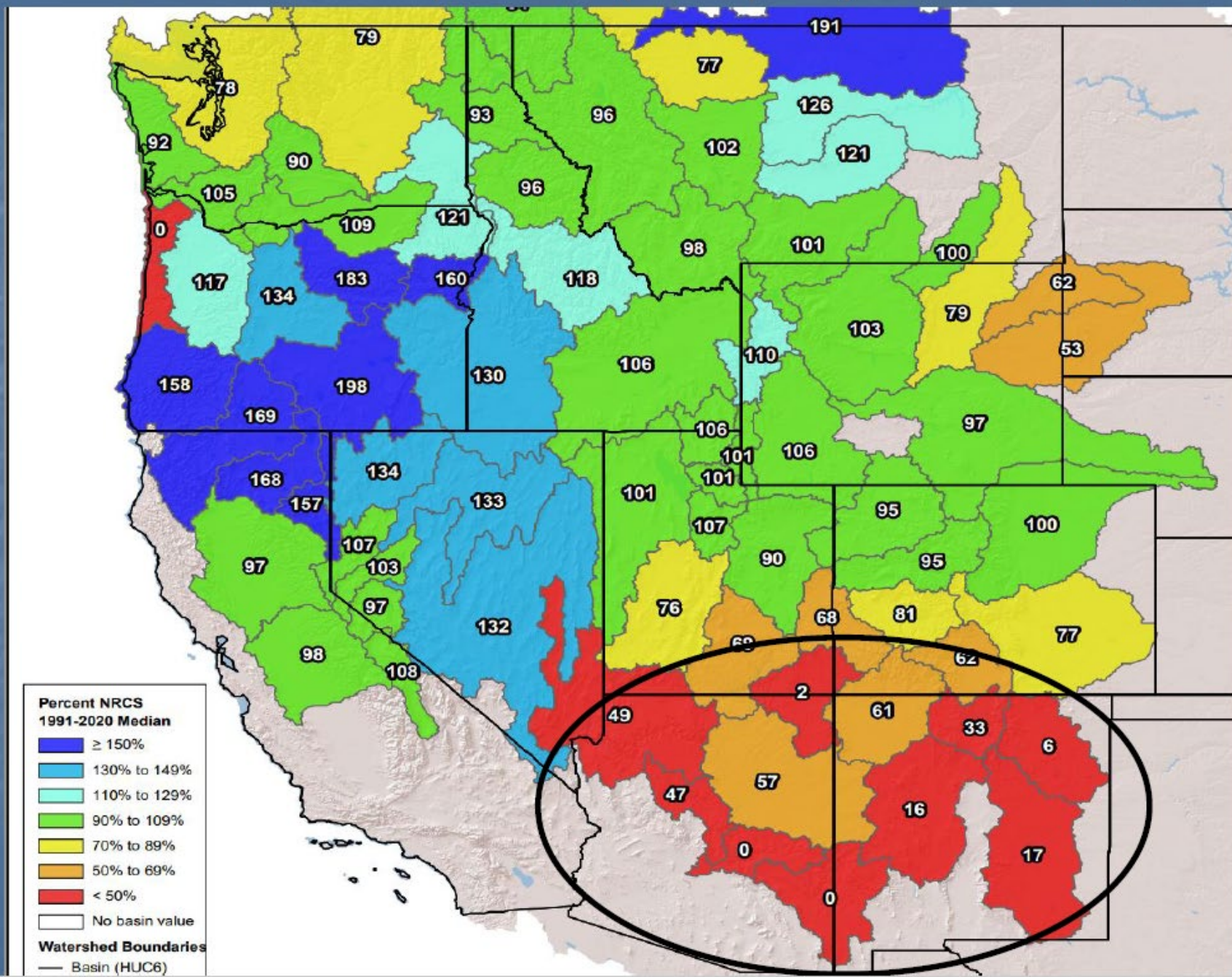
Valid for May 1 - July 31, 2025
Released April 30, 2025



Snow Water Equivalent (Snowpack) Values – 4/1/25

2025 Snowpack Conditions

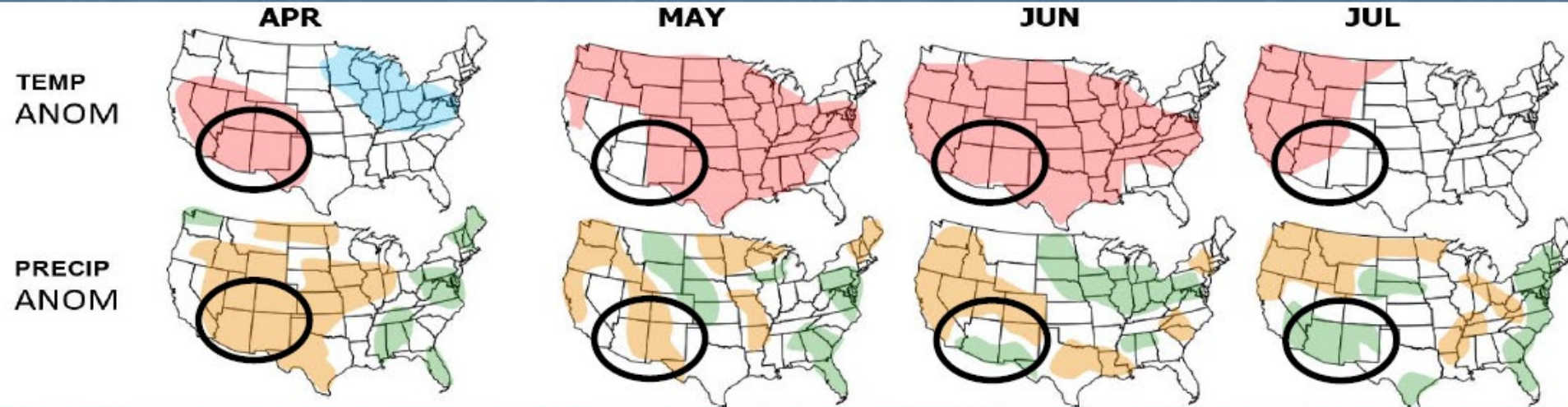
- Less than half normal snowpack conditions for season
- One of the lowest snowpacks on record for southern portions of the Continental Divide in NM.
- Lackluster runoff will not benefit water supply
- Concerns about dry conditions and upcoming fire season



Temp & Precipitation Forecast

- Periodic low-pressure systems will keep weather variable and fire potential lower through May
- Significant fire potential highest during windy/dry periods in southern/central NM in May
- Monsoon **on time & above normal rainfall** focused on the Divide region
- However, If hot temps are delayed, then monsoon could be delayed as well.

Fire Season 2025: APR-JUL Temp & Precipitation Forecast



A continued active and up/down spring weather pattern with some periods of near normal/**slightly cooler than normal temperatures** but with **an overall warmer than normal temperature signal** and **generally dry conditions overall** except across the far east in mid-late spring

Overall moisture is expected to be below normal regionally through early-mid June

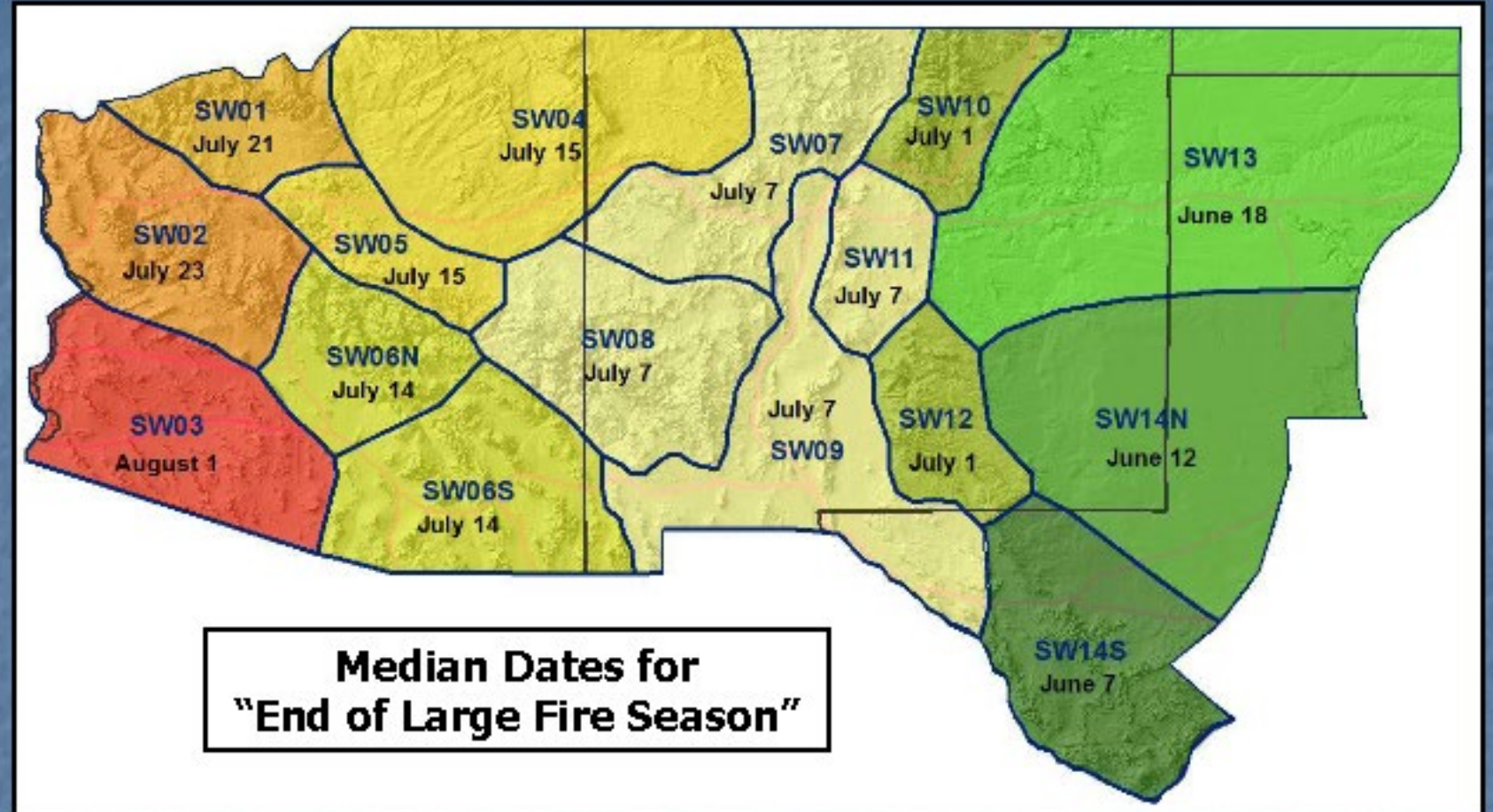
Monsoon likely to be on-time to at least slightly early with **above normal rainfall/moisture focused out near/along the divide region** Likely sharply drier far east, but generally east of the NM central mtns.

Likely a slightly above to above average spring as it relates to breezy/windy conditions with continued wind events regionally into May

Monsoon Dates

- Expected monsoon beginnings early July
- Potential for early monsoon in eastern half of NM

Fire Season 2025: Monsoon



- For Reference: Median dates for end of 'large fire' season.



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2025 Fire Season Factors Summary



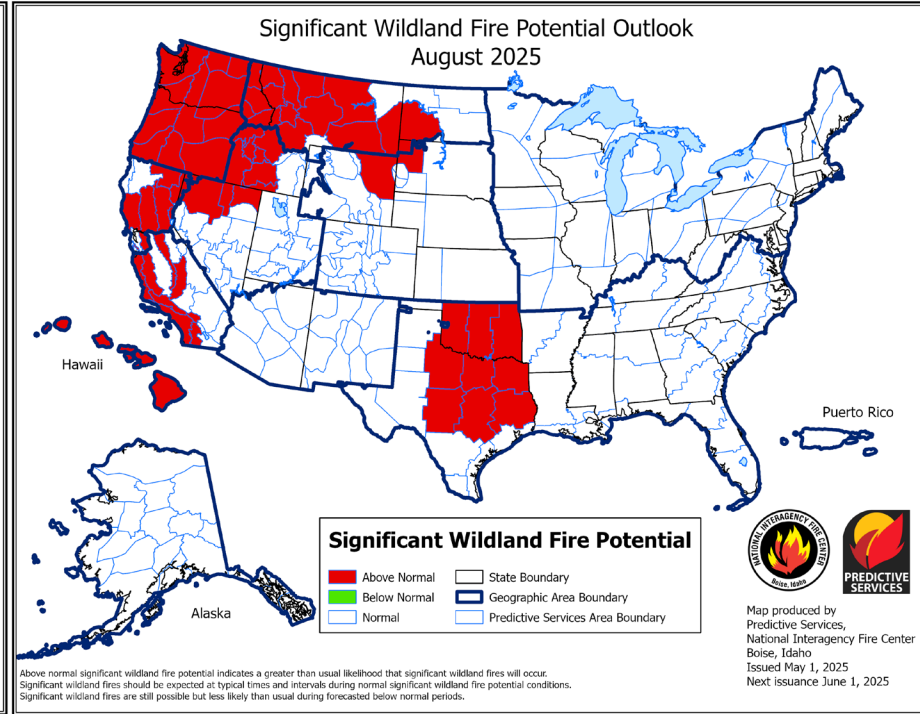
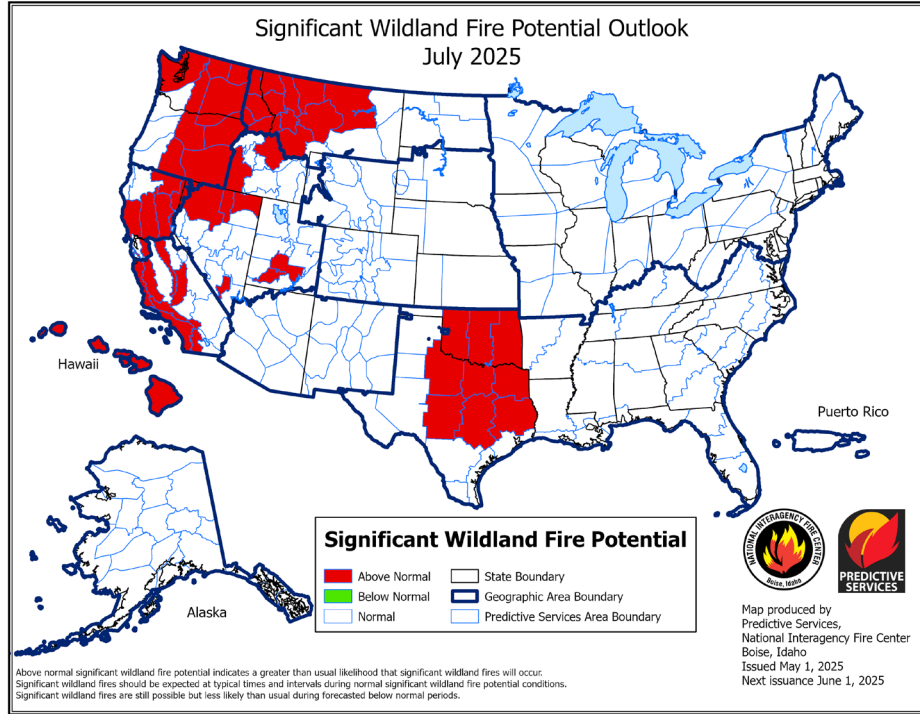
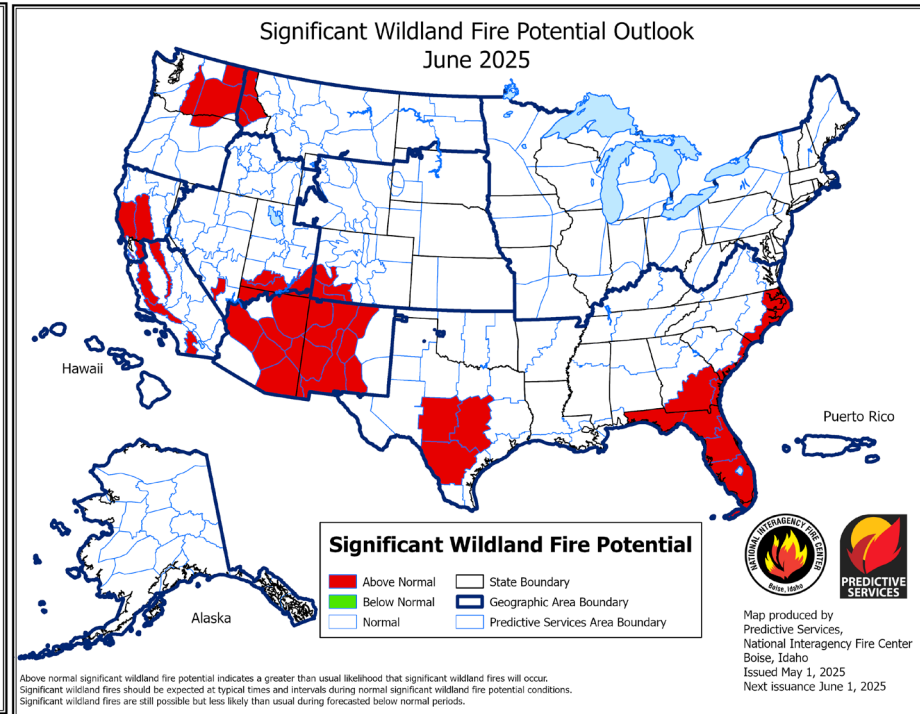
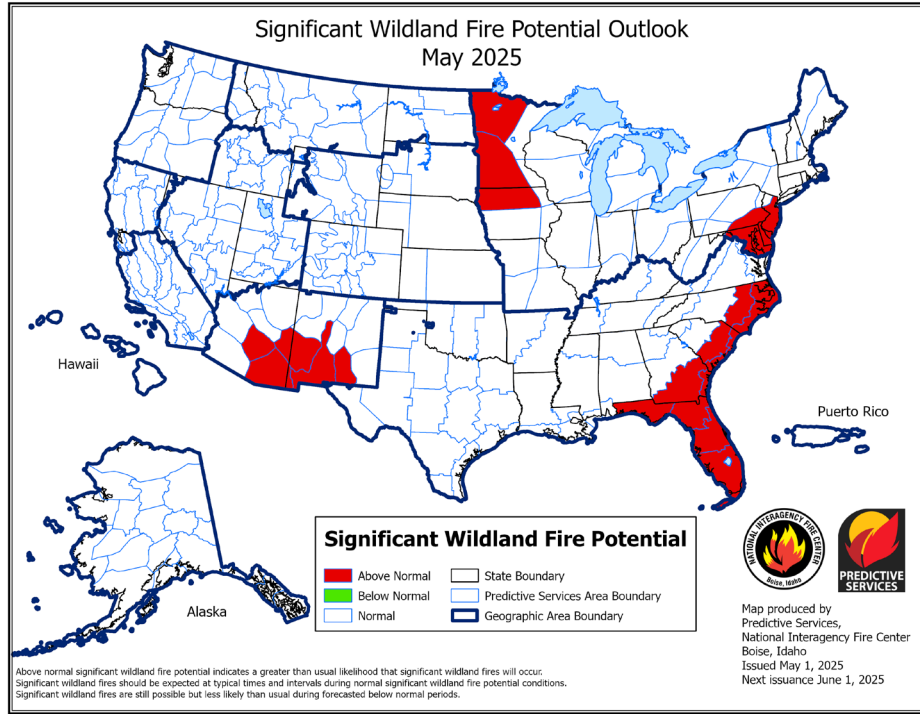
Fuels conditions along Middle Rio Grande on March 3, 2025

1. **Drought** – Most significant across far southern New Mexico.
2. **Fine fuels Condition** – Above normal in both northern and southern NM.
3. **Seasonal Temperature and Precipitation** – An up and down winter, with higher temps and below normal precipitation
4. **Spring/early Summer Weather Pattern** – Up and down pattern through May characterized by warmer and drier conditions than normal and a likelier breezier wind pattern compared to normal. Likely active dryline by May.
5. **Monsoon** – likely on time to at least slightly early onset (July 7 is average). Near or above normal moisture west near or below normal moisture east.

Bottom Line: A changeable spring pattern to lead to an early overall start to the large fire season.

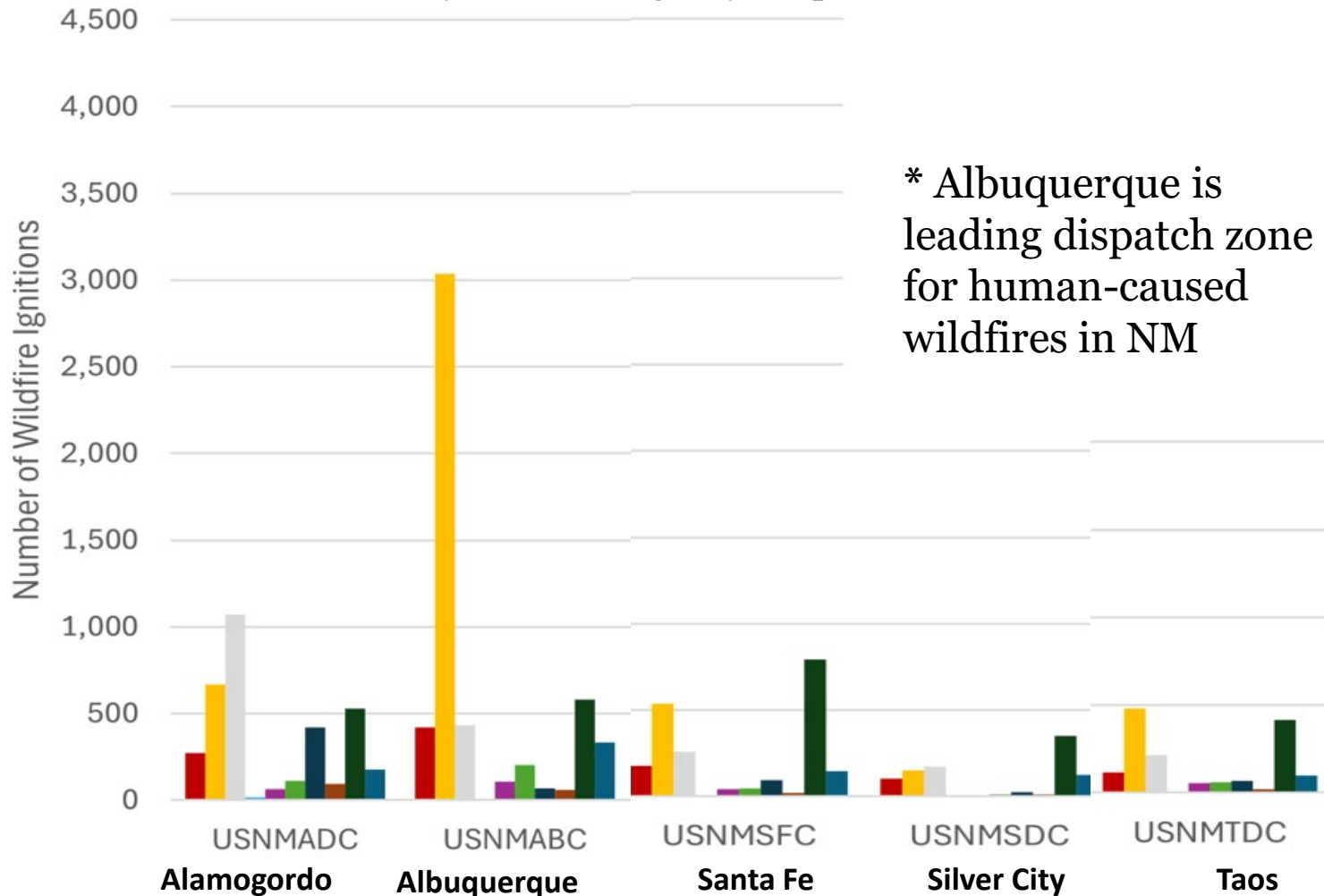
2025 Wildfire Outlook

- Above normal fire activity in South-Central Mountains and Lower Rio Grande Valley through **May**
- Above normal fire activity moves up into the rest of the state during **June**, with exception in Eastern plains
- **July- August** expected monsoons decrease fire potential to normal across the state.
- If monsoons delayed, fire potential could push above normal during July



Human Caused Ignitions in New Mexico 1992-2023

- Data from Forest Stewards Guild, Zander Evans
- Listed by NM Interagency Dispatch Center



Top 3 Human Causes of Wildfire in New Mexico

1. Debris and open burning
2. Campfires, outdoor recreation and ceremony
3. Equipment and vehicle use, including welding and other “hot work” activities performed outside

- Arson/incendiarism
- Debris and open burning
- Equipment and vehicle use
- Firearms and explosives use
- Fireworks
- Misuse of fire by a minor
- Power generation/transmission/distribution
- Railroad operations and maintenance
- Recreation and ceremony
- Smoking



How we fight fire: Master Cooperative Wildland Fire Management Agreement



Multi-Agency Agreement is the foundation of all wildfire response in New Mexico. The signatories are:

- Dept of the Interior agencies including the Bureau of Land Management, National Park Service, Bureau of Indian Affairs, and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
- U.S. Department of Agriculture, Forest Service
- U.S. Department of Energy, National Nuclear Security Administration (LANL)
- State of New Mexico, EMNRD-Forestry Division

The Master Coop Fire Agreement outlines the process for the entities to cooperate and coordinate wildfire response on the lands under their jurisdiction. The agreement:

- Outlines a wildfire response structure designed to ensure quickest dispatch for initial attack
 - Uses the “closest forces concept” as opposed to being focused on jurisdictional boundaries
- Establishes notification processes
- Lays out a process for use and reimbursement of interagency fire resources – including access to equipment caches, crews, aviation, etc.
- Sets up a process joint project implementation and project planning
- Allows for National Guard deployment during Governor’s declared emergencies

2025 State of New Mexico is Ready

State Wildfire Crews

- **Mimbres** (Socorro) is nearly fully staffed as a Type 2 Initial Attack crew (18 out of 21 positions).
- **Pecos River** (Las Vegas Grande) staffed with 10 FTE, but increasing workforce as we speak.
- **Wildfire Response Program** (Santa Fe) **Rio Grande** and **Wheeler Peak** Type 2 Initial Attack crews are staffed with 9 FTE and up to 40 emergency hire firefighters.
- On track for 150 AD (emergency hire) staff for the upcoming season statewide.
- **16 Type-6 Engines** positioned statewide with engine boss and crew
- Already provided training to over 1,500 firefighters in New Mexico in FY25.



Federal Crew and Aviation Resources for Southwest Region (NM/AZ)

- 20 federal Hotshot Crews in New Mexico and Arizona; approximately 440 firefighters
- 105 Forest Service Type 3 and Type 6 engines
- **Forest Service firefighter capacity not expected to decrease from 2024**
- 1,500 federal personnel estimated by peak fire season



Type 6 Engine, US Forest Service

- 25 exclusive use Large Air Tankers (LATs)
- 4 exclusive use Very Large Air Tankers (VLATs) – DC-10
- 4 “call when needed” airtankers
- 6 exclusive use water scooper aircraft
- 103 helicopter contracts (heavy, medium, light)
- 470 “call when needed” helicopters.

If Additional Capacity is Needed: Resource sharing with Great Plains Compact and state-to-state agreements



Interstate Compact for the Prevention and Control of Forest Fires (Section 68-3-1 NMSA 1978)

Article I: Purpose

The purpose of this compact is to promote effective prevention and control of forest fires in the great plains region of the United States....

ARTICLE IV: Aid to Other Member States

If the state forest fire control agency of a member state requests aid from the state forest fire control agency of another state in combating, controlling or preventing forest fires, the state forest fire control agency of that state may render all possible aid to the requesting agency, consonant with the maintenance of protection at home.

ARTICLE V: Claims and Reimbursement

(a) Any member state rendering outside aid pursuant to this compact shall be reimbursed by the member state receiving the aid for any loss or damage to, or expense incurred in the operation of, any equipment used in answering a request for aid, and for the cost of all materials, transportation, wages, salaries and maintenance of employees and equipment incurred in connection with the request....

Thank You!

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Energy, Minerals and Natural Resources Department

