SEASON OUTLOOK

May 08, 2019

Early Summer Outlook (May—July) A dry start to Spring this March was tempered by normal April weather patterns with average precipitation across most of the province. The landscape is still in a drying trend, however, and we can expect to see grasses curing and vegetation becoming more available for fires. Above seasonal temperatures are still expected for early summer, however, precipitation forecasts are indicating average levels of rainfall.

May and June weather in particular will be important for our fire season as June is traditionally our wetter month. Lack of rainfall during these months could lead to above average wildfire starts and area burnt later in the season. These are the conditions we experienced in 2017/ 2018. The lack of and quickly disappearing snowpack is also a concern in many areas of the province. This is observed in recorded lower than normal stream flows in some areas.

Extended Outlook (August—October) Above seasonal temperatures are expected to continue into the summer, particularly for southern and southwestern areas of the province. Current precipitation models are indicating normal amounts of precipitation for this time of year.

Precipitation, lightning storms and wind events are difficult to predict more than a few days out and are by far the most influential weather events on our fire season.

Predicted above normal fire conditions

Predicted normal fire conditions

How does the BCWS predict a fire season?

This forecast was assessed by meteorologists and fire behaviour specialists who considered a range of broad fire environment factors and observed weather data. This includes accounting for conditions that affect soil moisture, fine fuel dryness and vegetation growth, which in turn influence the amount of fuel available for wildfires.

What factors influence this prediction?

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 reliably forecast much beyond a few days in advance. The BC Wildfire Service maintains its levels of preparedness by studying forecasts, using experience from previous seasons and analyzing trends to give us a good indication of what to expect in the upcoming season. We will produce monthly updates of our season forecast, as we continue to collect data and utilize forecasting models.

What can we do to prepare for an upcoming fire season?

Much of the fire starts at this time of year are human-caused and therefore preventable. This is a good time to review how we can all prevent wildfires heading into the 2019 season. For more information including resources on wildfire resiliency within our forests and communities, visit:

www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/safety/wildfire-status/prevention or www.FireSmartBC.ca.