

2026 Fire Season Outlook

Northwest California

James White - Fire Team Lead and IMET



EUREKA CA

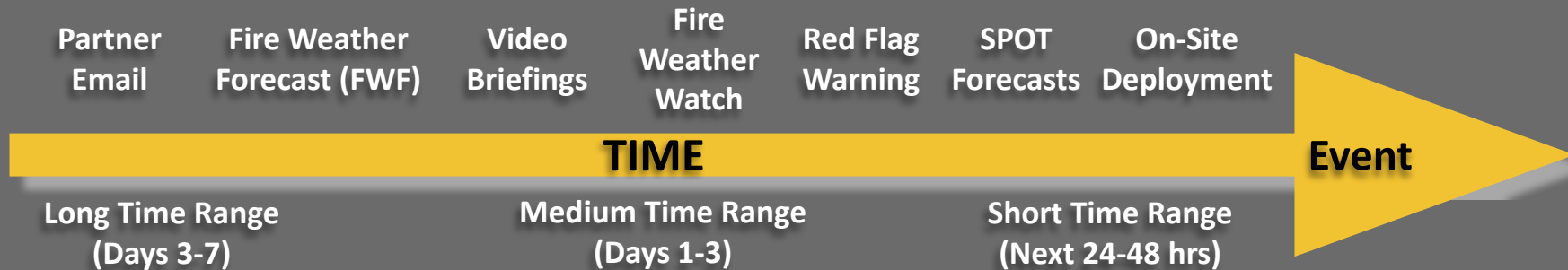
NOAA NATIONAL WEATHER SERVICE

Issued May 11th, 2026





Fire Program Overview





Partner Email Briefings

- Briefings issued for all weather hazards - including fire weather
- Email list open to any government partner
- Published publicly on the web at: <https://www.weather.gov/eka/briefing>

National Weather Service
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
Weather Forecast Office
Eureka, CA
Friday, May 1, 2026

Interior Thunderstorms Possible through Monday; Sneaker Waves Possible Sunday

KEY POINTS

- Thunderstorms are possible each afternoon through Monday
- Highest chances for thunderstorms Sunday
- Sneaker Waves possible Sunday
- Additional chance for thunderstorms late next week

WEATHER RISK OUTLOOK

Risk levels incorporate potential impacts from weather hazards and likelihood of occurrence for a reasonable worst-case scenario.

	Fri 5/1	Sat 5/2	Sun 5/3	Mon 5/4	Tue 5/5	Wed 5/6	Thu 5/7
Del Norte County Crescent City, Gasquet	Thunderstorms	Thunderstorms	Thunderstorms Sneaker Waves	Rain Showers			
Humboldt County Eureka, Fortuna, Willow Creek	Thunderstorms	Thunderstorms	Thunderstorms Sneaker Waves	Rain Showers			
Trinity County Weaverville, Hayfork	Thunderstorms	Thunderstorms	Thunderstorms	Thunderstorms			Thunderstorms
Mendocino County Ukiah, Fort Bragg	Thunderstorms	Thunderstorms	Thunderstorms Sneaker Waves	Rain Showers			Thunderstorms
Lake County Clearlake, Lakeport	Thunderstorms	Thunderstorms	Thunderstorms	Rain Showers			Thunderstorms

Risk Levels Little to None Minor Moderate Major Extreme

DETAILS

Del Norte County, Humboldt County, Trinity County, Mendocino County, Lake County

Impacts:

- Thunderstorms could produce lightning causing fire starts.
- Frequent lightning, hail, and gusty winds are possible in the strongest cells

Timing:

- This afternoon to Monday afternoons
- Highest chances Sunday
- Chance for interior thunderstorms return late next week.

Confidence:

- Low to moderate

Thunderstorms



- FWF - Fire Weather Forecast
- Broad forecast product that covers average fire weather conditions over a large Fire Weather Zone
- Best viewed in the CA Fire Weather Page:
<https://www.google.com/search?q=ca+fire+weather+page>

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Fire Weather Planning Forecast for Northwest California
National Weather Service Eureka CA
1240 AM PDT Fri May 8 2026

.DISCUSSION...Northerly winds will increase Friday afternoon with building high pressure, likely eroding the coastal low clouds through the afternoon. Breezy afternoon northerly to westerly winds will continue while temperatures trend warmer with the strengthening high. Inland valley temperatures will reach the low to some mid 90s by early next week. Expect warm, dry thermal belts for the ridges with temperature differences up to 15 degrees from the ridges to valleys by early next week.

CAZ401-090145-
Coastal Del Norte-
1240 AM PDT Fri May 8 2026

.TODAY...

* Sky/Weather...Mostly cloudy then becoming partly cloudy then becoming sunny. Patchy fog in the morning.

* Max Temperature...57-65.

* Min Humidity...64-77 percent.

* MIXING HEIGHT...2400 ft AGL.

* SNOW LEVEL...Above 4300 feet.

* 20-FOOT WINDS...

VALLEYS/SLOPES.....Northwest winds 5 to 8 mph.

RIDGES.....Variable 2 to 4 mph...becoming northwest 5 to 7 mph in the afternoon.



New Fire Weather Zones!



- New Fire Weather Zones went live in April 2026
- Big change for our area - much smaller and more detailed zones
- Now follow county borders (mostly)
- Will provide more detailed and accurate FWF forecast and targeted Red Flag Warnings





New Fire Weather Zones - Del Norte

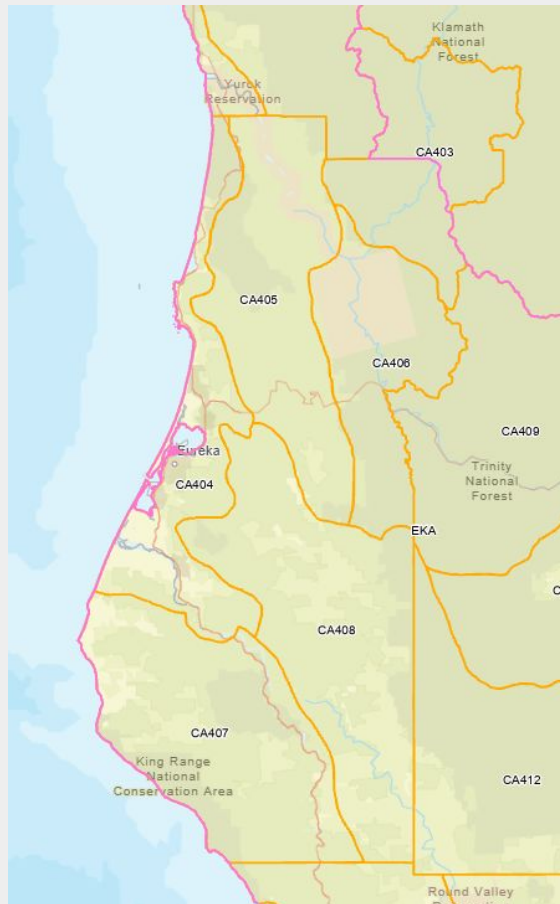




New Fire Weather Zones - Humboldt

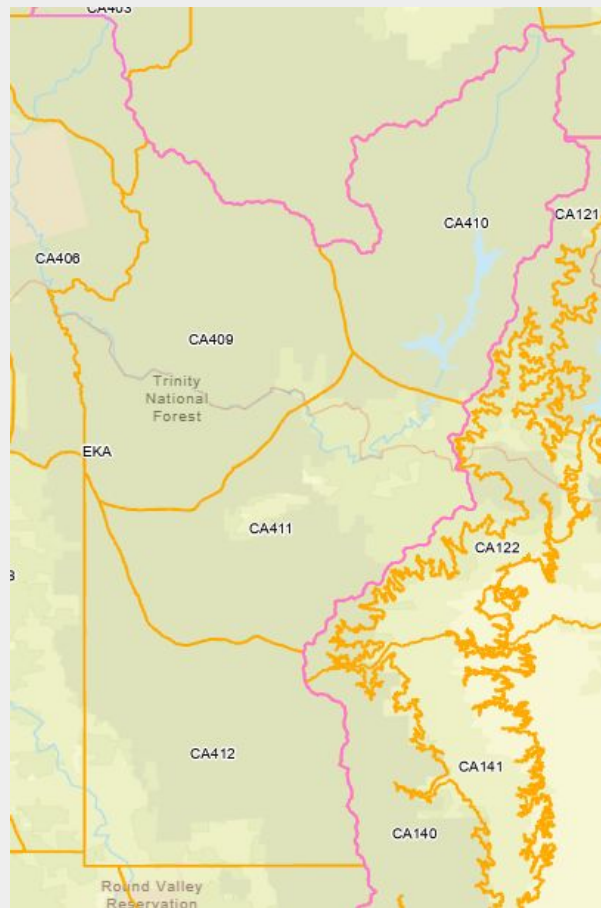


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New Fire Weather Zones - Trinity

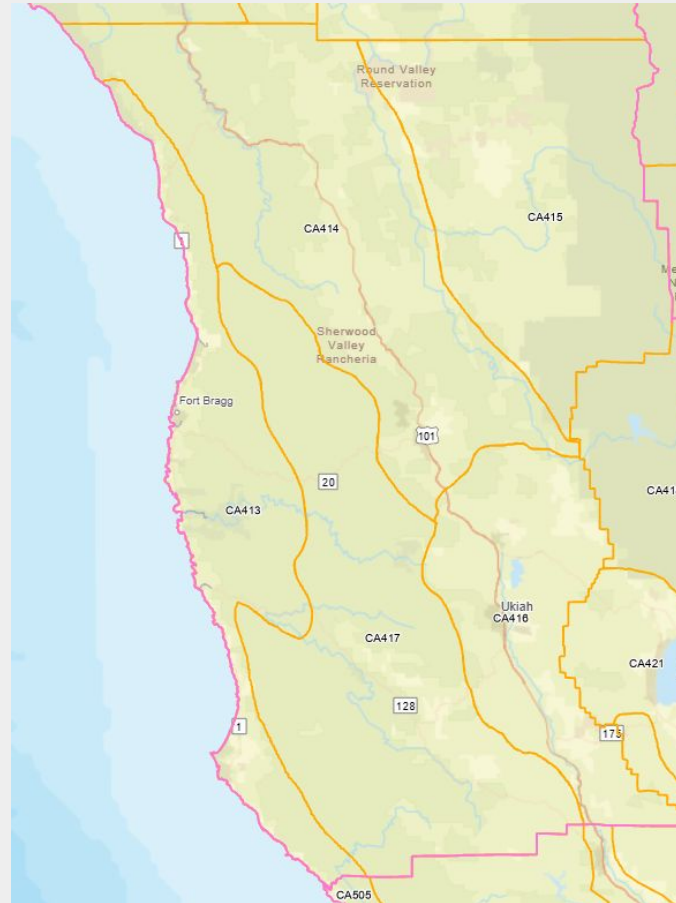




New Fire Weather Zones - Mendocino



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New Fire Weather Zones - Lake

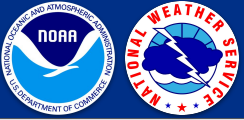




Video Briefings

- Sent out as a video conference link to our partner email list
- Sent on an event by event basis
- Considering starting recurring fire weather specific video briefing
 - Similar program at some other NWS offices
 - Likely 2 or 3 times a week
 - Please let us know if you are interested in this!

The image shows a screenshot of an email header and body. The header is a blue bar with the NOAA and National Weather Service logos on the left, the text 'National Weather Service National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration' in the center, and 'Weather Forecast Office Eureka, CA Monday, Feb 23, 2026' on the right. The body of the email is white with blue text for the subject line: 'Atmospheric River Event Video Conference Being Held Today From 1 PM to 1:30 PM'. Below the subject line is the text 'Hello Partners,' followed by a paragraph of text: 'We will be holding a briefing to discuss strong gusty winds, heavy rainfall and potential flooding. This time is for you to ask us any questions or express concerns you may have about the upcoming event. The briefing will be held via google meet today, February 23rd, 2026 from 1:00 to 1:30 PM. You can find the meeting details below. Feel free to join and leave as your schedule allows.'



Red Flag Warnings

- California Warning criteria remains unchanged
 - Unusually Hot Dry and Windy conditions
 - OR abundant dry lightning on dry fuels
- Goal is for watches to be issued 36+ hours in advance.
- PDS Red Flag used for very extreme events - EKA has not issued one since it started in 2021

Red Flag Weather Matrix		Sustained Winds				
		<6 mph	6--11 mph	12-20 mph	21-29 mph	30+ mph
H u	Daytime Min <29-42% and/or Night Max 60-80%	Low	Low	Medium	High	RFW
	Daytime Min <19-28% and/or Night Max 46-60%	Low	Medium	High	RFW	RFW
i d	Daytime Min <9-18% and/or Night Max 31-45%	Medium	High	RFW	RFW	RFW
	Daytime Min <9% and/or Night Max <31%	High	RFW	RFW	RFW	PDS RFW





Spot Forecasts

- **Localized forecasts issued on demand for wildfires and prescribed burns**
 - **Can also be requested for Hazmat, SAR, etc.**
- **Must be a government or public safety official to request**
- **Request at:**
<https://spot.weather.gov/>

Spot Forecast for MR5B 89...US Forest Service
National Weather Service Eureka CA
350 AM PDT Mon May 4 2026

If conditions become unrepresentative...contact the National Weather Service.

If you have questions or concerns regarding this forecast, please contact our office at (707) 443-6484

Please do not respond directly if you have received this in an email.

.DISCUSSION...Expect light showers throughout the day today, with a slight chance (10-20%) of thunderstorms. Showers are forecast to taper off this evening and into tonight. Aside from erratic and gusty winds possible with any vicinity thunderstorms, expect diurnal uphill winds around 5 mph, becoming very light and variable late in the afternoon and evening. A drier and a warming trend will begin on Tuesday; however, isolated showers remain possible Tuesday afternoon due to the combination of lingering low-level moisture and diurnal heating on Tuesday afternoon.

.REST OF TODAY...

Sky/weather.....Cloudy. Patchy fog early in the morning. Slight chance of thunderstorms early in the morning.
Chance of rain showers through the day.

- Great source for observations and watch / warning info:
<https://www.weather.gov/wrh/hazards>
- Great source for point forecast info:
<https://www.weather.gov/forecastpoints>
- When in doubt, call or email us!
 - 707-443-6484
 - nws.eureka@noaa.gov

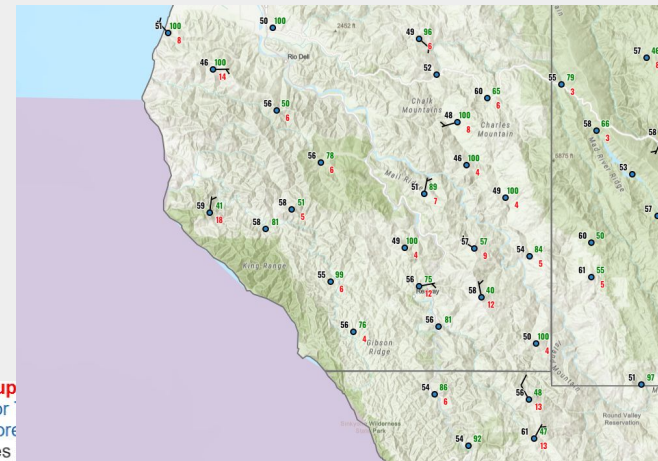


Table up
Click for
EKA Fore
15 miles

	Fri May 8	Sat May 9	Sun May 10	Mon May 11	Tue May 12	Wed May 13	Thu May 14
Max Temp, °F	67	72	68	78	76	70	68
Min Temp, °F	50	49	52	54	58	55	52
Max Wind, mph	9	8	9	7	8	9	8
Min Wind, mph	1	0	0	0	1	0	0
Max Wind Gust, mph	18	15	20	13	18	16	17
Max Prob. of Precip., %	1	1	4	0	15	15	10
Max Prob. of Thunder, %	0	0	0	0	2	4	4
Max Dew Point, °F	51	57	56	59	53	54	53
Min Dew Point, °F	44	40	44	45	47	46	46
Max RH, %	79	83	83	77	73	81	83
Min RH, %	57	60	66	52	45	57	59
Max Cloud Cover, %	57	43	59	54	54	52	42
Min Cloud Cover, %	10	14	37	22	24	17	18
Min Snow Level, x1000ft.	6.9	8.4	9	9.4	8.8	8.2	7.9
Max Wave Height, ft	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

- Relatively average to quiet year
- Spring was much warmer and drier than normal
- Summer was cooler than normal with lots of wet thunderstorms
- Early start to the wet season prevented any large east wind event risk

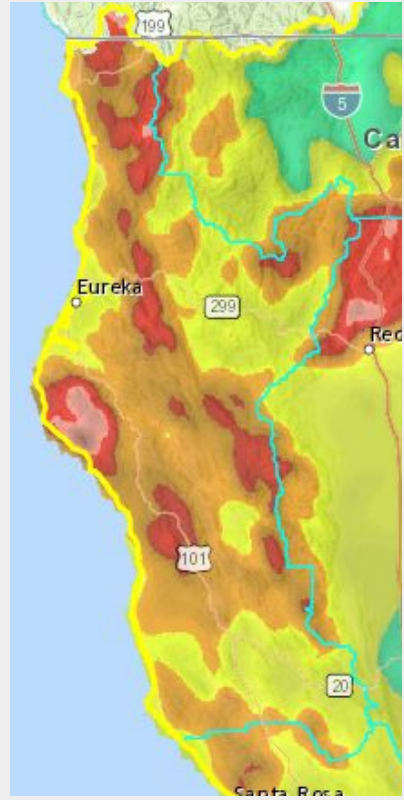




2025-2026 Winter in Review

- Generally below average precipitation
- Largest rain deficit in the north (only 60% of normal)
- Rain was very unevenly distributed
 - Wetter than average December and April
 - Second driest March ever

Water Year-to-Date Precip (Inches) - May 2026



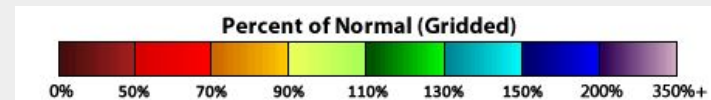
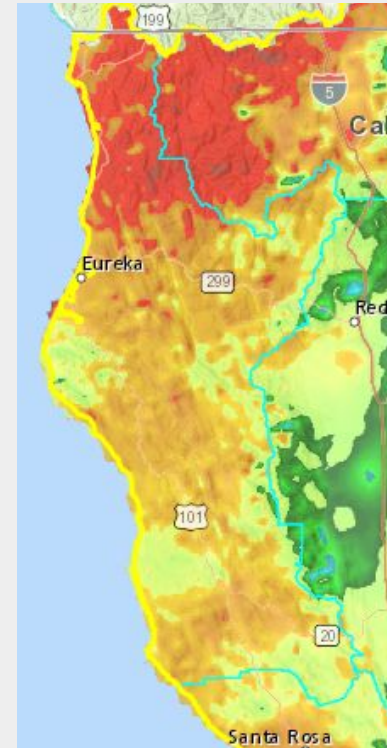


2025-2026 Winter in Review



Water Year-to-Date Precip % of Average - May 2026

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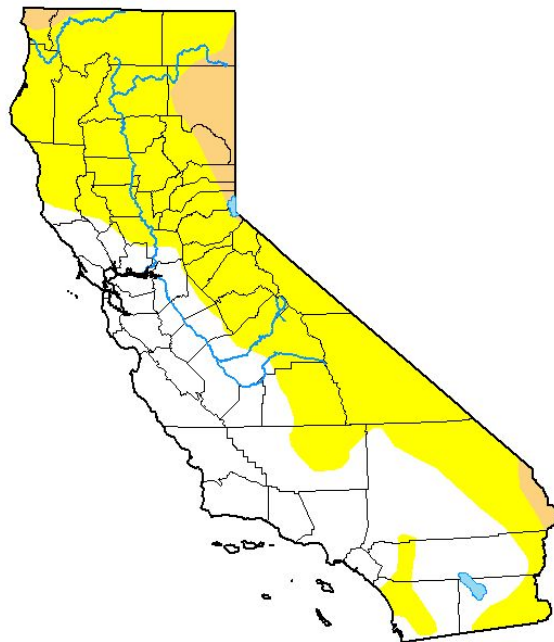
2026 Drought Status



- Generally the lowest level of drought across NW California
- Some moderate to severe drought stretching into southern Oregon
- The driest start to the summer since at least 2023

U.S. Drought Monitor California

May 5, 2026
(Released Thursday, May 7, 2026)
Valid 8 a.m. EDT



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>

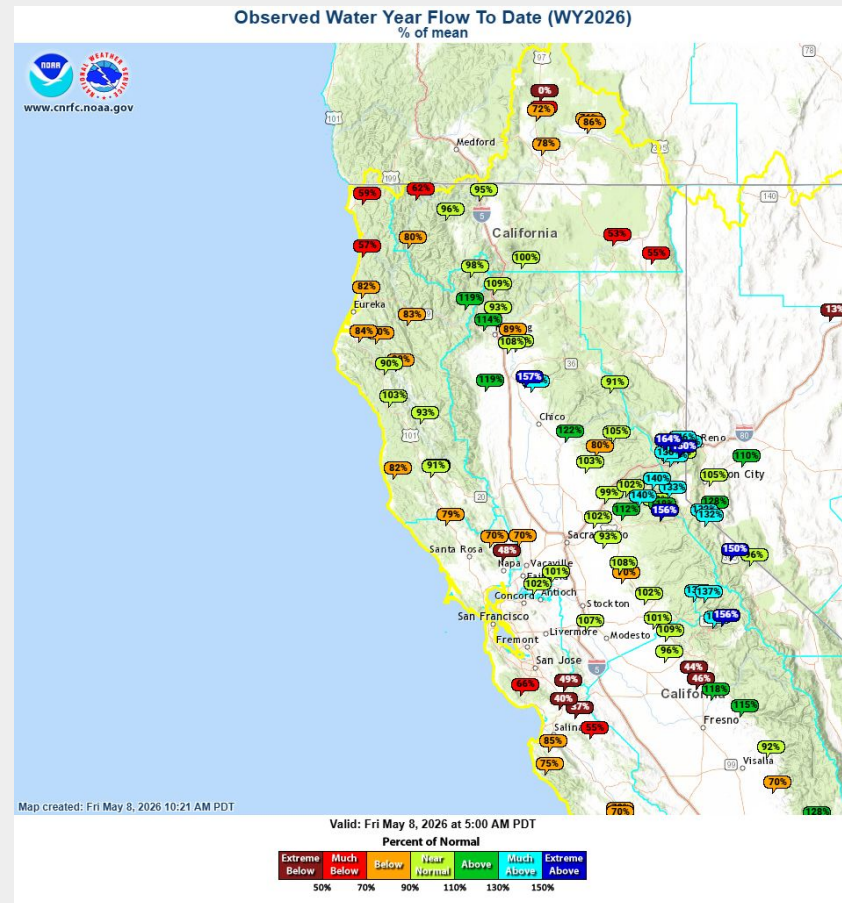
Author:

Adam Allgood
NOAA/NWS/NCEP/CPC



droughtmonitor.unl.edu

- Much below normal stream flow, similar to precipitation
- Record breaking low snowpack - nearly nonexistent here
- Careful - snow doesn't correlate well with fire activity

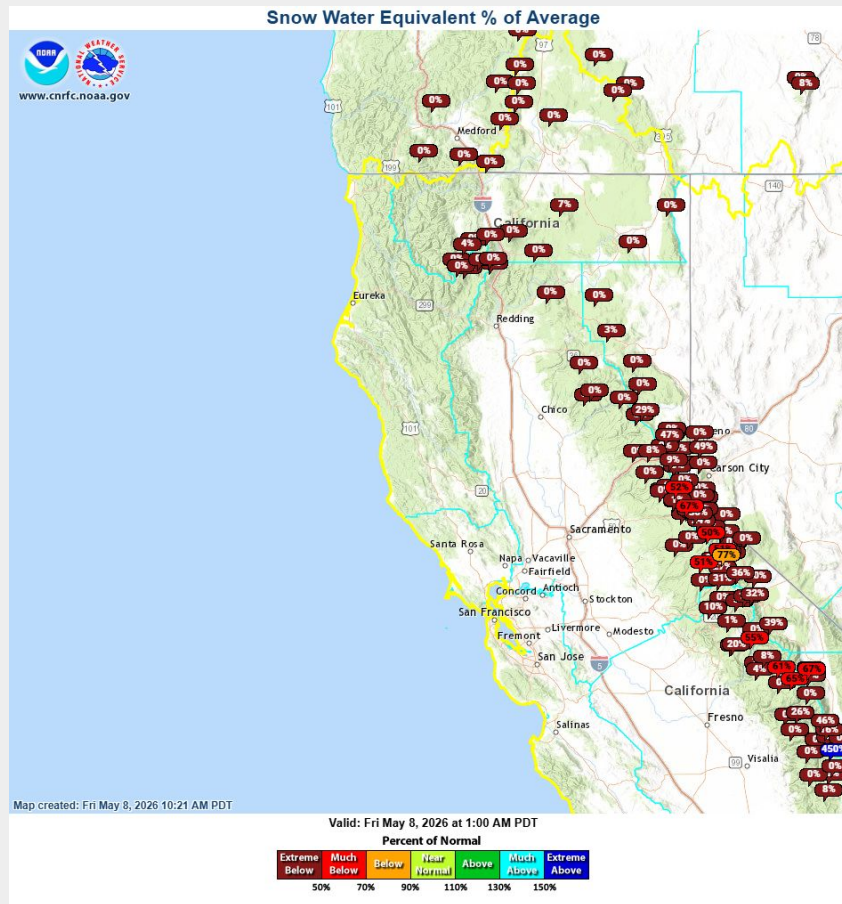




2026 Snow and Streamflow



- Much below normal stream flow, similar to precipitation
- Record breaking low snowpack - nearly nonexistent here
- Careful - snow doesn't correlate well with fire activity

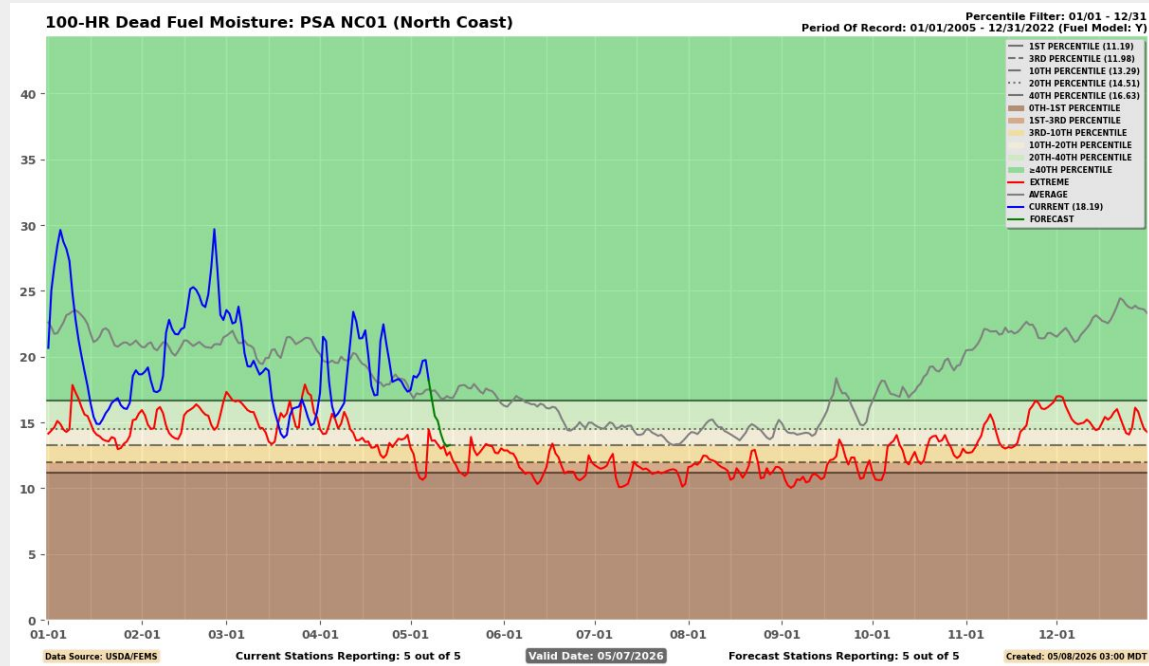




Current Fuels Status - North Coast



- Data provided by North Ops GACC Predictive Services
- Generally record fire danger in March but has returned to near normal
- Forecast to jump much above normal with heatwave this week

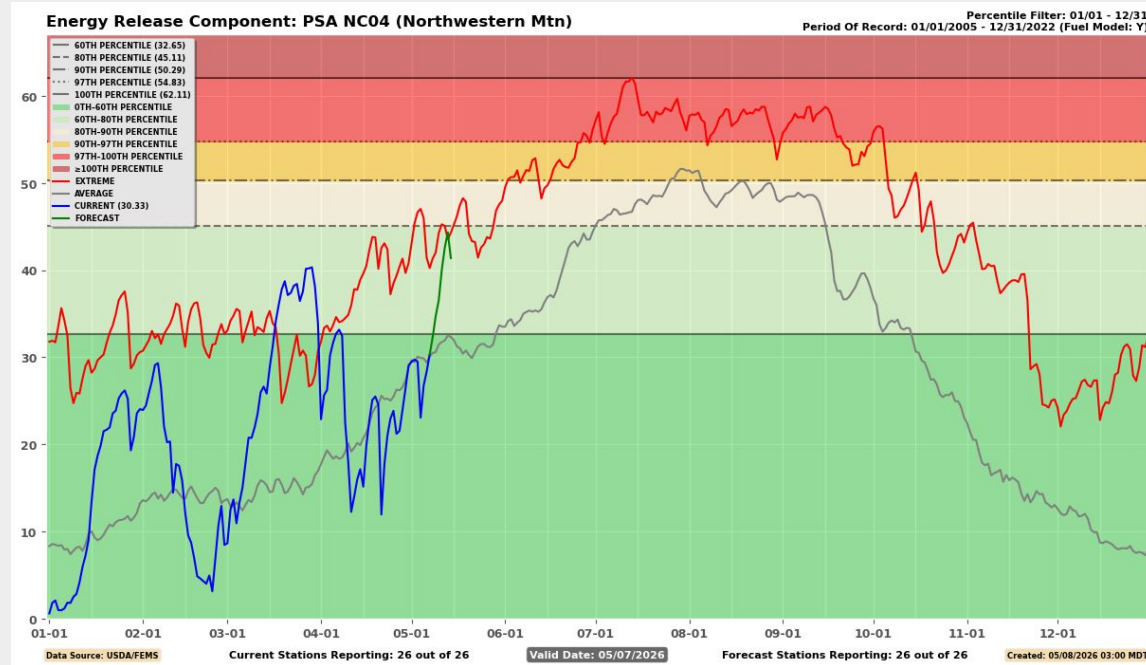




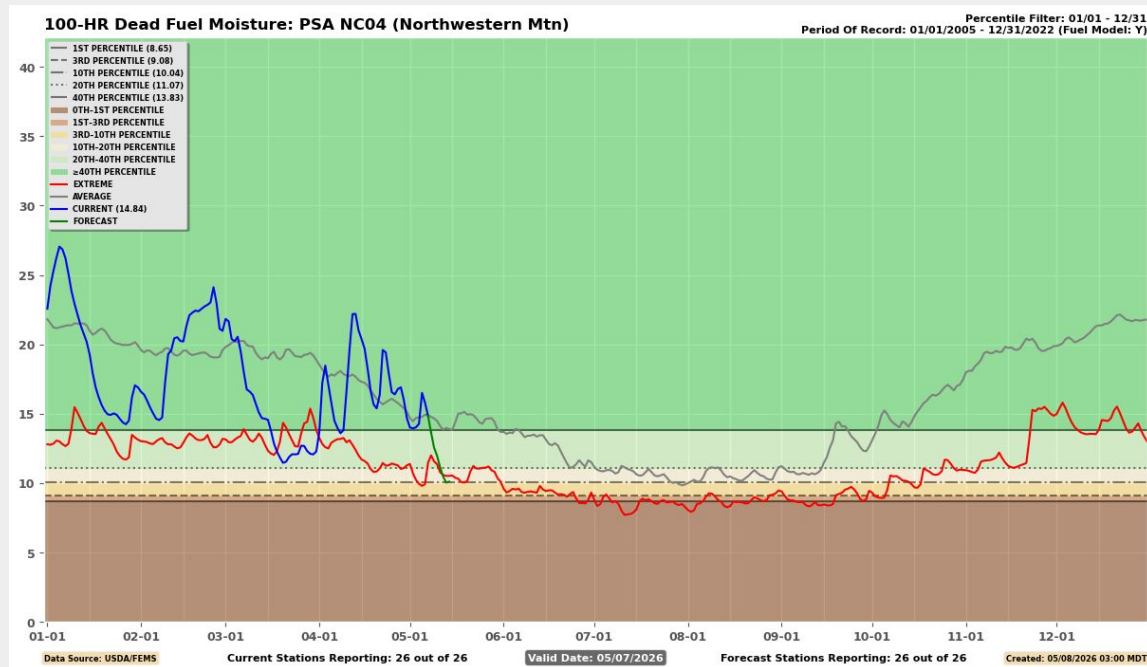
Current Fuels Status - NW Interior



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- Forecast to jump back near record values with heatwave this week



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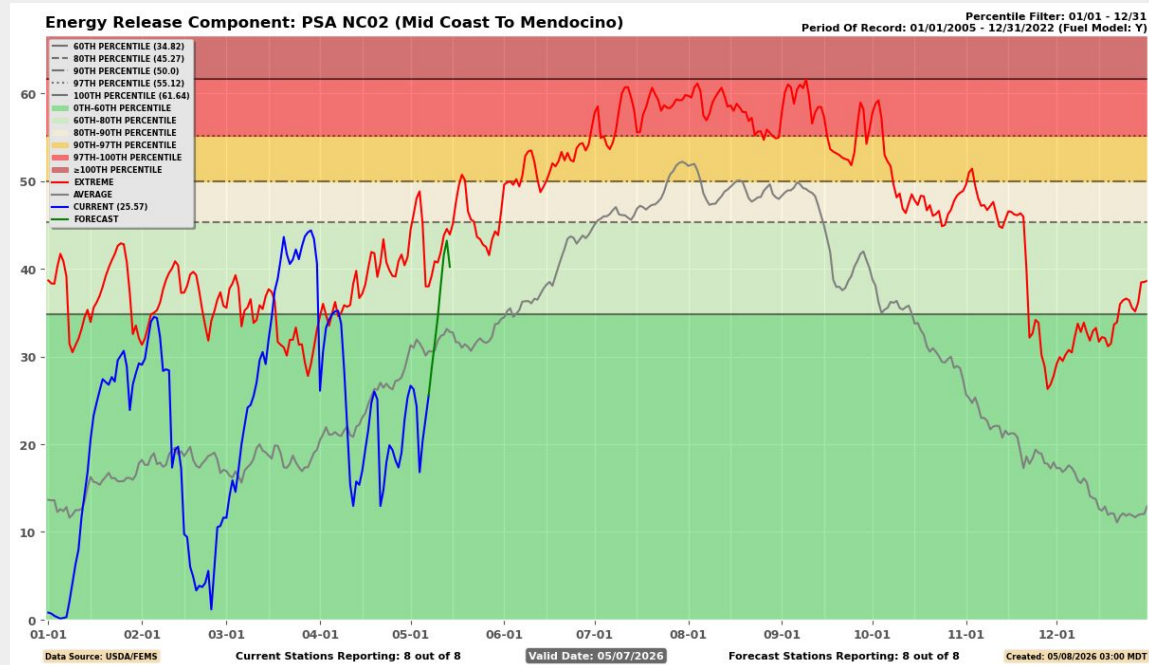




Current Fuels Status - Mendocino / Lake



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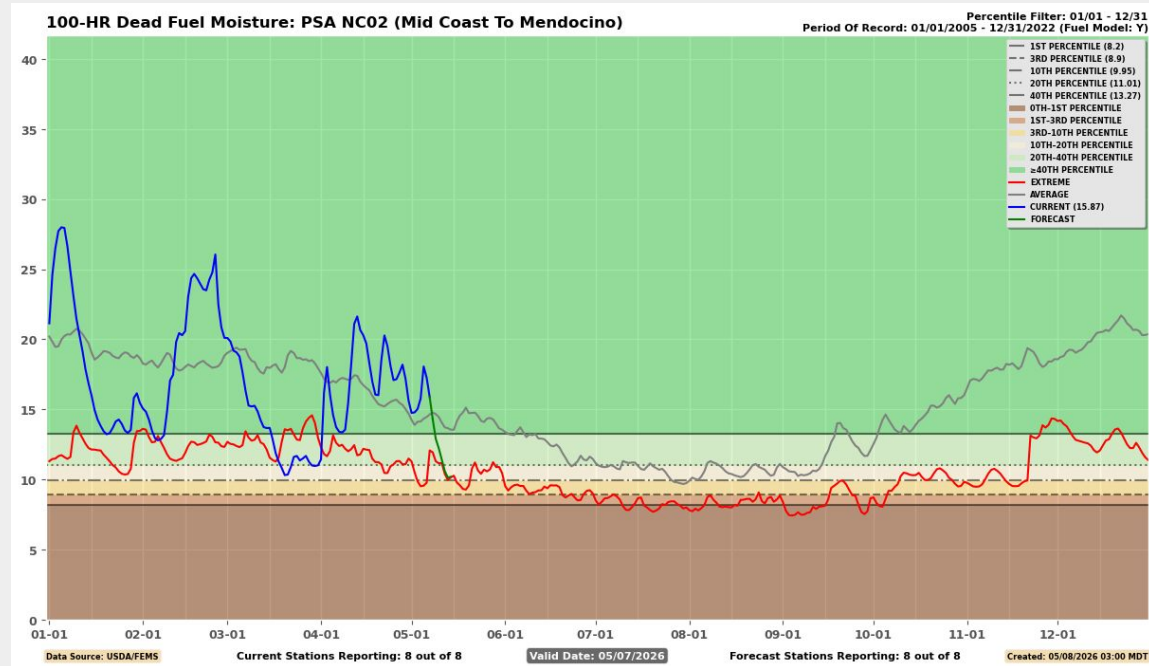




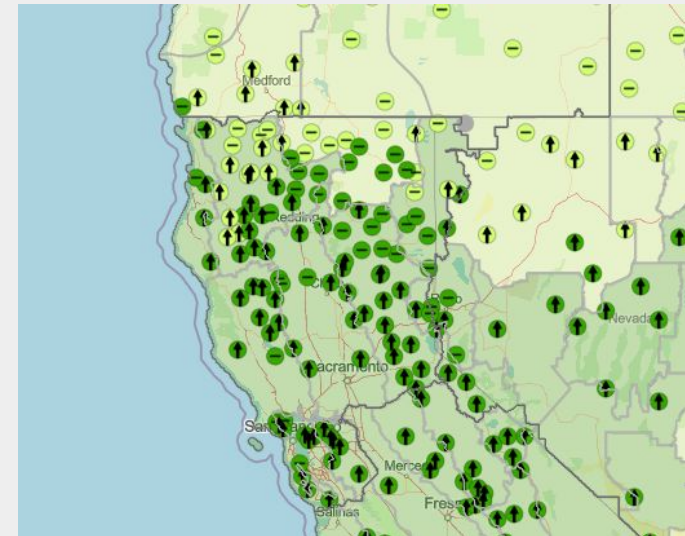
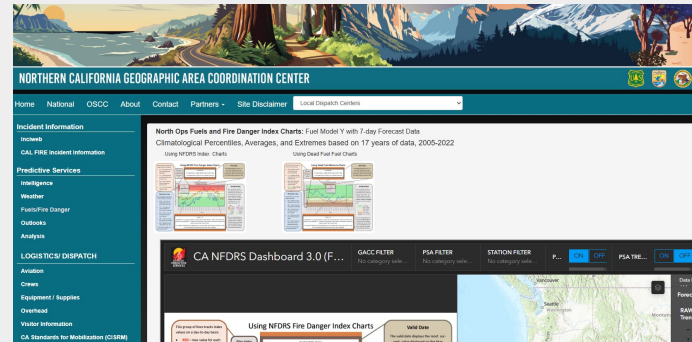
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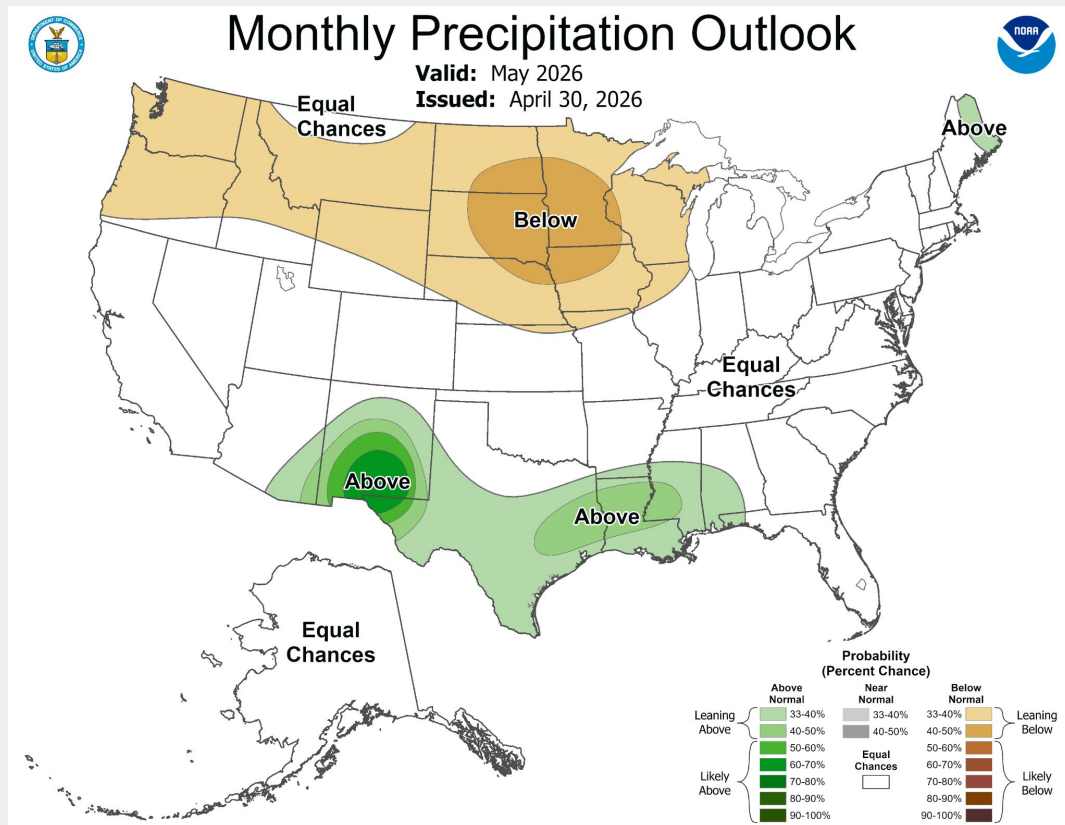
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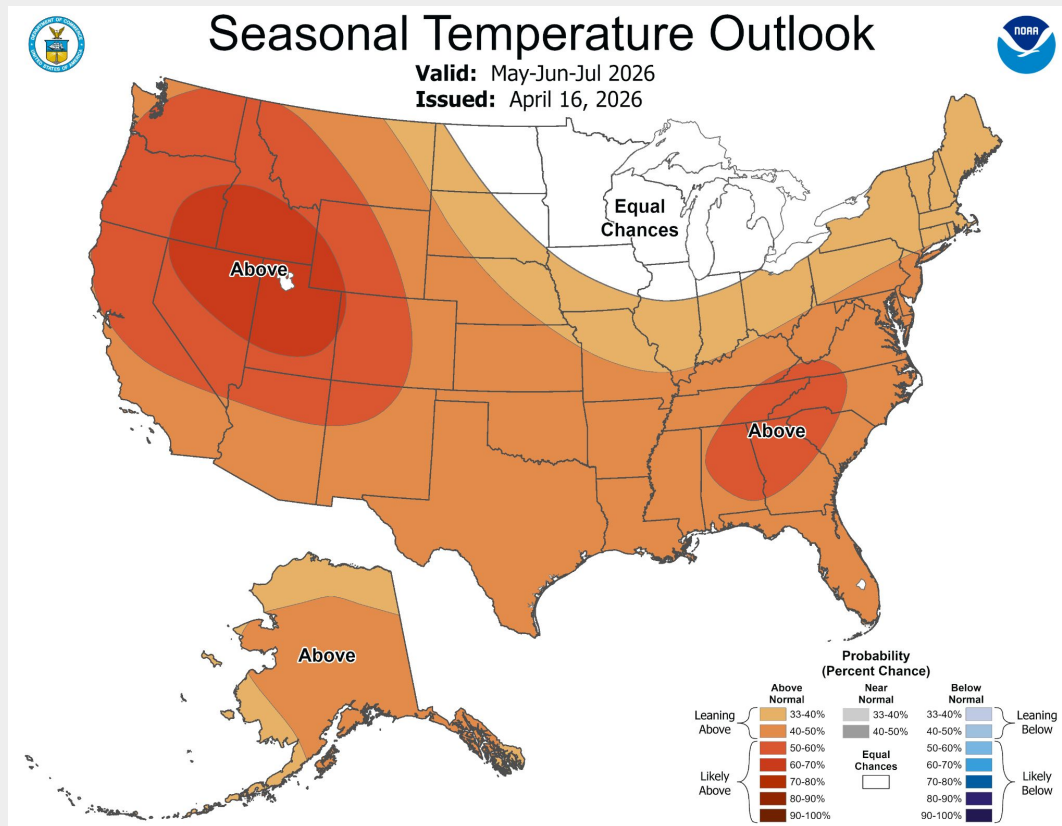
- GACC continues to improve access to fuel information
- Great new displays at: <https://gacc.nifc.gov/oncc/fuelsFireDanger.php>
- Much improved live fuel moisture data access on FEMS



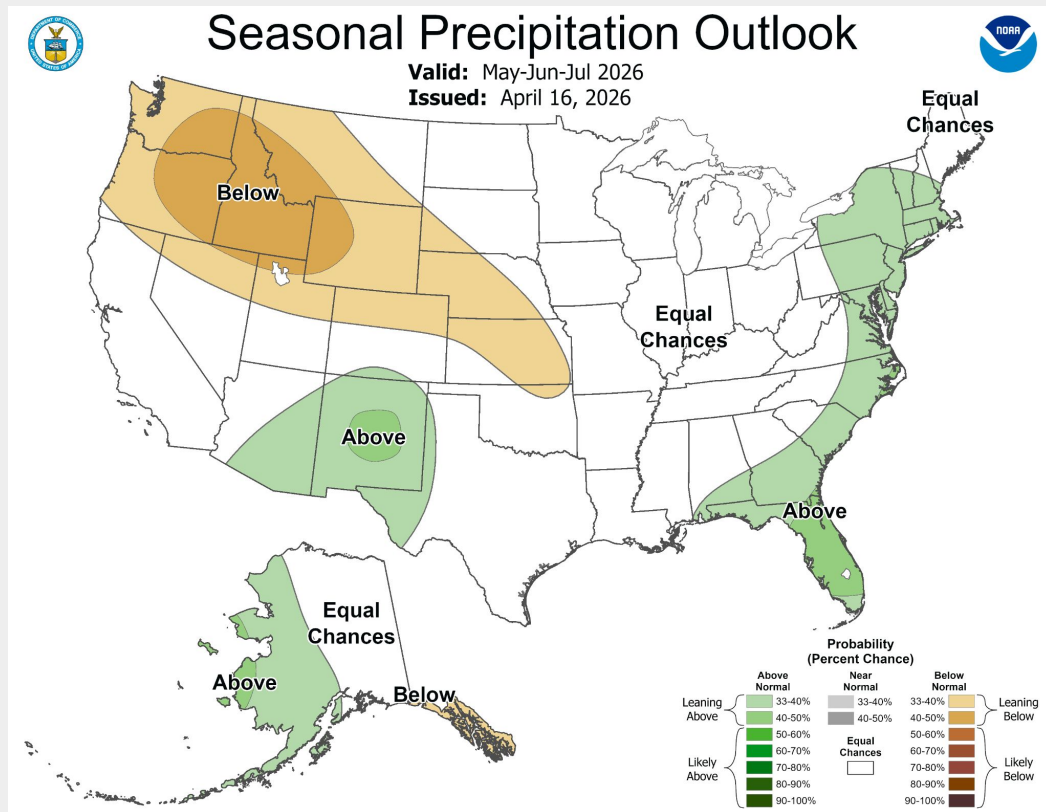
- Long term outlooks from the CPC - Climate Prediction Center
- Generally above average temperatures forecast
- Much less predictability with rain



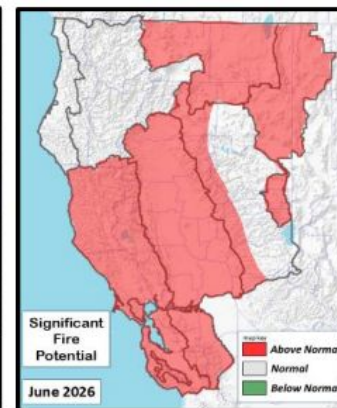
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- Equal chances for rain
 - But climatology is near zero
- Forecast of strong El Nino
 - Little predictable outcome here
 - Pattern may support drier storms compared to wet storms



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 - Little predictable outcome here
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- Provided by experts at the GACC
- March saw much above normal fire activity, but average rest of spring
- May most likely to be average
- Above average fire activity likely mid to late summer





Summary

- Fire weather products continue to evolve
 - Let us know if you want onsite support or fire video briefs!
 - Let us know how the new zones are working!
- Drier than average spring with much lower snow and streamflow
 - Forecast for warmer than normal summer conditions
 - Above normal fire activity most likely by mid summer
 - Ignition potential is always the wild card!
- Email James White - james.h.white@noaa.gov or Ryan Aylward - ryan.aylward@noaa.gov with any fire weather questions or concerns



nws.eureka@noaa.gov



(707) 443-6484



weather.gov/eureka

