

# Northern Rockies

## Fuels and Fire Behavior Advisory

**Subject:** Heavy/Fine Flashy Fuel Loadings from 2011 & Potential for Extreme Fire Behavior

**Discussion:** Fine fuel growth from 2011 was not compacted by winter snows. This lack of snowpack, intermittent precipitation combined with unseasonable warm dry weather across much of the Northern Rockies Region this spring has resulted in unusually low moisture content in fine herbaceous fuels. These factors have contributed to conditions where high rates-of-spread and high intensity fires are occurring before the new green growth has cured.

With the elevated fuel loadings and vertical arrangement of grasses and sedges fires are burning with an intensity and rates-of-spread that is not typical of June/early July conditions.



### Concerns to Firefighters and the Public:

- Anticipate any ignition with a fine fuel component to ignite easily and move rapidly.
- Anticipate that uncured grasses will not act as a heat sink to slow fire growth.
- Anticipate large acres to be consumed in a short period of time.
- Once the live fuel moisture values fall, flaming fronts will elongate and fires will burn with more intensity and fire behavior will become more extreme.
- Anticipate fires to exhibit extreme spread rates, elongated flaming fronts, and increasing fire brands; expect more long range spotting.
- Anticipate dependent and independent crown fires in the insect infested conifer stands.

### Mitigation Measures:

- Indirect tactics may have to be used earlier this year.
- Ensure firefighters have good anchor points Carry the black with you when constructing fireline - keeping one foot in the black.
- Monitor fuel conditions and post information on the National Fuels Monitoring Database.
- Monitor and understand the effect of weather changes and topography have on fire behavior.
- Post lookouts that can see the flaming front.

**Area of Concern:** Primarily east of the continental divide (Beaverhead, Deerlodge, Helena, Lewis and Clark, Gallatin, Custer National Forests and Dakota Prairie Grasslands) and lower elevations on the Lolo, Bitterroot and Confederated Salish Kootenai Tribal lands.