

# Fuels and Fire Behavior Advisory

## Western Slope of Colorado

06/21/2013



**Subject:** Western Colorado is in the third year of drought. The situation is predicted to persist or intensify through July. There is increased risk of large fire development and intense fire behavior. Dry, heavy fuels at higher elevations could pose a greater risk of active fire behavior.

**Discussion:** The wet spring pattern that occurred during April and May has provided a brief reprieve. Live and dead fuel moistures are quickly returning to a condition that will support large fire growth. Forecasts do not offer the prospect of live or dead fuels conditions improving through July.

**Difference from normal conditions:** Fuels are described by fire managers as being deceptively green. The visual greenness being observed can lessen the sense of fire potential. Live fuels, which had shown some improvement from late spring precipitation, are drying. On the Western Slope of Colorado, 100FM fuels are setting historically low values for the date, nearing the 3rd percentile, and moving into the range associated with historic large fires. Long-term drying has made large, higher elevation fuels, available as well.

### Concerns to Firefighters and the Public:

- Recent large fires on the Front Range and Western Slope have displayed intense and/or extreme fire behavior.
- Long-range spotting, fire whorls, extreme fireline intensity and high winds have been observed and will continue to be control problems on both wildland and urban interface incidents.
- Local preparedness planning and cooperation should be on-going.
- Management of suppression resources rest and recovery as activity increases.

**Mitigation Measures:** Strategies for dealing with each of the specific circumstances listed above include using Predictive Service's forecasts of higher potential for large fire occurrence, rapid initial attack in those high risk areas, and daily fire and fuels briefings to suppression personnel.

#### BRIEFINGS

- All resources need to be aware of local conditions and hazards. Through briefings from local units must occur in order to understand local influences and understand unique hazards.

#### LOCAL FACTORS

- Large areas of beetle killed lodge pole and spruce pine beetle have verified risks associated with available dead fuels and falling snags.

#### TERRAIN AND FUELS MAKE ESCAPE TO SAFETY ZONES DIFFICULT

- Gambles Oak is highly receptive with fuel moistures <125% especially when aligned with wind, slope, and sun.

#### INDUSTRIAL INTERFACE

- Review and understand Interagency Standards for Fire and Aviation Operations Chapter 7-20, Responding to Wildland Fires in or near Oil/Gas Operations. [Safety and Risk Management Chapter 7](#)

#### RISK MANAGEMENT

- Constantly evaluate the probability and the severity of your actions. Evaluate the risk you accept against the values at risk. Stand fast on the principles of HRO and the Risk Management Process with all actions taken.

**Area of Concern:** Submitted by the Upper Colorado River Fire Management Unit, Colorado, Western Slope.