

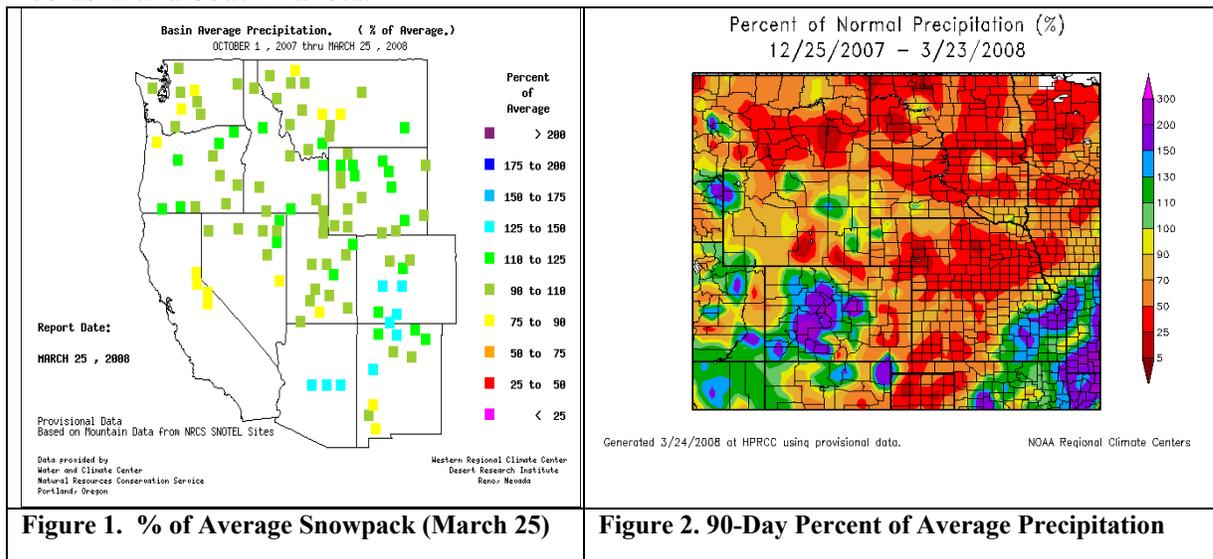
RMA Early Spring Fire Potential Outlook

Developed by Rocky Mountain Area Predictive Services

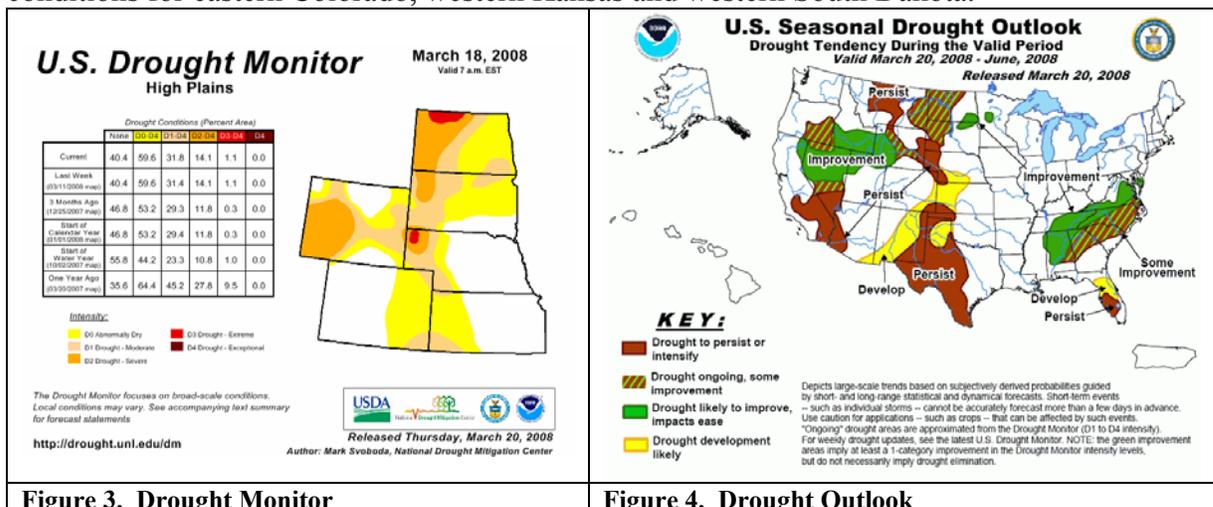
March 25, 2008

Current Weather and Climate Situation:

Percent of average snowpack (Figure 1) is average to above average for most high elevation locations across Wyoming and Colorado. However, the 90 day percent of average precipitation (Figure 2) for the RMA shows below average precipitation for most locations east of the divide, especially across eastern Colorado, much of Kansas, Nebraska and South Dakota.



The latest drought monitor (Figure 3) shows abnormally dry to moderate drought conditions across eastern Colorado and western Kansas, with severe to extreme drought conditions across western Nebraska and western South Dakota. Severe drought conditions are noted over western Wyoming. Compared to last year (for the same time), drought conditions have worsened for eastern Colorado and western Kansas, with little or any improvement across western Nebraska and western South Dakota. The drought outlook through June 2008 (Figure 4), indicates developing and or persistent drought conditions for eastern Colorado, western Kansas and western South Dakota.



Current Fuel Conditions:

Extensive fine dead fuel loading is present across the eastern plains of Colorado, and western Kansas, and to a lesser extent elsewhere. An increase in large grass fire activity has been noted across portions of Kansas and eastern Colorado during the last two weeks, a result of increasing drought conditions, wind events and elevated fine dead fuel loading. Recent fire activity on the plains has exhibited very active to extreme fire behavior in the short and tall grass fuel models. Wind driven head fires with individual and group torching in the open timber has been reported. Anticipate fires to exhibit extreme rates of spread, elongated flaming fronts as most grass fires this time of year are wind driven.

2 Week Temperature and Precipitation Outlooks:

A chance of moisture moves into the RMA on Thursday and Friday (27th and 28th). Most of the moisture is forecast to stay in the mountains, with little precipitation forecast east of the divide. Temperature and precipitation outlooks for March 31-April 4 (Figure 5-8) and April 2-9 indicate above average temperatures and below average precipitation through the period, especially east of the divide.

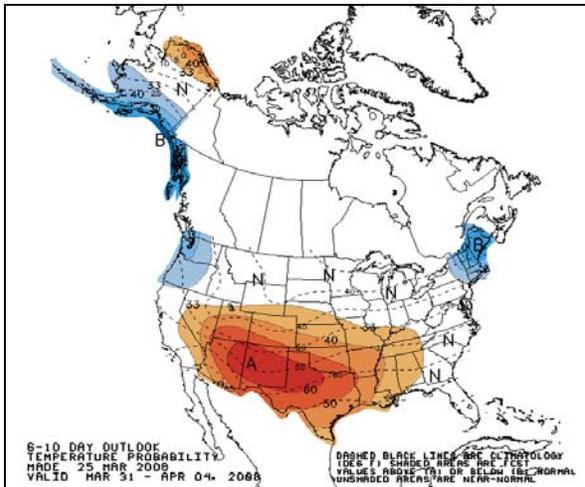


Figure 5. 6-10 Day Temperature Outlook

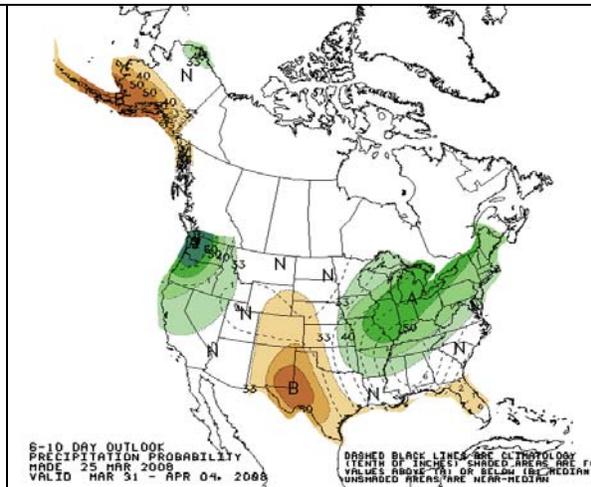


Figure 6. 6-10 Day Precipitation Outlook

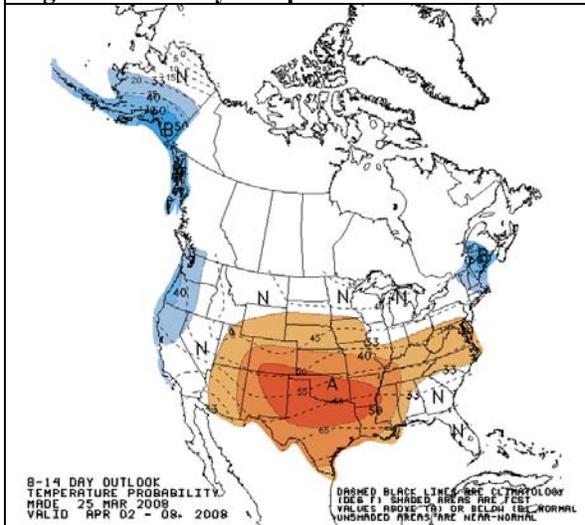


Figure 7. 8-14 Day Temperature Outlook

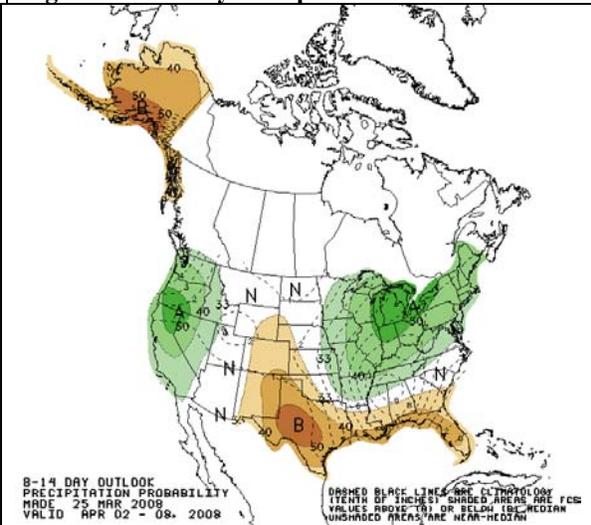
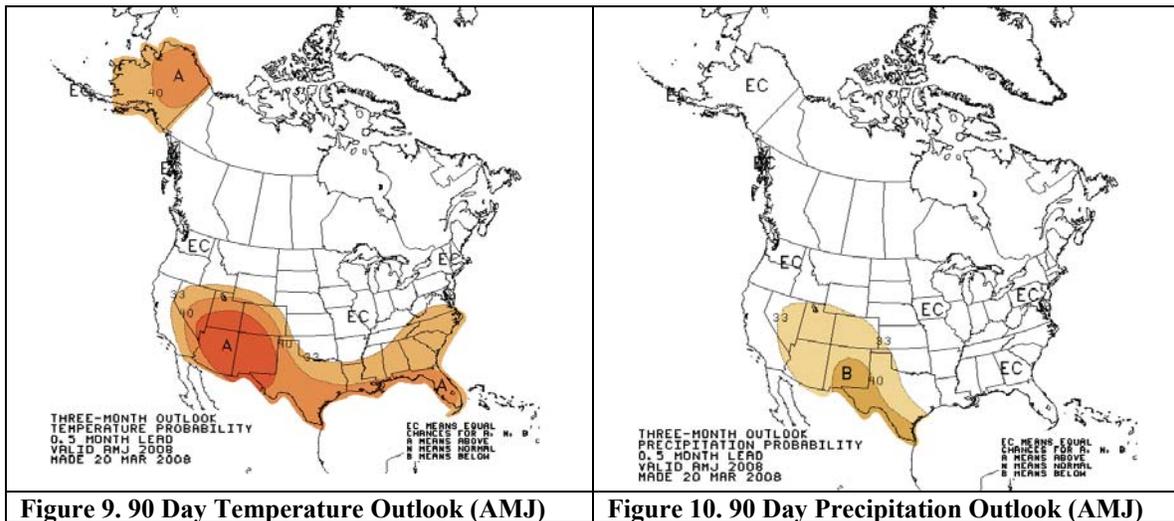


Figure 8. 8-14 Day Precipitation Outlook

90-Day Temperature and Precipitation Outlooks:

90-day temperature outlook (Figure 9) indicates odds tilted toward above average temperatures across Colorado and southern Wyoming during the April-May-June forecast period, with near average readings elsewhere. Odds are tilted toward below average precipitation across the four corners region including Colorado.



Fire Potential Implications:

The combination of fine fuel loading, precipitation deficits east of the divide, and frequent wind events, has resulted in above average fire potential for eastern sections of the RMA this spring. These conditions are expected to continue into early April or longer if green-up is curtailed by increasing dryness and drought. Fire potential will be significant ahead of cold fronts. The prefrontal environment east of the divide will offer warm temperatures, increasing downslope winds, low humidity and unstable atmospheric conditions. The conditions will result in high rates of spread.

It is still too early to say with reasonable accuracy how the fire season is going to shape up in 2008. However, above average snowpack will significantly decrease the chances for early fire season conditions along and west of the divide. One of our wettest months (March) has been uneventful east of the divide. If this trend continues this spring, large fire activity will become more of concern in the heavier fuel beds at low and mid elevations east of the divide from southern Colorado, north into the Black Hills.

Monitoring Products:

Field personnel are required to monitor NWS fire weather forecasts, NWS watches and warning, request a spot forecast during a wildfire situations.

The field should monitor long range fire potential products developed by predictive services. These products currently include the 30-day/seasonal fire potential forecast located at:

http://www.nifc.gov/nicc/predictive/outlooks/monthly_seasonal_outlook.pdf

The 30-day and seasonal fire potential product is issued each month (usually on the 1st) by Rocky Mountain Area and National Predictive Services groups. A more detailed seasonal outlook will be issued at the end of April.