

Fire Environment Statement

Southern Missouri (Severe and Extreme Drought)

Issued on 10/16/2026

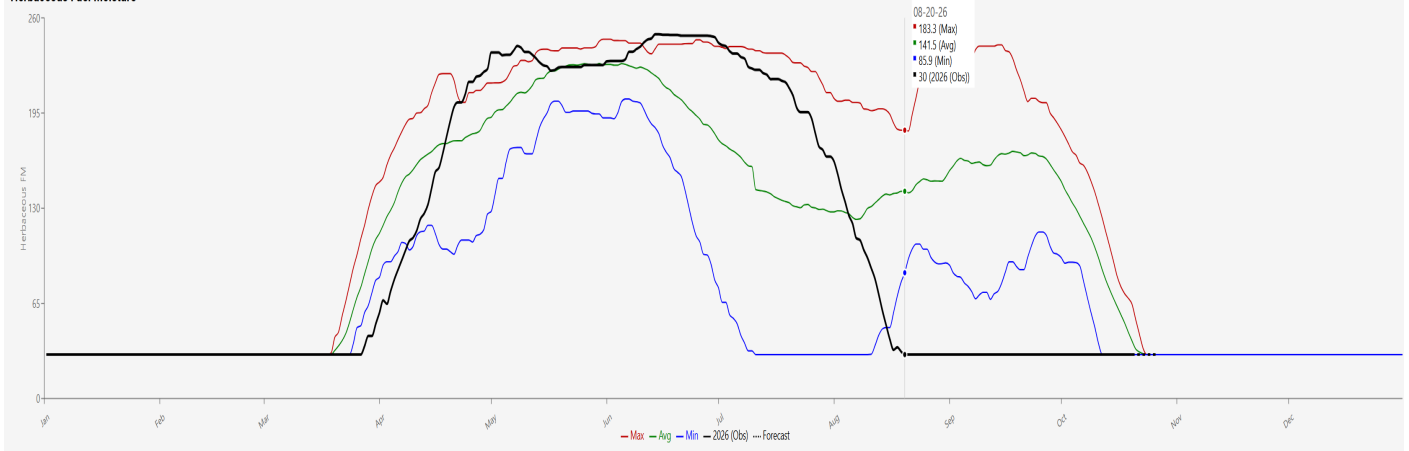
Subject: Record setting weather conditions have caused live and herbaceous vegetation to dry and cure during the late summer. The conditions have also affected the woody fuels, duff moisture, and soil moisture across central and southwest Missouri. These conditions represent an early onset of dormant season conditions which have caused an early onset of wildland fire potential and uptick in fire behavior. Field samples are showing record low fuel moistures in all dead woody fuel classes. We have seen an increase in fire starts and greater resistance to control. **The current forecasted weather and climate predictions indicate limited improvement for the next 30 days.**

Discussion: The past 90 days have brought substantial precipitation deficits and prolonged record-high temperatures. The impacts of these conditions have forced drying and curing of live vegetation during the latter part of the growing season. Over 45 days of record high temperatures and record low rainfall has left the southern part of the state in severe to extreme drought. This abnormal weather has led to below normal live and dead fuel moistures. Areas in the southwestern part of the state, where live vegetation is transferring to the fine fuel load (1hr) and woody vegetation (trees) are becoming more susceptible to ignition sources. There are more frequent fire starts from sparks caused by machinery, vehicles, lightning, and cutting equipment in dry grasses and other fine fuels. Normally we would have 5 fires/week, but we are currently responding to 10 to 15 fires/week across the state. During this several counties have implemented burn bans as conditions deteriorate and risks escalate.

Difference from normal conditions: Typical precipitation for this period is 3–4 inches per month; the current 90-day deficit ranges from 3 to 8 inches across the advisory area. Live herbaceous and woody fuels, normally at 110–140% moisture, have fallen to 35–60%, with the lowest readings in southwest Missouri. These fuels have effectively transitioned into fine and dead fuel classes and are highly receptive to ignition. Dead and downed fuel classes are also critically dry, with 1000-hour fuels at the 10th percentile. Fire behavior will intensify on fire weather days.

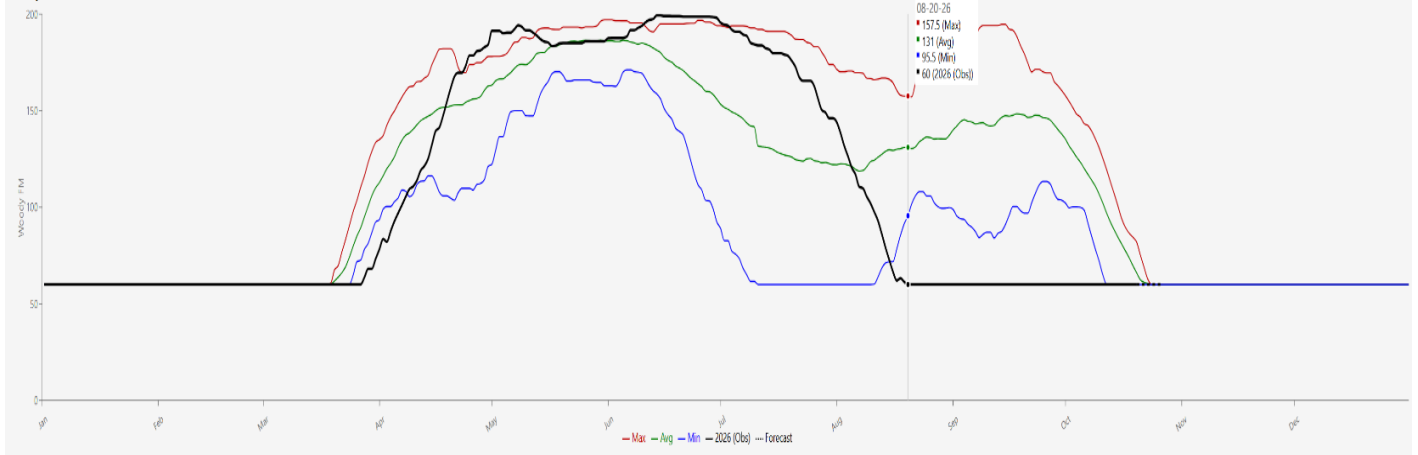
CASSVILLE - (POR: 07-11-2017 - 12-31-2024)

Herbaceous Fuel Moisture



CASSVILLE - (POR: 07-11-2017 - 12-31-2024)

Woody Fuel Moisture

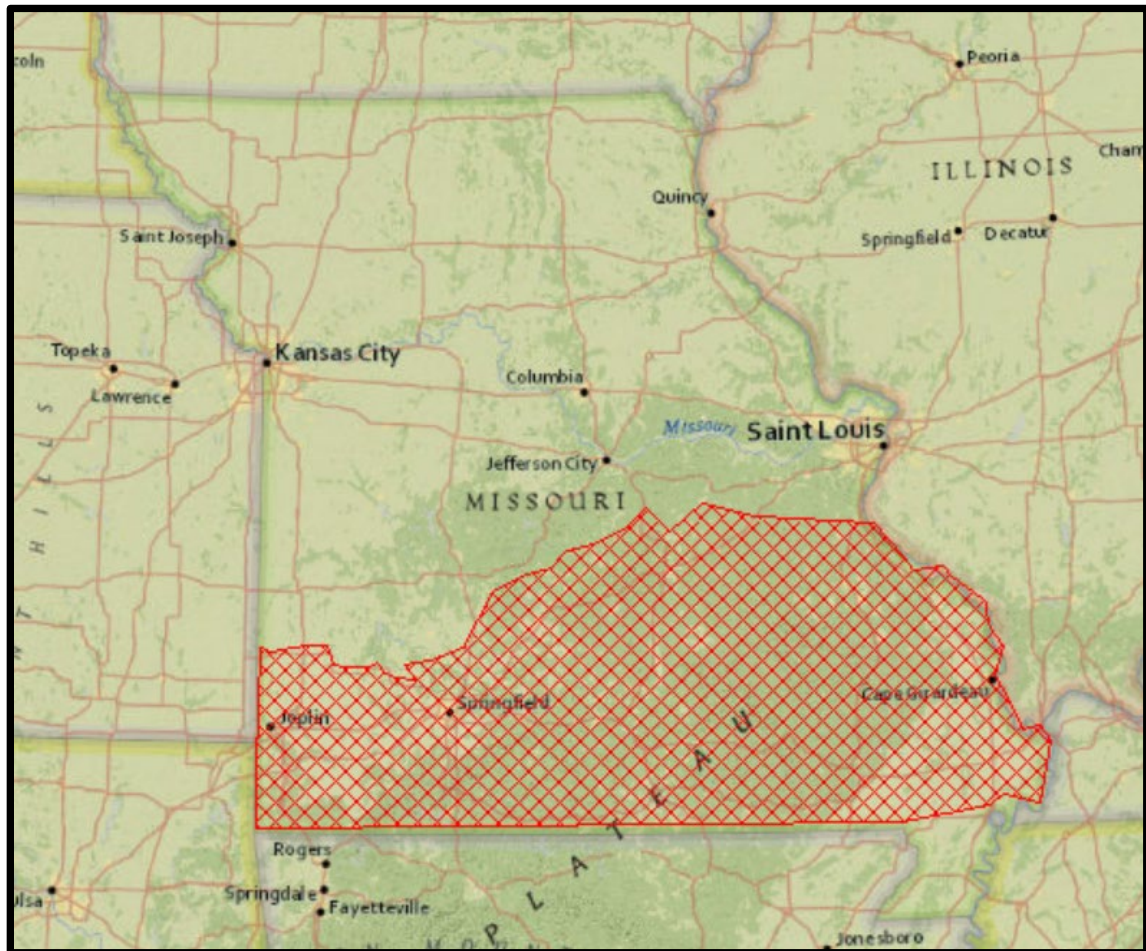


Concerns to Firefighters and the Public:

- Increase fire severity, higher fireline intensities, resistance to normal control practices, increased rate of spread during days of very low relative humidity, increased spotting, single tree torching with short crown runs.
- Extreme fire growth potential and very high fireline intensity are to be expected during both initial attack and extended attack operations, especially when critical fire weather is occurring.
- Continued public engagement will need to focus on limiting sources of ignition on predicted fire weather days.
- If fire starts are experienced in areas affected by severe storms with pockets of heavy fuel loading expect longer duration fires and increased acreages.

Mitigation Measures:

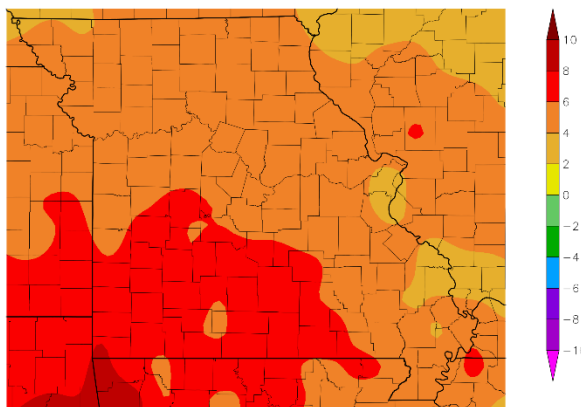
- Local briefings will highlight specific fire environment conditions. The briefings should include local fire weather forecast, pocket cards, NFDRS indices, and current fuel moisture readings.
- Based all actions on current and expected fire behavior. Augment initial attack resources as incident activity dictates.
- Indirect tactics in elevated fire weather conditions. The use of natural roads, natural features, improved natural fuel breaks, and dozer lines for control lines are important. Blower line may not suffice.
- Recent observations indicate large diameter surface fuels and ground fuels are burning more readily and holding heat longer due to low 1000-hr fuel moisture and underlying drought. Expect longer and more difficult mop-up operations.



Issued by: United States Department of Agriculture Forest Service

The 90-Day Departures:

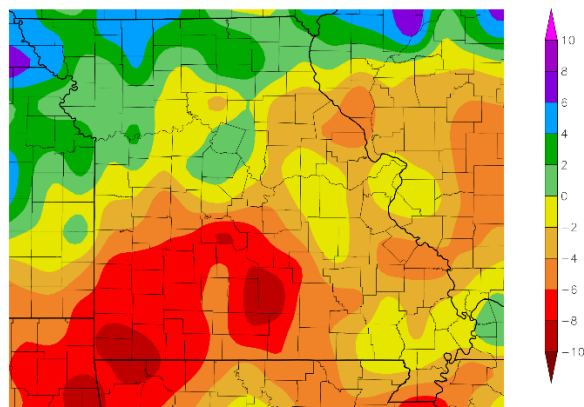
Departure from Normal Temperature (F)
7/17/2026 – 10/14/2026



Generated 10/15/2026 using provisional data.

ACIS Web Services

Departure from Normal Precipitation (in)
7/17/2026 – 10/14/2026

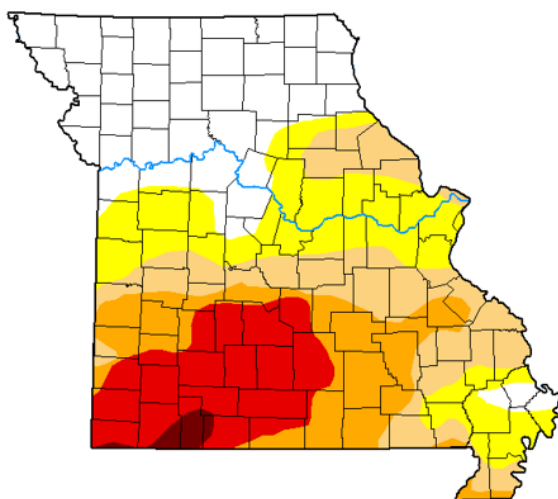


Generated 10/15/2026 using provisional data.

ACIS Web Services

Current Drought:

U.S. Drought Monitor Missouri



October 13, 2026
(Released Thursday, Oct. 15, 2026)
Valid 8 a.m. EDT

Drought Conditions (Percent Area)

	None	D0-D4	D1-D4	D2-D4	D3-D4	D4
Current	30.44	69.56	48.77	30.32	15.99	1.10
Last Week 10-06-2026	39.27	60.73	44.78	25.10	15.27	0.00
3 Months Ago 07-14-2026	84.28	15.72	2.81	0.43	0.00	0.00
Start of Calendar Year 01-01-2026	4.72	95.28	57.54	11.61	0.00	0.00
Start of Water Year 09-30-2025	6.56	93.44	63.57	22.18	0.00	0.00
One Year Ago 10-14-2025	1.52	98.48	76.94	35.85	3.94	0.00

Intensity:

None	D2 Severe Drought
D0 Abnormally Dry	D3 Extreme Drought
D1 Moderate 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>

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droughtmonitor.unl.edu