

Fuels and Fire Behavior Advisory

Southern Idaho

Valid September 5th – September 19th, 2024

Subject: Above Normal heat and dryness from early summer have rapidly dried out both live and dead fuels across Southern and Western Idaho many weeks ago. Fuels have been at critical levels for most of the summer. **Fine fuel loading in lower elevations is the primary issue** as its well above normal and fully cured. These fuel conditions are responsible for the extreme fire behavior and rapid rates of spread that have been recently observed. Several large fires burning tens of thousands of acres in a single burn period have occurred the past few weeks. These critical conditions also include the far western Payette and Boise National Forests where the lighter grass/brush fuel component is intermixed with heavier fuels.

Discussion: The following conditions are being experienced/observed:

- Overall dryness the past few months has introduced “**Moderate Drought**” to much of western Idaho.
- Moisture from any showers in the short term, will quickly evaporate as warm/dry conditions are expected early-mid September. Any brief precipitation events will not have long lasting effects on fuels.
- Above normal fine fuel loading across most of the lower elevations. Grasses are fully cured.
- Live fuel moisture values (sagebrush, pinyon-juniper, gambles oak, mixed conifer) are well below critical late-summer normal levels, correlating with High to Extreme fire behavior and will continue falling over the next 2 weeks.
- For many areas Sagebrush Live Fuel Moisture has fallen below 100% and correlates with Extreme Fire Behavior.

Difference from Normal Conditions: Live and dead fuel moistures rapidly dried out with the warm and dry weather conditions of the early-mid summer months. Live sagebrush fuel moisture is below normal most areas and will continue at those levels through late-September. Above normal fine fuel loading represents the biggest departures from normal conditions, and when combined with fully cured grasses and critically dry live fuel moisture levels in the brush, can quickly contribute to explosive growth of any new and existing fires.

Concerns to Firefighters and the Public:

- Anticipate flashy fine fuels and sagebrush, pinyon-juniper, gamble oak and mixed conifer to ignite easily and exhibit **advanced rates of spread, elongated flaming fronts and increasing fire brands; expect more long range spotting, even in absence of slope and wind. You can't out run it!**
- Anticipate dust devils and fire whirls to develop in hot, dry and unstable conditions, especially in fine flashy fuels, that may jeopardize control lines and contribute to erratic fire behavior.
- Expect longer burn periods at mid to higher elevations.
- Fine fuel loadings in some areas are dense and continuous and will support extreme rates of spread regardless of fuel heights.
- Thunderstorms may produce strong outflow winds that may rapidly increase fire behavior and change spread direction.

Mitigation Measures:

- Modify tactics to account for potential high rapid rates of spread and high resistance to control.
- Communicate retardant drop effectiveness and modify as necessary; higher coverage levels or altered tactics may be required.
- Park all vehicles in clean, cold black; avoid driving or parking in unburned fuels.
- Ensure solid anchor points – keep one foot in the black.
- Constantly re-evaluate LCES – Lookouts – Communications – Escape Routes – Safety Zones.
- Consult the latest weather and fire danger information at <http://gacc.nifc.gov/gbcc/>

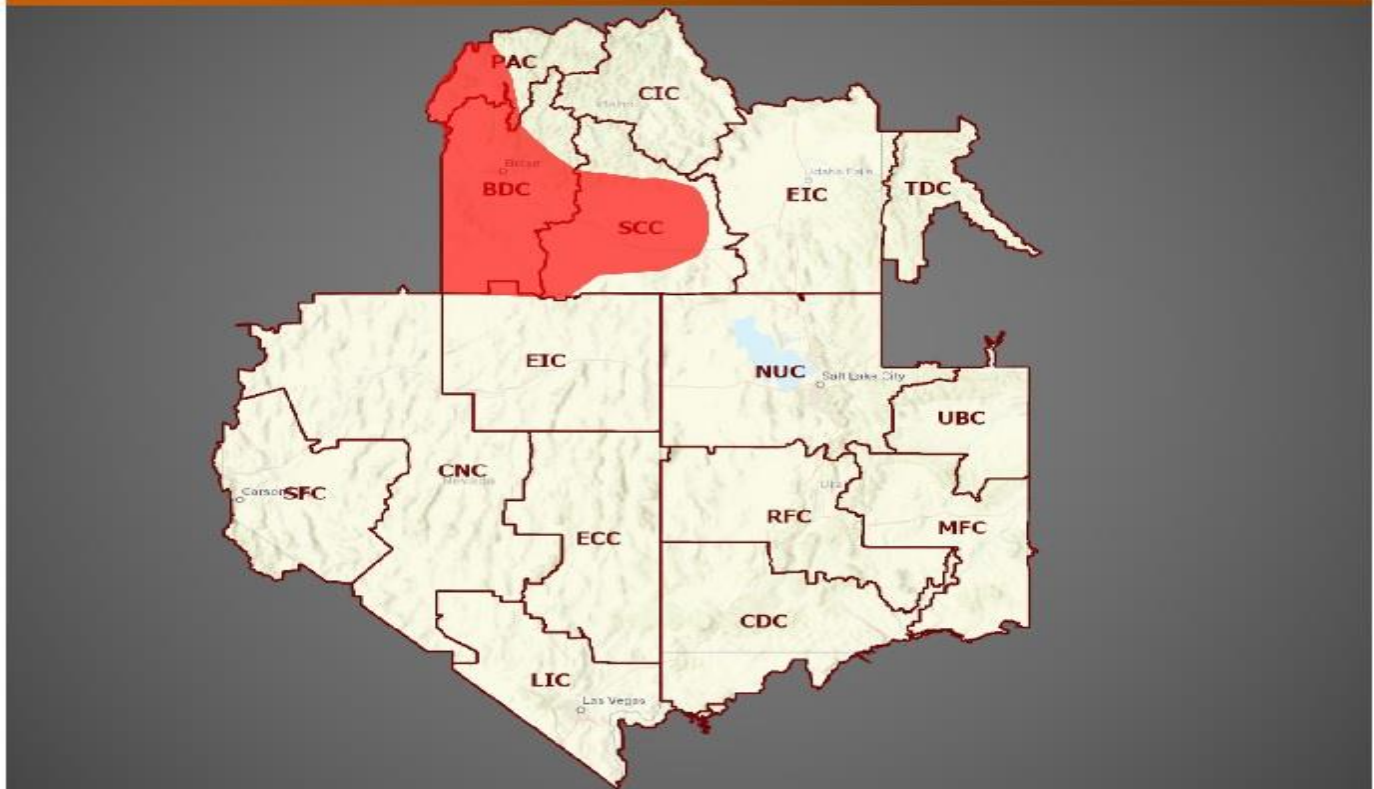
Area of Concern: Southern and Far Western Idaho elevations below 6000 ft.

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Great Basin Fire Activity

