

Seasonal Outlook for December 2020 – March 2021

December



WEATHER/FUELS/FIRE POTENTIAL:

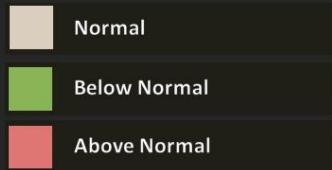
Over the last 30 days precipitation has been well below normal or non-existent over nearly all of the southern 1/2 of the Great Basin. Further north, parts of ID/WY/northern NV have seen near or above normal precipitation, but portions of even the north are still below normal. Temperatures have generally been near to just above normal across the region, over the last month however cold fronts have brought cooler weather at times **(Fig 1)** Monsoon moisture did not materialize at all across the Great Basin, which is responsible for the well below normal precipitation for last water year into the fall. ERCs have dropped, but still remain above normal or at record highs for the time of year in the south, which would be near what would be considered normal for late July. ERCs are near or below normal over the northern half of the Great Basin. **(Fig 2)**

Extreme to exceptional drought continues across most of Nevada/Utah and the AZ Strip. The drought is likely to persist through the next few months with the storm track expected to keep moisture over the northern tier of the U.S. in the fall in winter most often. **(Fig 3)** Recent cold fronts have brought new snow to parts of the Great Basin, but snowpack is still mostly below normal over the southern 2/3 of the region and near normal in the higher terrain of Central Idaho and Wyoming. **(Fig 4)**

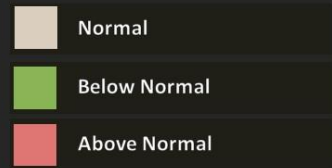
January



February



March



WEATHER/FUELS (cont.)

Carryover fuels are still present from 2019 along with some new growth earlier in 2020 and have contributed to fire behavior this fire season. Above normal fine fuel loading will continue to be an issue this fall/winter during windy periods with dry cold fronts and as outdoor human recreation increases, with how critically dry fuels remain. This increased fire potential would typically last a burning period or two and be mainly wind driven.

Above normal temperatures and dry weather is expected through mid-December under a ridge of high pressure. The weather pattern may shift to bring some moisture to the region late December into January. However a strong La Nina is expected to influence the weather pattern and keep wet/cool conditions mainly north across the Pac NW, northern Rockies and Idaho/Wyoming and drier weather further south. **(Fig 5 and 6)**

FIRE POTENTIAL

Fuels will remain drier than normal over the southern half of the Great Basin in December. Dry cold fronts will be the biggest risk to increased fire potential in December into early January until the weather pattern shifts to bring some moisture to the region. The wind will be a significant concern in all fuel types, but especially where prominent grass loading exists, and in areas where fall/winter recreation typically increases in areas where sagebrush and timber are much drier than normal. The dried grasses will transition to dormancy, but still be a concern after dry periods on windy days if ignitions occur. Overall, fire potential will remain through February/March due to shorter days and cooling weather. However, any wind event will need to be monitored closely, especially after prolonged dry periods.

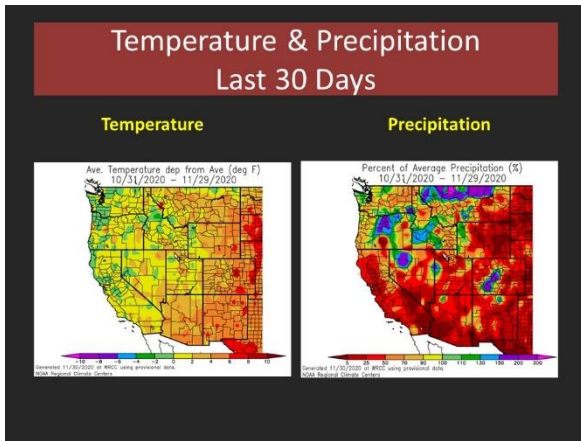


Fig 1. (30-day Temperature / Precipitation)

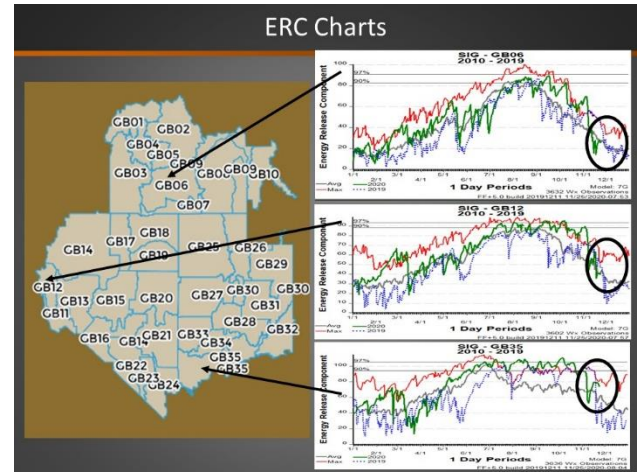


Fig 2. (Live Fuel Moisture)

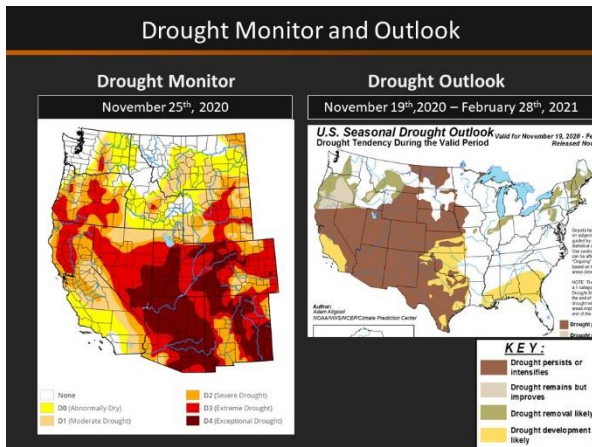


Fig 3. (Drought)

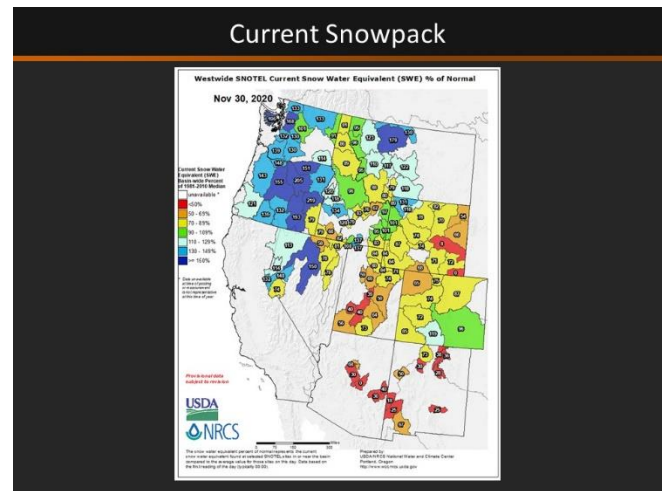


Fig 4. (Snowpack)

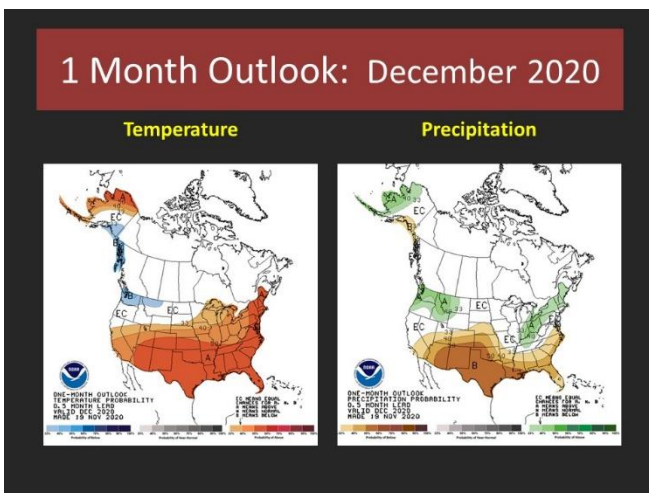


Fig 5 (CPC December 2020 Outlook)

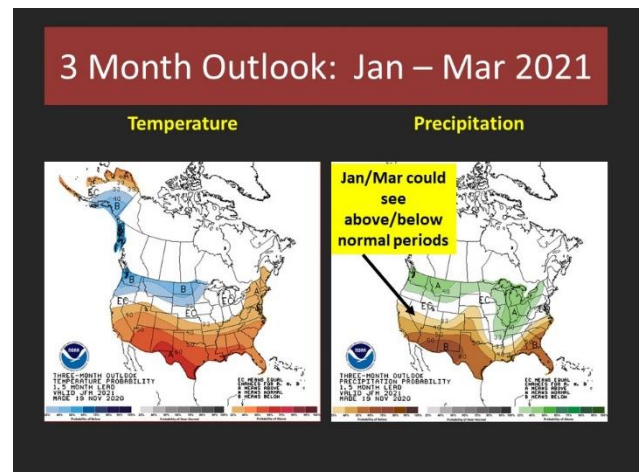


Fig 6. (CPC Jan - Mar 2021 Outlook)



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