

Fuels and Fire Behavior Advisory

Pacific Northwest

Date Advisory Effective – July 28, 2026



Subject: This winter's record low snowpack in the Northwest, along with recent drought conditions, has led to live and dead fuels curing significantly earlier than usual. Fire activity is already reflecting patterns normally seen much later in the fire season. Alignment in the fire environment is producing extreme fire behavior.

Summary:

- Record low snowpack across much of the region has contributed to current drought conditions.
- Live fuels are stressed, burning readily, and contributing to increased fire behavior.
- Anticipate active fire behavior and longer burn periods. Continuous rangeland fuels are enabling rapid fire spread when aligned with wind.
- Fires are showing increased resistance to control, requiring more resources for longer periods and aviation support is often less effective.

Discussion: Winter snowpack across the region was substantially below normal, and when combined with higher-than-normal temperatures and below-normal precipitation, it has accelerated drying across both live and dead fuel classes. Although the broader weather pattern remained dry, repeated spring precipitation events, combined with intervals of above-average temperatures, supported widespread herbaceous growth across the Geographic Area. As these rangeland fuels cured quickly, they produced above-average fine-fuel loading capable of supporting high fire intensity, rapid spread, and greater resistance to control. Heavy fuels that normally hold moisture well into mid-summer have already reached critical levels, and live fuels have cured at an accelerated rate.

Differences from Normal Conditions:

- Under normal seasonal progression, live fuels do not fully cure until later in the summer, and thousand-hour time lag fuels retain significantly more moisture. Heavy, large dead and live fuels are already fully consuming this year.
- This year's conditions are several weeks ahead of schedule, with fuels that are normally unavailable for sustained fire spread now actively burning. Riparian areas may no longer be reliable barriers to fire spread.

Concerns to Firefighters and the Public:

- Early season dryness is increasing the potential for rapid fire growth, supporting earlier crown fire development, enabling long-range spotting greater than ½ mile, and limiting opportunities for control.
- Higher resistance to control should be expected during Initial Attack; efforts may be less effective, leading to quicker transitions to extended attack and larger incidents.
- The accelerated fuel curing elevates the risk of large fires, smoke impacts, evacuation needs, and threats to infrastructure at a time when communities may not yet be fully prepared for peak fire activity.
- Fire suppression tactics should align with critical values at risk, and under these environmental conditions, operations should focus only on strategies with a high probability of success.
- Fine fuel loading in parts of the Northwest is above normal, supporting aggressive fire behavior in low-elevation rangelands when winds over 10 mph combine with low humidity.

Issued by: NWCC Predictive Services in conjunction with state and federal partners

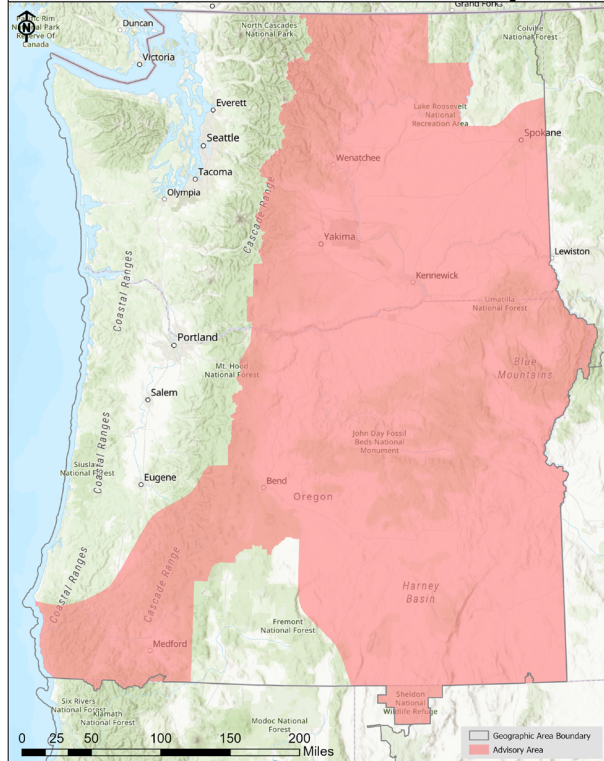
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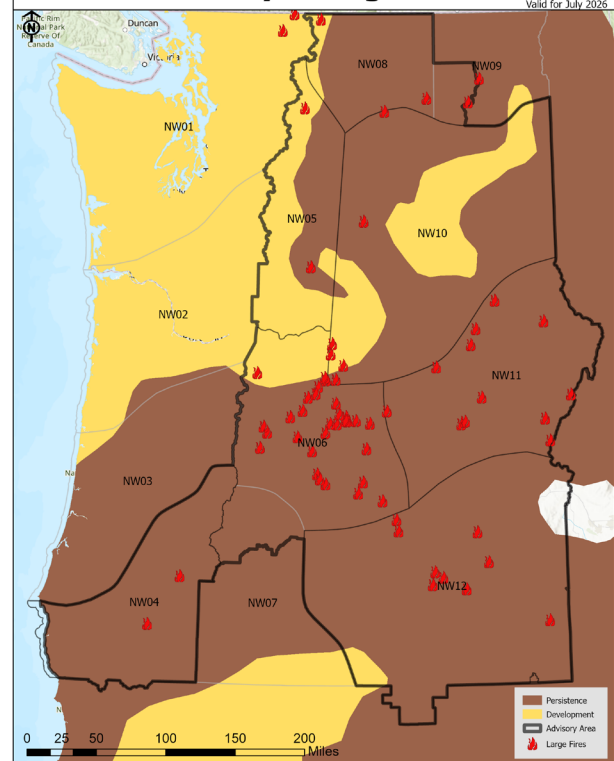
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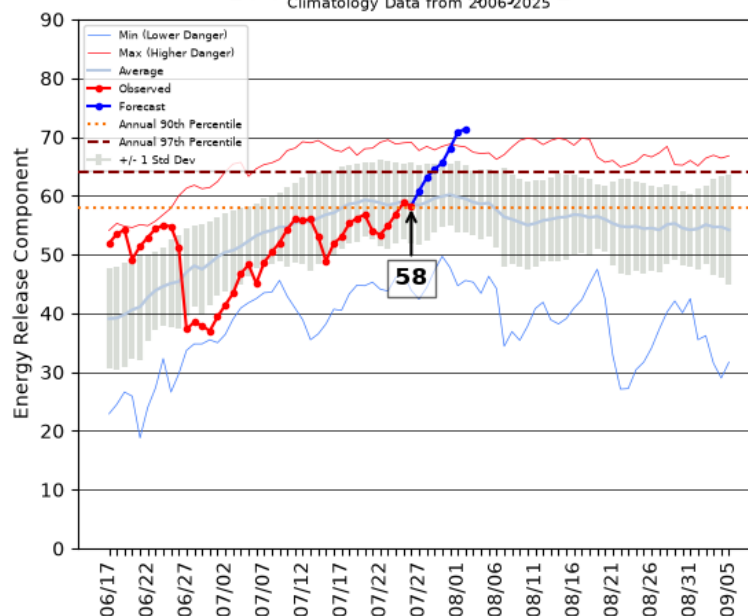
Fuels and Fire Behavior Advisory Area



CPC Monthly Drought Outlook



FEMS ERC-Y for PSA NW12 - NFDRSv4
Last Observation: 26 July 2026
Climatology Data from 2006-2025



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