

Fuels and Fire Behavior Advisory

Pacific Northwest

Date Advisory Effective – July 14, 2026



Subject: Record low snowpack across the Northwest this winter and recent drought has caused live and dead fuels to cure much earlier than normal. Fire activity is already mirroring conditions normally not seen until later in the season. Recent lightning has been highly efficient, and new starts have been exhibiting rapid fire growth.

Summary:

- Record low snowpack across much of the region has contributed to current drought conditions.
- Drought stressed live vegetation is more combustible and contributes to increased fire behavior.
- Expect more active fire behavior and longer active burn periods. Horizontal fuel loading in eastern Washington is contributing to rapid fire growth when aligned with wind.
- Dry surface fuels allow fires to burn deeper into organic layers, requiring more resources over longer periods to reach containment and control.

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. Despite the overall dry pattern, multiple rounds of spring precipitation, mixed with periods of above-average temperatures, promoted abundant herbaceous growth across much of the Geographic Area. As these grasses and other fine fuels rapidly cured, they created above-average fine-fuel loading that now supports higher fire intensity, rapid rates of spread, and increased resistance to control, particularly in rangeland and grass-shrub fuel types. Heavy fuels that typically retain moisture into mid-summer are already at critical levels, and live fuels have cured at a faster rate than normal.

Differences from Normal Conditions:

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

Concerns to Firefighters and the Public:

- Early-season extreme dryness increases exposure to rapid fire growth, earlier and more sustained transition to crown fire, long-range spotting greater than ½ mile, and reduced 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 early 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.
- Strategies need to account for high elevations being capable of supporting active fire behavior a month earlier than normal with increased potential for long-duration incidents in timbered areas.
- Fine fuel loading in parts of the GA is above normal, contributing to aggressive fire behavior in low elevation rangelands, with sustained winds over 10 mph combined with low humidity.

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

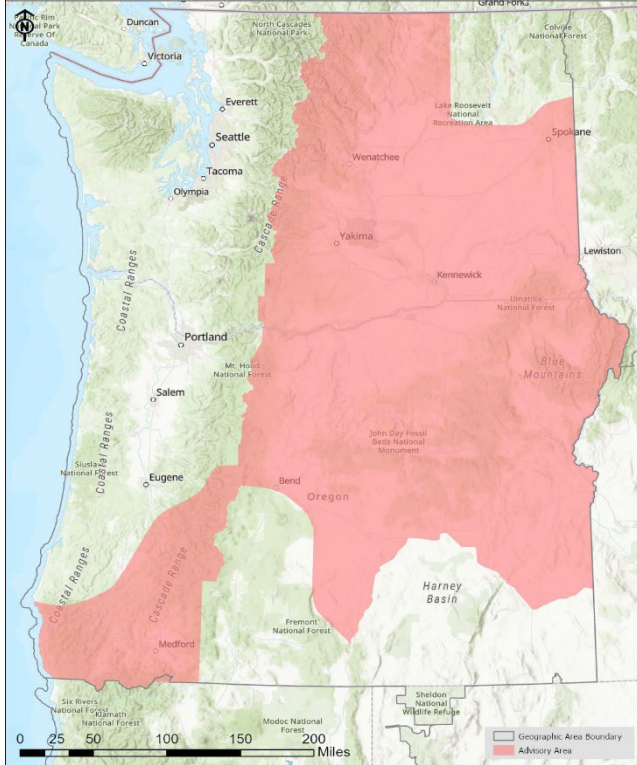
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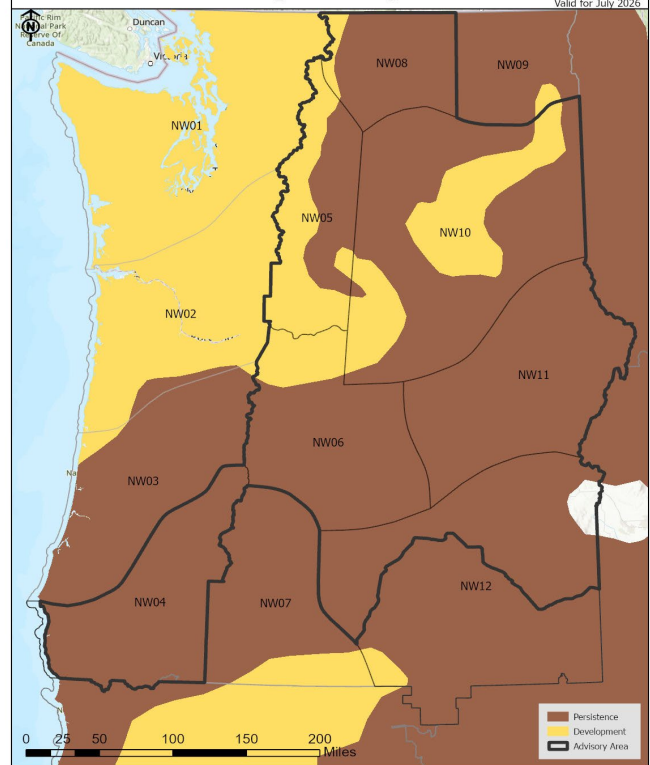
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Fuels and Fire Behavior Advisory Area



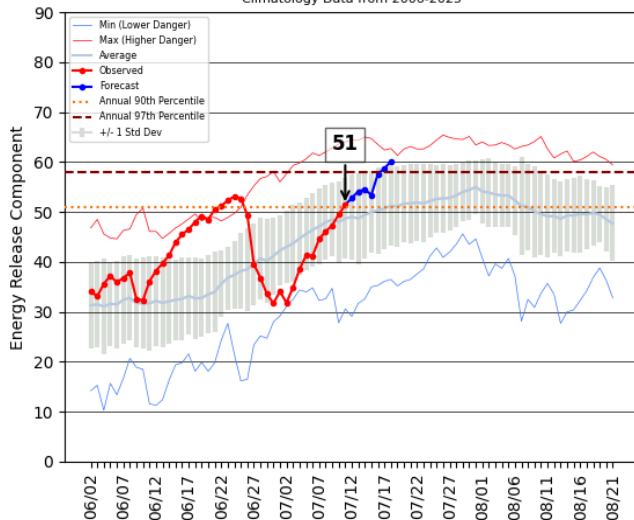
CPC Monthly Drought Outlook



FEMS ERC-Y for PSA NW11 - NFDRSv4

Last Observation: 11 July 2026

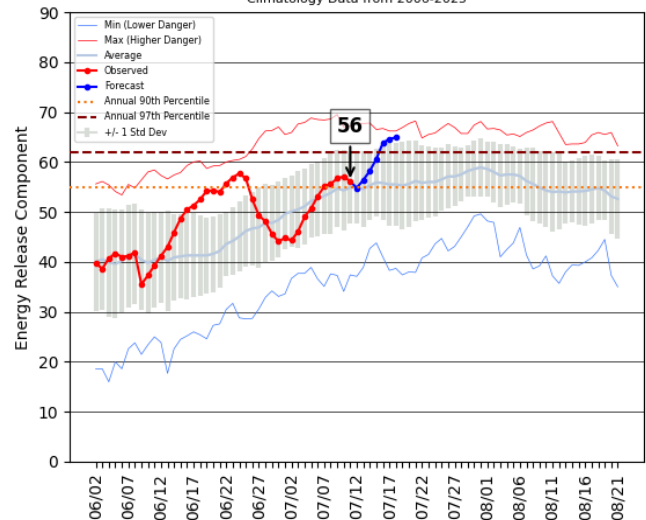
Climatology Data from 2006-2025



FEMS ERC-Y for PSA NW10 - NFDRSv4

Last Observation: 11 July 2026

Climatology Data from 2006-2025



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