June - September 2020 HIGHLIGHTS

- Temperatures above normal through the period.
- Below normal rainfall through the period.
- Less monsoonal thunderstorms than normal July through September.
- Shallower marine layer than normal through the period.
WEATHER AND FUELS DISCUSSION

The weather pattern was progressive in May with a series of troughs and ridges moving into California from the Pacific Ocean. A couple of the ridges were strong and a couple of the troughs were deep for this time of year. Record or near record temperatures occurred from May 5th – May 7th and once again from May 26th – May 28th as strong high pressure set up over Southern California and the Desert Southwest. Temperatures were 10 to 15 degrees below normal when deep troughs set up over California May 12th – May 13th and May 18th – May 19th. Overall, almost the entire region received well above normal temperatures in May (Fig 1). A strong storm that moved into Northern California from the Gulf of Alaska brought significant rainfall to the Sierra and to the Big Sur Coast May 17th – May 19th. Elsewhere, most locations received light rainfall amounts away from the deserts during this time. Light scattered showers also moved across parts of Central California May 10th – May 12th as a storm approached the Northern California Coast and then moved northward. Most of the region received near to a little below normal rainfall away from the deserts which received very little or no rainfall this month (Fig 2). Even though the High Sierra above 8,000 feet received a couple feet of new snow May 17th – May 19th, it melted quickly and almost the entire Sierra snowpack is now gone (Fig 3). There was little change to the drought in May, with no drought continuing across Southern California and the Central Coast and abnormally dry and moderate drought conditions continuing across interior Central California (Fig 4). There was a substantial drop in the 1000 hour dead fuel moisture from well above normal to near or a little below normal as the consistent rains from March and April ceased and due to the couple of hot and dry spells (Fig 5 next page). The 100 hour dead fuel moisture was quite variable during the month. It reached record or near record low values during hot and dry periods and was well above normal during rainy and cool periods (Fig 6 next page). The grasses across the lower elevations are now either fully cured or almost fully cured. The live fuel moisture in new growth vegetation has dropped significantly over the past couple of weeks, but it is still a little above normal.

**Fig 1:** May 1st - May 30th Temperature (% of Ave.)

**Fig 2:** May 1st - May 30th Precipitation (% of Ave.)

**Fig 3:** Snow Pack as of May 27, 2020

**Fig 4:** Drought Monitor May 28th, 2020

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**Webpage:** https://gacc.nifc.gov/oscc/predictive/weather/index.htm  
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SOUTH OPS OUTLOOK

Substantial warming has occurred in the sea surface temperatures across both the Gulf of Alaska and along the West Coast over the past month (Fig 7). Thus, expect high pressure off the California Coast to be the dominant weather feature in June. This ridge will cause there to be little or no rainfall across the region. It is normal for there to be little or no rainfall in June, which is one of our driest months. The above normal sea surface temperatures off the California Coast will also cause temperatures to be warmer than normal and the marine layer to be shallower than normal in June (Fig 7). Weak troughs are expected to move inland into the Pacific Northwest through the summer months, but they will have little influence on the weather across Central and Southern California. These troughs will most likely keep the center of high pressure that usually forms near the Four Corners Area during the summer suppressed further to the south. This placement in the high pressure will most likely cause there to be less monsoonal thunderstorms than normal. Due to the sudden increase in sea surface temperatures off the California Coast, temperatures are now expected to remain above normal through the summer months.

Fig 5: Southern Coast 1000 hr dead fuel moisture May 31st

Fig 6: Southern Sierra 100 hr dead fuel moisture May 31st

Fig 7: Sea Surface Temperature Anomaly, May 31st, 2020