

Fuels and Fire Behavior Advisory

Southeastern United States

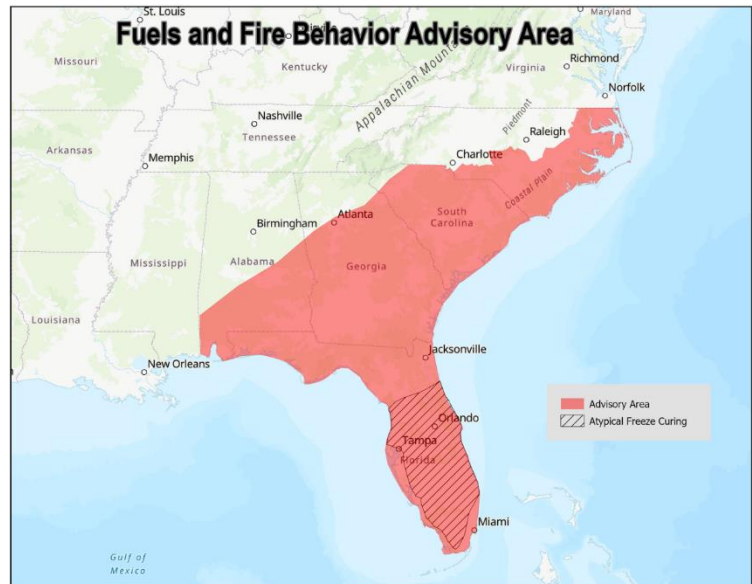
Date Advisory Effective – April 30, 2026



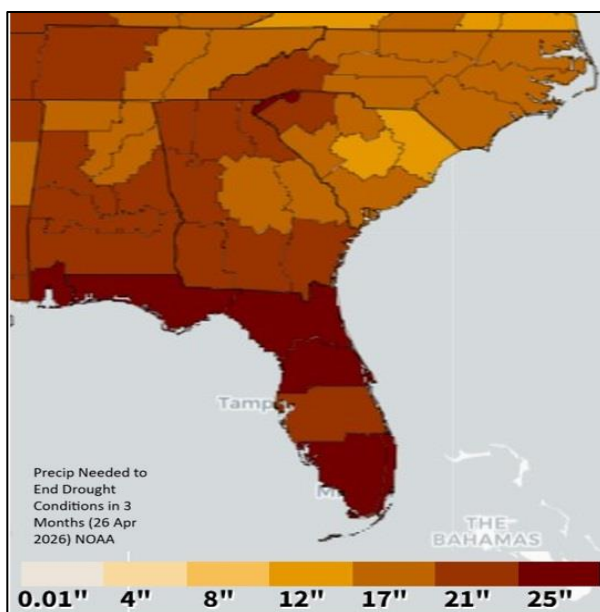
Subject: Persistent drought conditions have led to unusually dry fuels and very low water levels, resulting in extreme fire behavior, impactful extended attack fires and a continued high risk of initial attack.

Summary:

- Drought has reduced moisture levels in soil and organic layers, causing vegetation stress and lowering live fuel moistures.
- Ground fuels are burning for extended periods, increasing control challenges and reburn potential.
- Low water levels are exposing additional fuels and reducing natural barriers that normally slow or stop fire spread.
- Conditions are producing active fire behavior with abnormally high rates of spread.
- Fires have higher resistance to control and require more resources and longer timeframes.



Discussion: Drought has continued to intensify the last few weeks, cementing conditions in the fire environment that are increasingly impactful. Hardwood leaf-out is progressing along normal timelines, but green-up of grasses and forbs has slowed where rainfall has been insufficient during this critical time of year. Extremely low soil moisture, dry surface fuels, low water levels in coastal areas and persistent low humidity have all contributed to unusual fire activity this spring. A changeable weather pattern will take shape in May, with periodic thunderstorm chances followed by dry and cooler stretches. The fire environment will briefly moderate where soaking rainfall occurs, but new lightning ignitions will likely occur, and extended attack fires may re-emerge where dry weather prevails.



Differences from Normal Conditions: Long-term rainfall deficits across the advisory area will require at least one to two feet of rain over the next few months to end drought conditions in the Southeast. This underlying dryness has resulted in historically low stream flow and water levels for this time of year, in addition to extreme fire behavior and increased resistance to control. There are widespread reports of holdover fires re-emerging or smoldering several weeks to as long as 45 days after being contained. Extended attack fires in south Georgia and north Florida erupted during a period of historically high fire danger, which has eased slightly due to periods of higher humidity and scattered rainfall. Farther south in Florida, some of the coldest winter temperatures in decades resulted in freeze kill of sensitive vegetation that is now burning readily. Fire activity will remain dominated by drought-stressed fuels until significant relief occurs.

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Concerns to Firefighters and the Public:

- Critical fire weather may occur with hot, dry & breezy days, dry frontal passages, sea breezes, thunderstorms, and high dispersion indices.
- Typical fire weather thresholds may not apply where drought, record high fire danger and heat align – critical conditions may occur with RH 5-10% above and winds 5-10 mph below regional thresholds.
- Vegetative stress has reduced live fuel moisture in many areas that may lead to more active fire behavior than normally seen.
- Resinous fuels in coastal plain areas may be more volatile during the green-up period – especially in droughty conditions where shrubs do not have adequate water to complete the green-up process. These fuels should be treated with caution.
- Expect most snags and heavy dead and down fuel to readily ignite, potentially consuming entirely.
- Helene and other storm-damaged fuels are much more available now than last spring or fall.
- Ground and/or duff fire will likely be a long-term issue that can hinder fire control efforts and lead to poor visibility in smoke or super fog.



A plume-dominated day on the Hwy 82 Fire in southeast Georgia was interrupted by a sudden wind shift with a sea breeze on Saturday, April 25th.



Unusually dry swamps after a recent fire on the Osceola National Forest are experiencing needle cast that may contribute to reburn in the coming weeks.

- Recent fuel-driven fires in coastal plain areas have produced explosive fire behavior that may outpace control efforts, even with little or no wind - swamps or drainages may not provide reliable containment.
- Fires have significant reburn potential given longer residual burn time and needle cast from scorched canopies. This has caused fires to escape containment weeks and months after fire spread was thought to be complete.
- Careful consideration should be given to any planned prescribed fires during this time.
- Members of the public should stay informed of fire activity near their location and should heed evacuation notices immediately!
- Do not fly drones near areas of fire suppression activity!