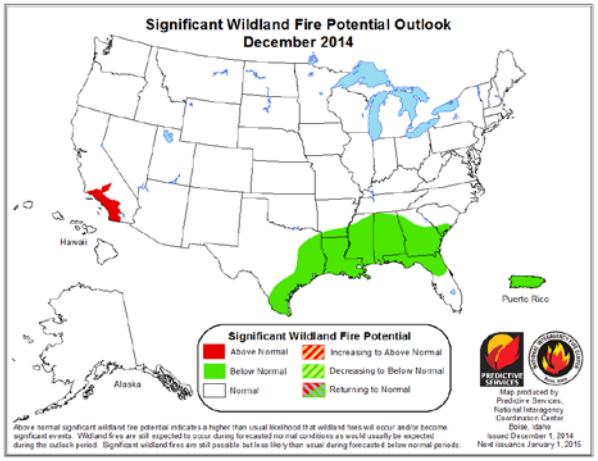
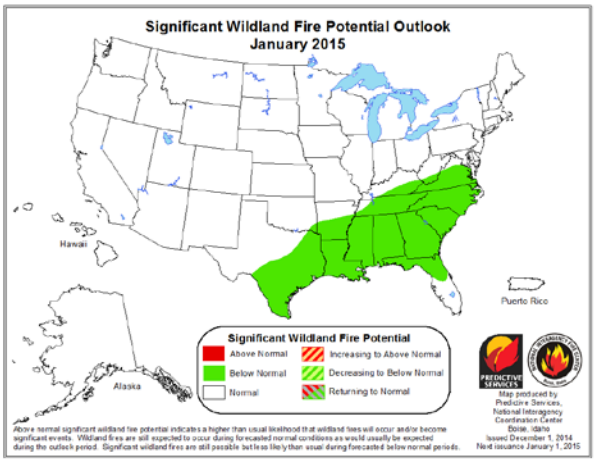
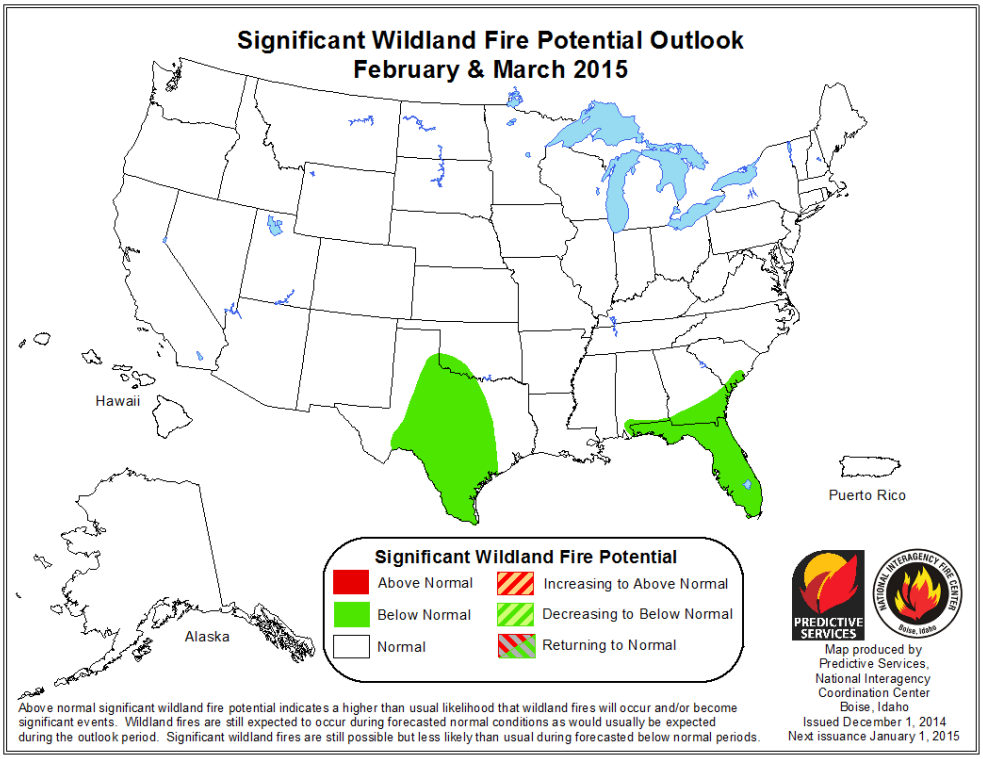
Western Great Basin Monthly and Seasonal Outlook

Issued: December 2, 2014 Valid for: December 2014 – March 2015

WGB Monthly and Seasonal Fire Potential Outlook: *Normal *







Weather and Climate Conditions Over the Last 30 Days

Average temperatures over the last 30 days remained above normal over nearly all of the WGB, with the exception of near normal temperatures over far northeast/eastern Nevada. **See Figure 2.** Dry conditions continued over the southern 1/2 of the WGB with precipitation less than 5-25% of normal. The only area that saw near normal precipitation was over the northern portion of Nevada.

Temperatures will likely average above normal through December and may drop to near to below normal at times from late December through January. Precipitation may return to above normal over parts of southeast/southern Nevada through January if the gradual shift to El Nino continues, with above normal precipitation possible at times over northern/western areas especially in December through mid-January.

The El Nino Southern Oscillation (ENSO) is currently in a neutral state, with a slow shift toward some variation of El Nino, or a warmer state of neutral through the fall and winter. Certain atmospheric conditions are still holding El Nino back from development. This still leads to a weak version of El Nino developing, or just remaining on the warm side of neutral. Generally near or below normal precipitation may occur this winter in the north/west; however a period of wet weather is possible from December through mid-January. The impacts on the WGB will depend on the strength of the El Nino, if it develops, and when the development takes place.

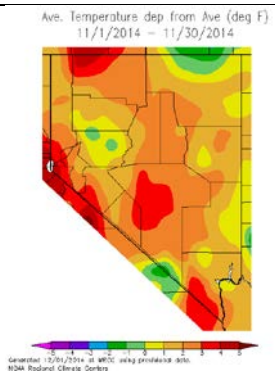


Figure 2: 30-Day Average Temps Departure from Avg. (deg F)

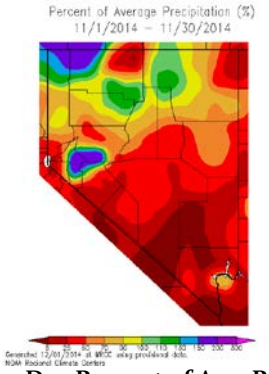


Figure 3: 30-Day Percent of Avg. Precipitation

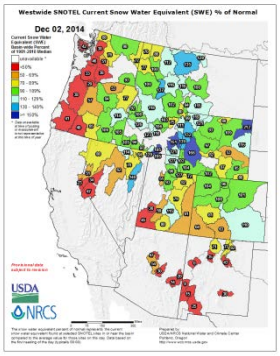


Figure 4: Snowpack as of October 31, 2014

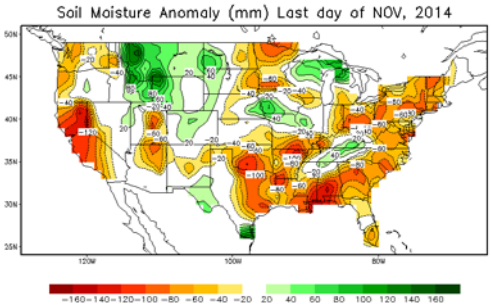


Figure 5: Most Recent Month (November) Soil Moisture Anomaly

Climate Factors, Fuels and Long Range Outlooks

The Climate Prediction Center (CPC) is forecasting above normal temperatures across the WGB through March, with the potential for above normal precipitation over the southern half of the area later in the year into early 2015 (see **Figure 6 and 7**). This outlook appears reasonable at least through January, with less certainty into late winter/spring 2015.

The U.S. Drought Monitor (**Figure 8**) shows extreme to exceptional drought continuing over the western half of Nevada and most of California. Moderate to severe drought continues over southern. There has been recent improvement in drought conditions over the eastern third of Nevada due to winter, spring and summer precipitation with now moderate drought, or abnormally dry conditions. Current drought conditions are expected to persist through spring of 2015 across the northern 2/3 of the WGB. Despite above normal precipitation in the summer, which brought some relief to the short term drought, this precipitation will likely do little to alter the long term drought conditions in the near future. If wetter than normal conditions develop over southern and parts of eastern Nevada, then there may be some improvement in the drought (**see Figure 9**).

Fuel Conditions

Fuel moisture increased in early October, then again later in the month and in early November as a couple wet/cool systems did bring moisture and cooler weather to western and northern areas as well. As temperatures decrease, fuels will gradually enter a state of dormancy through the winter.

Western Great Basin Outlook

Normal fire potential is expected through March, which typically means little or no significant fire activity. Due to drier conditions early in the fall, if there are strong wind events after a dry period and

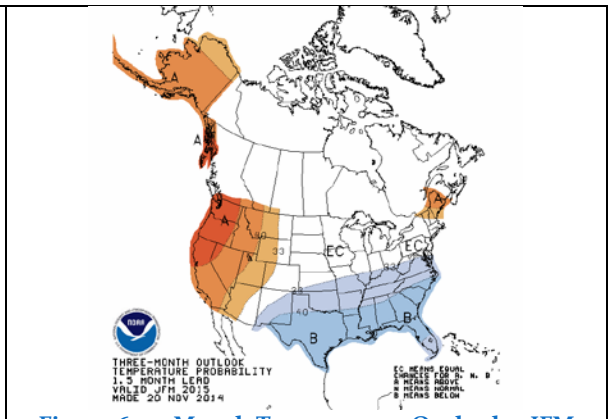


Figure 6: 3-Month Temperature Outlook – JFM

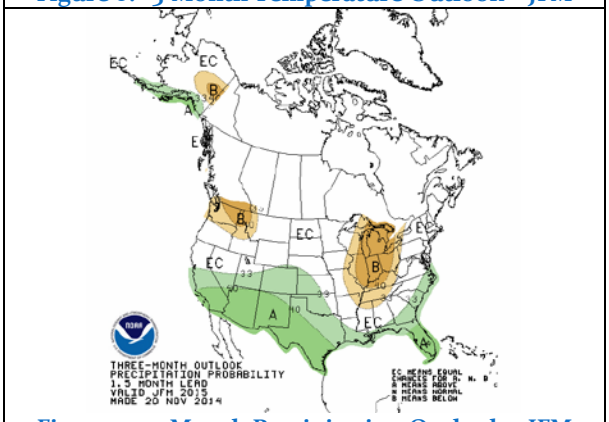


Figure 7: 3-Month Precipitation Outlook – JFM

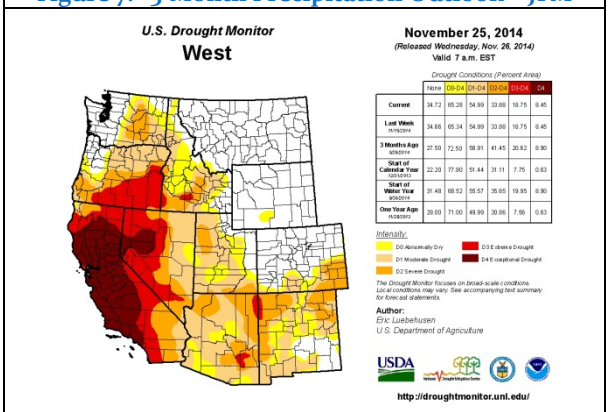


Figure 8: Western U.S. Drought Monitor

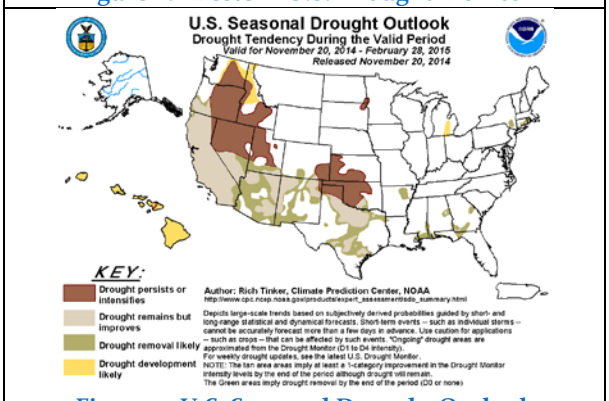


Figure 9: U.S. Seasonal Drought Outlook

there are ignitions, fire potential may briefly increase in local areas.	