2020 Fire Weather Refresher
Seasonal Outlook
Outlook

Will we burn?

Or will we swim?
Current Snow Depth South Central
Snow Water Equivalent
Percent of Normal

- 0–25
- 25–50
- 50–75
- 75–100
- 100–125
- 125–150
- 150–175
- 175–200
- 200+

https://www.weather.gov/aprfc/nrcs_AK_SWE

Snow Water Equivalent - Interior
US Drought Monitor

- The map at right highlights the portions of Alaska that are in drought status as of April, 2020: None!
- Past couple of years had featured mild to moderate drought over the Southeast Panhandle
2020 Temperature Forecast

April-May-June

July-August-September
2020 Precipitation Forecast

April-May-June

July-August-September
Arctic Sea Ice

Arctic Sea Ice Extent
(Area of ocean with at least 15% sea ice)
So, about our fire season...

- Warmer than normal conditions expected to continue statewide again this spring and summer. Precipitation is truly unknown.

- Going into the season with a healthy snowpack in the Interior, with less robust snow in South Central. Temperatures are expected to be warm in April, but the snowpack in place suggests a normal or even slow start to the fire season.

- Still no indicators that we can bank on for mid-summer.

- This leads to...
Much of eastern U.S. is expected to have very low potential for spring.

Potential then increases in in portions of the West and Northwest for the summer.
Alaska Monthly Fire Potential Outlook

Forecast:
- Alaska is transitioning into fire season with a forecast of below normal potential expected for April, with a return to normal for May through July. As snow retreats in the southernmost parts of the state, human-caused fires will begin in April, spreading into central and northern Alaska by the end of April and early May. By late May, most of the state will be snow-free, and fire activity will be on the rise, reaching its peak with more lightning starts around the summer solstice.

Factors:
- The U.S. Drought Monitor shows normal conditions over all of Alaska. There had been some drought issues in South Central Alaska as well as in the Southeast Panhandle last year, but the precipitation over this winter has helped to mitigate those concerns. As of early April, the snowpack over much of Interior Alaska had a liquid water content at or above climatological normal.
- CPC outlook maps indicate warmer than normal conditions for Alaska this spring and summer.
- Precipitation forecasts have notoriously little skill in Alaska, but all long range forecasts are indicating the likelihood for higher than normal precipitation.
- As parts of the state become snow free, Calculations of the CFFDRS will start. Increasing temperatures will thaw the ground, allowing fuels to start drying. Though ignitions are unlikely for the first few weeks, fuels in parts of southern AK will probably be burnable by late-April.
That covers it!

Questions?

heidi_strader@nps.gov
eric_stevens@nps.gov