





FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE AND CONSUMER SERVICES
COMMISSIONER ADAM H. PUTNAM

June 1, 2011

MEMORANDUM

TO: Jim Karels, Director
David Core, Assistant Director

FROM: Sean Luchs, Meteorologist 

THROUGH: John Fish, Chief, Forest Protection Bureau 

SUBJECT: Long Range Forecast for June through August, 2011

CURRENT CONDITIONS:

La Niña conditions in the equatorial Pacific Ocean continued to fade as Florida saw above normal temperatures and below normal precipitation in April 2011, similar to February and March. As a result, drought conditions have generally expanded across the state. Though below normal precipitation has been seen across most of the state recently, West Central Florida is an exception, which saw considerably above normal precipitation in March. This has helped decrease drought conditions in that part of the state. Parts of East Central Florida also had a wet March, while a narrow band of the state from the Big Bend to northeast Florida had a moist February – however, the overall deficit of rainfall over the long term has not effectively eased drought conditions. La Niña conditions are coming to an end, as some regions have warmed into the neutral phase. While temperatures have not warmed enough for a sufficient period of time to declare an end to the La Niña event, it is virtually inevitable at this point.

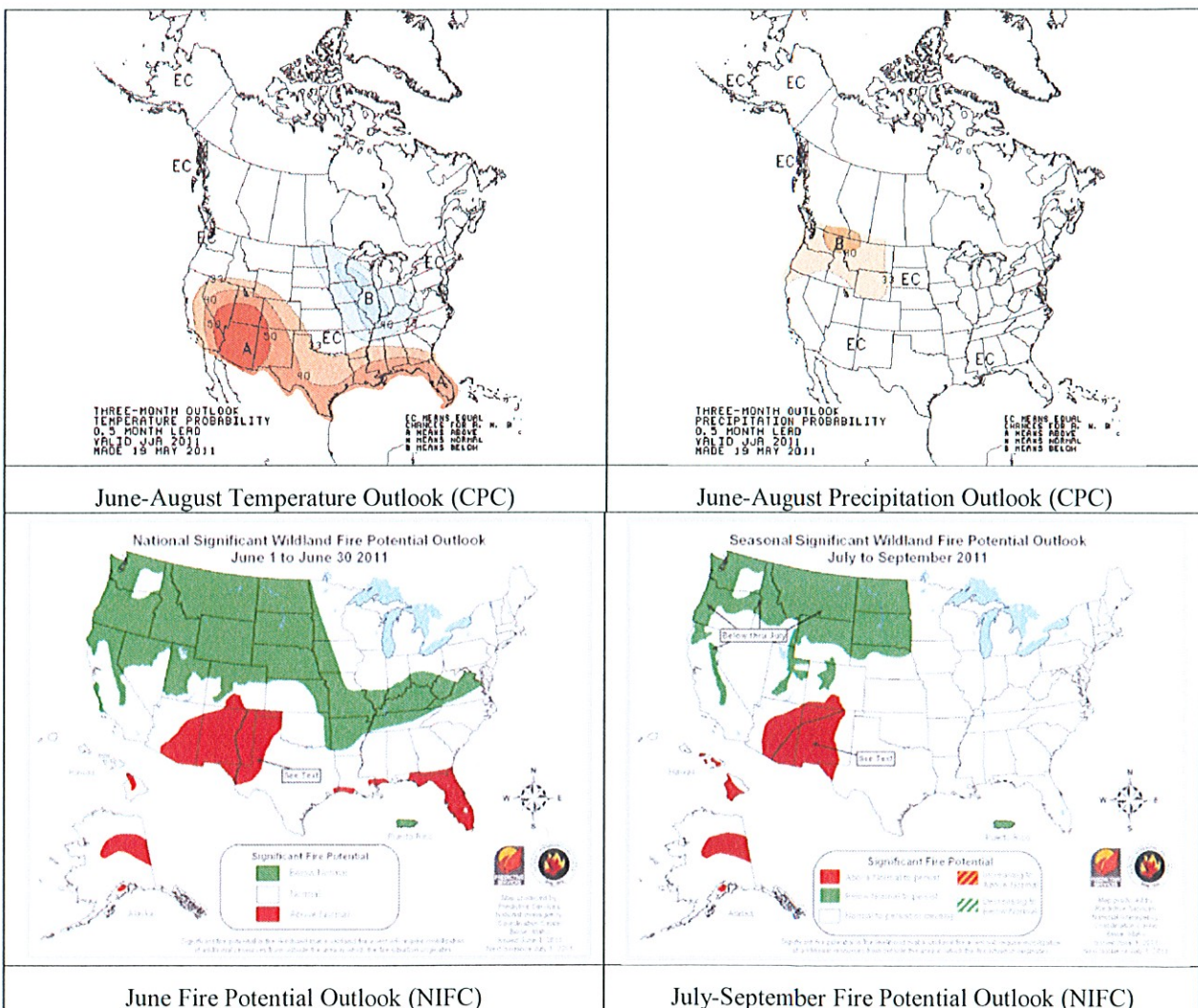
LONG-RANGE OUTLOOK:

A transition from the La Niña event to an ENSO-neutral phase is occurring, given the lack of cool anomalies in the upper portion of the equatorial Pacific and the consensus of computer models. A neutral phase should continue through at least the 2011 summer. A neutral ENSO phase indicates a weak signal on Florida's weather patterns. In addition, influence from the ENSO phase on Florida's weather patterns typically is less during the summer than the winter, and we must look to other signals for clues. Dry soil moistures and an abnormally warm Gulf of Mexico tend to indicate a possibility for above normal temperatures in June and perhaps further into the summer. The lack of a strong climate signal for the state as far as precipitation is concerned results in a forecast of equal chances for above, below, or near normal precipitation. We also must consider the potential for the impact of tropical cyclones, as the North Atlantic hurricane season begins June 1 and continues until November 30. Last year had significant activity, and was considered a 'hyperactive' hurricane season. While some parts of the basin – most notably Mexico – suffered damaging strikes, the United States was generally fortunate to experience very

little impact. However, the lack of impact from tropical cyclones also helped drought conditions to develop in Florida with a very dry second half of 2010. Seasonal forecasts for 2011 suggest another above normal season (though probably not as active as last year) as the transition from La Niña to neutral conditions suggests less shear, and sea surface temperatures across the basin's favored regions for hurricane development are abnormally warm. At this time, there is no skill in forecasting what areas in the basin are more likely to see strikes from tropical cyclones. Beyond the summer, there is less confidence in the forecast – most models suggest a continued neutral phase into the fall and winter. However, some models suggest the possibility of an El Niño or return to La Niña.

SUMMARY:

Wildfire activity in Florida is typically at its peak in May and early June until consistent wet season rainfall results in a significant decrease in activity. That trend is expected to hold again this year when wet season precipitation becomes prominent. However, with the presence of long-term drought and no clear signal for above normal precipitation to mitigate the drought conditions, wildfire potential may continue to be considered 'above normal' in the short term despite the reduction in wildfire activity, as this reduction may not be as significant as in typical years.



cc: DoF Bureau Chiefs
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