

Seasonal Bushfire Assessment Workshop

Chris Lucas, Timothy Brown & Graham Mills

Bureau of Meteorology Research Centre

Desert Research Institute

Objectives

- To support decision-making needs and provide information that can assist fire managers with determining budgets, priorities, resource allocations and public education
- To improve the capabilities of states to incorporate new and long-term information into their decision-making processes
- To implement a standardized product that is evidence-based and defensible
- To build capacity between states and fire management and weather/climate partners

Workshop goals

- To develop a process for creating a national seasonal fire potential outlook
- To generate a prototype national fire potential outlook map

Workshop attendees

- AFAC/Bushfire CRC
- Bureau of Meteorology
- Bushfires Council NT
- CALM Conservation and Land Management
- Cape York Fire Management Project
- Country Fire Authority (CFA)
- Country Fire Service (CFS)
- Department of Environment and Heritage (DEH)
- Desert Research Institute
- Department of Sustainability and Environment (DSE)
- Fire and Emergency Services Authority (FESA)
- Forest NSW
- NSW Fire Brigades
- NSW Rural Fire Service
- Queensland Fire and Rescue
- Tasmania Fire Service

Fire potential definition

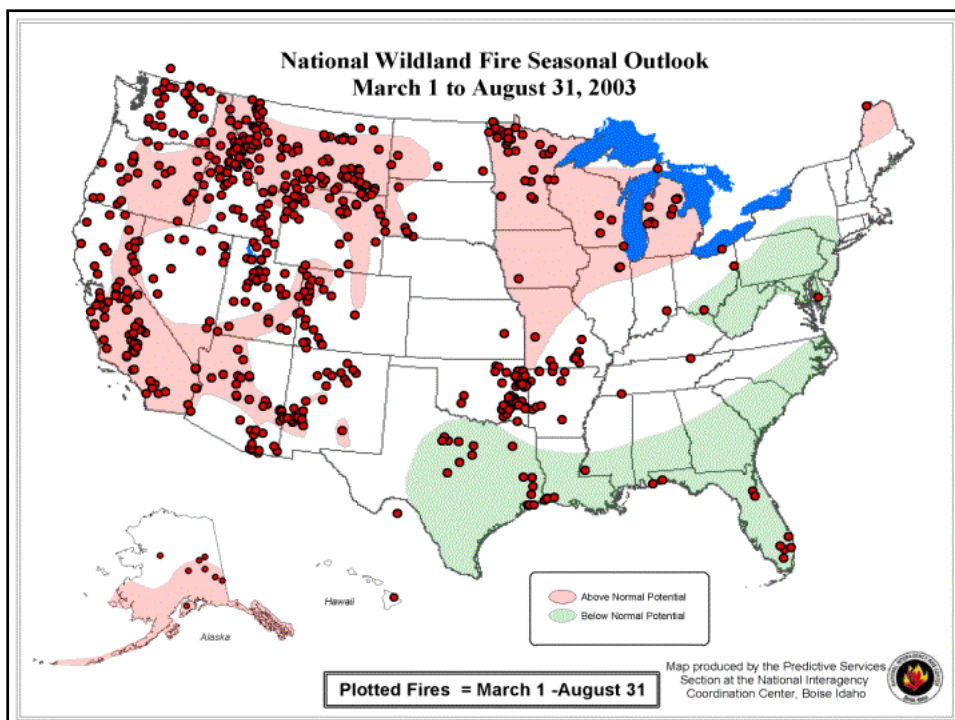
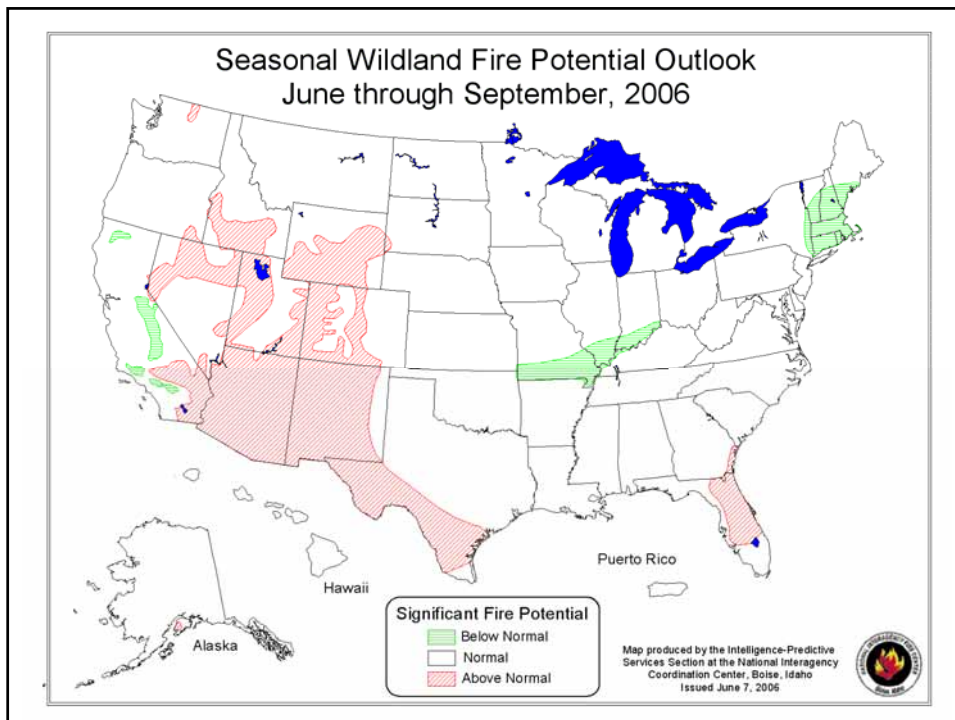
The chance of a fire or number of fires occurring of such size, complexity or other impact which requires resources beyond the area in which it or they originate.

The potential for a significant fire situation is a sum of factors that includes fuels, ignition triggers, significant weather triggers and resources.

Workshop background (U.S. model)

National Seasonal Assessment Workshops

- Eastern and Southern States
 - mid-January
- Western States and Alaska
 - early April

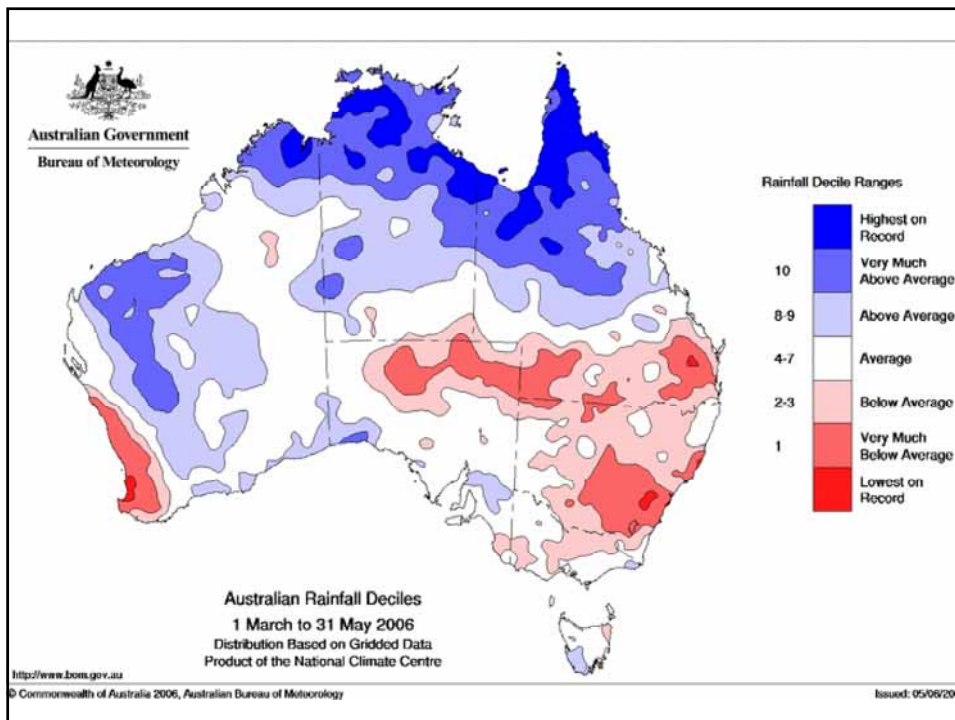
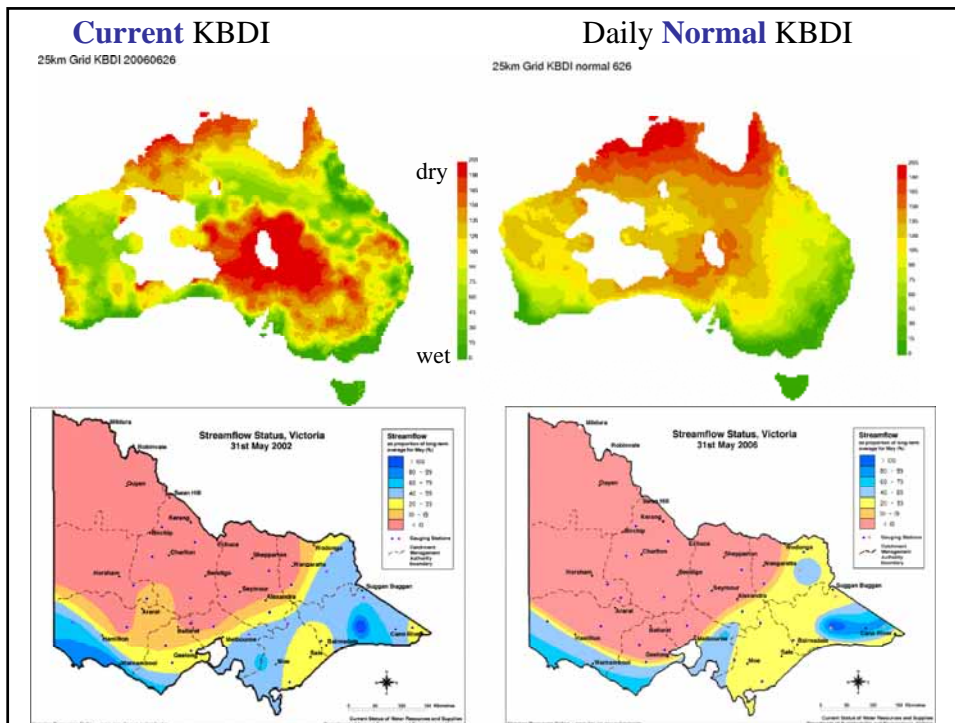


Seasonal Fire Outlook Content (Standardised format)

- Executive summary
- Introduction and objectives
- Current conditions
- Climate outlooks
- Fire occurrence and resource outlooks
- Future scenarios and probabilities
- Management implications and concerns
- Summary and recommendations

Current conditions - weather/climate

- Temperature/precipitation anomalies
- Streamflow
- ENSO
- Circulation
- Drought indices



Current conditions - Fuel/Fire

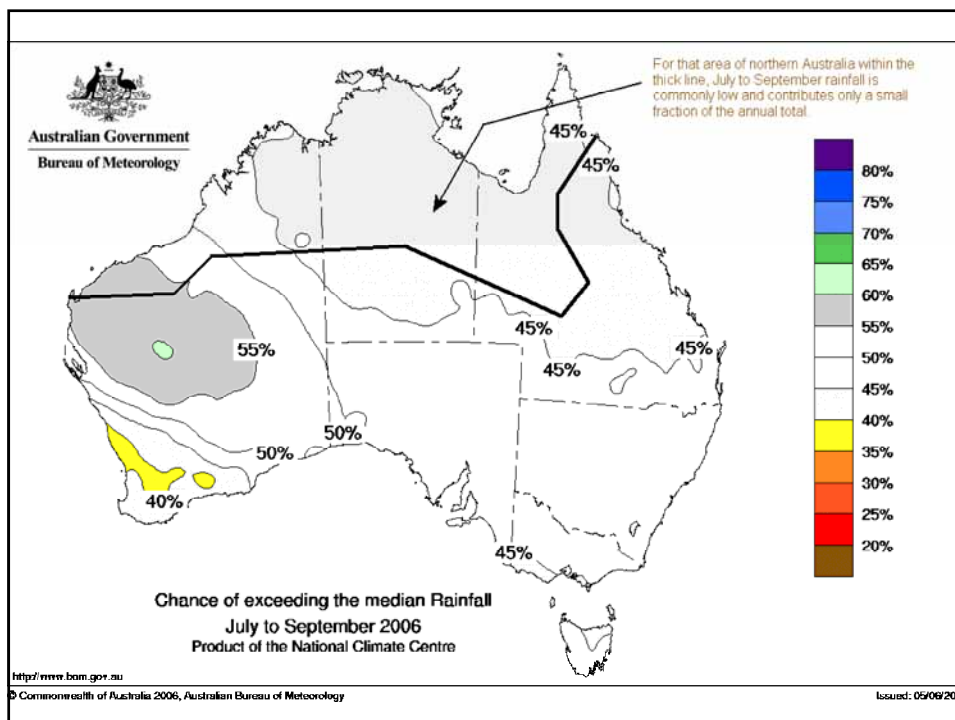
- Fire danger
- Vegetation greenness
- Fuel moisture
- Fire occurrence
- Fire behaviour
- Fuel loading
- Disturbances (e.g., disease, downed fuels, etc.)

South East Barkly Tablelands : April 2006 Mitchell Grass Fuel Loads



Outlooks

- Monthly/seasonal temperature/precipitation
- Circulation
- ENSO
- Drought forecasts
- Soil moisture forecasts
- Fire weather indices
- Hydrologic indices



Fire Outlooks

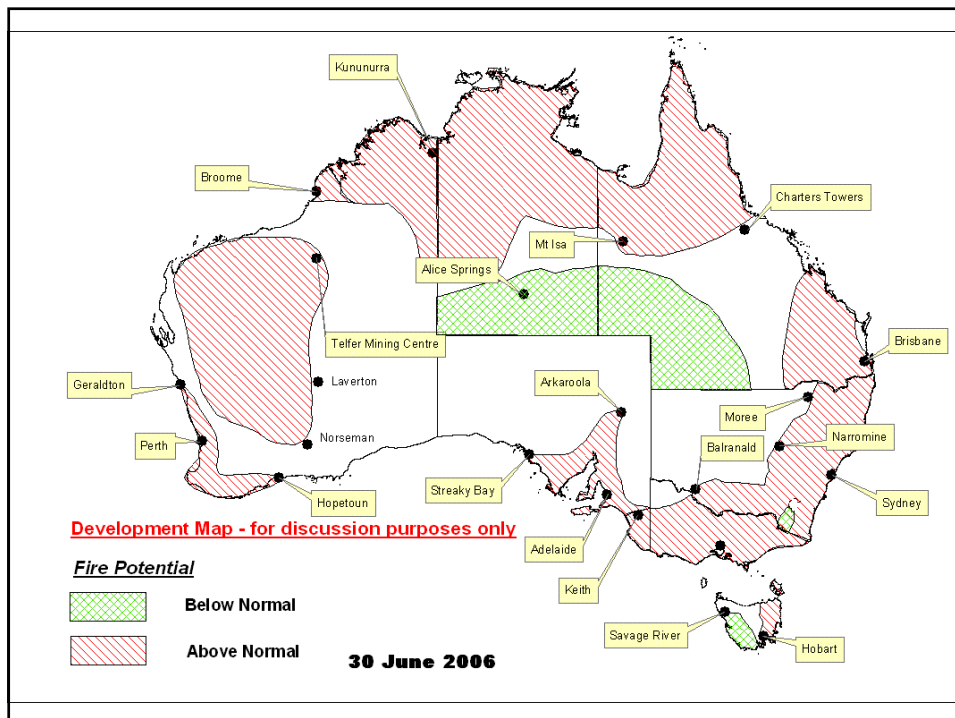
- Seasonal fire occurrence estimates
- Estimates of expected resource needs
 - Type, location, timing

Future Scenarios

- Priority sub-regions within Geographic Area
- Fuel-type considerations
- Climate considerations
- Season ending event probabilities

State fuel condition summaries

- WA, NT, QLD heavy fuel growth in grasslands
- Southwest WA drought conditions; much long unburned land; heavy fuel loads
- NSW, VIC, SA: no early season information; long-term drought suggests heavy fuel loads in forests and plantations
- TAS: wet in West; dry in East



Outlook uses

- Budgets
- Resource management
- Political decisions
- Management briefings
- Public briefings
- Prescribed fire and prevention planning
- Business and industry decisions

Needs and action items

- 3-month map
 - Updated monthly
- 6-month map
 - Updated as needed (e.g., 2-3 times)
- Two workshops
 - Mar/Apr north
 - Aug/Sep south
- Determine issuing authority
- Develop standardized reporting (both state and national levels)