

Fuels and Fire Behavior Advisory

Northwest Texas

Date Advisory Effective – August 16, 2024

Subject: An increased volume and resistance to control of wildfires is expected across Northwest Texas for the second half of August 2024 due to growing drought and increased availability of surface fuel and above normal grass loading.

Discussion: Through mid-August, Northwest Texas has experienced 180% of normal wildfire response with increased resistance to control being observed in heavier juniper/oak fuel mixed with the drought cured, above normal grass loading. Less than 25% of normal precipitation over the last 60 days is common throughout the area and these environmental conditions are amplified with persistent above normal temperatures. This growing drought follows an early growing season where above normal rainfall resulted in grass production more than 150% above normal across Northwest Texas.

Difference from normal conditions: Energy Release Component values in the Rolling Plains and northern Cross Timbers are near the 90th percentile for ERC-G and expected to remain above the 90th percentile possibly through the end of August. Temperatures more than 100°F combined with late afternoon wind gusts near 20 mph have contributed to increased resistance to control in juniper/oak fuels. Heavier diameter surface fuel is contributing to fire activity requiring additional time and effort toward mop-up.

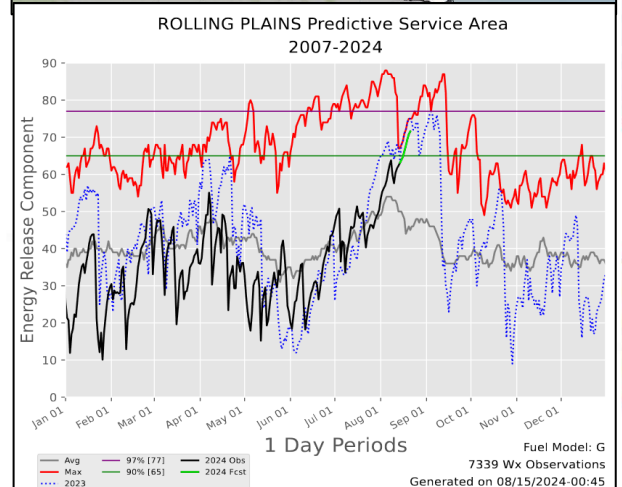
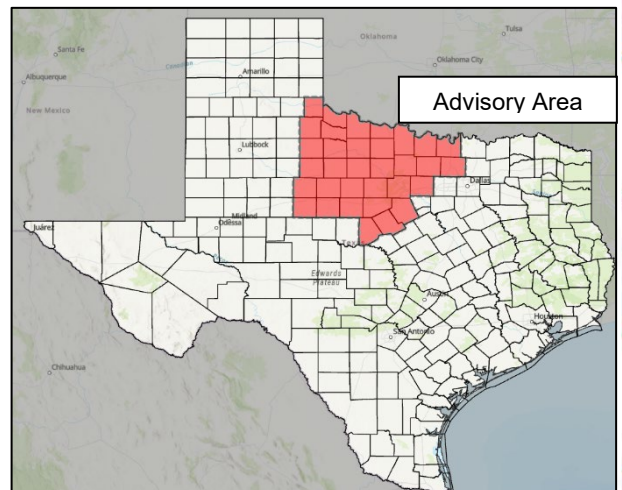
Concerns to Firefighters and the Public:

- High fire line intensity is to be expected during both initial attack and extended attack. Group torching will likely become more frequent in juniper/oak under moderate weather conditions.
- The drought cured, above normal grass loading can result in multiple new fires daily volume resulting in a rapid resource drawdown of initial attack resources and limit availability for extended attack resources.
- Typical barriers to fire spread like roadways, rivers, and hardwood river bottoms cannot be relied upon to stop fire progression.

Mitigation Measures:

- Fire managers should be prepared to support periods of more frequent fire occurrences as well as complex, long duration incidents.
- Firefighters should anticipate constructing wider than normal control lines with dozers and graders (maintainers) working in tandem with engine support.
- Recent observations indicate large diameter surface fuels burning more readily and holding heat longer due to low 1000-hr fuel moisture and underlying drought. The time and effort needed for mop-up will continue to increase as large diameter fuels hold heat with the forecast of continued very hot and mostly dry conditions.

Issued By: Texas A&M Forest Service in coordination with the Southern Area Coordination Center



High Risk Oak/Juniper and drought cured grass loading on the Robertson Fire 8/12/24

