HAZARD **NOTE**

bushfire&natural HAZARDSCRC

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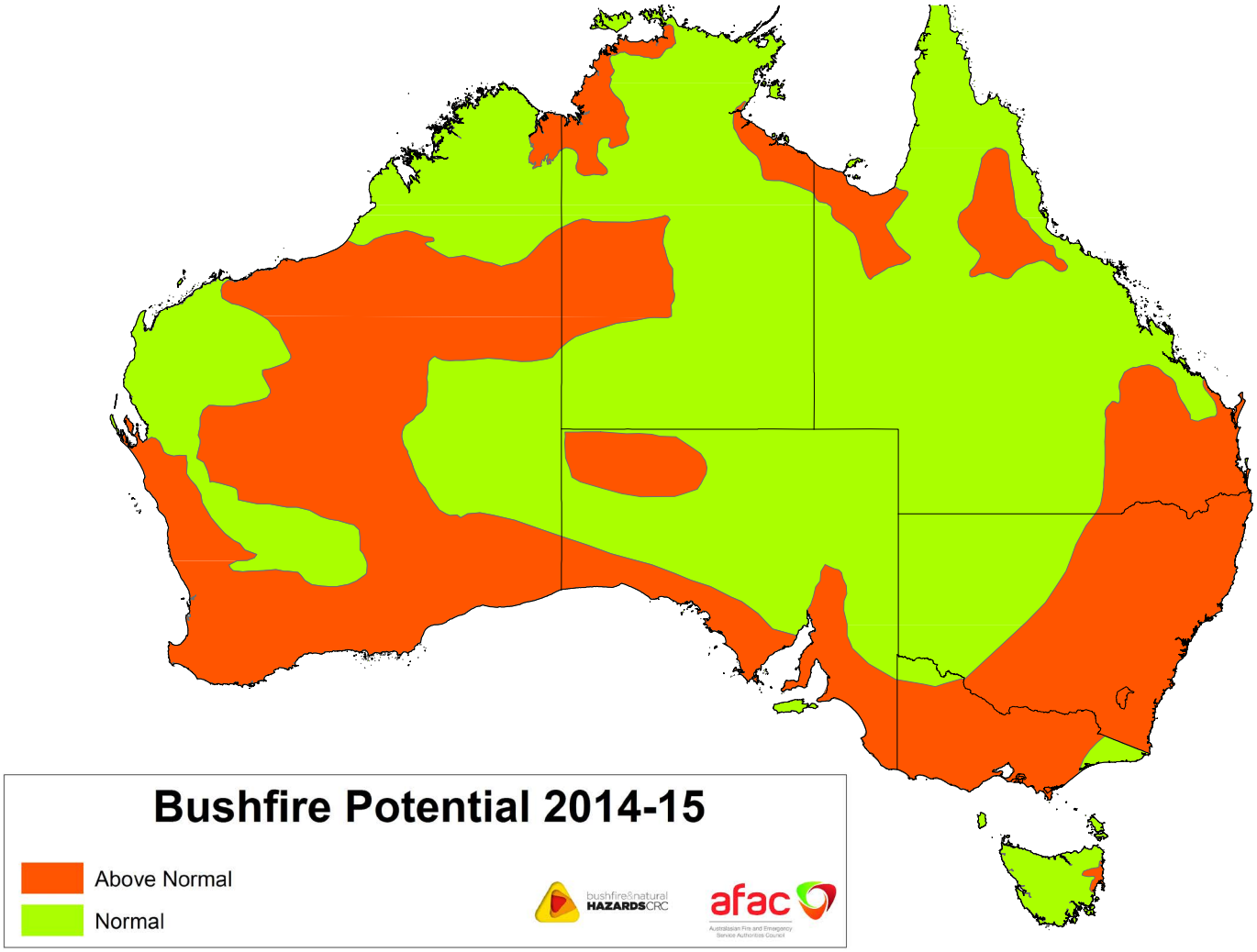
TOPICS IN THIS EDITION | FIRE WEATHER | FUEL MANAGEMENT

SOUTHERN AUSTRALIA SEASONAL BUSHFIRE OUTLOOK 2014-15: NOVEMBER UPDATE



OVERVIEW

Across south eastern Australia, spring has been unseasonably dry and with the expectation of a hot and dry summer the bushfire seasonal outlook for 2014-15 has been re-examined for Victoria, South Australia and Tasmania.

This has resulted in an update to the *Southern Australia Seasonal Bushfire Outlook*. This new edition, released as *Hazard Note* 003, replaces the previous Outlook for these three states, published as *Hazard Note* 002 in September 2014.

The significant change in this Outlook is that more parts of south eastern Australia are now expected to experience above normal fire conditions. In these areas, it is more likely that the resources required to fight bushfires from within a region will be insufficient, with resources required from other areas of an affected state, interstate and possibly overseas.

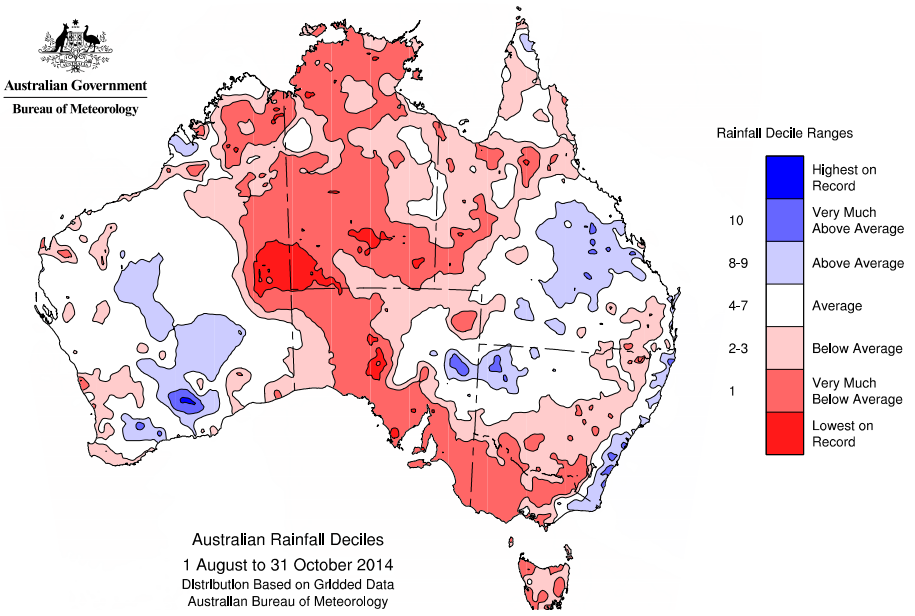
Record October warmth across much of southern Australia has caused a rapid drawing of moisture from the landscape which is raising expectations of high fire danger in the south eastern states.

This has increased the bushfire potential in Victoria, South Australia and Tasmania sufficiently to warrant the updating of the national perspective. The above map reveals the updated bushfire outlook for southern Australia through to 2015. This map has been combined with the outlook for the northern fire season from July 2014, to show the areas of fire potential for all of Australia in 2014-15 (see *Hazard Note* 001).

SEASONAL CLIMATE OUTLOOK

Rainfall since August has been below average to very much below average across most of Victoria, South Australia and Tasmania, with South Australia recording its driest October on record.

Climate models suggest current conditions will either persist or strengthen, with at least a 70% chance of El Niño occurring. Regardless of whether El Niño fully develops, warmer-than-average tropical Pacific Ocean temperatures, combined with cooler waters currently to the north of Australia, increase the chance of some El Niño-like impacts. For many parts of Australia, this suggests below average rainfall and above average temperatures in the months ahead.



REGIONAL SUMMARIES

Victoria

The expectation of an above normal fire season for 2014-15 has extended in Victoria. The outlook has changed to a potentially major fire season.

All Victorian districts except the Mallee and East Gippsland may expect above normal fire potential. The continuation of dry conditions in all districts except East Gippsland, coupled with an increased likelihood of an earlier start to the season, has extended the above normal outlook beyond the geographic extent advised in September (see *Hazard Note* 002).

Longer term rainfall deficits have emerged across much of the state, including key areas along the Great Dividing Range. Critical shorter term deficits in coastal and southern Victoria coincide with areas of tall forest with no recent history of fire. Critical deficits also coincide with vulnerable areas in the Great Dividing Range where forests have been killed by fire in the past 10 years.

New additions include Wyperfeld, the Far South West, the Otway Range, the eastern Melbourne region, forests in the Great Dividing Range as far east as the Tongio Plateau and the Cobberas Range, Melbourne's water catchments, the foothills of South Gippsland, Wilsons Promontory and the Latrobe Valley.

Climatic signals indicate the continuation of warmer and drier than average conditions. Significant or widespread above average rainfall is not forecast. Rainfall of 30-50mm may occur in places, but its effectiveness will be limited due to the antecedent conditions.

South Australia

In South Australia the outlook conditions indicate the most likely scenario is for above normal fire potential in many parts of the state.

In the North West Pastoral, West Coast, Eastern Eyre Peninsula, Flinders and Mid North districts, the above normal fire potential is due to accumulated growth from previous growing seasons and above average rainfall earlier in 2014.

The Yorke Peninsula, Mount Lofty Ranges, Upper South East and Lower South East districts are experiencing rainfall deficiencies, with very dry soil moisture resulting in very dry fuels.

The area adjacent to the Northern Territory border (north of the APY Lands) has normal fire potential, in line with the normal potential indicated by the Northern Territory.

Normal to above normal fire potential may see the need for firefighting resources over a longer period of time, together with a longer time for mop up post-fires. The districts where there is potential for above normal activity may pose resourcing issues during this fire danger season, should an above normal level of activity be experienced.

Tasmania

The extraordinary run of above average monthly maximum and minimum temperatures continues, while dry conditions in September and October were only relieved by significant rain in the last week of October.

Difficult fires have already occurred; on 28 September Tasmania experienced the earliest total fire ban since 1987. The central part of the east coast extending into Fingal continues to have above normal fire season potential.

Without an improvement in conditions, the area from St Helens down to Marion Bay and through the Midlands and lower Derwent Valley are all likely to have above normal potential at the beginning of summer.

Other states and territories

In New South Wales, the ACT and Western Australia, the *Southern Australia Season Bushfire Outlook* remains as described in September's *Hazard Note* 002.

The Bushfire and Natural Hazards CRC is a national research centre funded by the Australian Government in the Cooperative Research Centre (CRC) Program. It was formed in 2013 in partnership with the fire, land and emergency service management agencies in Australia and New Zealand for an eight year program to undertake end-user focused research.

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