

STATE BOARD OF LAND COMMISSIONERS

May 21, 2024
Department Report

Pre-Season Fire Brief: May-July 2024

The current Significant Wildland Fire Potential Outlook is normal throughout Idaho for May and June. Most of southern Idaho is forecasted for above average fire potential in July and August, while northern Idaho remains in normal fire potential. Low snowpack and persisting drought in northern Idaho could increase fire potential, however, there is indication of spring moisture that will create a slow start to fire season and moderate conditions early in the summer. This forecast relies on several variables and will become more accurate over the next several months.

As of May 2, IDL had 17 fires for 10.3 acres, mostly due to debris and grass burning. IDL sent resources to Michigan and Virginia already this season.

IDL Resources

IDL's exclusive use helicopter vendor notified IDL in January they were closing their business. IDL staff continue to work on filling that gap and will have an update for the June Land Board. Due to this and turnover with helitack leadership, a full helitack crew will not be hired. IDL will have its regular complement of Amphibious Water Scoopers (Fire Bosses): 2 in Coeur d'Alene and working to secure an additional 2 in CDA, and 4 Single Engine Air Tankers (SEATs) (2 based in McCall and 2 in Grangeville).

IDL will have the 20-person Teakean hand crew based in Deary, a 6-person Northern Idaho Suppression Module based in Sandpoint, and 3 Zone Fire Managers, based in northern, central, and southern Idaho.

There are 33 engines distributed throughout IDL district offices and 9 engines at the two Timber Protective Associations. IDL is expecting to bring on contract engines to assist areas where needed. The 5 Strategic Engines will be in place for the 2025 fire season.

East Idaho FPD update – A new Fire Warden is in place, with 2 job openings currently advertised for Assistant Fire Wardens. IDL is working with the USFS and BLM to finalize the East Idaho FPD boundary. IDL is working through agreements and operating plans. The current plan is to hire a seasonal crew for fire season 2025.

Staffing – IDL continues to recruit for permanent Resource Foremen (9 vacancies/11 fully staffed) and Assistant Fire Wardens (3 vacancies/12 fully staffed). All of IDL's Fire Warden positions are filled. IDL's District Readiness Reviews start the week of May 20 and will wrap up by the end of June. The greatest staffing shortfalls are in the Engine Boss level and Incident Commander Type 4 level. IDL is anticipating 40-60% engines to be fully staffed with seasonal and resource foremen during the fire season for 7-day coverage. This creates a need for higher level fire management, and qualified non-fire IDL staff to backfill engine staffing in addition to their regular jobs.