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Evans Road fire, from US Fish & Wildlife Service

Summary

Drought gripped North Carolina after a warm, dry end to 2007, and it persisted through much of 2008. As a result, the state had its worst spring and summer fire season in more than 20 years, including the long-lived Evans Road wildfire at the Pocosin Lakes refuge.

Statistics

For all of North Carolina



DM

| | | | | |
|------|-----|-------|-------|----|
| 2007 | May | -0.4° | -2.2" | D1 |
| | Jun | +0.5° | -0.8" | D1 |
| | Jul | -1.1° | -2.0" | D1 |
| | Aug | +5.0° | -3.2" | D1 |
| | Sep | +2.2° | -2.2" | D3 |
| | Oct | +5.8° | +1.1" | D4 |
| | Nov | +0.2° | -2.1" | D4 |
| | Dec | +6.0° | +0.5" | D4 |
| 2008 | Jan | +0.1° | -2.0" | D4 |
| | Feb | +4.3° | +0.2" | D4 |
| | Mar | +1.7° | -0.4" | D2 |
| | Apr | +0.9° | +1.4" | D2 |
| | May | -1.6° | -1.1" | D0 |
| | Jun | +3.5° | -2.3" | D1 |
| | Jul | -0.3° | -0.5" | D1 |
| | Aug | -0.1° | +0.7" | D1 |
| | Sep | +0.6° | +1.2" | D1 |

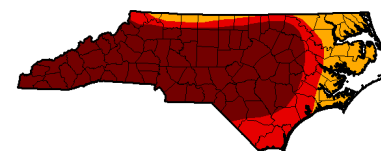
Narrative

After a **dry spring with sustained high pressure** over the Southeast US, most of NC was in Moderate Drought (D1) by May. It's a fairly common warm-season weather pattern, but its early onset and sustained duration helped drought emerge quickly.

Our warmest August on record was also the 2nd-driest, which led to **rapidly drying vegetation and soils** and expanding drought.

A hot, mostly dry fall with only one minor tropical storm (Gabrielle) saw **Exceptional Drought (D4)** take hold.

The dry 2007-08 winter brought **limited moisture recharge**, especially in organic soils.



US Drought Monitor, Dec. 11, 2007

The **spring fire season started early** in 2008, as a cold frontal passage on February 10 brought dry air and high winds that whipped up 300+ fires. March saw more fires prior to green-up.

Spring storms improved the state's overall drought classification, but lightning strikes ignited several wildfires, including the **Evans Road fire** at the coast on June 1.

Even with near-normal precipitation in July and August, **drought lingered** at the coast and in the Mountains, and fires continued smoldering.

Late-summer rainfall aided response efforts, but the final hot spots on the Evans Road fire were not fully extinguished until January 2009.



Tree roots exposed by the burned peat. (Photo from US FWS)

Timeline Legend



Statewide temperature and precipitation departures from 1901-2000 normal, from the National Centers for Environmental Information.

DM

Most common US Drought Monitor category in **North Carolina**, by area covered.

Monthly Temperature Rankings:

| | | | | | | |
|----------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|----------------|
| Record Coolest | Coolest 10% | Coolest 33% | Near Normal | Warmest 33% | Warmest 10% | Record Warmest |
|----------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|----------------|

Monthly Precipitation Rankings:

| | | | | | | |
|---------------|------------|------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|----------------|
| Record Driest | Driest 10% | Driest 33% | Near Normal | Wettest 33% | Wettest 10% | Record Wettest |
|---------------|------------|------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|----------------|

US Drought Monitor Categories:

| | | | | |
|--------------------|----------------------|--------------------|---------------------|-------------------------|
| D0: Abnormally Dry | D1: Moderate Drought | D2: Severe Drought | D3: Extreme Drought | D4: Exceptional Drought |
|--------------------|----------------------|--------------------|---------------------|-------------------------|