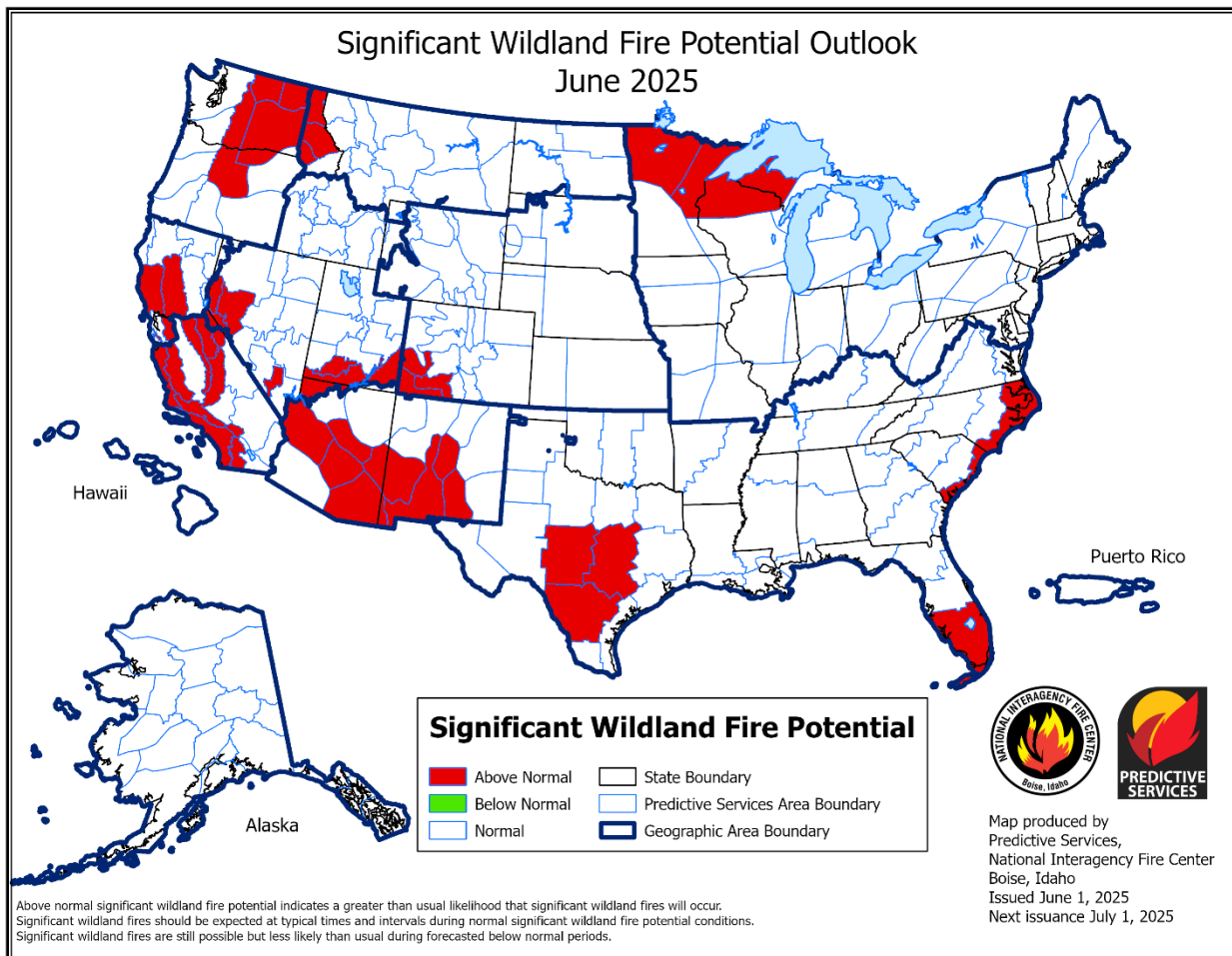


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June 16, 2025

Western Wildfire Risk Above Normal for 2025

Above normal potential for large fires is predicted for North Central Oregon in June, according to the National Interagency Fire Center! May precipitation was 80% of average in some areas. Conditions are expected to worsen into August and September as above average temperatures hit the Northwest.



As of today, there are two large fires burning in Oregon. The Rowena fire at 3,636 acres and the Ferry fire along the John Day River at 10,458 acres, and it is only mid-June!

2024 went down in the record books for the most acres consumed by wildfire and the largest cost to the state to suppress the numerous fires throughout Oregon. The effects of those fires are still being felt by the communities and people in their path.

With lower-than-average Spring moisture and higher than average Spring temperatures 2025 looks as if it could be as bad of a fire season as 2024 was. As a rancher in Eastern Oregon, a member of the “Fire 35” task force and the President of the Oregon Cattlemen’s Association. I represent over 11,000 ranchers in the state that raise 1.2 million cattle and provide over \$1 Billion of cash receipts to the state’s economy. The task force, the Governor and many legislators recognize that the current funding solution for ODF mitigation and suppression comprising of general funds and landowner assessment needs modernized. The landowner assessments have increased at a rate of over 150% of CPI since 2007! Special sessions to pay the state’s fire costs should not be the norm. If no action is taken this legislative session landowner assessments will rise another 20% in July. They are currently at a point of infeasibility. Another rate increase will exacerbate the economic hardship already burdening the landowners of this state and may trigger a collapse of the current system as regions and districts petition for removal from ODF and form RFPA’s or be absorbed by local rural fire districts.

FY25	Private & Public Acres	Tax Lots	Assessment \$
Timber	10,798,951	248,044	\$32,362,984
Grazing	3,118,691	48,571	\$3,849,997
Totals	13,917,642	296,615	\$36,212,982

This chart shows the total acres, tax lots and assessment collected currently. The trend is for costs and assessments to continue to rise. Further emphasizing the immediate need for long-term, equitable and durable funding.

HB 3940 has several of the work groups solutions for modernizing the funding needs for mitigation and suppression. New money such as the beverage tax, and an increase in timber harvest tax. Reallocation of some existing funds, the insurance retaliatory tax, ending balance and rainy-day funds. There have been several amendments brought forth to HB 3940 one such amendment of note is the dash 11 which proposes to use the interest on the rainy-day fund. Two separate bills dealing with the states “kicker” and the lottery are also on the table. Additional new funding ideas are also being discussed.

As this session is nearing its end it is time to act! I ask that you keep moving HB 3940 forward across the finish line and to the Governor’s desk. For the good of Oregon and its people.

Respectfully,



Matt McElligott, President
OREGON CATTLEMEN’S ASSOCIATION