Fuel Conditions: Current – The first week of October finds conditions right near normal across the state. ERC’s are in the 60-70th percentile range for eastern Washington with most areas at or just below the normal range for this time of year, while western Washington is a bit drier than normal due to a persistent high-pressure system that has kept the rains at bay for all but a five-day period over the last month.

1-2 Weeks – Climate models suggest a normal October, with only miniscule variations from the average precipitation over the entire month. The shorter-term weather models show that our high pressure is likely to persist until late next week, when a large trough moves in that should bring significant rainfall. Westside areas are still damp after the last storms, and don’t look like we will have an opportunity to dry all that out before the additional moisture comes. East side, the shorter days, dropping freezing levels, and overall cooling temperatures have kept indices slowly falling, and there is no indication that will change.

2-4 Weeks – By the middle of the month, the only thing able to revive fire danger concerns for the westside is a strong offshore event, and that will take a couple of consecutive days of drying to bring about much results. Eastern Washington can expect indices to continue to fall though never really out of danger without snow on the ground until the greenup hits.

Fire Behavior Potential:
Western Washington can expect slow ground fires in timber type fuels with very low flame length and little resistance to control without very strong weather events. Unshaded slash type fuels may be able to exhibit active behavior with much larger flame lengths, but still very slow spread rates. Grassy fuels may become problematic if the local RH values dip below 35%, but with very short burn windows and not a very persistent fire type.

Eastern Washington can expect some high intensity, short duration activity with shortened burn periods, but still relatively dry fuels. The resistance to control will be greater until we get a good bit of moisture as well as the soils have not had much real moisture. Timber and brushy fuels especially may show some high intensities if a fire gets a bit of momentum as the live fuels finish the transition into dormancy. Grassy fuels will always have the potential to become volatile if winds and RH allow but very short burn windows with cold and damp nights take away what little staying power grass fires have, and provide plenty of opportunity to contain fires within a single shift.