

Moisture Situation Update – May 28, 2018

Synopsis:

The month of May ushered in an abrupt shift in province-wide weather patterns, ending a long cold spell that saw the winter snowpack lingering on agricultural lands well into the third week in April. May was characterized by largely uninterrupted well above average temperatures, yielding a warm spell like this that is estimated to occur less than once in 50-years (**see map 1**). In addition, rainfall was well below normal, with large areas estimated to be below one in 12-year lows (**see map 2**). For those seeding this was precisely what was needed to jump start their operations. Unfortunately, this ideal seeding weather meant that perennial crops got a very slow start to the growing season and early growth may have been affected by a lack of rainfall and high temperatures in many areas.

Warm weather and meager rainfall accumulations, drew down soil moisture reserves significantly for this time of year, with many areas south of Red Deer and north of town Peace River seeing reserves this low on average less than once in 25-years (**see map 3**). Rain will be needed soon to help replenish these reserves which will help crops get through short duration dry spells that are typical of most growing seasons.

Perspective

Fortunately, as seeding operations are winding down and areas are in need of a good soaking, we now appear to be on the cusp of another major shift in the weather patterns. AF's fire weather meteorologists are saying that all current signs are indicating that large scale atmospheric conditions are appearing to slip into "normal" June type weather patterns, and since June is one of the wettest months of the year, if this pattern holds true, that is indeed good news.

Current forecasts are now calling for cooler temperatures and wide spread rain is on the way. Over the past few days, widespread convective (thunderstorm) activity has brought relief to many areas, and during the next several days, two different moisture bearing systems are poised to move through the province. By the end of the weekend, most areas south of Slave Lake, extending all the way down to the US border will see much needed moisture. Lands along the foothills in and around the Calgary area may see accumulations in the 20 to 50 mm range, as well as upwards of 20 mm in through the Lac La Biche area. Moving eastward accumulations diminish down to 5-10 mm along the Alberta/Saskatchewan border.

For the next several days, most lands north of the Swan Hills are likely to not see wide spread rain, but thunderstorms are expected to bring spotty relief to many areas. Province wide, looking out over the next two weeks, most forecasts are showing below normal temperatures with a good chance of more moisture.

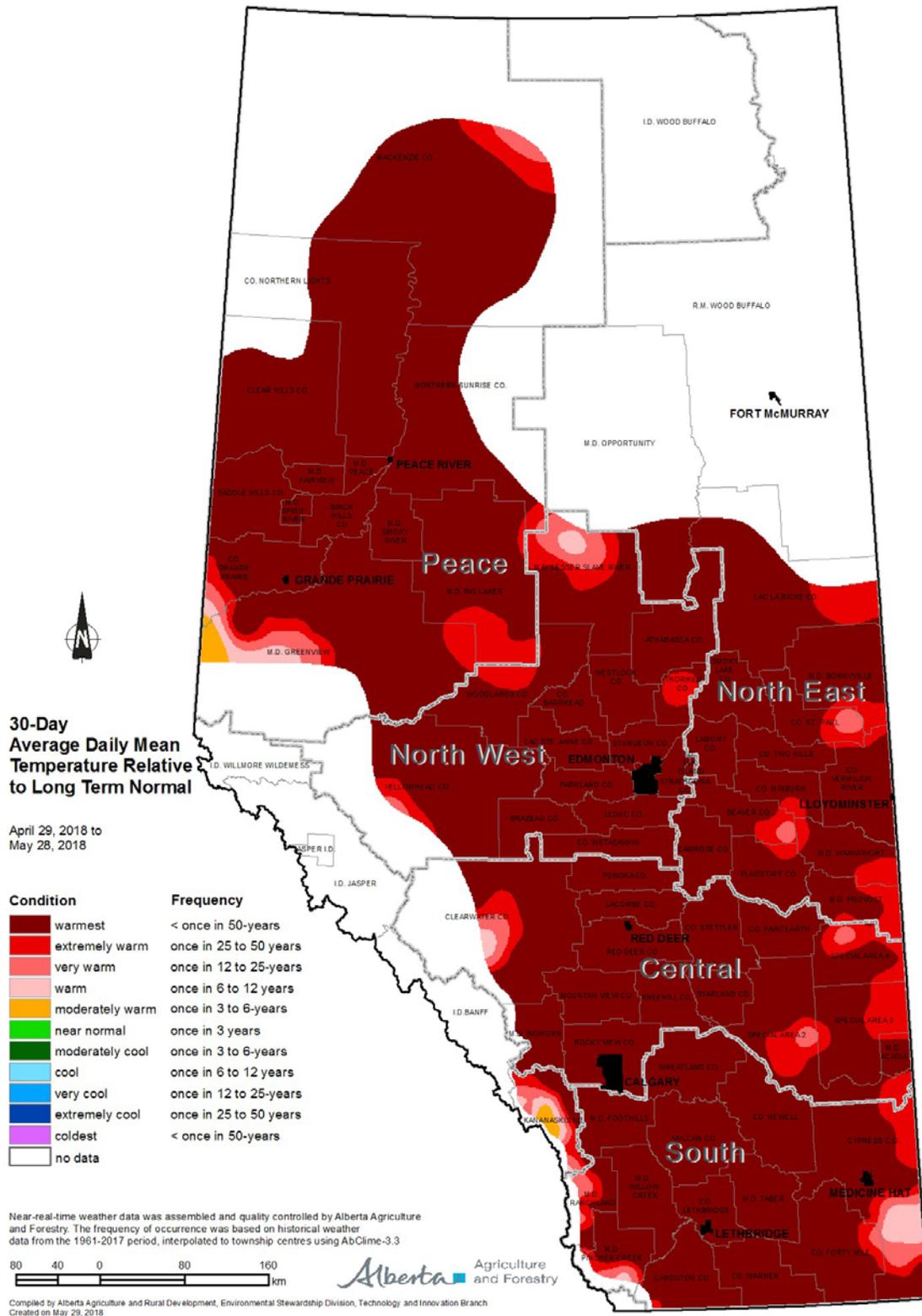
Near-real-time hourly station data can be viewed/downloaded at www.agriculture.alberta.ca/stations

Note: Data has about a two hour lag and is displayed in MST.

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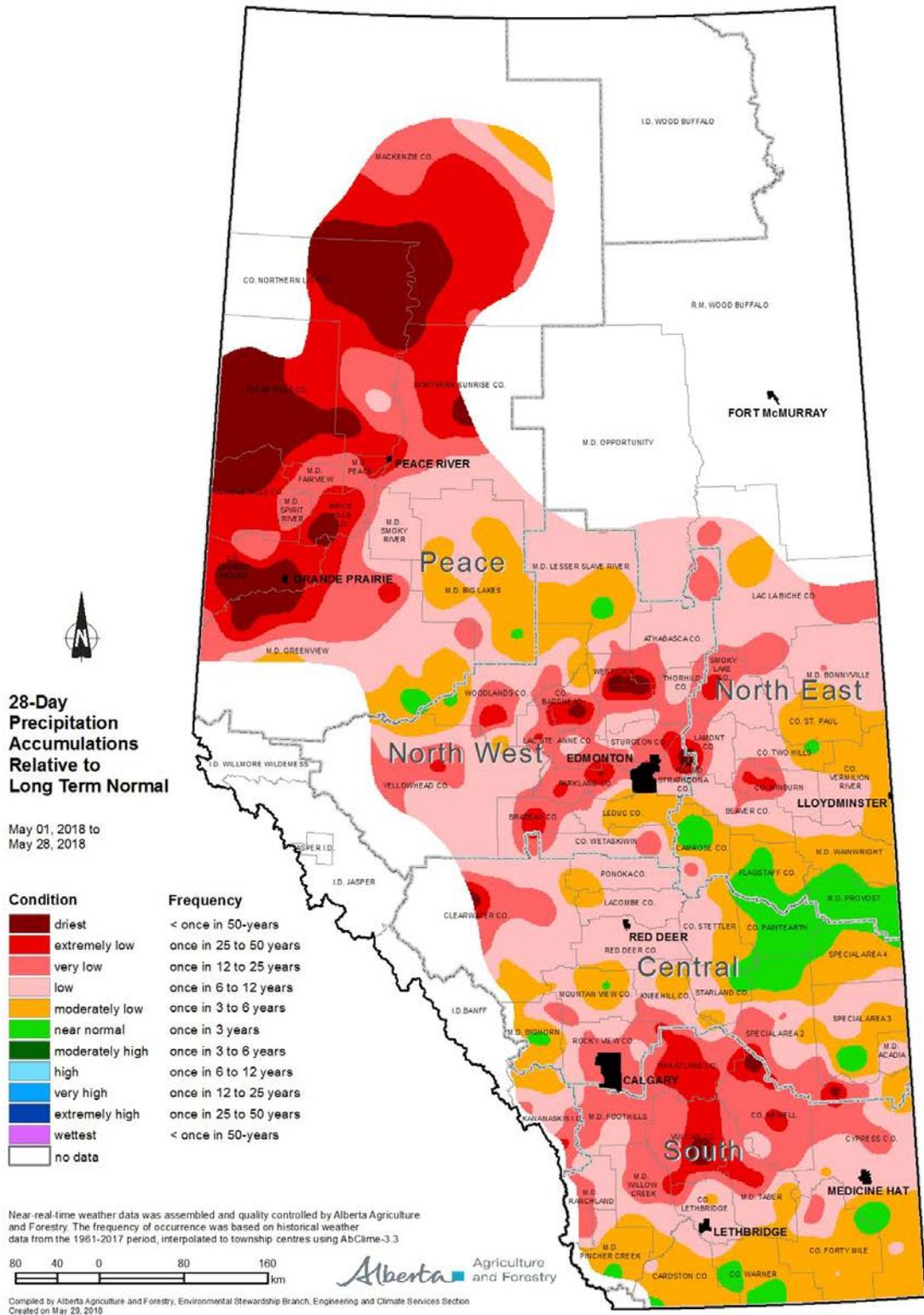
Map 1



Visit weatherdata.ca for additional maps and meteorological data

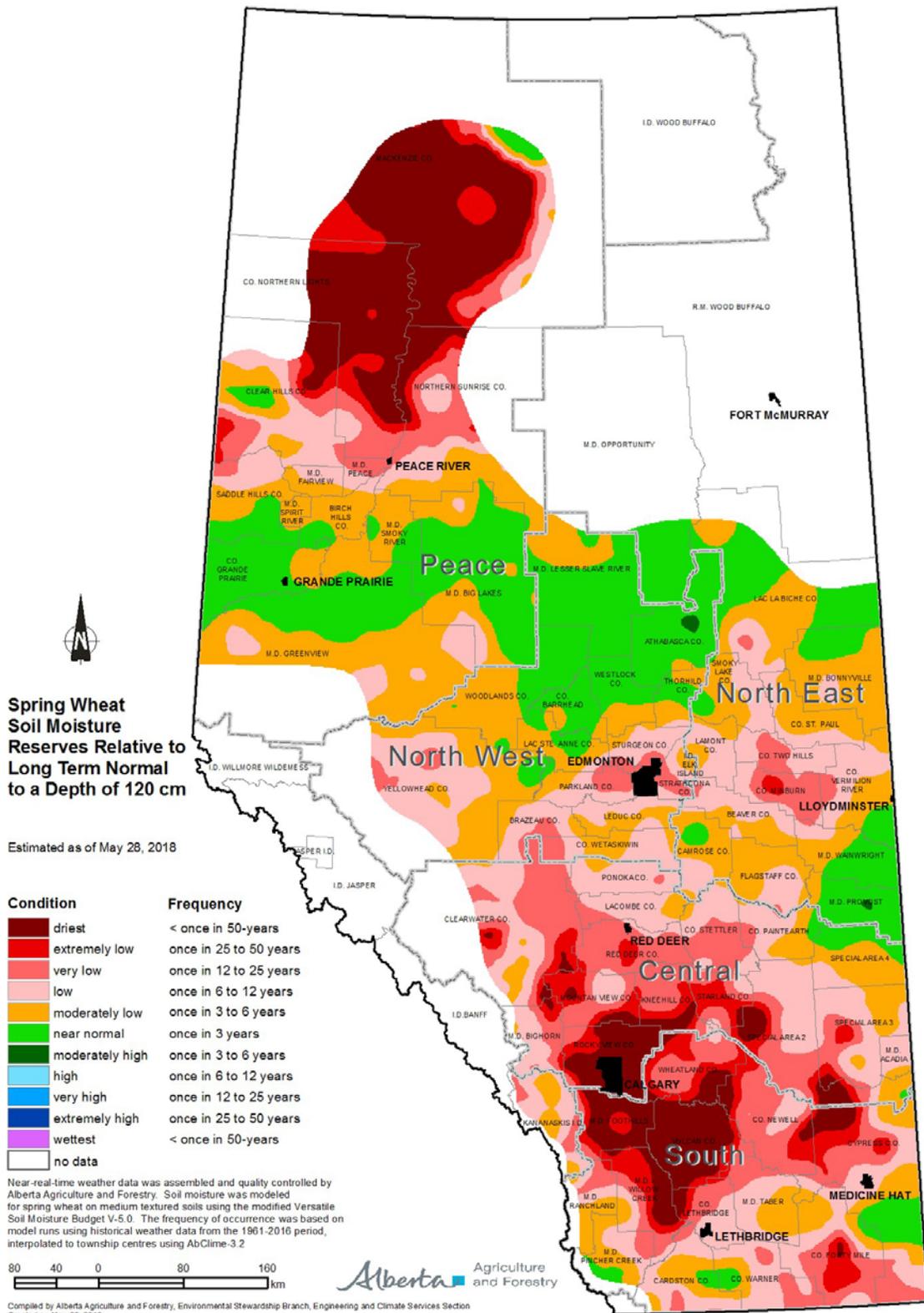
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Map 2



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Map 3



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