TEXAS A&M FOREST SERVICE

2019 Winter and Spring Fuel Loading Assessment

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2018/2019 Winter and Spring Fuel Loading Assessment

- Selected sample sites are collected by Predictive Service Area to gain an understanding of the impacts of growing season rainfall and grazing practices on the amount of grass present across the grass dominant landscapes of the Texas Plains.
- Fine fuel loading or grass loading plays a prominent role in the number and types of wildfires that will occur during the dormant fire season in Texas.
- These “snap shots” are for situational awareness and sharing of information in regards to the story of fuel loading heading into the 2018/2019 dormant season.

Cross Timbers (*Montague County*)

Pockets of above normal grass loading are present intermixed with Post Oak and Juniper near Bowie.

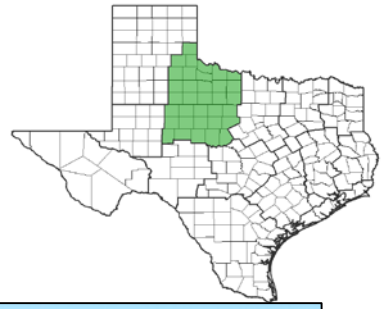
Traveling a short distance transitioned into a grazed pasture where herbaceous loading is now normal near St. Joe.

Cross Timbers (*Wise and Jack Counties*)

Representative fuels near Poolville where herbaceous loading is normal.

Another example of how grazing has produced normal to below normal grass loading southeast of Jacksboro.

Rolling Plains *(Childress County)*

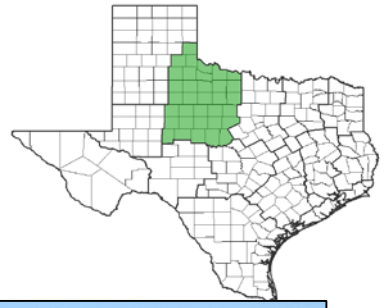


November 2017

November 2018

These photos from the same location north of Childress contrast the above normal grass loading found here in 2017 and the normal to below normal grass loading now present in 2018. The May through August percent of normal rainfall was near 75% for both years. The difference in loading this year is an increase in grazing intensity or timing of grazing.

Rolling Plains *(Knox County)*

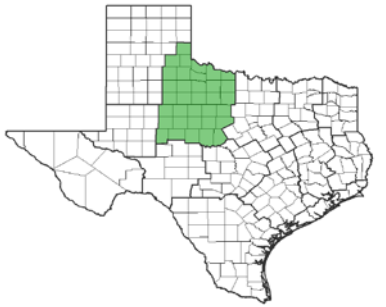


November 2017

November 2018

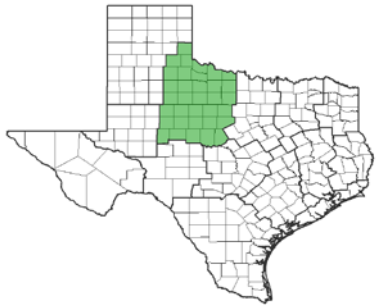
Grazing and 50-75% of normal rainfall from May-August has provided normal grass loading compared to the above normal grass loading present in late 2017.

Rolling Plains *(Shackelford County)*



Grass loading near the Fort Griffin State Historic site is normal (Left). Roadside grass loading can be misleading for fuel loading assessment. The right photo is a good example of this, where the adjacent green cool season grasses can provide a barrier to fire spread with higher moisture content.

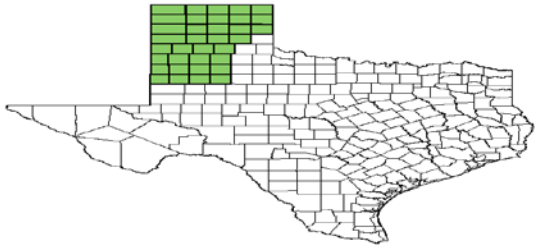
Rolling Plains (King County)



A combination of grazing and 50 percent below normal growing season rainfall has left below normal grass loading between Aspermont and Guthrie.

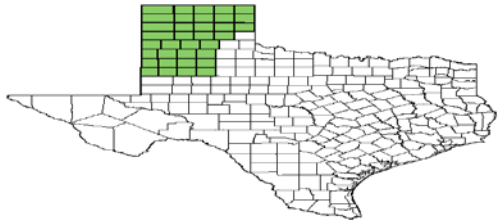
High Plains

Armstrong County



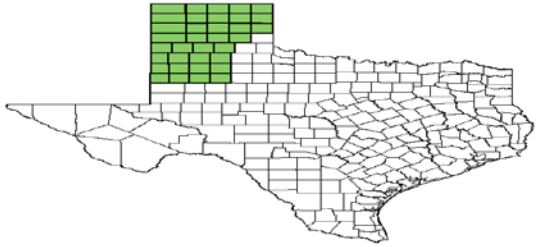
Both of these pictures were taken in the vicinity of the 2018 Mallard Fire south of Goodnight. The picture on the left shows a contrast in grazing intensities. The picture on the right shows ridgetop grass and brush fuels with normal grass loading. This region carried persistent drought through the 2018 growing season. It is likely that the grass loading seen here is a remnant of the 2017 growing season.

High Plains Oldham County



Normal grass loading with moderate grazing (left) was found just across Highway 385 from **below normal grass loading with heavy grazing (right)**. This High Plains site was in Oldham County between Boys Ranch and Vega. This year's grass production on the High Plains has not out paced grazing as it has in recent years. (2017, 2018)

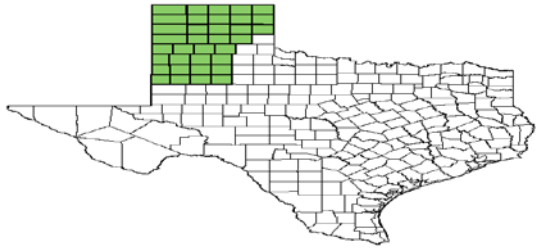
High Plains Hartley County

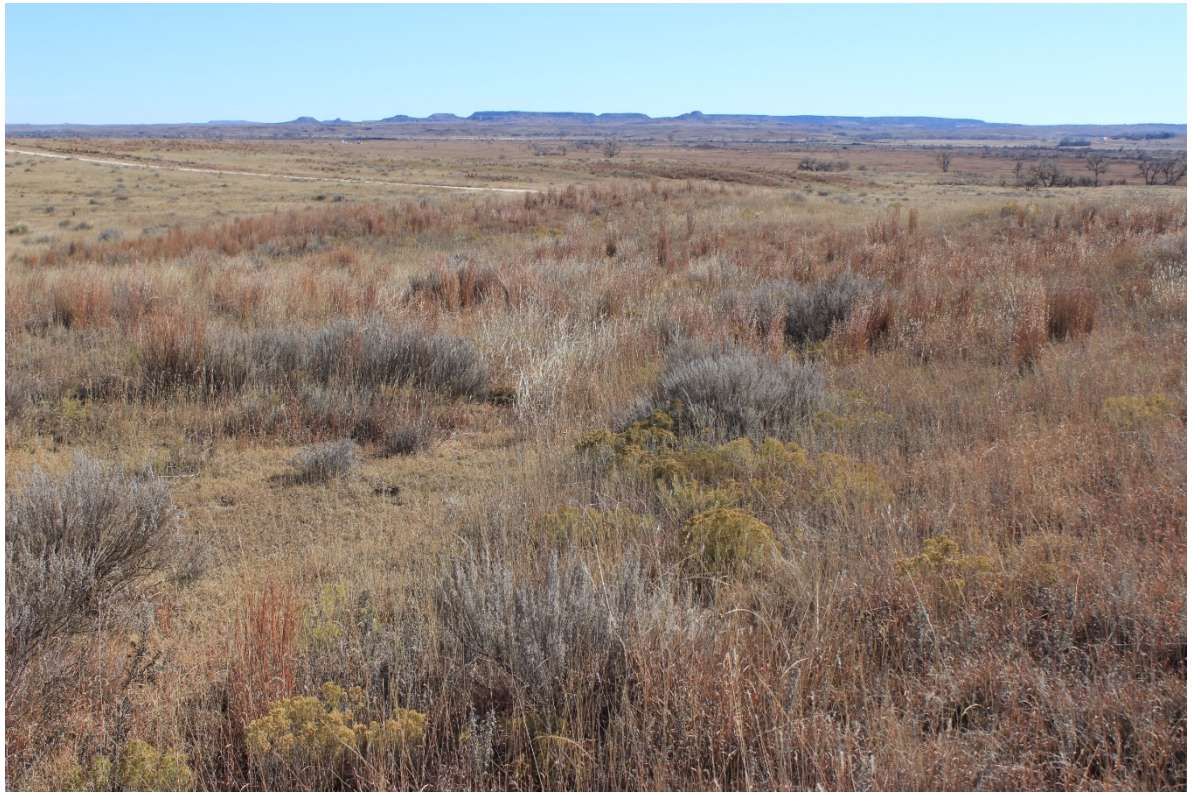


Both of these pictures were taken near the perimeter of the 2018 Channing Fire east of Channing. The below normal loading on the left was in the fire and has been grazed The normal grass loading on the right was not burned but has been grazed.

High Plains

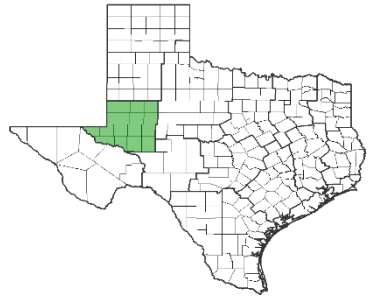
NE Canadian River





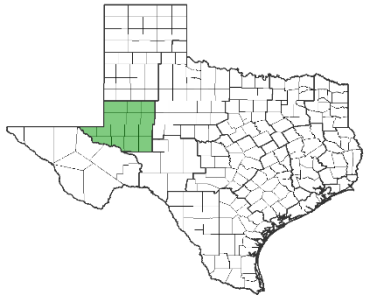
Some of the better soils and higher grass production can be found in the drainage areas of rivers and streams. Normal to above normal loading can be seen on the left in Hemphill County where grazing was limited. On the right in Roberts County, is an intermittent stream side zone that supports a mix of timber, brush and a heavy load of grass.

Southern Plains *(Midland County)*



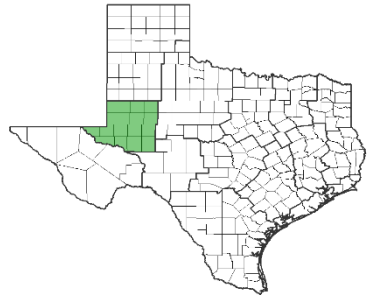
The above photos were taken across the road from each other south of Stanton. The left photo represents the impact of grazing in grass and mesquite brush. The right photo has had no grazing where grass loading is normal.

Southern Plains (Andrews County)



125-150 percent of normal rainfall from May through September has produced above normal grass production in northeast Andrews County.

Southern Plains (Borden County)



Normal grass loading can be found in northern Borden County between Gail and Post.

Western Hill Country *(Val Verde County)*

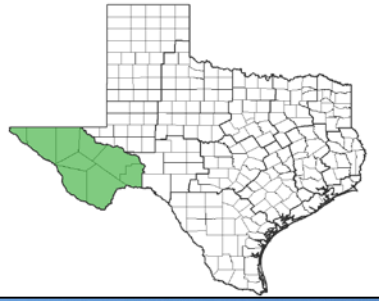
Photo taken near Comstock in Val Verde county. This is another area that in years past, have had very sparse grass fuels but within the last couple of years has grown enough grass to support continuous grass fuel beds.

Trans Pecos *(Jeff Davis County)*

Grazing has produced below normal herbaceous loading in lower elevations and gentle topography around the Davis Mountains.

Herbaceous loading is normal to above normal in burn scars of the 2018 fires. Pictured above is the summer's grass growth in the burn scar of the Scenic Loop Complex on The Nature Conservancy property in the Davis Mountains.

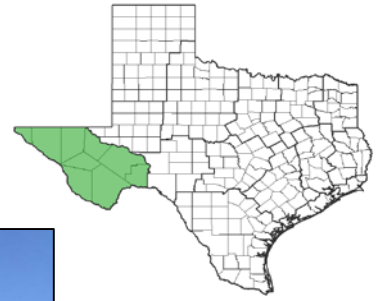
Trans Pecos (*Culberson/Reeves, Presidio Counties*)



Creosote brush is common in many of the flats in Culberson and Reeves Counties. There is limited herbaceous growth at the surface in many of these locations where Creosote is established.

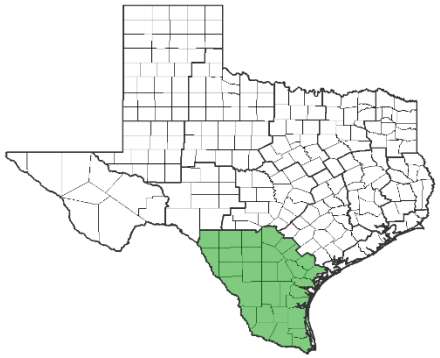
Herbaceous grass loading is normal to above normal in higher elevations of Presidio County at the Chinati Mountains. Creosote brush with limited herbaceous growth is common moving into the flats toward the Rio Grande river.

Trans Pecos *(Brewster and Terrell Counties)*



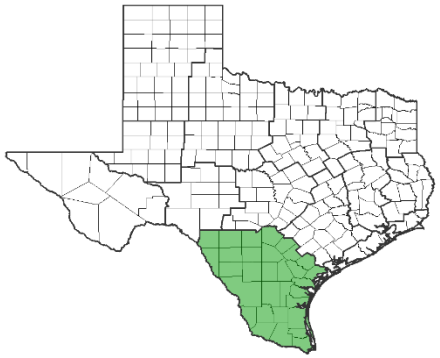
The picture to the left was taken 20 miles East of Marathon; picture on the right was taken in Sanderson. In the past, both of these areas have had sparse grass fuels but they are now covered in continuous grass fuels.

South Texas (Medina County)



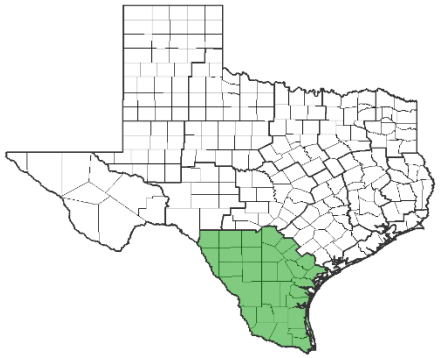
Ungrazed herbaceous fuels adjacent to grazed herbaceous fuels near D’Hanis

South Texas (Brooks County)



Deeper sandy loam soils in northern Brooks County west of Falfurrias combined with 200 percent of normal growing season rainfall has produced an abundant crop of grass in deep South Texas.

South Texas (Goliad County)



Deep soils and over 200 percent of normal rainfall has produced above normal grass loading in a brush and grass fuel type between Goliad and Beeville.