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## WILDFIRE OUTLOOK FOR 2012

The Las Conchas Wildfire burned its way through the landscape and into the memory of Northern New Mexico when it scorched 156,593 acres last summer, more than 30,000 of which were on the Valles Caldera National Preserve. The dry conditions, high winds and above average fuel loads set the stage for a perfect firestorm the likes of which had never before been seen in New Mexico. Last week the Southwest Coordination Center (SWCC) for Interagency Incident Response released its regional fire outlook and it calls for vigilance this outdoor season.

According to SWCC the drought is expected to persist through the summer which will contribute to a higher fire potential for much of Arizona and western New Mexico (including the Jemez Mountains) from May through July with normal fire potential further east. Overall weather conditions will be highly variable and changeable. Through spring and early summer expect much less wind but greater lightning potential than 2011. Also, the monsoonal rain pattern is trending weak and dry for mid to late summer.



### Las Conchas Fire on the Valles Caldera National Preserve July 2011

Regardless of the potential it is important to be prepared. Homeowners living in or near the wildland-urban interface should “fireproof” their private property by clearing brush, trees and other flammable material from their land. You can also contact municipal, county and state fire management agencies for assistance. Homeowners can also take advantage of information available through the Firewise program ([www.firewise.org](http://www.firewise.org)).

We invite you to come up to the Preserve to see how recovery is progressing from last year’s fire and to learn about how fire can benefit the environment. We are open seven days a week. For more information go to <http://www.vallescaldera.gov/comevisit/> or call 1-866-382-5537. You can also check out current weather conditions for your visit to the Valles Caldera or the surrounding Jemez Mountains by going to <http://www.wrcc.dri.edu/vallescaldera/> . We hope to see you soon.