

National Drought Summary for March 11, 2025

Summary

Last week brought substantial precipitation (over 1.5 inches) to parts of western Washington, the central and southern Sierra Nevada, southwestern California, portions of the western Mississippi Valley from southern Minnesota into Louisiana and eastern Texas, a swath across the Gulf Coast and South Atlantic States, and the eastern tiers of the mid-Atlantic and Northeast. The highest totals (3 to locally 8 inches) were recorded across northern Florida and adjacent Georgia, and northwesternmost Washington. More than 3 inches also fell on scattered small patches of the Sierra Nevada, in a swath from central Mississippi through western Georgia, and central South Carolina. In contrast, only a few tenths of an inch of precipitation barely dampened most of the Ohio Valley and adjacent Appalachians, and from the central and western Plains to the Pacific Coast, although some of the higher elevations of the central Rockies recorded moderate amounts. Central and southern portions of the Florida Peninsula also recorded a few tenths of an inch at best. Meanwhile, it was an abnormally warm week across the entire northern tier of the country outside far western Washington, from the central Plains eastward through the mid-Atlantic, and across central and southern Texas. Daily maximum temperatures averaged 12 to 15 deg. F above normal for the 7-day period over the central and northern Dakotas and adjacent Minnesota. Somewhat below-normal temperatures were observed from the central Rockies westward to the Pacific Coast and southward to the Mexican Border.

Northeast

Near- to above-normal precipitation (1 to 2 inches) fell on the eastern tier of the region, with more variable amounts reported farther west. This eased dryness and drought over parts of southern and eastern New England, and removed D2 (severe drought) conditions that had covered interior southern New England. Smaller-scale areas with similar amounts were observed over central Pennsylvania for the second consecutive week, leading to scattered improvement there. To the south, subnormal totals prompted expansion of D0 and D1 conditions across northern Virginia, northwestern Maryland, and northern West Virginia. Despite increased precipitation this week, the southern and eastern parts of the region remain the driest, with D3 (extreme drought) observed over southeastern New Jersey and D2 covering areas from central Maryland and Delaware northward through southeastern Pennsylvania and most of southern New Jersey. A large part of the D2 area has recorded less than two-thirds of normal precipitation since the start of the Water Year (October 2024 to date, about 5.5 months).

Southeast

Near or above-normal precipitation was observed in most areas, although the swath of heaviest totals along and adjacent to northern Florida were outside the areas affected by dryness. Still, enough rain fell from Alabama through the northern tier of Florida, Georgia, and the Carolinas to prompt areas of improvement, including widespread removal of D0 (abnormal dryness) from southern Georgia. Elsewhere, the northern and southern portions of the Region were drier, leading to some degradations in parts of North Carolina, northernmost Georgia, and the central and southern Florida Peninsula. A large brush fire in Walker County, Georgia was ongoing at the end of the 7-day period, increasing the air quality index to above 200 in nearby cities.

South

Subnormal precipitation in eastern and southern Tennessee led to some expansion of D0 and D1 there, but most of the central and eastern South Region, from eastern portions of Oklahoma and Texas through Mississippi and western Tennessee, is free of dryness and drought. There are a few isolated areas of dryness across Mississippi, and abnormal dryness is also affecting extreme northwestern Arkansas. But Louisiana is one of only 2 states completely free of dryness and drought on the Drought Monitor. In contrast, some degree of dryness covers the central and western sections of Texas and Oklahoma. Rainfall along the Red River (south) led to some improvements across southern Oklahoma and adjacent Texas, but some degree of dryness remains on the map there. Other parts of Texas and Oklahoma saw little or no precipitation, leading to areas of dryness and drought intensification. The greatest drought intensity (D4, exceptional drought) covers a large part of the Big Bend as well as portions of central Texas, where patches of D4 are surrounded by a large area of D3 (extreme drought). Since mid-December, less than 5 percent of normal precipitation has fallen on the Big Bend while large sections of central, southern, and western Texas reported less than half of normal since mid-January. Generally 20 to 50 percent of normal for the 2-month period was also observed across the Oklahoma Panhandle and adjacent areas. With dry weather, seasonably increasing temperatures, and periods of high winds, conditions could deteriorate rapidly across central and northwestern Texas, reaching into parts of adjacent Oklahoma and New Mexico.

Midwest

Variable precipitation totals took drought conditions in different directions over disparate parts of the Region. Persistently subnormal precipitation continued over northwestern Ohio, central and southern Indiana, and adjacent Illinois led to deterioration in parts of those areas. Meanwhile, Moderate to heavy precipitation brought sizeable areas of improvement to northwestern Indiana, central and northern Illinois, central and southern Iowa, and much of Missouri. Farther north, a part of the northern Great Lakes also saw improvement, but most of the precipitation missed Minnesota, causing deterioration in

west-central parts of the state. Meanwhile, moderate precipitation covered most of Kentucky, which is one of two states completely free of dryness and drought. During the last 6 months, precipitation has totaled 3 to locally 8 inches below normal across a large part of this Region, including central and southwestern Minnesota, portions of northern Wisconsin, much of central and southern Michigan, central and southern Indiana, central and eastern Illinois, and a northeast-to-southwest swath through Missouri. At the same time, surplus precipitation has accumulated along and south of the Ohio River, over parts of central Wisconsin, and parts of the northern Great Lakes.

High Plains

Light to moderate precipitation fell on parts of the High Plains Region last week, reducing dryness and drought severity in the middle of the Region across several patches in Wyoming, adjacent northern Colorado, part of north-central Nebraska, and a small area in northwestern Kansas and adjacent areas. Farther south, continued subnormal precipitation induced a broad area of deterioration in central and western Kansas and smaller portions of southern Colorado, but heavier amounts eased conditions in eastern Kansas. The depiction across the Dakotas did not change. During the last 90 days, less than half of normal precipitation was measured across south-central and southwestern Kansas, southeastern Colorado, and a few patches across the Dakotas. At the same time, much of Wyoming, central and northeastern Colorado, and a few swaths from northern Kansas through Nebraska and southwestern South Dakota recorded above-normal amounts. Southwestern Kansas and southeastern Colorado were particularly dry during the last 90 days, receiving less than 25 percent of normal.

West

Areas of moderate precipitation, with isolated heavy amounts, affected the Sierra Nevada, southwestern California, western Washington, and some of the higher elevations across Arizona, Utah, eastern Nevada, and southern Idaho. Most of the large West Region, however, recorded several tenths of an inch or less. Similar to the situation across central and western Texas, dryness and drought may be intensifying at a fairly quick clip across New Mexico, and a large part of the state deteriorated by one category this week. That includes a larger area of D3 along the southern tier of the state, with a small area of D4 introduced in the states southwestern interior. Farther west, no intensification was noted this week, but a broad area of D3 and D4 persists across southern California, southern Nevada, and much of Arizona. From central sections of Utah and Nevada southward to the Mexican border and southwestward through southern California, less than half of normal precipitation has fallen since mid-December. The lowest totals (just 2 to 25 percent of normal) extend across the southern Four Corners area. Conditions are considerably better north of Utah and central

Nevada, with D3 restricted to a small part of western Montana, and more than half of the area free from dryness and drought.

Caribbean

Due to antecedent rainfall, Puerto Rico remained free of dryness and drought, and this should continue to be the case for the near future.

In the U.S. Virgin Islands, another drier-than-normal week led to the introduction of abnormal dryness (D0-S) across St. Thomas and St. John. One-month Standardized Precipitation Index values for both islands are supportive of D0, and ground-based observations indicate that vegetation is starting to exhibit varying degrees of stress. Depth to water has been generally increasing over the last several weeks, according to U.S. Geological Survey well data. In fact, depth to water at the Susannaberg DPW 3 well on St. John topped 9.0 feet on March 12, compared to approximately 0.3 foot as recently as November 2024. Depth to water at that St. John well was last greater in late-May 2024. Meanwhile, winter and early-spring rain showers have been somewhat heavier on St. Croix, maintaining mostly healthy vegetation and stable groundwater reserves. Consequently, St. Croix remains free of dryness and drought.

Pacific

Conditions this past week were unremarkable across southern Alaska, and the D0 areas across the southern tier of the state are unchanged from last week.

Precipitation is on the uptick across most of the state, but in most areas, amounts this past week were insufficient to change the Drought Monitor depiction. Eastern parts of the Big Island were an exception, with moderate drought giving way to abnormal dryness there.

The U.S.-Affiliated Pacific Islands experienced mostly light rainfall during the drought-monitoring period, with a few exceptions. Notably, heavier showers occurred in the Republic of Palau and across American Samoa, both of which remained free of dryness and drought. In the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM), spotty showers were heaviest at Nukuoro, which received more than 5 inches. In contrast, abnormal dryness (D0-S) was introduced for Kapingamarangi, due to mostly light and sporadic showers in recent weeks. Elsewhere in the FSM, moderate drought (D1-S) persisted across Yap and Pingelap, with the latter location reporting less than one-tenth of an inch of rain during 3 of the last 4 weeks. Meanwhile in the Marianas, mostly dry weather returned, following the previous weeks beneficial rainfall across Guam and Rota. Abnormal dryness (D0-S) was retained for Guam and Rota, while severe drought (D2-S) continued for Saipan. Through March 11, year-to-date rainfall at Saipan International

Airport totaled just 3.41 inches, 49 percent of normal. Finally, drier-than-normal weather prevailed in early March across the Republic of the Marshall Islands, maintaining moderate drought (D1-S) across Kwajalein, Utirik, and Wotje, and resulting in the introduction of abnormal dryness (D0-S) for Ailinglapalap and Jaluit. Kwajaleins January 1 March 11 rainfall totaled 3.70 inches.

Looking Ahead

The March 13-17 period starts out unusually mild in a large part of the central and eastern U.S. while relatively cool weather stretches from the Rockies to the Pacific Coast. On March 13, temperatures may reach the upper 70s deg. F as far north as central South Dakota, central Indiana, West Virginia, and North Carolina. Portions of central and southern Texas are expected to top 90 deg. F. It'll be a little cooler in the mid-Atlantic and Northeast, with highs in the low 60s deg. F at best, and probably not above 45 deg. F in most of New England. As the period progresses, warm air pushes south and east toward the Atlantic Ocean while a shot of cold air invades the northern Plains. Lows are expected to drop into the teens in parts of the northern Plains that are expected to top 75 deg. F just two days earlier. The cold intrusion looks to be short-lived, with the air mass moderating as it pushes east. On March 17, warmer weather is expected to again build into the Plains. Meanwhile, the western half of the CONUS remains relatively cool. Much of the Sierra Nevada, Cascades, Pacific Northwest Coast, and northern California are anticipating more than 4 inches of precipitation for the 5-day period, with 5 to locally 8 inches possible in northwestern California and adjacent Oregon. Elsewhere from the Rockies westward, fairly widespread light to moderate precipitation is forecast, with heavier totals of 1.5 to locally 4.0 inches falling on some of the higher elevations (particularly in central and northern Idaho) and parts of the central and southern California Coastline. Most lower elevations should expect lesser amounts of several tenths to an inch. Farther east, a swath of heavy rain is anticipated from the lower Ohio Valley southward into portions of the Gulf Coast States. More than 1.5 inches is forecast there, with amounts exceeding 3 inches possible in northeastern Mississippi, northern Alabama, and central Tennessee. Moderate amounts of at least 0.5 inch should fall elsewhere from the Mississippi River to the Atlantic Seaboard, with lesser totals expected over most of Maine, southern Florida, and the western Great Lakes. In the middle of the country, at least a few tenths of an inch of precipitation are forecast for the east-central and northeastern Great Plains and the Upper Mississippi Valley, with amounts approaching or slightly exceeding an inch over most of Minnesota and adjacent portions of South Dakota and Iowa. Dry weather is anticipated across the High Plains and the southern half of the Great Plains, with a few tenths of an inch falling at best.

The Climate Prediction Centers 6-10 day outlook valid March 18-22, 2025 favors a continuation of below-normal temperatures from the Rockies westward, and warmer than normal weather over most of the central and eastern states. Odds for unusual warmth top 60 percent from the Ohio Valley and mid-Atlantic northward to the Canadian

border while there is over a 70 percent chance of unusually cool conditions in the western Great Basin. Hawaii has significantly enhanced odds for above-normal temperatures (over 60 percent), and the dry areas of southern Alaska should also average warmer than normal, although with lower probabilities. Meanwhile, subnormal precipitation continues to be favored across most of Texas and Oklahoma, and there are slightly enhanced chances for drier than normal weather over part of North Dakota and along the South Atlantic Seaboard. The rest of the country should average near- or wetter-than-normal, with the best odds for surplus precipitation over and near the Pacific Northwest. Above-normal precipitation is also favored for the western half of Hawaii and for the dry areas in Alaska

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