

National Drought Summary for March 25, 2025

Summary

On March 18 for the second time in 5 days a ferocious dust storm across the southern High Plains and neighboring regions led to sharp visibility reductions and increasingly stressful conditions for rangeland, pastures, and winter grains. The dust, lofted by high winds, was drawn into a storm system crossing the central Plains and upper Midwest, leading to widespread reports of dirty rain and snow. On March 19-20, significant accumulations of wind-driven snow occurred from parts of Kansas and Nebraska into northern Michigan, while locally severe thunderstorms erupted across the Midwest. More than a dozen tornadoes were spotted on March 19 across Illinois and Indiana. Farther east, however, parts of the Carolinas experienced a rash of spring wildfires, with the Black Cove and Deep Woods Fires near Saluda, North Carolina, collectively charring some 6,000 acres of vegetation and destroying at least 20 structures. Some of the fuel for fires in the Carolinas was provided by trees downed by Hurricane Helene about 6 months ago. Elsewhere, dry weather dominated the southern Plains and the Southwest, while late-season precipitation fell in northern and central California and the Northwest. According to the California Department of Water Resources, the average water equivalency of the high-elevation Sierra Nevada snowpack climbed nearly to 25 inches, essentially ensuring a normal seasonal accumulation. For the second week in a row, near- or below-normal temperatures dominated the West, although warmer weather arrived late in the drought-monitoring period. Conversely, warm weather prevailed in many areas east of the Rockies, with consistently chilly conditions limited to portions of the nation's northern tier.

Northeast

Periods of Northeastern precipitation resulted in modest trimming of abnormal dryness (D0) and moderate to extreme drought (D1 to D3) in northern New York and along the Atlantic Coast. Farther south and inland, however, some expansion of dryness (D0) and moderate to severe drought (D1 to D2) was noted from West Virginia into western New York.

Southeast

Most of the Southeast experienced a dry, breezy week, leading to a rash of wildfires and general increases in the coverage of abnormal dryness (D0) and moderate to severe drought (D1 to D2). A new patch of D2 was introduced along the Georgia-South Carolina border, northwest of Augusta, Georgia. Meanwhile in southern Florida, the 344 Fire near Homestead grew to nearly 27,000 acres, with containment reaching 80% by March 25. Among dozens of wildfires in the Carolinas, the Table Rock Fire in

northwestern South Carolina was the largest, having burned more than 3,200 acres. Nearly as large were the Black Cove and Deep Woods Fires near Saluda, North Carolina. Late in the drought-monitoring period, scattered showers and a few thunderstorms swept into Alabama, with only a minimal impact on existing areas of dryness and drought.

South

Drought-related impacts further spread and intensified across parts of Texas and Oklahoma, amid March winds, dust, and dryness. In fact, two previously separate areas of drought were connected across Texas and Oklahoma. Meanwhile, little rain has fallen since mid-February across Arkansas and portions of neighboring states. While the short-term dryness has been favorable for spring fieldwork, rain will soon be needed across the mid-South for pastures, fall-sown small grains, and recently planted summer crops. By March 23, nearly one-half (46%) of the intended rice acreage had been planted in Louisiana, along with 36% in Texas. In Arkansas, 10% of the corn and 2% of the rice had been planted by March 23, while 7% of the winter wheat had headed. Pastures in Arkansas rated 27% very poor to poor on March 23 were just starting to exhibit some stress from short-term dryness. On that date, rangeland and pastures in Texas were in much worse shape (71% very poor to poor), reflecting drought at multiple time scales and the impact of recent blowing dust.

Midwest

With a band of snow cutting across the Midwest on March 19-20, followed by some additional precipitation, there were targeted improvements to the drought depiction, mainly from Iowa to Michigan. However, some areas farther north and south saw drought deterioration, most prominently across southern Missouri. A patch of severe drought (D2) was introduced in southwestern Missouri, extending into neighboring areas of northwestern Arkansas and northeastern Oklahoma.

High Plains

Major storm systems continued to undercut the Dakotas and portions of neighboring states. Notably, severe drought (D2) was broadly expanded in South Dakota, where season-to-date snowfall totals were broadly at least 1 to 2 feet below average. With the northern Plains drought occurring at multiple time scales, current impacts include poor conditions for rangeland, pastures, and winter wheat. In contrast, late-season storminess across the northern Intermountain West, including much of northern and

western Wyoming, led to improved mountain snowpack, more favorable spring and summer runoff prospects, and reductions in drought coverage and intensity.

West

Occasional precipitation continued to fall across roughly the northern half of the region, further improving high-elevation snowpack, as well as spring and summer runoff prospects. Drought improvements of up to one category were introduced from the northern Great Basin to the northern Rockies. Meanwhile, dry weather returned across the Southwest, following some late-season precipitation that was heaviest in parts of southern California but did not reach the southern Rockies. In fact, significant increases of all drought categories were introduced in New Mexico, parts of which have been affected by the same windy, dusty weather that has been plaguing the southern Plains.

Caribbean

For Puerto Rico, neither dryness nor drought exists, maintaining a status that has existed since November 12, 2024. Seasonably dry conditions, mainly across southern Puerto Rico, are being monitored for the potential development of abnormal dryness (D0).

Precipitation was rather scarce for St. Croix and St. John, although the western end of St. Thomas received 0.5 to 1.0 inches, according to the National Weather Services seven-day quantitative precipitation estimates. St. Thomas and St. John remain in D0, while St. Croix is in normal conditions.

The Standardized Precipitation Index indicated normal or wet conditions for all islands at all time scales. The Vegetation Health Index does not indicate much stress for any of the islands. The water levels in St. Thomas and St. Johns wells were dropping, while the level of the St. Croix well was decreasing slowly.

Pacific

There were no changes to Alaskas depiction, as precipitation in existing areas of abnormal dryness (D0) largely diminished early in the drought-monitoring period.

In Hawaii, a period of mostly tranquil weather led to minimal change in drought coverage. In fact, there was no change from the previous week, aside from the introduction of moderate drought (D1) across far eastern Oahu, owing to poor vegetation health and rainfall shortages.

The Republic of Palau received ample rain with more than 4 inches at Koror the past week. Precipitation at Palau IAP has been above normal for March and since the start of 2025. Water supplies should be ample.

The Mariana Islands remained dry with Guam and Rota in D0 and Saipan in D2. Guam received 0.52 inches, while Rota reported 0.21 inches. Saipan received from 0.14 to 0.50 inches. These islands need an inch weekly to meet minimum water needs.

The Federal States of Micronesia were mixed, with a few locations trending dry. Yap remained in D1 after four weeks of insufficient rainfall, and Kapingamarangi and Pingelap were in D0. Kosrae, Lukunor, Nukuoro, Pohnpei, and Woleai received more than 2 inches, with Lukunor and Nukuoro getting more than 5 inches.

The Marshall Islands were nearly all in D0 or D1, except for Mili, which received 0.91 inches of rain for the week, resulting in a monthly total of 3.83 inches so far. Kwajalein and Wotje continued in D1, reporting 0.19 inches and no rain, respectively. Utirik also remained in D1 after recording 0.04 inches of rain, for a total of 0.14 inches for the month so far. Ailinglaplap, Jaluit, and Majuro were in D0, receiving 1.30, 0.78, and 0.16 inches, respectively. These locations require 2 inches of rain per week to meet minimum water needs.

American Samoa remained free of dryness. Pago Pago and Toa Ridge received 7.76 and 1.87 inches of rain.

Looking Ahead

Drought-easing rain across southern Texas will gradually shift eastward along the Gulf Coast. Five-day rainfall totals could reach 2 to 8 inches or more across the western half of the Gulf Coast region, with higher totals leading to flooding in southern and coastal Texas. Meanwhile, active weather will also prevail in the vicinity of a nearly stationary front draped across the northern United States. The front will separate cold air to the north from warmth farther south, with accumulating snow expected during the weekend from parts of the northern Plains eastward into northern New England. Meanwhile, Midwestern 5-day rainfall could total 1 to 2 inches, accompanied at times by locally severe thunderstorms. Elsewhere, persistent low pressure near the northern Pacific Coast will maintain showery, unsettled conditions from the Northwest to the northern Rockies, while mostly dry weather will persist in the Southwest, despite a cooling trend.

The NWS 6- to 10-day outlook for April 1-5 calls for above-normal precipitation nearly nationwide, with northern and central California and the western Great Basin having the greatest likelihood of experiencing wet conditions. Elevated odds of near- or below-normal precipitation should be limited to southern Texas. Meanwhile, warmer-than-normal weather from the southern half of the Plains to the middle and southern Atlantic

Coast should contrast with below-normal temperatures in the Far West and across the nations northern tier.

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