

National Drought Summary for May 20, 2025

Summary

This week, widespread precipitation impacted much of the U.S., with heavier amounts (exceeding 1 inch) observed from the northern Rockies eastward to the East Coast, and in portions of the Pacific Northwest, Hawaii, and southern Alaska. Specifically, much of the High Plains reported 2 to 10 inches of rain, while similar totals (2 to 8 inches) were seen across parts of the South, Midwest, and along the East Coast. This above-normal precipitation supported drought improvements across large portions of the High Plains and Northeast, parts of the Midwest and Southeast, and smaller pockets of the West and South. Conversely, below-normal weekly precipitation occurred in parts of the western U.S., the Midwest, and Southeast, leading to the expansion or intensification of drought and abnormal dryness in western High Plains, eastern West, and parts of the Midwest and Southeast. Temperatures were above normal across much of the U.S. this week. The southern U.S., from Texas to Mississippi, saw temperatures up to 10 degrees F above normal. In contrast, below-normal temperatures, with departures up to 10 degrees F below normal, were observed across much of the West and western High Plains, with the largest departures noted in the Dakotas and interior West.

Northeast

Precipitation fell across much of the Northeast this week, with heavier amounts (1 to 8 inches above normal) observed across much of the region. The greatest weekly rainfall totals (3 to 8 inches) were recorded in portions of West Virginia, Maryland, Pennsylvania, and New Jersey, resulting in improvements to moderate to severe drought (D1-D2) and abnormal dryness (D0) in these areas. This above-average rainfall justified the removal of severe drought (D2) in West Virginia and eastern Pennsylvania, and reduced severe drought in western Maryland. Moderate drought (D1) was removed from Maine, northeastern Massachusetts, New York, and New Jersey, and improved in parts of southern Pennsylvania, Maryland, and eastern West Virginia. Abnormal dryness (D0) also improved across much of the region this week. Average temperatures were above normal across the region, with departures ranging between 2 to 8 degrees F above normal. The greatest temperature departures were reported in parts of New York, Vermont, northern New Hampshire, and western Maine.

Southeast

Heavy rains continued across much of the Southeast this week, with rainfall totals 1 to 8 inches above normal. Above-normal weekly rainfall totals, with amounts between 150% to 600% above normal, were observed across much of Virginia and in parts of the Carolinas, Georgia and Alabama. These beneficial rains, alongside improvements in

short-term SPI/SPEI, streamflow and soil moisture data, supported improvements to moderate to severe drought (D1-D2) and abnormal dryness (D0). Severe drought (D2) was removed from northern Virginia and eastern North Carolina, while moderate drought (D1) and abnormal dryness (D0) were improved across much of the state. Improvements to severe drought (D2) were made along the Carolina Coast, while moderate drought (D1) was improved in these areas. Abnormal dryness was improved across much of Virginia and North Carolina, as well as parts of South Carolina, Georgia, southern Alabama, and the Florida Panhandle. Conversely, dry conditions across much of Florida resulted in the expansion of moderate to extreme drought (D1-D3) within the Florida Peninsula. Temperatures were near to above normal across the region. The largest temperature departures (6 to 8 degrees F) were observed along the East Coast and in small pockets across the interior Southeast, while near-normal temperatures were reported in small pockets of central Alabama and along the Gulf Coast of the Florida Peninsula.

South

Warmer temperatures dominated the South this week, with departures ranging up to 10 degrees F above normal. However, parts of Texas and Oklahoma observed temperatures near or below normal this week. Precipitation varied across the region this week, with heavier amounts (2 to 8 inches) falling across much of Arkansas, eastern Oklahoma, and in parts of Tennessee, northern Mississippi, and small parts of Texas. Unfortunately, not many improvements were made due to rain falling over areas already free of drought and abnormal dryness, but conditions prevent existing drought from expanding or intensifying. Moderate drought (D1) was removed from eastern Tennessee this week, while abnormal dryness (D0) was removed from Mississippi and improved in eastern Tennessee. Arkansas, Louisiana, and Mississippi are free of drought and abnormal dryness this week.

Midwest

Above-normal temperatures, with departures ranging between 1 to 8 degrees F above normal, were observed across most of the Midwest this week. The largest temperature departures were observed in pockets of Michigan, Illinois, Indiana, western Kentucky, and northeastern Minnesota. In contrast, temperatures were below normal across much of Minnesota and in parts of Iowa and western Wisconsin. Precipitation was reported across most of the region this week, with the greatest amounts (3 to 6 inches) falling in parts of Minnesota, Iowa, Missouri, Illinois, Indiana, and Kentucky. This above-normal precipitation led to moderate drought (D1) improvements in parts of Minnesota, Missouri, and western Illinois, and abnormal dryness (D0) improvements across western portions of the region. However, precipitation was below normal across much of Wisconsin and in portions of Ohio and in northern parts of Minnesota, Illinois, and

Indiana, with rainfall totals at 50% or less for the week. Growing precipitation deficits and degrading conditions (indicated by short-term indicators, streamflow, and soil moisture) resulted in the expansion of moderate drought and abnormal dryness in northern and eastern Illinois and western Indiana, while abnormal dryness expanded in northern Minnesota and eastern Indiana.

High Plains

Temperatures varied across the High Plains this week, with departures ranging up to 8 degrees F above normal, while cooler-than-normal temperatures were observed along the western and northern portions of the region. Heavy precipitation fell across much of the region this week, with areas from North Dakota to northern Nebraska reporting weekly precipitation totals between 400% to 600% above normal. These beneficial rains (2 to 8 inches above normal) justified widespread moderate to extreme drought (D1-D3) improvements in the Dakotas and Nebraska. Additionally, improvements of moderate to severe drought (D1-D2) and abnormal dryness (D0) occurred in northern Wyoming and eastern Kansas, where rainfall amounts were up to 3 inches above normal for the week. Conversely, dry conditions resulted in the expansion of extreme drought (D3) in southwest Nebraska and western Wyoming, while severe (D2) and moderate drought (D1) expanded in southern Wyoming and Colorado. Abnormal dryness was also expanded in eastern Colorado this week.

West

Cooler temperatures dominated the West this week, with departures ranging between 1 to 10 degrees F below normal. Much of the interior West experienced temperatures between 4 to 10 degrees below normal. In contrast, above-normal temperatures were observed across the eastern portions of the Southwest and in parts of Montana, eastern Utah, southern Nevada, and northern California. Precipitation varied across the region this week, with beneficial amounts falling in parts of the Southwest and northeastern Oregon. Moderate to extreme drought (D1-D3) were improved in eastern New Mexico, while moderate to severe drought (D1-D2) were trimmed back in western Utah and abnormal dryness (D0) was improved in Oregon. Conversely, below-normal precipitation resulted in the expansion of exceptional drought (D4) in southwestern New Mexico and moderate drought (D1) in northern Montana this week.

Caribbean

Puerto Rico remains drought-free this week based on recent precipitation, vegetation health and soil moisture data.

Rain was plentiful for the U.S. Virgin Islands. St. Croix Island received rainfall ranging from 0.89 to 4.14, according to CoCoRaHS observations. Water levels for the Adventure 28 well were at 14.1 ft, which was a 0.6 ft increase compared to last week. St. John Island received precipitation totals ranging from 0.26 to 1.52. The Susannaberg DPW 3 well also rose by 0.6 ft compared to last week. St. Thomas received 2.18 to 2.19 of rain this week. The Grade School 3 well water level was at 2.35 ft. With increasing well water level and plentiful rain, all the U.S. Virgin Islands remain free of drought and dryness.

Pacific

There were no changes to Alaskas depiction this week.

In Hawaii, while showers were generally focused over windward coasts and slopes, strong trades allowed some showers to spill into leeward areas. Notably, Kauai and Oahu experienced enhanced showers during the first half of the week, leading to improvements on these islands. In contrast, extreme drought (D3) expanded on the Big Island due to missed precipitation and declining streamflows levels and vegetative health.

Most places in the Republic of the Marshall Islands (RMI) continue to face drought and dryness with varying levels of severity. Mili continues to be the only island currently not in dryness or drought. Utirik and Wotje continue to have extreme drought. Utirik received its first instance of precipitation of the month last week at 0.39. Wotje received a much needed 2 of rain, though it is still unclear whether this rain took to the soil or was subject to runoff. Alingalapalap also got some much-needed rain at 2.18 this week.

The Federated States of Micronesia (FSM) has received adequate precipitation in most islands. For example, Nukuoro has received 3.68 of rain this week. Kosrae received a whopping 5.28 of rain this week. Pingelap also received much-needed 2.4 of rain this week. On the other hand, places like Chuuk Lagoon and Yap had a much drier week, receiving 0.73 and 0.76 of rain, respectively.

The Republic of Palau also received plentiful rain this week. Koror received 4.05 of rain, while the WSO Palau received a whopping 6.19 of rain. American Samoa received much less rain this week compared to last week. Pago Pago received 1.79 of rain, while the Siufaga and Toa Ridge received 1.22 and 0.76 of rain, respectively. Both Palau and American Samoa overall remain free of drought and dryness.

The Mariana Islands remain in severe drought. Guam received 0.8 of rain this week, with one of these days being the first time in a while it received a wetting rain, at 0.23. Meanwhile, the situation in Rota is dire. Eyewitness accounts of withering plants and wildfires, along with reports of cattle death from a rancher, highlight extreme drought for Rota. Nevertheless, Rota received 0.83 of rain this week. Saipan received a one-

category improvement despite receiving little rain this week. This is due to lower tourism and less planting of crops, which leads to much lower water demand for the island. Saipan INTL Airport received 0.24 this week, while the AMME NPS Saipan received 0.46 of rain.

Looking Ahead

During the next five days (May 2024, 2025), As the medium range period begins Tuesday, a surface low pressure system over the Mid-Mississippi Valley supported by strong upper-level energy will provide ample lift and instability for rain and thunderstorms in the Mississippi and Ohio Valleys. The low is forecast to track east and spread rain and thunderstorm chances to the Mid-Atlantic in particular on Wednesday, and shifting into the Northeast later week as the low pivots northward. Elsewhere, some weak troughing aloft and frontal systems tracking through the Northwest next week could produce rounds of modest precipitation there. Most precipitation should be rain aside from the highest peaks. Warm to hot temperatures are likely across the southeastern U.S. as the subtropical upper ridge reaches the region. Southern Texas in particular will remain hot into Tuesday, with temperatures well into the 100s. The Florida Peninsula should see warm temperatures in the mid 90s. Both areas could see record or near record warm lows and highs. Meanwhile, a trough will promote below normal temperatures across the northern tier, with highs only reaching the 50s in the north-central Plains on Tuesday. As the trough tracks east, cooler than average temperatures are likely in the eastern third of the U.S. under it, moderating temperatures in the South. But upper ridging poking into the southwestern U.S. will raise temperatures to above normal there, expanding east across the Four Corners states by Thursday and into the southern Plains late next week. Highs will be well into the 100s in the Desert Southwest with temperatures nearing 100 in parts of Texas eventually.

The Climate Prediction Centers 6-10 day outlook (valid May 25-29, 2025) favors above-normal precipitation across most of the U.S., with near-normal precipitation favored from southern California to Montana, as well as parts of the Midwest, northern New England, and northwest Alaska. Below-normal precipitation favored in portions of the Midwest, from northern Minnesota to northern Michigan. Increased probabilities for above-normal temperatures are forecast for Hawaii, much of the West, and along the Gulf, while below-normal temperatures are favored from the central Plains to the Northeast, and in parts of Alaska.

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