

National Drought Summary for August 26, 2025

Summary

On August 21, Hurricane Erin passed about 200 miles east of North Carolinas Outer Banks, with minimal weather impacts aside from gusty winds along portions of the Atlantic Seaboard. A peak northerly wind gust to 43 mph was clocked on Cape Hatteras, North Carolina. More broadly, Erin resulted in an extended period of Atlantic coastal impacts, such as life-threatening surf and higher-than-normal tides. Meanwhile, patchy downpours maintained adequate to locally excessive soil moisture in much of the upper Midwest, while locally heavy showers dotted the central and southern Plains and the lower Southeast. However, mostly dry weather in many other areas across the central and eastern U.S. led to declining topsoil moisture reserves, especially where combined with late-summer heat. Cooler air arrived, however, late in the drought-monitoring period, starting in the North and soon reaching all areas east of the Rockies but the northern High Plains and the Deep South. Meanwhile in the West, hot, mostly dry weather prevailed until late in the period, when shower activity increased and began to spread northward..

Northeast

Aside from a band of rain across parts of New York and Pennsylvania into southern New England, mostly dry weather prevailed. Consequently, moderate to severe drought (D1 to D2) worsened across northern New England, extending into northern New York. On the other side of the rain band, abnormal dryness (D0) expanded in West Virginia and environs. On August 24, topsoil moisture in agricultural areas was rated at least 55% very short to short in all six New England States, as well as New York, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

Southeast

Showery weather allowed for mostly improving conditions in a region with an already small drought footprint. As the monitoring period began, drought covered just over 3 percent of the Southeastern region. Some of the heaviest rain fell from Floridas Gulf Coast northward to coastal South Carolina. Downtown Charleston, South Carolina, received 8.05 inches of rain on August 22-23.

South

Flash-drought conditions across the mid-South contrasted with the arrival of heavy rain in Oklahoma and neighboring areas. On August 24, prior to the heavy rain, statewide topsoil moisture was rated 60% very short to short in Texas, along with 53% in Oklahoma. Portions of central and northwestern Oklahoma received 3 to 6 inches of rain during the drought-monitoring period. Meanwhile, topsoil moisture was rated more than one-half very short to short on August 24 in Arkansas (92%), Tennessee (63%), and Mississippi (53%). Aside from eastern Tennessee, southern Mississippi, and west-central Arkansas, where some heavy rain fell, conditions generally worsened across those three states, with broad expansion of abnormal

dryness (D0) and moderate to severe drought (D1 to D2).

Midwest

Continuing a recent theme, drier-than-normal weather in the southern and eastern Corn Belt generally contrasted with locally heavy showers (and ample soil moisture reserves) farther north and west. By August 24, the U.S. Department of Agriculture rated statewide topsoil moisture at least one-half very short to short in Kentucky (66%), Michigan (55%), and Ohio (51%). Statewide values were above 40% very short to short in Illinois and Indiana. Despite a turn toward cooler weather, coverage of abnormal dryness (D0) and moderate drought (D1) broadly increased from Missouri into the Ohio Valley and lower Great Lakes region.

High Plains

The High Plains region experienced a mix of drought improvement and deterioration. The regions most significant drought exists across western sections of Colorado and Wyoming. On August 24, statewide topsoil moisture as reported by the U.S. Department of Agriculture was rated 70% very short to short in Wyoming. During the drought-monitoring period, the most significant drought improvement occurred in central Colorado, although there were also targeted improvements in Kansas, Nebraska, and South Dakota.

West

A hot weather pattern gradually yielded to increasingly cloudy and showery weather. In most areas, however, showers were insufficient to result in significant drought relief, except in central Colorado and environs. Still, there were several episodes of significant weather, including a thunderstorm-fueled haboob on August 25 in Phoenix, Arizona, where high winds (clocked to 70 mph at Sky Harbor International Airport) and near-zero visibility in blowing dust led to travel and electrical disruptions. By August 26, at the end of the drought-monitoring period, shower activity began to shift farther north and east. In the Northwest, where hot, dry weather prevailed for much of the period, there was some drought expansion, with two previously separate areas of severe drought (D2) merging across eastern Washington. Some of the worst agricultural conditions in the country have been noted in recent weeks across Washington, with the U.S. Department of Agriculture reporting that 47% of the states rangeland and pastures were rated in very poor to poor condition on August 24. On the same date, Washington led the U.S. with 57% of its barley and 53% of its spring wheat rated very poor to poor.

Caribbean

In Puerto Rico, mostly tranquil weather returned in the wake of the previous weeks locally heavy showers, which had been associated with the outer rainbands of Hurricane Erin. As a result, there were no changes to the Puerto Rican depiction, which included patchy dryness (D0) in eastern and northwestern sections of the commonwealth.

The U.S. Virgin Islands experienced little to no rainfall following the heavy rains from Hurricane Erin last week.

On St. Croix, several weather stations reported no rainfall, including VI-SC-10 (Christiansted 1.6 E), VI-SC-20 (Frederiksted 1.7 ESE), VI-SC-23 (Christiansted 6.5 W), and VI-SC-30 (Christiansted 1.7 SW). This week, VI-SC-34 (Frederiksted 1.9 NE) recorded only 0.14 inches of rainfall (with one day not accounted for), while VI-SC-35 (Frederiksted 1.3 ENE) reported 0.25 inches. The Standardized Precipitation Index (SPI) values for East Hill are currently -1.02 for SPI-1 and -1.38 for SPI-3, indicating a further decline in rainfall conditions. According to the USGS, groundwater levels at Adventure 28 Well (St. Croix) dropped to 18.03 feet below the surface on August 26, 2025, an increase from last weeks level of 17.43 feet. As a result, St. Croix has once again entered a moderate short-term drought this week.

On St. Thomas, little or no rainfall was recorded across the island this week. The rainfall totals recorded at VI-ST-13 (Charlotte Amalie, 1.2 NNW) were only 0.04 inches, while VI-ST-15 (Charlotte Amalie West, 1.3 N) reported 0.17 inches of rain with 3 days unaccounted for. On August 26, 2025, the depth of the water level in the Grade School 3 well in St. Thomas was reported to be 6.81 feet below the land surface, a slight increase compared to last week (5.98 feet). For Cyril E. King Airport, St. Thomas, the SPI-1 and SPI-3 values are -0.14 and -0.8, respectively. In contrast, the long-term SPI values (over six months) showed positive values, indicating that conditions are not in drought. This week, St. Thomas remains drought-free.

This week, St. John recorded minimal rainfall, with only 0.23 inches reported at VI-SJ-5 (Cruz Bay 1.6 E) compared to last weeks significant rainfall of 5.44 inches. Additionally, VI-SJ-3 (Windswept Beach) reported 0.22 inches of rain. As of August 26, 2025, the depth to the water level at the Susannaberg DPW 3 well (St. John, USVI) measured 12.40 feet below the land surface, indicating a slight increase in depth from last week's measurement of 11.95 feet. The SPI-1 and SPI-3 values at Windswept Beach are 1.15 and 0.26, respectively. Overall, due to the recent rains, St. John remains drought-free.

Pacific

Wetter weather in parts of Alaska further reduced the wildfire threat and dampened some previously dry areas. Precipitation across interior Alaska was particularly heavy on August 24, when Fairbanks received a daily-record rainfall of 1.30 inches. Due to the wet weather, pockets of abnormal dryness (D0) were trimmed or eliminated across interior and northern Alaska.

In Hawaii, seasonably dry weather prevailed, leaving widespread moderate to extreme drought (D1 to D3) intact and gradually worsening. Some of the most significant drought existed on the Big Island, where Hilo an area experiencing moderate drought (D1)received rainfall totaling just 1.26 inches (13% of normal) during the first 26 days of August. Hilo's driest August on record occurred in 1971, when 2.66 inches fell. Additionally, year-to-date rainfall in Hilo through August 26 totaled 35.12 inches, less than one-half the normal value of 73.25 inches.

This week, most areas of the Marshall Islands experienced drought-free conditions, while some islands received heavy rainfall. Mili, Ailinglapalap, and Majuro recorded 4.64, 2.94, and 1.52 inches of rain, respectively. In contrast, Kwajalein recorded only 1.02 inches of rain, remaining

in short-term abnormally dry conditions. In addition, Utirik reported only 0.53 inches of rain, remaining in short-term moderate drought conditions. There was no available data for Jaluit and Wotje so that no assessment could be conducted for those locations.

Wet weather conditions were observed across the Federated States of Micronesia this week, with heavy rainfall reported on several of the islands. For example, the islands of Kosrae, Pohnpei, Woleai, and Yap received rainfall amounts of 5.96 inches, 4.91 inches, 3.38 inches, and 3.1 inches, respectively. This week, Chuuk Lagoon, Kapingamarangi, Lukunor, and Nukuoro recorded rainfall of 2.3 inches, 0.85 inches, 1.82 inches, and 0.99 inches, respectively. In addition, Pingelap reported only 2.2 inches of rain, allowing the islands to remain drought-free. Data was unavailable for Fananu and Ulithi, preventing any assessment.

Normal weather conditions were reported in American Samoa, with Pago Pago receiving 0.85 inches of rain. Siufaga Ridge and Toa Ridge recorded 0.89 inches and 0.75 inches of rain this week, respectively. Consequently, American Samoa remains drought-free.

Palau experienced heavy rainfall this week. The Weather Service Office in Airai recorded 4.13 inches of rain, while Koror reported 3.64 inches, although data for one day is missing. This consistent rainfall has kept the island free from drought.

This week, heavy rainfall was recorded across most areas of the Mariana Islands. According to the weekly rainfall report, Guam received 3.45 inches, Rota 3.89 inches, and Saipan 2.92 inches of rain. Additionally, Tinian recorded 1.74 inches, although two days of data are still unaccounted for. As a result, the Mariana Islands are currently experiencing drought-free conditions.

Looking Ahead

A generally cool weather pattern will persist in most areas of the country for the remainder of the month. However, heat will gradually return across the West, with temperatures in parts of the Desert Southwest topping 110F by the last day of August. East of the Rockies, anomalous warmth should be limited to the northern High Plains and the Deep South, mainly from southern Texas to southern Florida. Meanwhile, much of West will experience a drying trend, although late-month downpours in portions of the central and southern Rockies could lead to flash flooding and debris flows, especially on burn-scarred hillsides. Heavy, late-month rainfall (locally 2 to 4 inches or more) may also affect an area stretching from the mid-South to the southern Atlantic Coast. In contrast, little or no rain will fall during the next 5 days from the middle Mississippi Valley into the middle Atlantic States.

The NWS 6- to 10-day outlook for September 2-6 calls for the likelihood of below-normal temperatures in the central and eastern U.S., aside from warmer-than-normal weather in northern Maine, peninsular Florida, and the western Gulf Coast region. In contrast, late-summer warmth will dominate the West, except in the central and southern Rockies. Meanwhile, near- or above-normal precipitation across most of the country should contrast with drier-than-normal conditions in parts of the Pacific Northwest.

Author(s)

Brad Rippey, U.S. Department of Agriculture

Tsegaye Tadesse, National Drought Mitigation Center