

# National Drought Summary for December 9, 2025

## Summary

This U.S. Drought Monitor week saw both improvements and degradations across the country, shaped largely by uneven precipitation and widespread colder-than-normal temperatures. Much of the nation was colder than normal, with the sharpest departures in the Midwest and Northeast, where most of the weeks moisture fell as snow and offered limited short-term help for soils and streams. In the West, storm systems delivered substantial rain and mountain snow to the Pacific Northwest and northern Rockies, improving conditions in parts of Washington, northwest Oregon, western Montana and eastern Idaho. However, areas that missed the heaviest precipitation—especially central and southern Oregon, central Idaho and southwestern Montana—saw drought expand as snowpack remained well below normal. Parts of the Southwest, including southeastern California and western Arizona, continued to improve as moisture from earlier storms worked through the hydrologic system, while east-central Nevada saw worsening drought due to very low snowpack and long-term precipitation deficits.

The central and southern Plains did not see any meaningful precipitation this week, leading to conditions remaining largely unchanged outside of localized areas. Short-term dryness worsened in southeastern Kansas and northeastern Oklahoma, where precipitation deficits continue to accumulate. In the east, several areas along the Gulf Coast and Southeast received 1 to 3 inches of rain, leading to widespread improvement short-term dryness and drought in southern Alabama, southern Georgia, the Florida Panhandle and portions of the Carolinas. Despite moderate precipitation in southern Florida and parts of the interior Southeast, longer-term precipitation deficits led to dryness continuing to intensify. In the Midwest and Northeast, cold temperatures and predominantly frozen precipitation led to limited improvements and degradations in areas that missed precipitation.

## Northeast

In the Northeast, this week's precipitation did little to improve abnormal dryness or drought, with the only improvements occurring in southeast West Virginia, southeast Delaware and central New York. With temperatures across the region below normal, as much as 6 to 12 degrees in the north and west, precipitation remained largely frozen and unable to benefit soils and streamflows where it did fall. Across central Pennsylvania and southeastern New York, where streamflows are sitting below the 15th percentile, degradation expanded abnormal dryness (D0) and moderate drought (D1). Similarly, streamflows in northwestern New Jersey are at or below the 8th percentile, which led to the expansion of severe drought (D2) conditions in northwestern New Jersey.

## Southeast

The Southeast saw a mixture of improvements and degradations, mainly driven by precipitation. Precipitation fell across the southern Gulf Coast with areas of 2 to 3 inches of rain falling across southern Alabama and Georgia, the Florida Panhandle and along the coasts of

South and North Carolina, bringing widespread 1-class improvements and the removal of exceptional drought (D4). Further up the Atlantic coast, 1 to 1.5 inches of rain brought some minor improvements to northern Virginia. Further inland, the rain was not as beneficial to area of northern Alabama, Georgia and the western Carolinas which are at 50 to 75 percent of normal precipitation, causing areas of degradation as dryness intensifies. Elsewhere in Florida, a swath of 2 to 3 inches of rain brought improvements across the central Florida Peninsula. Much like the inland areas of the Southwest, southern Florida continues to see less than 50 percent normal precipitation and combined with temperatures of 3 to 6 degrees above normal saw abnormal dryness (D0) and moderate drought (D1) spread across southern Florida.

## **South**

The South saw mostly improvements this week following a mixture of below-normal temperatures and heavy rainfall. One-class improvements were seen from far eastern Texas to Mississippi where 1.5 to 3 inches of rain fell, with parts of southern Louisiana recording 5 to 6 inches of rain. Areas of central Texas and the Panhandle that improved last week, continued to see improvements in soil moisture and streamflows, leading to further improvements this week. Isolated degradation did occur in Texas southwestern Panhandle as well in northeastern Oklahoma as lack of precipitation continues to stress soils and lead to lower streamflows.

## **Midwest**

The Midwest had much colder-than-normal temperatures, and most of the weeks precipitation fell as snow, limiting its ability to improve soil moisture or streamflow. Drought changes in the Midwest were mixed and localized this week. In Missouri, drought expanded slightly along the southern Missouri/Illinois border, including small areas shifting into moderate (D1) and severe (D2) drought, while the northwest part of the state saw abnormal dryness (D0) expand. At the same time, northeastern Missouri experienced improvements where short-term conditions recovered. A small area along the central Missouri/Illinois border improved slightly. Illinois saw one-category degradations along the eastern side of the state near the Indiana border, driven in large part by multiple months of precipitation deficits. Michigan remained mostly unchanged except for a small area of expanding moderate drought (D2) in the southeast.

## **High Plains**

Conditions across the High Plains changed very little this week as much of the region received only light precipitation and remained colder than normal. The Dakotas saw little meaningful moisture, and Nebraska saw none, leaving drought conditions unchanged. In Kansas, a lack of precipitation combined with continued short-term dryness led to an expansion of abnormal dryness (D0) that stretched into northeastern Oklahoma.

In eastern Wyoming, dryness increased where precipitation was limited, resulting in some expansion of abnormal dryness. In eastern Colorado, light snowfall helped ease small pockets of abnormal dryness, though most areas saw little change.

## **West**

Out West, there was a mixture of improvements and degradations. Improvements were seen in the Southwest despite no precipitation this week. Prior weeks moisture has made its way into the hydrologic cycle, as seen in improving streamflows and soil moisture. Despite snow falling across the Rocky Mountains, many stations continue to report that the snow water equivalent (SWE) is below the 30th percentile. Snowpack levels in the northern Rockies are doing better, with many stations showing snowpack at 100 percent for this time of year, which was further improved with 1 to 2 feet of snow falling across western Montana and eastern Idaho. This moisture led to areas of improvement in northwest Montana. Improvements were also seen along the Idaho-Wyoming border where up to 2.5 feet of snow fell. Southwestern Montana and central Idaho, which are experiencing below-normal snowpack, missed out on the snow and saw the expansion of moderate drought (D1) across the border. Over the Pacific Northwest, storms brought upwards of 6 to 8 inches of precipitation, where many stations in the Cascades are reporting below snowpack below 50 percent of normal. Areas in central Washington into northwest Oregon saw improvements as some short-term metrics were more aligned with moderate drought (D1) conditions rather than severe drought (D2). Central and southern Oregon, which missed out on the heaviest precipitation, saw the expansion of abnormal dryness (D0) and moderate drought (D1).

## **Caribbean**

No drought changes were made in Puerto Rico this week. Temperatures were near normal across the island.

Rainfall during the last 1.5 to 3 months has been persistently if not dramatically below normal. This led to St. John, St. Thomas, and St. Croix all receiving a D0 designation. Precipitation has remained below normal through the first 9 days of December, but amounts appear sufficient to keep all 3 islands in D0 again this week, although deterioration to D1 could occur in the near future if amounts remain lacking.

Generally 0.35 to 0.65 fell in the vicinity of Charlotte Amalie, St. Thomas so far this December, bringing 30-day totals to just under 2 at C.E.King Airport. Longer-term totals are closer to normal, however, with about 9 reported over the last 60 days, and nearly 15 measured the most recent 90 days. November brought only 2.22 of rain to King Airport, but during October, areas around Charlotte Amalie observed 7 to over 10 of rain. St. Thomas may be on the cusp of drought (D1), but rainfall has been fairly frequent if not very heavy, so D0 is maintained on the island this week.

St. Croix also remains at D0 this week, but rainfall has been a bit more generous here since the start of December. Between 0.6 and 1.5 fell around most of Christiansted during December 1-9 while 0.9 to 2.3 dampened Frederiksted. Totals for the last 30 days are 2.83 and 2.68 respectively, which is considerably below normal. Longer-term numbers are closer to normal, with 60-day totals of 6.5 to 9.0 recorded, and 14.5 to 20.3 falling during the past 90-days. With slightly wetter conditions this past week, St. Croix does not appear as close to reaching D1 as St. Thomas and St. John.

Across, St. John, most locations reported 0.5 to 0.8 during December 1-9, with somewhat lower amounts measured across the east-central interior near Bordeaux. East Hill reports only about 2 of rain over the past 30 days (normal is almost 4.5), but like most other locations across the U.S. Virgin Islands, this follows a fairly dry November with prior months being closer to normal. November brought anywhere from 2.0 to 2.7 to the various observing sites across St. John, which followed 3.9 to 7.3 totals for October, with that months highest totals observed at Bordeaux and Windswept Beach. Despite below-normal totals, rainfall this past week appears sufficient to maintain last weeks designation for the island (D0), although D1 may be introduced soon if rainfall doesnt start to pick up.

## **Pacific**

Alaska remained free of abnormal dryness or drought this week. Temperatures were generally near to slightly below normal across much of the state, with the coolest anomalies along the southern and southeastern coastline.

No changes were made in Hawaii this week. Temperatures across the islands were near to slightly above normal, with only small variations by island and elevation.

Palau was unusually dry this past week. Koror recorded only 0.62 during December 3-9, when the normal is over 2 inches. However, about 25 inches of rain fell during October-November, and there is no indication that impactful dryness could develop in the near future.

Across the Marianas Islands, Saipan maintains its abnormal dryness (D0) designation this week, and the same classification is introduced at Tinian this week. Saipan recorded no measurable rain this past week, and has received only 0.6 in the last 30 days. About 8.8 of rain has fallen on Saipan since the start of October, including just 2.62 for November 1 December 9 (just over one-third of normal). Conditions in Tinian were boosted by a relatively wet November (5.52 or about 80 percent of normal) but less than 5 inches were observed in October (normal over 11 inches) and only 0.37 has fallen so far in December (just over one-third of normal). Farther south, Guam and Rota have been somewhat drier than normal for the past several weeks, but amounts have been running a bit above the amounts that could allow impactful dryness to develop.

December is off to a dry start in western portions of the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM). About an inch has fallen on Woleai in the first 9 days of the month, and just over one-half inch was reported in Yap. However, with October-November bringing 25 of rain to Yap and 35 to Woleai, no dryness or drought designation is warranted.

Across the central tier of FSM, December 1-9 featured more generous rainfall. Most locations recorded 2.0 to 5.2 during this period, which is near or above normal. Lukunor was drier than other locations, reporting just 1.2 of rain, but all of central FSM (Lukunor, Fananu, Chuuk, Lukunor, Nukuoro, and Kapingamarangi) received 9.5 to 15.5 during November, and in most locations October was as wet or wetter. The exception is Kapingamarangi, where moderate drought (D1) was in place last week. August-September brought only 5.65 of rain there (compared to a normal of 17.2), but almost 14 fell during November, and the 2 noted so far in December has been sufficient to improve conditions, at least for the time being.

Precipitation was highly variable across the eastern reaches of FSM during the first 9 days of December. Pohnpei reported just 1.58 while 3.16 fell on Pingelap and 7.44 doused Kosrae. Prior to that, however, Pingelap reported almost 20 during November, and October-November featured 34 to 38 at Pohnpei and Kosrae. Given the robust rainfall of the last 2 full months, no dryness or drought designation is warranted at this time.

Across the Republic of the Marshall Islands (RMI), the northernmost islands are affected by abnormal dryness while no dryness or drought designation is justified elsewhere. Utirik remains in D0, unchanged from last week, while D0 was introduced at Kwajalein. Rainfall in Utirik was sufficient but several inches below normal during August-September. Amounts increased to slightly below normal during October, but November 1 December 9 has seen a resurgence of dryness. Only 4.24 fell on Utirik during this period, which is a little over half of normal (7.90). Kwajalein reported below-normal but adequate rainfall for a few months through October, but just over 7 inches fell November 1 December 9, which is a less than what is typically necessary to keep up with demand, and well below the 13.4 normal. Farther south, December has been a mixed bag, with some locations reporting adequate to robust rainfall amounts (2.47 at Ailinglapalap, 3.90 at Majuro, and just under 2 inches at Jaluit) while others reported lesser totals (about 1 at Mili, and less than 0.5 at Wotje). However, abundant rainfall was observed during October-November across central and southern RMI (20 to 28 inches at Wotje, Ailinglapalap, Majuro, Jaluit, and Mili). This included a November with only about half of normal rainfall at Ailinglapalap, but a very wet October and somewhat increased rainfall rates for the first 9 days of December preclude introducing D0 there.

Like a number of other locations across the USAPI, Pago Pago in American Samoa has received considerably lower than normal rainfall since the start of December, but earlier heavy to intense rains make any dryness designation untenable. December 1-9 brought just 1.3 of rain to Pago Pago (less than 40 percent of normal), but with 60-day totals exceeding 35 and 90-day totals approaching 49 impactful dryness is not currently a concern.

## ***Looking Ahead***

According to the National Weather Services 5-day quantitative precipitation forecast (valid from Dec. 11 -16) the heaviest precipitation is forecast across the Pacific Northwest, especially along the coastal ranges of Washington, Oregon, and far northern California, where totals may exceed 5 to 10. Moderate precipitation is also expected across the northern Rockies and into the northern Plains and Upper Midwest, with widespread amounts between 0.5 and 2 inches and localized areas of higher amounts where terrain enhances moisture, such as elevation and lake-effect snow. Across the South and Southeast, a broad area of lighter but steady rain is anticipated from eastern Texas through the Gulf Coast states and into the Carolinas, generally ranging from 0.5 to 2 inches. The Northeast is also expected to pick up around 1 to 2 inches. In contrast, much of the Interior West including the Great Basin, Southwest and central Rockies shows little to no precipitation.

The Climate Prediction Centers 6 to 10 day outlook (valid Dec. 16-20) favors widespread above-normal temperatures across most of the Lower 48, with the highest likelihood for above-normal temperatures centered over the Four Corners region and extending across the western and

southern U.S. Much of the Midwest, Great Lakes and Northeast also lean warmer than average, while only a small pocket of near-normal temperatures is suggested in parts of the northern Plains. Cooler-than-normal conditions are limited to coastal New England and portions of Alaska, where the highest chances for below-normal temperatures appear. Precipitation patterns show more divide with wetter-than-normal conditions favored across the Pacific Northwest, the northern Rockies, the Upper Midwest and parts of Hawaii. In contrast, drier-than-normal conditions are likely across the central and southern Rockies, the central Plains and much of the Southeast, with the strongest dry signal centered over Arizona, New Mexico and western Texas. Near-normal precipitation is expected across broad sections of the Midwest, Mid-Atlantic and Interior West.

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