

National Drought Summary for March 31, 2026

Summary

This U.S. Drought Monitor (USDM) week saw extensive degradations across areas of the West, Plains, South, and Southeast. Out West, widespread degradations were centered across the Intermountain West, including Colorado, Utah, Idaho, and Wyoming, and to a lesser extent across portions of Arizona, New Mexico, Nevada, and Montana. Continued degradations are expected in the coming weeks and months due to anomalous heat and record-low snowpack levels. In the Plains, drought expanded and intensified from Oklahoma to South Dakota. In the South and Southeast, dry conditions persisted this week, adding to significant longer-term (9- to 12+ month) precipitation deficits (ranging from 8 to 20+ inches), with the most severe drought conditions centered over portions of Texas, Arkansas, Georgia, and Florida. In the Northeast and Midwest, light-to-moderate rainfall (1 to 3 inches) during the past week led to targeted improvements in Illinois, Indiana, Ohio, Pennsylvania, and New York.

At the end of March, mountain snowpack conditions remain well below normal for the time of year, with record to near-record low levels observed across all western states. Additionally, many Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) SNOw TElemetry (SNOTEL) network monitoring stations are reporting very shallow snow depths or no snow on the ground. Region-level (2-digit HUC) snow water equivalent (SWE) values (percent of median) are as follows: Pacific Northwest 55%, Missouri 56%, Upper Colorado 24%, Great Basin 18%, Lower Colorado 14%, Rio Grande 8%, and Arkansas-White-Red 8%. In California, statewide snowpack is 18% of normal (April 1), with the Southern Sierra at 32%, Central Sierra at 21%, and Northern Sierra at 6%. Despite poor snowpack conditions, Californias reservoirs remain at or above historical averages for the date (March 31), with Lake Shasta and Lake Oroville at 113% and 123% of average, respectively. In the Southwest, the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation (March 29) reports critically low levels at Lake Powell (24% full; 41% of average for the date) and Lake Mead (33% full; 52% of average for the date), with the total Colorado River system at 36% of capacity (compared to 41% at the same time last year).

Northeast

This week, improvements were made in isolated areas of Pennsylvania, New York, New Jersey, Connecticut, and Massachusetts in response to precipitation during the past two weeks. In New England, recent rainfall improved groundwater and soil moisture conditions in Connecticut and Massachusetts. Over the past 30 days, precipitation was near normal to above normal (110200+%) across Pennsylvania, New York, Connecticut, and western Massachusetts, while areas of New Hampshire, Vermont, and Maine were below normal (5090%). Snowpack conditions continue to decline seasonally, with the National Weather Service National Operational Hydrologic Remote Sensing Center (NWS NOHRSC) reporting 37.3% snow cover (compared to 97.8% last month) for the

Northeast Region, an average depth of 2.7 inches, and a maximum depth of 73.6 inches. Temperatures were above normal across most of the region, with the greatest departures (410 F) in the southern half, while Maine and New Hampshire observed below-normal temperatures (28 F).

Southeast

During the past week, very dry conditions prevailed across most of the region, exacerbating drought conditions. However, some isolated light-to-moderate rainfall accumulations (1 to 3 inches) were observed in South Florida. On the map, drought expanded and intensified across all states except Virginia. In southern Georgia and northern Florida, areas of Exceptional Drought (D4) were added. Impacts are being reported in northern Florida, where low water levels are limiting recreational use of waterways on the Chipola, Santa Fe, and Suwannee rivers. For the past 30-day period, precipitation departures across most of the region ranged from 1 to 4 inches, with the greatest departures observed in southern Alabama, Florida Panhandle, southwestern Georgia, and far western portions of the Carolinas. According to data from the Southeast Regional Climate Centers Climate Perspectives tool, the past six months (October 1 to March 31) have been very dry across areas of the region, with record dryness observed in the following locations: Tallahassee (-13.51 inch departure); Jacksonville, FL (-9.98 inches); Macon, GA (-11.64 inches); Montgomery, AL (-13.82 inches); Charlotte, NC (-10.67 inches); and Raleigh, NC (-9.23 inches). In terms of average temperatures for the week, above-normal temperatures (5 to 10 F) were observed across the western portion of the region, while the eastern extent remained near normal.

South

On this weeks map, widespread degradations were made in drought-affected areas of Texas, Oklahoma, Louisiana, and Arkansas, while isolated areas of Mississippi and Tennessee saw degradations. During the past 30-day period, the National Drought Mitigation Centers Conditions Monitoring Observer Reports (CMOR) tool showed numerous impact reports across the region. For the week, dry conditions prevailed across the region. Looking at climatological rankings for the past 90-day period (December 31 to March 31), several locations ranked among their driest on record, including Austin, TX (4th driest; -5.53 inches), Brownsville, TX (driest on record; -3.38 inches), Oklahoma City, OK (driest on record; -3.61 inches), Monticello, AR (driest on record; -8.95 inches), and Jackson, MS (driest on record; -7.4 inches). In Texas, Water for Texas (April 1) reports statewide reservoirs at 73.5% full, with eastern reservoirs in good condition while many western and southern reservoirs remain below normal, including Falcon Reservoir (19% full). Average temperatures for the week were above normal across the region (3 to 15+ F) with dry conditions prevailing.

Midwest

On this weeks map, improvements were made across Iowa, Illinois, Wisconsin, and Michigan in response to rainfall during the past week, primarily along a narrow west-to-east band extending from west-central Illinois to northern Ohio. One-category improvements were observed in areas of Moderate Drought (D1) to Severe Drought (D3). In Kentucky, short-term dryness led to expansion of areas of Moderate Drought (D1) and Abnormally Dry (D0) across the state. Snowpack across the Northern Great Lakes Region continues to decline, with NWS NOHRSC reporting 30.5% snow cover, an average depth of 4.2 inches, and a maximum depth of 64.9 inches. Temperatures were above normal across most of the region, with anomalies ranging from 2 to 15 F.

High Plains

On this weeks map, widespread changes were made across the region in response to below-normal precipitation (time scales from 1 to 6 months), declining soil moisture, scattered low streamflows, elevated evapotranspiration rates, and associated anomalously warm temperatures not only in recent weeks, but moving through the entire cool season. In South Dakota, record to near-record low streamflows have been observed during the last 120-day period as well as below-normal soil moisture levels observed at the South Dakota Mesonet monitoring stations. Additionally, the NDMCs CMOR map shows numerous ag-related impact reports from the Black Hills region in southwestern South Dakota. For the week, the region was very dry with warmer-than-normal temperatures (3 to 15+ F above normal) observed across much of the region, with the greatest anomalies observed in Nebraska and Kansas. Looking at climatological rankings for the past 90-day period (January 1 to April 1), several locations ranked among their warmest on record, including Grand Island, NE (warmest on record; +9 F departure from normal); North Platte, NE (warmest on record; +10 F); Rapid City, SD (warmest on record; +9 F departure from normal); Goodland, KS (warmest on record; +11 F departure from normal); and Dodge City, KS (warmest on record; +8 F departure from normal).

West

Conditions deteriorated significantly on the map this week in response to the combination of record to near-record heat and very poor snowpack conditions. The recent heat wave accelerated snowmelt across the region over the past few weeks, with many NRCS SNOTEL stations reporting little to no snow on the ground or unseasonably low levels. Peak runoff is occurring earlier than normal or has already passed in some locations raising concerns about reduced inflows into reservoirs moving

through spring and into the summer months. In the Upper Colorado River Basin, Lake Powell is 25% full, while upstream reservoirs show mixed conditions, including Flaming Gorge (82% full), Blue Mesa (50%), and Navajo Lake (62%). In Rio Grande Basin in New Mexico, Elephant Butte is 12% full and Caballo Reservoir is 7% full. In Arizona, the Salt River Project reports the Salt River system at 56% full, the Verde system at 63%, and the combined system at 63% (compared to 70% last year).

Caribbean

No changes were made this week in Puerto Rico.

Overall, the U.S. Virgin Islands continued to receive enough rain to keep at bay any designation of dryness or drought. Across St. Croix, the Christiansted area generally reported anywhere from 0.75 inch to 2.67 inches of rain last week, pushing March totals to between 4 and 5.6 inches. Frederiksted has been slightly drier, picking up 2.2 to 4.5 inches of rain during March, but these amounts are not markedly lower than normal, and follow sufficient totals earlier in the year. On St. John, Cruz Bay reported about 1 to 1.5 inches of rain last week, which brought March totals to between 3.2 and 3.6 inches, which is not remarkably wet nor dry. Windswept Beach has been drier, with only 0.26 inch last week and just over 7.5 inches for the year to date, but this has been enough to keep most impacts from dryness at bay. Similar to Cruz Bay, Charlotte Amalie on St. Thomas also received generally 1 to 1.5 inches of rain last week, resulting in slightly higher March totals of 4.4 to 6.6 inches. This is enough to stave off any noticeable dryness or drought for the time being.

Pacific

No changes were made this week in Alaska.

No changes were made this week in Hawaii.

Palau received 2.20 inches of rain last week, bringing their March total to 12.62 inches and the year-to-date total to 29.51 inches. These numbers are both somewhat above normal and over the 8 inches per month generally required to consistently meet ecological and human demand. There are no indicators of dryness or drought.

Across the Marianas, heavy to excessive rainfall has been observed over the past few months, especially in March. After 6.24 inches of rain at Saipan last week, the March total climbed to 13.72 inches, more than 7 times the normal for the month. The January-March total at Saipan was 34.59 inches, compared to a normal of 8.09 inches. Guam, Dededo, and Rota all recorded 14-16 inches in March, which was over 5 times normal.

Amounts in other areas were not as extreme, but no indicators of dryness or drought exist across the islands.

In western sections of the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM), Yap and Woleai both recorded around an inch of rain last week, which brought March totals slightly above normal. Between 24 and 27 inches fell during January-March, which is also slightly above normal. There is no indication of any dryness or drought.

Across central FSM, Lukunor reported subnormal rainfall each of the last 3 months. Between 5.9 and 6.8 inches fell each month during this period, which ranged from 57 to 73 percent of normal. No significant dryness-related impacts have been reported, but 3-month amounts have been sufficiently below normal to support introducing abnormal dryness (D0) there. Elsewhere, across Chuuk, Nukuoro, and Kapingamarangi, very dry conditions prevailed during the last week of March, but enough rain fell during the prior few months to preclude the introduction of any dryness at this time. Chuuk has been persistently wetter than normal all year so far. Nukuoro recorded subnormal March (8.5 inches) and January (9.45 inches) totals, but amounts have been sufficient to keep up with environmental and human demand. Kapingamarangi has been drier than normal all 3 months, but totals have been sufficient to keep up with demand, ranging from near 8 inches to over 10 inches each month.

The eastern FSM is climatologically very wet this time of year. The 15.49 inches of rain reported during March in Kosrae were actually slightly below normal, and totals of 17.7 and 12.9 inches, respectively, fell during February and January. This is more than what is needed to keep up with demand. About 2/3 of normal rainfall amounts were reported in March at Pohnpei (9.39 inches), which is actually sufficient to keep up with demand. Totals during January (12.5 inches) and February (15 inches) were even more robust. Thus, no dryness is indicated in eastern FSM.

In contrast to other parts of the U.S. Affiliated Pacific Islands, drought dominates the northeastern Republic of the Marshall Islands (RMI), with severe (D2, Utirik) to extreme (D3, Wotje) drought assessed. These conditions are unchanged from last week despite a wet spell that straddled the past 2 weeks. March 20-26 brought over 7 inches of rain to Utirik and more than 3.5 inches to Wotje; however, the drought designations were not changed because the rest of the month brought only 0.75 inch to Ulithi and 0.42 inch to Wotje, with none reported since early March 27. After the short wet spell, temperatures again climbed above normal, with Utirik reporting daily highs of 88-89 deg. F and lows remaining at or above 82 deg. F for the last 5 days of the month. This implies that surface moisture may not have been dramatically recharged despite the large amounts. For now, D2 to D3 conditions remain, but the situation will be closely monitored for any improvements.

In the western, central, and southern reaches of RMI, conditions have been significantly wetter during the past 3 months, and no dryness or drought is assessed at this time. Mili reported almost 7 inches of rain last week, which brought their March total above 19 inches. Majuro reported 3.26 inches last week, bringing their year-to-date total to 24.7

inches, which is about normal and sufficient to keep up with demand. Wet conditions prevailed last week at Jaluit (3.03 inches) and Ailinglapalap (5.38 inches). March finished with over 16 inches at Ailinglapalap and nearly a foot at Jaluit, and on the back of wetter-than-normal Februaries at both locations, no dryness is observed. Totals have been more muted at Kwajalein in northwestern RMI, but the climatology is a little drier than across most of southern and western RMI. Still, over 2 inches fell last week, pushing March totals to 6.5 inches. Prior months were somewhat wetter than normal (7.83 inches in January and 4.44 in February), but with relatively low normals and these months usually being among the driest of the year, the moisture budget is only marginally keeping up with demand, and abnormal dryness could be introduced if subnormal amounts continue over the forthcoming weeks and months, when normal will be increasing.

Abnormal dryness ended across American Samoa. Just 5.11 inches of rain fell in February (less than half normal), and deficient totals continued into March. Last week, however, over 5.5 inches of rain fell, primarily later in the period, bringing the monthly total to 11.3 inches, or approximately normal. In addition, January was exceptionally wet, with almost 28 inches of rain reported. Given the relatively short-lived nature of the territory's moisture deficits, these amounts support removing abnormal dryness and leaving the region with no designation of dryness or drought.

Looking Ahead

The NWS Weather Prediction Center 7-Day Quantitative Precipitation Forecast (QPF, liquid equivalent) calls for precipitation accumulations generally ranging from 2 to 4 inches across eastern portions of the Southern Plains, Midwest, and Northeast, with the heaviest totals along a corridor from eastern Texas through the Lower Mississippi Valley into portions of the Upper Mississippi Valley. In the Southeast and Mid-Atlantic, light-to-moderate liquid precipitation accumulations ranging from 0.5 to 2 inches are expected. Across the High Plains, light-to-moderate liquid precipitation accumulations ranging from 0.5 to 2 inches are expected, with the greatest totals across portions of the Dakotas. In the West, light-to-moderate liquid precipitation accumulations are expected across areas of the region, with the highest totals across portions of the Pacific Northwest, northern California, and southern Oregon. In the higher elevations, snow is expected across the Sierra Nevada, southern Cascades, northern Great Basin, and portions of the central and northern Rockies. Dry conditions are expected to prevail across much of the Southwest, including areas of southern California, southern Nevada, Arizona, and New Mexico.

The 610-day temperature outlook (valid April 711, 2026) calls for above-normal temperatures across much of the western U.S., Southern Plains, and areas of the South, with the highest probabilities centered over the California, Nevada, Utah, and Arizona. Below-normal temperatures are favored across the Northern Plains as well as the New England. Near-normal temperatures are expected across much of the eastern

U.S., including the Mid-Atlantic and Southeast, as well as portions of Texas. In terms of precipitation, the 610-day outlook calls for above-normal precipitation across areas of the eastern half of the western U.S., Plains states, South, much of the Midwest, and Florida. Below-normal precipitation is favored across portions of the Mid-Atlantic and southern extent of New England. Near-normal precipitation is expected across areas outside of these regions, including portions of the western U.S. and Southeast.

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