

National Drought Summary for July 21, 2026

Summary

This U.S. Drought Monitor (USDM) week saw degradations across the areas of the Plains, Upper Midwest, and Florida, while rainfall during the past week led to improvements in drought-affected areas of the South, Southeast, Mid-Atlantic, and Northeast. In the West, a mix of improvements and degradations occurred on the map with improvements across areas of Idaho and Montana in response to above-normal rainfall during the past 30-day period. Conversely, areas of eastern Colorado and southeastern Wyoming saw degradation in response to dry conditions and excessive heat and elevated evaporative demand. Likewise, hot and dry conditions prevailed across the central and northern Plains leading to expansion and intensification of drought, with temperatures ranging from 2 to 10+ °F above normal and reports of poor rangeland conditions. In the South, another round of heavy rainfall in the Hill Country of Texas led to continued improvement in the long-term drought situation as well as severe flash flooding, with widespread rainfall accumulations ranging from 5 to 10 inches and isolated areas receiving totals in excess of 15 inches during the past week. In the Southeast and Mid-Atlantic, isolated shower activity led to improvements in drought-affected areas of Florida, Georgia, the Carolinas, and Mid-Atlantic states. Similarly, isolated areas of the Northeast received heavy rainfall accumulations ranging from 2 to 5+ inches, leading to improvements in New Jersey, New York, Connecticut, and Massachusetts.

In terms of reservoir storage in the West, California's reservoirs continue to be at or above historical averages for the date (July 21), with the state's two largest reservoirs, Lake Shasta and Lake Oroville, at 110% and 100% of average, respectively. In the Southwest, the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation is reporting (July 19) Lake Powell at 22% full (34% of average for the date; lowest on record for the date in the last 30 years), Lake Mead at 27% full (45% of average for the date; lowest on record for the date in the last 30 years), and the total Colorado River system (July 19) at 33% of capacity (compared to 39% of capacity the same time last year).

Northeast

This week, continued isolated improvements were made in areas of Delaware, Maryland, West Virginia, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, New York, Connecticut, and Massachusetts in response to shower activity and overall improving conditions, mainly in the southern extent of the region, observed during the past 30 days. Rainfall accumulations this week broadly ranged from 1 to 2 inches with the heaviest accumulations exceeding 5 inches in isolated areas. Recent rains have helped to boost groundwater and streamflow levels as well as soil moisture. For the week temperatures were near-normal to slightly above normal in the far southern extent of the region, while much of New England experienced below-normal temperatures with negative departures ranging from 2 to 4 °F.

Southeast

During the past week, isolated light-to-moderate rainfall accumulations (1 to 5 inches) were observed across much of the region with the heaviest accumulations along the Gulf coastal areas of west-central and the Panhandle of Florida and coastal areas of northeastern North Carolina. Improvements in drought-affected areas were made across all states in the region. Conversely, some minor degradations were made in areas of Florida where longer-term precipitation deficit exist and missed out on this week's shower activity. Across Florida, numerous wildfires continue to burn across the state, including the Berger Fire in south-central Florida's Rotenberger Wildlife Management Area, which has burned 14,300 acres since the fire started on July 17th. Additionally, other drought impacts in South Florida include extremely low water levels in western portions of the Everglades. According to data from the Southeast Regional Climate Center's Climate Perspectives tool, the past month has been very dry across areas of the region, with near-record dryness observed in the following locations: Miami International Airport, FL (4th driest; -4.7 inch departure); Naples, FL (6th driest; -2.61 inches); North Myrtle Beach, SC (5th driest; -2.4 inches); Fayetteville, NC (9th driest; -3.2 inches); and Mobile, AL (2nd driest; -5.12 inches). In terms of average temperatures for the week, above-normal temperatures (1 to 5+ °F) were observed across most of the entire region, with the Carolinas experiencing the greatest departures.

South

On this week's map, improvements were made in drought-affected areas of Texas, Arkansas, and Tennessee. In terms of precipitation during the past week, moderate to heavy rainfall accumulations (ranging from 5 to 15+ inches) were observed in the Hill Country of Texas bringing much-needed relief to the long-term drought situation and low reservoir levels. However, the torrential rains also led to severe and dangerous flash flooding across areas of the region. Looking at the reservoir situation, Water Data for Texas (July 22) reports statewide reservoirs at 78% full, with eastern reservoirs in good condition while numerous western and southern reservoirs remain below normal. In Tennessee, precipitation during the past 30-day period was above-normal across much of the western part of the state, leading to improvements on the map. Looking at climatological rankings for the past 30-days, record to near-record precipitation was observed in areas of the region, including in Junction, TX (2nd wettest on record; +5.44 inch departure), San Angelo, TX (9th wettest; +2.49 inches), Del Rio, TX (3rd wettest; +5.86 inches) and Shreveport Airport, LA (wettest; +8.36 inches). Average temperatures for the week were above normal across most of the region (1 to 5 °F).

Midwest

On this week's map, degradations were made across areas of Minnesota, Iowa, Wisconsin, and Michigan in response to above-normal temperatures and precipitation shortfalls during the past 30-day period. Elsewhere in the region, conditions continued to improve in Kentucky where precipitation has been well above normal during the past month. Looking at climatological rankings for the past 30-day period, numerous locations ranked among their wettest or near-wettest on record, including Paducah, KY (wettest on record; +7.09 inch departure); Louisville Intl. Airport, KY (wettest on record; +7.08 inches), Ames Municipal Airport

(2nd wettest; +7.77 inches); and Evansville, IN (5th wettest; +4.37 inches). Temperatures were near normal across the southern tier of the region, while the northern extent logged anomalies ranging from 2 to 6 °F.

High Plains

On this week's map, drought-related conditions deteriorated across the region including in the Dakotas and Nebraska with reports of rapidly deteriorating conditions. The recent anomalously hot temperatures and deteriorating drought-related conditions led to the South Dakota Governor issuing a drought emergency executive order last week. In terms of drought impacts, the National Drought Mitigation Center's Condition Monitoring Observer Report (CMOR) drought impacts reporting system is showing numerous impact reports across the Dakotas during the past 30 days. For the week, average temperatures were 4 to 10+ °F above normal across the Dakotas and Nebraska. Looking at climatological rankings for the past 30-day period, several locations logged near-record dryness including Omaha, NE (3rd driest on record; -3.16 inches); Grand Island, NE (5th driest; -3.05 inches); and Rapid City NWS Weather Forecast Office, SD (5th driest; -1.48 inches).

West

On the map, drought-related conditions continued to deteriorate in areas of eastern Colorado, southeastern Wyoming, and portions of southern Idaho, while improvements were made in central and northern Idaho and Montana where short-term conditions (past 30 days) improved. In the Southwest, monsoonal thunderstorms delivered much-needed moisture to isolated areas of the Four Corners states and eastern Nevada, while dry conditions prevailed across the western Great Basin and Pacific states. In the Colorado River Basin, Lake Powell is 22% full, while Lake Mead is 27% full, according to the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation. Other reservoirs in the region are experiencing low levels including at Elephant Butte Reservoir in New Mexico (2% of capacity) and Blue Mesa Reservoir in southwestern Colorado (32% full). Looking at climatological conditions for the past month, record or near-record precipitation was observed at the following locations: Nogales, AZ (3rd wettest; +2.43 inch departure from normal); Wilcox, AZ (7th wettest; +2.03 inches); and Flagstaff Airport, AZ (10th wettest; +1.76 inches); Great Falls, MT (wettest on record; +2.29 inches); Glasgow Airport, MT (3rd wettest; +2.88 inches); and Challis Airport, ID (wettest on record; +1.8 inches).

Caribbean

On the map, no changes were made this week in Puerto Rico.

During the drought-monitoring period ending July 21, hot, breezy, mostly dry weather persisted across the U.S. Virgin Islands. At times, Saharan dust led to hazy conditions and reductions in visibility. Standardized Precipitation Index (SPI) values broadly indicated that short-term extreme drought (D3-S) is present throughout the territory. On St. John, Windswept Beach reported near-record low rainfall of 0.23 inch in June, followed by 0.22 inch during the first 20 days of July. Windswept Beach's driest July on record occurred in 2015, with 0.69 inch.

Drought-related impacts in the U.S. Virgin Islands include significant vegetation stress, an increased wildfire threat, diminishing surface water reserves, and increases in depth to groundwater. According to the U.S. Geological Survey, depth to water at the agency's well on St. John topped 17 feet on July 21 for the first time since early-October 2023. As recently as late-October 2025, depth to water at the USGS well on St. John had been less than 8 feet.

Pacific

In Alaska, areas of Abnormally Dry (D0) in the Interior and Southcentral were removed as well as areas of D0 in Seward Peninsula were reduced due to short-term rainfall.

On the map, no changes were made this week in the Hawaiian Islands.

Generally active weather continued across the U.S.-Affiliated Pacific Islands, with neither dryness nor drought across the region. Some of the most significant rain accompanied monsoon surges across the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM), with totals during the drought-monitoring period ranging from 4 to 10 inches in portions of Chuuk State. Elsewhere in the FSM, Yap's month-to-date rainfall approached 17 inches. Ample rain also continued to fall across the Republic of Palau, while recovery efforts from Super Typhoon Bavi's recent strike continued across the Marianas. Farther east, the Republic of the Marshall Islands (RMI) experienced a modest drying trend, although no drought concerns were yet noted. In fact, reservoir storage on Majuro topped 41 million gallons for several days in mid-July, up from 37.7 million gallons at the beginning of the month. Reservoir capacity on Majuro is 47.4 million gallons. Finally, somewhat drier weather also prevailed across American Samoa, although like the RMI, drought-related concerns have not yet arisen. Additionally, American Samoa has recently experienced several very wet months, with rainfall at Pago Pago International Airport reaching 27.92 inches in January and 21.55 inches in May.

Looking Ahead

The NWS Weather Prediction Center 7-Day Quantitative Precipitation Forecast calls for the heaviest precipitation accumulations across portions of the Mid-Atlantic states, where precipitation accumulations generally ranging from 2 to 7+ inches are expected, with the highest amounts primarily across the coastal plains of southern Virginia and the Carolinas. Across areas of the interior Southeast, including northern portions of and Georgia as well as eastern Tennessee, precipitation accumulations generally ranging from 1 to 3+ inches are expected. In isolated areas of the Northeast, and central Plains, precipitation accumulations generally ranging from 1 to 2 inches are expected. In Texas, light to moderate accumulations (2 to 4 inches) are expected in areas of the South Texas Plains. In the West, the higher elevations of areas of the central and southern Rockies and portions of the Southwest, including the Mogollon Rim of Arizona, localized precipitation accumulations of 1 to 2+ inches are expected.

The NWS 6–10-Day Temperature Outlook (valid July 27–31, 2026) favors above-normal temperatures across most of the contiguous United States, with the highest probabilities centered across much of California, Great Basin, central and southern Rockies, Plains states, Texas, and western portions of the Midwest. Above-normal temperatures are also favored

across much of the South and Southeast regions. Conversely, below-normal temperatures are favored in the Pacific Northwest in western Washington, much of the Northeast, and Alaska, while near-normal temperatures are expected across portions of the Mid-Atlantic.

The NWS 6–10-Day Precipitation Outlook favors above-normal precipitation across areas of the Pacific Northwest (Washington), portions of the Southwest and central Rockies, and along the Eastern Seaboard from Florida to Maine. Below-normal precipitation is favored across eastern portions of the central and southern Plains, Texas, South, and Midwest.

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