

National Drought Summary for July 28, 2026

Summary

This U.S. Drought Monitor (USDM) week saw very hot and dry conditions across areas of the Western U.S. and the Plains states where average temperatures soared well above normal levels—significantly elevating evaporate demand, especially across the Upper Midwest, Northern Plains, Colorado, and the Texas Panhandle where conditions deteriorated rapidly. Elsewhere, heavy rains across areas of the Mid-Atlantic states, Southeast, and the South, led to widespread improvements on the map in drought-affected areas. In North Carolina, rainfall totals for the week ranged from 3 to 8+ inches across the state leading to a significant improvement in drought-related conditions statewide. In the Northeast, recent isolated shower activity helped to improve drought conditions; however, the impacts of the longer-term drought continue to affect groundwater conditions in areas of Rhode Island and Massachusetts. In the Upper Midwest, drought expanded and intensified on the map, especially across Minnesota and Wisconsin where composite flash drought indicators were showing severe to extreme flash drought conditions during the past week. Out West, the Four Corners states continued to receive beneficial monsoonal rainfall with isolated areas receiving 2 to 4 inches. In portions of Arizona and western New Mexico, precipitation during the past 30-day period has been above normal, boosting streamflow and soil moisture levels while improving vegetation health. In the Pacific Northwest, short-term dryness has led to a dip in soil moisture and streamflow levels in areas of western Oregon and Washington. In the Great Basin, recent monsoonal rains have provided some minor relief to drought-affected areas of eastern Nevada.

In terms of reservoir storage in the West, California's reservoirs continue to be at or above historical averages for the date (July 28), with the state's two largest reservoirs, Lake Shasta and Lake Oroville seeing slight decreases over the past week, at 99% and 108% of average, respectively. In the Southwest, the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation is reporting (July 26) Lake Powell at 23% full (33% 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 26) at 33% of capacity (compared to 39% of capacity the same time last year). According to the Salt River Project, the Salt River reservoir system in Arizona is currently 48% full, Verde River system 59% full, and the total reservoir system at 50% full (compared with 59% full a year ago).

Northeast

Rainfall this week led to continued isolated improvements in areas of Delaware, Maryland, West Virginia, New Jersey, New York, Connecticut, Rhode Island, and Massachusetts. Rainfall accumulations during the past week ranged from 1 to 5+ inches with the heaviest accumulations observed in isolated areas of Delaware and New Jersey. Despite recent rains, longer-term groundwater issues continue across areas of Rhode Island and Massachusetts. In Maine, conditions deteriorated leading to expansion of areas of Moderate Drought (D1) as well as areas of Abnormally Dry (D0) in response to declining streamflow levels, elevated evaporative demand, and below-normal precipitation during the past 30-to-60-day period. For

the week, temperatures were below normal across most of the region with negative departures ranging from 2 to 6+ °F. According to data from the Southeast Regional Climate Center's Climate Perspectives tool, the past month has been very dry in areas of Maine, with near-record dryness observed in Portland, Maine (2nd driest on record; -2.83 inch departure).

Southeast

During the past week, light-to-heavy rainfall accumulations (1 to 8+ inches) were observed across the region with the heaviest accumulations across North Carolina and Virginia. Elsewhere, isolated areas of northern Alabama and Georgia as well as Florida received beneficial rains leading to improvements in drought-affected areas. Conversely, some minor degradations were made in areas of Florida's Panhandle where precipitation has been <50% of normal during the past 30 days and the National Drought Mitigation Center's (NDMC) flash drought conditions indicator map (July 27) is showing severe to moderate flash drought conditions in the Panhandle and northern Florida. According to data from the Southeast Regional Climate Center's Climate Perspectives tool, the past month has been very hot across areas of the region, with record to near-record maximum temperatures observed in the following locations: Orlando, FL (warmest on record; +3 °F departure); Gainesville, FL (warmest on record; +3 °F departure); West Palm Beach, FL (2nd warmest; +3 °F departure); Jacksonville, FL (2nd warmest; +3 °F departure); and North Myrtle Beach, SC (2nd warmest; +2 °F departure). In terms of average temperatures for the week, above-normal temperatures (1 to 4+ °F) were observed across Florida and southern portions of Alabama, Georgia, and South Carolina, while below-normal temperatures associated with this week's storm activity in North Carolina and Virginia led to negative anomalies ranging from 2 to 5+ °F.

South

On this week's map, widespread improvements were made in drought-affected areas of Tennessee where rainfall has been well above normal during the past 30-to-60-day period across much of the state. In southern Texas, areas of drought expanded where hot and dry conditions have prevailed during the past 30 days. In the Texas Panhandle, short and longer-term dryness led to intensification of drought with year-to-date precipitation deficits ranging from 3 to 8+ inches. Looking at the reservoir situation, Water Data for Texas (July 29) reports statewide reservoirs at 78% full, with eastern reservoirs in good condition while numerous western, northern (Panhandle), and southern reservoirs remain below normal. Looking at climatological rankings for the past 30-days, record to near-record mean temperatures were observed in areas of the region, including in Brownville, TX (2nd warmest on record; +2 °F departure), Amarillo, TX (8th warmest; +3 °F departure), Gulfport, MS (4th warmest; +2 °F departure) and Jackson, MS (5th warmest; +2 °F departure). Average temperatures for the week were above normal across most of the region (1 to 10+ °F) with the greatest anomalies observed in the panhandles of Oklahoma and Texas.

Midwest

On this week's map, widespread degradations were made on the map across the northern portions of the region including Minnesota, Iowa, Wisconsin, and Illinois. In terms of rainfall for the week, much of the region was dry and well above normal temperatures were observed in Minnesota with 2 to 8+ °F departures. Additionally, NDMC's flash drought composite map (July 27) showed flash drought conditions developing across areas in the Upper Midwest including Minnesota, Wisconsin, and Michigan. Looking at climatological rankings for the past 30-day period, numerous locations ranked among their warmest or near warmest mean temperatures on record, including Hibbing, MN (warmest on record; +6 °F departure); Minneapolis/St. Paul Airport (2nd warmest; +5 °F departure); Dubuque, IA (2nd warmest; +5 °F departure); Eau Claire, WI (2nd warmest; +4 °F departure); and Milwaukee, WI (4th warmest; +3 °F departure).

High Plains

For the week, drought-related conditions deteriorated across the region including in the Dakotas, Nebraska, and Kansas where temperatures were well above normal, especially in western portions of the region where anomalies ranged from 3 to 9 °F above normal. NDMC's flash drought composite map (July 27) also showed flash drought conditions developing with numerous drought impact reports coming into the NDMC's Condition Monitoring Observer Report (CMOR) reporting system during the past 7-day period—especially in the Dakotas in relation to crop and rangeland conditions. Looking at climatological rankings for the past 30-day period, numerous locations ranked among their warmest or near warmest mean temperatures on record, including: Rapid City NWS Weather Forecast Office, SD (warmest on record; +8 °F departure); Custer, SD (3rd warmest; +6 °F departure); Bismarck, ND (5th warmest; +5 °F departure); and Fargo, ND (3rd warmest; +5 °F departure).

West

On the map, drought-related conditions deteriorated in areas of eastern Colorado, eastern New Mexico, southeastern California, and western Washington. Conversely, beneficial monsoonal rainfall led to improvements across Arizona, northwestern New Mexico, southeastern Utah, and northeastern Nevada. In the Southwest, an active monsoonal pattern (June 15 to present) has led to above-normal precipitation, especially in Arizona where percentages of normal have ranged from 150% to 250% above normal across southeastern, central, and northern portions of the state. According to the NWS Forecast Office in Tucson, AZ monsoon statistics, the following Arizona locations have received above-normal rainfall for the monsoon season: Nogales, Sierra Vista, Wilcox, Ajo, Globe, Apache Junction, Flagstaff, Kingman, Page, Prescott, Show Low, and Winslow. In Colorado, drought expanded and intensified on the map in response to anomalously warm temperatures, decreased soil moisture levels, and elevated evaporative demand. Looking at climatological rankings for the past 30-day period, numerous locations ranked among their warmest or near warmest mean temperatures on record, including: Montrose, CO (warmest on record; +3 °F departure); Dinosaur, CO (warmest on record; +4 °F departure); Grand Junction, CO (2nd warmest; +4 °F departure); Trinidad, CO (2nd warmest; +4 °F departure); Denver, CO (2nd warmest; +3 °F departure); Rock Springs, WY (3rd warmest; +4 °F departure); Casper, WY (3rd warmest; +5 °F departure); Salt Lake

City, UT (5th warmest; +4 °F departure); and Pocatello, ID (5th warmest; +4 °F departure).

Caribbean

In Puerto Rico, rainfall deficits during the past 30-90-day period led to expansion and intensification of drought in southern and northeastern portions of the island. Impacts related to the drought conditions include water rationing for farmers in the southwest and northeast, low streamflows, and stressed crops.

The U.S. Virgin Islands remained in extreme drought (D3-S), despite scattered showers locally totaling more than one-half inch during the drought-monitoring period. Standardized Precipitation Index (SPI) values at time periods up to 3 months are indicative of D3. The drought, which began in late-spring 2026 and has rapidly intensified, has had a profound effect on vegetation health. Other impacts have included an elevated wildfire threat, reduced surface water supplies, and increasing depth to groundwater. For example, depth to water at the U.S. Geological Survey well on St. John recently topped 17.2 feet for the first time since early-October 2023. Chronically elevated temperatures have been a complicating factor, with King Airport on St. Thomas experiencing more documented days with 95-degree heat – four – in July 2026 than in any other month during the 21st century.

Pacific

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

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

The entirety of the U.S.-Affiliated Pacific Islands remained free of dryness and drought. At the end of the drought-monitoring period, Super Typhoon Dolphin passed north of the Republic of the Marshall Islands (RMI), between Utirik Atoll and Wake Island. Based on preliminary reports, weekly rainfall in the RMI surpassed 6 inches at Mili and ranged from 2 to 4 inches at Majuro, Jaluit, and Ailinglaplap. Widespread showers in the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM) resulted in weekly totals of more than 8 inches at Pohnpei and more than 4 inches at Chuuk Lagoon. Through July 28, month-to-date rainfall in the FSM included 18.96 inches for Yap and 17.02 inches for Chuuk. Ample rain also continued to fall across the Republic of Palau. Meanwhile, as Super Typhoon Bavi recovery efforts continued across Guam and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, month-to-date rainfall at Guam International Airport climbed to 20.90 inches, nearly twice the normal value for July 1-28. Finally, shower activity increased across American Samoa, with Pago Pago International Airport receiving 1.23 inches during the drought-monitoring period and 6.71 inches during the first 28 days of July.

Looking Ahead

The NWS Weather Prediction Center's 5-Day Quantitative Precipitation Forecast calls for the heavy precipitation accumulations across portions of the Gulf Coast from southeastern Louisiana to west-central Florida, where totals ranging from 3 to 5+ inches are expected. In other areas of the Southeast and Mid-Atlantic, lighter accumulations, generally ranging from 1

to 2+ inches, are expected. In the Northeast, Midwest, and eastern portions of the High Plains, precipitation accumulations generally ranging from 1 to 4+ inches are expected. In the Four Corners states, isolated monsoonal rainfall with accumulations ranging from 1 to 2 inches are forecast, while dry conditions are expected across most of the Intermountain West, Great Basin, and West Coast states.

The NWS 6-10-Day Temperature Outlook, valid August 3-7, 2026, favors above-normal temperatures across most of the contiguous United States, with the highest probabilities centered across California, the Great Basin, Desert Southwest, and portions of the central and southern Rockies. Above-normal temperatures are also favored across the Plains, Midwest, South, Southeast, and the Northeast. Near-normal temperatures are favored across portions of the Pacific Northwest and central Gulf Coast. Across Alaska, above-normal temperatures are favored, while near-normal temperatures are forecast for Southwest Alaska and the Aleutian Islands. Above-normal temperatures are favored across Hawaii.

The NWS 6-10-Day Precipitation Outlook favors above-normal precipitation across portions of the Southwest, western and southern Texas, southern Florida, Upper Midwest, and the Northeast. Below-normal precipitation is favored across portions of the Pacific Northwest, northern Rockies, northern Great Basin, and western portions of the Plains states. Elsewhere, near-normal conditions are expected. In the Hawaiian Islands, above-normal precipitation is favored.

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