National Drought Summary for October 20, 2026

Summary

Drought conditions improved across large areas of the U.S. this week, while deterioration extended from the Lower Mississippi Valley into the western Ohio River Valley. Temperatures averaged 2 to 6 degrees above normal across much of the northern Plains, Midwest, Northeast and West, with localized departures of 6 to 9 degrees. Near- to below-normal temperatures prevailed across portions of the southern Plains, Southwest and Southeast. Precipitation varied considerably, with much of the Pacific Coast, northern Plains and Southeast receiving less than 25% of normal rainfall, while portions of the central and southern Plains, Rockies and Upper Midwest received more than 200% of normal, locally exceeding 400%.

A powerful storm system brought heavy to excessive rainfall across portions of Texas and Oklahoma Oct. 13-15, with totals of 3 to 5 inches in the southeastern Texas Panhandle and localized amounts of 6 to 8 inches in western and central Oklahoma. The storm caused localized flooding and a record crest along the Middle Wichita River in northwestern Texas. Rainfall departures locally exceeded 6 inches above normal, providing substantial relief from prolonged dryness and supporting widespread drought improvements across Texas and Oklahoma. Additional improvements occurred across portions of Kansas, Nebraska, Colorado, Wyoming, Utah, Arizona and New Mexico, where recent rain and mountain snow helped replenish soil moisture and ease short-term deficits. Localized improvements also occurred in Washington.

In contrast, drought intensified from the Lower Mississippi Valley into the western Ohio River Valley, particularly across Arkansas, Louisiana, Mississippi, Tennessee and southern Missouri, with localized degradations extending into Alabama, northern Georgia and the southern Midwest. Persistent 30- to 90-day precipitation deficits, depleted soil moisture and exceptionally low streamflows supported these changes. Keetch-Byram Drought Index (KBDI) values, which measure dryness in the upper soil and vegetation layers, reached 700 to 800 in portions of Arkansas, Louisiana and Mississippi, indicating severe dryness and elevated wildfire potential.

Elsewhere, rainfall from the preceding week supported drought improvements across portions of Virginia, the Carolinas and Georgia. Localized improvements also occurred in the Northeast, although drought worsened slightly in northern Maine. Outside the Lower 48, drought improved in western and eastern Puerto Rico, while longer-term dryness persisted along the southern coast. Substantial rainfall eliminated the remaining abnormal dryness (D0) in Southeast Alaska, while drought persisted in the upper Tanana Valley. Conditions remained unchanged across Hawaii.

Northeast

Drought conditions generally improved across portions of the Northeast this week, particularly in New England, New York and New Jersey. Precipitation was unevenly distributed, providing localized relief from short-term dryness. Temperatures averaged near to below normal across Maine and coastal New England, while much of New York, Pennsylvania and the Mid-Atlantic experienced temperatures 1 to 6 degrees above normal. Despite recent rainfall, significant

precipitation deficits and below-normal groundwater and streamflow conditions persisted across portions of northern Maine and the Mid-Atlantic.

One-category improvements occurred across portions of New York, Vermont, New Hampshire, western Massachusetts and northeastern Connecticut, where recent rainfall helped improve short-term conditions. Additional improvements occurred in New Jersey, although low groundwater levels continued to limit recovery in some areas. Maine was the only state in the region to experience deterioration, with a slight expansion of severe drought (D2) in the north amid persistent moisture shortages. Conditions remained unchanged across Pennsylvania, Delaware, Maryland, West Virginia and Rhode Island.

Southeast

Drought conditions improved across much of the Southeast this week, primarily reflecting the lingering benefits of heavy rainfall during the preceding week. Although precipitation during the current week was more limited and unevenly distributed, rainfall accumulated over the previous 14 to 21 days continued to ease short-term moisture deficits across portions of Virginia, the Carolinas and Georgia. Temperatures averaged 3 to 6 degrees above normal across much of Virginia and North Carolina, with localized departures of 6 to 9 degrees. Farther south, temperatures were generally near normal to 3 degrees above normal across South Carolina and Georgia, while portions of Alabama and Florida experienced near- to slightly below-normal temperatures. Despite recent rainfall, significant dryness persisted across western portions of the region. Keetch-Byram Drought Index (KBDI) values remained around 600 to 800 across much of Alabama and northern Georgia, compared with values generally below 400 across eastern Virginia, the eastern Carolinas and northern Florida.

One-category improvements occurred across portions of Virginia, central and western North Carolina, South Carolina and Georgia, supported by improving short-term precipitation indicators and soil moisture conditions. However, localized drought degradations occurred across portions of Alabama, northern Georgia and coastal Virginia and North Carolina, where persistent rainfall deficits and declining soil moisture contributed to worsening drought severity. Elevated KBDI values across Alabama and northern Georgia provided additional evidence of continued dryness. In Florida, moderate drought (D1) was reduced locally in southwestern and southeastern portions of the state. However, moderate drought expanded in southeastern Florida, where longer-term precipitation deficits and low groundwater levels continued to support drought conditions.

South

Drought conditions varied considerably across the South this week, with substantial improvements across portions of Texas and Oklahoma contrasting with continued deterioration across the Lower Mississippi Valley and Tennessee. A powerful storm system brought heavy to excessive rainfall to the southern Plains Oct. 13-15, providing significant relief following prolonged hot and dry conditions during August and September. Rainfall totals of 3 to 5 inches were reported across portions of the southeastern Texas Panhandle and northern Rolling

Plains, while localized totals reached 6 to 8 inches west of Oklahoma City (NWS Lubbock; NWS Weather Prediction Center). Oklahoma City recorded 4.99 inches by late afternoon Oct. 14 (NWS Norman), while Lubbock, Texas, received 2.04 inches during the storm period (NWS Lubbock). The heavy rainfall caused localized flooding and substantial rises in streams and rivers, including a record crest of 18.91 feet on the Middle Wichita River near Guthrie, Texas (NWS Lubbock). Improving precipitation indicators, soil moisture and streamflows supported widespread one-category improvements across western and northern Texas, the Texas Panhandle and much of Oklahoma, including reductions in exceptional drought (D4). However, accumulated moisture deficits limited more widespread drought removal.

In contrast, drought intensified across other portions of Texas, Arkansas, Louisiana, Mississippi and Tennessee, where rainfall remained insufficient to offset prolonged deficits. Keetch-Byram Drought Index (KBDI) values reached approximately 700 to 800 in parts of Arkansas, Louisiana and Mississippi, indicating severe dryness. Extreme drought (D3) expanded across northern Arkansas, while exceptional drought (D4) developed or expanded across southern Arkansas and northern Louisiana. Worsening 30-, 60- and 90-day precipitation indicators, severely depleted soil moisture and exceptionally low streamflows supported these changes. Agricultural impact reports also documented worsening conditions across Arkansas. Additional drought expansion and intensification occurred across Mississippi and Tennessee, where persistent moisture shortages continued to affect agricultural and hydrologic conditions.

Midwest

Drought conditions were mixed across the Midwest this week, with localized improvements and degradations concentrated in the southern portion of the region. Precipitation was widespread but unevenly distributed, with much of Minnesota, Iowa, Wisconsin and Michigan receiving approximately 0.25 to 1.5 inches of rain and locally higher amounts of 1.5 to 2 inches. Farther south, rainfall generally ranged from 0.5 to 2 inches across portions of Missouri, Illinois, Indiana and Kentucky. Although the rainfall provided localized relief, accumulated precipitation deficits and lingering moisture shortages continued to affect portions of the region, particularly northern Minnesota, Wisconsin and the Upper Peninsula of Michigan.

One-category improvements occurred across portions of Missouri, Illinois and Kentucky, where recent rainfall helped ease short-term moisture deficits and improve soil moisture conditions. However, localized degradations also occurred across Missouri, Illinois, Indiana and Kentucky, particularly in areas that missed the heavier rainfall or continued to experience substantial precipitation deficits. The most significant deterioration occurred across southern Missouri, where extreme drought (D3) expanded along the Arkansas border. Across Minnesota, Iowa, Wisconsin and Michigan, drought conditions remained largely unchanged, as recent precipitation helped stabilize short-term conditions but was insufficient to overcome longer-term moisture deficits.

High Plains

Drought conditions generally improved across portions of the central and southern High Plains

this week, while no changes occurred across the northern Plains. Temperatures averaged 2 to 6 degrees above normal across much of the Dakotas and eastern Wyoming, with locally higher departures. Farther south, temperatures ranged from near to slightly above normal across portions of Nebraska, eastern Colorado and northern Kansas to 2 to 4 degrees below normal across southern Kansas. Precipitation varied considerably, with much of North Dakota and northern South Dakota receiving less than 25% of normal rainfall. In contrast, portions of eastern Colorado, Nebraska and Kansas received more than 200% of normal precipitation, locally exceeding 400%[EC1.1]. Rainfall totals of 1 to 2 inches were common across portions of the central High Plains, including 1 to 1.5 inches in central Nebraska and more than an inch in parts of the northern Nebraska Panhandle. Portions of eastern Wyoming received approximately 0.75 to 1.25 inches.

One-category improvements occurred across portions of eastern Wyoming, eastern Colorado, Nebraska and Kansas, where recent precipitation helped reduce short-term moisture deficits and improve soil moisture conditions. In Nebraska, improvements were concentrated across central, south-central and northeastern portions of the state, while additional improvements occurred across southern Kansas. The only degradation in the region occurred in northeastern Colorado, where persistent moisture deficits supported a localized increase in drought severity. Longer-term deficits also continued to limit recovery across portions of eastern Wyoming, western Nebraska and western South Dakota. No changes occurred across North Dakota and South Dakota, where precipitation during the current week was limited. However, moisture received during preceding weeks helped maintain existing drought conditions despite continued precipitation deficits and above-normal temperatures.

West

Drought conditions improved across portions of the West this week, with no deterioration reported. Temperatures averaged 2 to 6 degrees above normal across much of the Pacific Northwest, California, the Great Basin and the northern Rockies, with isolated areas reaching 6 to 8 degrees above normal. Farther south, temperatures were generally near to slightly below normal across portions of Arizona and New Mexico. Precipitation was limited across much of Washington, Oregon, California, Nevada, Idaho and Montana, where many areas received less than 25% of normal precipitation, including some areas receiving less than 5% of normal. In contrast, portions of Utah, western Colorado and Wyoming received more than 200% of normal precipitation, with localized amounts exceeding 400% of normal. A storm system brought rain and high-elevation snow to portions of the Rockies on Oct. 14-15, with reported snowfall totals of 4.3 inches at Silver Lake Brighton, Utah, and 3 inches near Evanston, Wyoming, on Oct. 14 (NOAA snowfall).

Localized one-category improvements occurred in Washington, while no changes occurred across Oregon, California, Nevada, Idaho and Montana. Persistent streamflow shortages continued to affect portions of Idaho, while low surface water levels and long-term moisture deficits limited recovery in southeastern Montana. Farther south, one-category improvements occurred across portions of western and central Wyoming, the Colorado Rockies, Utah, Arizona and New Mexico. In Wyoming and Colorado, recent rain and mountain snow helped ease

short-term moisture deficits. In Utah, improvements extended across portions of the Wasatch Front, central mountains and southeastern Utah, supported by recent precipitation and improving short-term drought indicators. In Arizona, improvements were concentrated across portions of the central mountains and eastern Arizona, while repeated rainfall in recent weeks supported additional improvements across central and southern New Mexico. Despite these changes, long-term hydrologic drought persisted across portions of the Colorado River and Rio Grande basins. On Oct. 20, Lake Powell held approximately 5.3 million acre-feet of water, or about 22% of capacity, while reservoir storage along the Rio Grande remained exceptionally low (Bureau of Reclamation).

Caribbean

Drought conditions continued to improve across portions of Puerto Rico this week following additional rainfall and the lingering benefits of precipitation during recent weeks. Rainfall was unevenly distributed, with the most beneficial moisture affecting portions of western and eastern Puerto Rico and the nearby islands. Improving 30- to 60-day precipitation indicators, soil moisture conditions and streamflows supported additional drought relief. However, longer-term precipitation deficits persisted across portions of the southern coastal plains and interior, where groundwater shortages and low reservoir levels continued to indicate lingering hydrologic drought.

One-category improvements occurred across portions of western and eastern Puerto Rico, including localized areas of Vieques and Culebra, where recent rainfall helped reduce short-term moisture deficits. Despite these improvements, drought persisted across portions of southern Puerto Rico, where longer-term precipitation deficits and groundwater shortages continued to limit recovery. Low reservoir storage in the Río de la Plata Basin also remained a concern, supporting the retention of existing drought classifications in affected areas.

With the Atlantic tropical basin remaining quiet, showers across the U.S. Virgin Islands were mostly scattered, light, and disorganized. Impacts from a 5-month drought continued to mount across the territory, with serious effects on agriculture (crop stress, animal mortality), vegetation health, soil moisture, and groundwater reserves. A few areas, mainly on St. Croix, received more than an inch of rain during the drought-monitoring period ending October 20, although several locations throughout the territory netted one-quarter inch or less. This is usually the wettest time of year in the U.S. Virgin Islands, with many locations typically receiving more than 40 percent of their normal annual rainfall during autumn (September-November). St. Thomas has been in exceptional drought since September 22 and has spent 5 weeks in D4 status. St. John and St. Croix have spent 15 consecutive weeks in extreme drought (D3), with just enough rain falling to prevent further deterioration. Depth to water at the U.S. Geological Survey’s Susannaberg DPW 3 well on St. John recently increased to more than 19.4 feet, compared to about 7.7 feet at the same time a year ago.

Pacific

Drought conditions improved across Southeast Alaska this week, where substantial rainfall

during recent weeks provided relief from lingering moisture deficits. Temperatures averaged approximately 2 to 6 degrees above normal across portions of the Interior and Southcentral Alaska. Precipitation was unevenly distributed, with generally light amounts across much of the Interior and heavier rainfall across portions of Southcentral and Southeast Alaska, where localized totals exceeded 2 inches.

The remaining abnormal dryness (D0) was removed from Southeast Alaska following substantial rainfall and improving moisture conditions. However, moderate drought (D1) persisted in the upper Tanana Valley of eastern Alaska, where longer-term moisture deficits continued to support existing drought conditions.

Conditions remained unchanged across Hawaii this week. Temperatures averaged within 0.5 degrees of normal across most of the state, with slightly below-normal temperatures across Oahu, Molokai and Maui and slightly above-normal temperatures across Kauai, Lanai and the Big Island. Moderate to breezy trade winds prevailed during the week, with passing easterly waves bringing periods of enhanced showers to windward and mountainous areas, particularly Oct. 16-19 (NWS Honolulu). Precipitation was generally 0.5 to 1 inch below normal across leeward portions of the islands, while windward areas received slightly above-normal rainfall. Portions of the windward Big Island received 1 to 2 inches more than normal. No changes occurred with abnormal dryness (D0) persisting across leeward portions of the Big Island. The remainder of the state remained free of drought and abnormal dryness.

Tropical Cyclone Champi passed just south of the Marianas, with Guam narrowly avoiding a direct strike from the super typhoon. Guam International Airport clocked a peak easterly wind gust to 83 mph on October 18, while about 130 miles to the north, Saipan International Airport recorded a southeasterly gust to 56 mph. Nearly 5 inches of rain fell at Guam International Airport before, during, and after Champi's near-miss. Meanwhile, variable showers dotted the Republic of the Marshall Islands (RMI) and the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM). The RMI remained free of drought and abnormal dryness, with higher weekly rainfall amounts (more than 3 inches) occurring at Majuro and Wotje. Majuro's reservoir storage topped 39 million gallons by October 12, up from 36 million gallons earlier in the month. In the FSM, Kapingamarangi remained in moderate drought (D1), having received little rain in 7 of the last 9 weeks. Drought-related impacts on Kapingamarangi included crop stress, limited soil moisture availability, and reduced storage in water tanks. The remainder of the FSM, except Lukunor, was experiencing neither drought nor abnormal dryness. However, abnormal dryness (D0) was introduced for Lukunor, as little rain has fallen for 5 consecutive weeks. Finally, abnormal dryness (D0) persisted across the Republic of Palau and in American Samoa. Palau has been either abnormally dry (D0) or in moderate drought (D1) each week starting August 18, 2026. Similarly, D0 or D1 has been present each week in American Samoa from August 25 to present, with rainfall so far this month at Pago Pago International Airport totaling less than 2 inches. Some other locations in American Samoa have fared slightly better, although recent rain at a pair of National Park Service sites (Toa Ridge and Siufaga Ridge) has not completed erased dryness-related concerns.

Looking Ahead

Over the next five days (Oct. 22-27), the Weather Prediction Center's quantitative precipitation forecast shows widespread precipitation across parts of the central and southern Rockies, particularly Colorado and northern New Mexico, where widespread totals of 1 to 3 inches are forecast, with localized amounts of 5 or more inches. Father west, widespread precipitation is forecast across the Intermountain West and Pacific Coast, including Washington, Oregon and California, with totals generally ranging from 0.5 to 2 inches and locally higher amounts in mountainous areas. Across the Southwest, precipitation is expected across portions of Arizona, Utah and New Mexico, while southern California and the lower deserts will remain relatively dry. East of the Rockies, 0.5 to 2 inches is expected across portions of the central and northern Plains, with heavy precipitation of up to 3 to 5 inches expected from western Texas and the Panhandle, eastern New Mexico, Oklahoma's Panhandle and southwestern Kansas. Much of the Mississippi Valley, Midwest, Southeast and Northeast are expected to remain dry. Additional rainfall is expected across the southern and Atlantic coasts of Florida, while the heaviest precipitation associated with an offshore weather system is expected to remain over the Atlantic Ocean.

The Climate Prediction Center's 6-10 day temperature outlook (Oct. 26-30) favors above-normal temperatures across much of the southern two-thirds of the Lower 48, including California, the Southwest, central and southern Plains, Mississippi Valley and Southeast. The highest probabilities for above-normal temperatures are centered across portions of the Southwest, southern Plains and lower Mississippi Valley, where continued warmth could increase evaporative demand and reinforce existing moisture deficits in the areas that miss significant rainfall. In contrast, below-normal temperatures are favored along the Canadian border from the northern Rockies into the northern Plains and across portions of northern New England. Near-normal temperatures are strongly favored across Alaska and most of Hawaii.

The Climate Prediction Center's 6-10 day precipitation outlook (Oct. 26-30) favors above-normal precipitation across a broad area extending from California and the Southwest through portions of Arizona, New Mexico and western Texas. Above-normal precipitation is also favored across the Florida Peninsula and portions of coastal Georgia and South Carolina. In contrast, below-normal precipitation is favored from the lower Mississippi Valley northeastward through the Ohio Valley, Appalachians and Northeast. Below-normal precipitation is also favored across portions of the Pacific Northwest and Southeast Alaska, while above-normal precipitation is favored across much of mainland Alaska and Hawaii.

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