National Drought Summary – April 21, 2020

Synopsis: A very active precipitation pattern impacted areas of the South into the Southeast over the last week. As with the recent storm paths, the areas along the Gulf Coast were again in an unfavorable position in which some areas did see rains, but the dryness continued. A spring snow event tracked through the Plains and into the Midwest, bringing with it a mix of rain and snow. Temperatures were cooler than normal over almost the entire CONUS region with only the coastal regions of the West and Florida being above normal for temperatures. Departures were greatest over the Midwest, where temperatures were 12-15 degrees below normal.

The Northeast: The region has been drought-free, and conditions remain favorable for the pattern to continue. Temperatures were 4-8 degrees below normal in New England and 8-12 degrees below normal through Pennsylvania, western New York and into West Virginia. The region was mostly dry for the week with some areas of Pennsylvania, New York and southern New England recording above-normal precipitation.

Southeast: Temperatures were below normal for most of the region outside of Florida where departures were 3-9 degrees below normal for the week. In Florida, temperatures were near normal in the north and 6-9 degrees above normal in central and south Florida. As with the last several weeks, the greatest precipitation was recorded over central Alabama and Georgia, where 200-400% of normal was observed. Portions of northern Florida were impacted by two rain events this week, with up to 200% of normal precipitation for the week. South Florida and areas along the Gulf Coast of Alabama were drier than normal with far south Florida recording less than 5% of normal precipitation for the week.

Midwest: Cooler than normal temperatures dominated the region, with departures of 12-16 degrees below normal observed. The region was mostly dry this week with only areas of southern Iowa and the northern extent of lower Michigan recording above-normal precipitation with some late-season snow mixed into totals. Portions of central Illinois and Indiana as well as central Michigan and western Minnesota have had some dryness developing over the last several months. Abnormally dry conditions were introduced into Michigan and Minnesota this week. Most areas are welcoming the dry weather as agricultural activity has been increasing with expedited fieldwork with the favorable conditions.

High Plains: The region was also cooler than normal for the week, with departures of 8-12 degrees below normal over most of the region. The region was mostly dry for the week, with only areas of eastern Kansas and southeast Wyoming above normal. Similar to what has been observed in the Midwest, the dry conditions have been favorable for early fieldwork in the agricultural sector as well as calving. There have been many discussions about the dryness in northern Kansas and southern Nebraska, but so far, no real issues are developing. Eastern Colorado and southwest Kansas remain the hot spots for drought. New areas of abnormally dry conditions were introduced over most of western North Dakota into northwest South Dakota this week. Northeast South Dakota also had a pocket of abnormally dry conditions introduced. A new area of abnormally dry conditions was introduced in portions of northern Kansas and southern Kansas. The dry areas are being discussed extensively by the local experts, who are monitoring the situation closely.
**South:** Much of the region was dry, especially in portions of Texas and Oklahoma and southern Louisiana. The big exception was Mississippi, central Louisiana, and into east Texas where up to 400% of normal precipitation was again recorded this week. Cooler than normal temperatures helped to offset the dryness as most areas were 6-12 degrees below normal for the week. In response to the short-term dryness, abnormally dry conditions and moderate drought were expanded over portions of the Texas and Oklahoma panhandles with a couple of new pockets of abnormally dry conditions in western Oklahoma into Texas. The abnormally dry conditions were expanded over west Texas while a reassessment of conditions in south Texas led to improvements and the removal of exceptional drought in the region. Mostly status quo was maintained along the Gulf Coast of Texas, where some improvements were made, but a new severe drought pocket popped up along the coast. Improvements were made to the abnormally dry conditions in Louisiana and Mississippi in response to the rain, and even some severe drought was improved in southern Louisiana. The coastal regions remain dry and will continue to be monitored.

**West:** Cooler than normal temperatures dominated the region, with departures of 9-12 degrees below normal over the Rocky Mountains and 3-6 degrees below normal over the Southwest and into the Great Basin. Temperatures were near normal to 3-6 degrees above normal over most of California, Oregon, and Washington. Some pockets of precipitation in the region were observed, but this was mostly a dry week over much of the area. In response to the continued dryness, a new area of extreme drought was introduced this week in northern California and southwest Oregon. These areas are experiencing widespread impacts to the agricultural sector as well as those systems not impacted by or benefitting from stored water. Drought areas expanded in and intensified over much of Oregon while abnormally dry conditions expanded over western Washington. Due to the good late-season snowpack in Idaho and western Montana, some areas of abnormally dry conditions were improved this week. Southern Idaho showed degradation this week with drought areas expanding and abnormally dry conditions spreading into southwest portions of the state. Far northeast Montana did see abnormally dry conditions spread south this week. A new area of severe drought was introduced into central Utah with an expansion of moderate drought conditions as well, while severe drought was expanded over most of southern Colorado and into northern New Mexico.

**Hawaii, Alaska and Puerto Rico:** In response to a recent wetter pattern and the indicators showing improvement, a full category improvement was made on Molokai this week, eliminating severe drought and reducing moderate drought and abnormally dry conditions on the western areas of the island. No changes were made this week for Alaska or Puerto Rico.

**Looking Ahead:** Over the next 5-7 days, it is anticipated that the eastern half of the United States will stay in an active storm pattern, with the greatest precipitation expected over the Lower Mississippi Valley, into the Ohio River Valley and into the Southeast, including Florida. Some coastal precipitation is expected over portions of Washington and into Oregon, but most of the rest of the West is not anticipating much precipitation. Temperatures during this time will be cooler than normal over the East and especially the Northeast, where departures will be in the range of 9-12 degrees below normal. The West and Southwest are anticipated to be the warmest with departures of 9-12 degrees above normal.
The 6-10 day outlooks show a higher probability of drier than normal conditions over much of the West and into the Plains and Southeast as well as Alaska. In contrast, there is a higher probability of wetter than normal conditions over the Midwest and Northeast. Temperatures during this time show that the greatest probability of warmer than normal temperatures is over the Southwest with much of the western half of the United States having a greater likelihood of warmer than normal temperatures. Much of the Midwest, the Northeast, the Mid-Atlantic and eastern Alaska have the best chances of recording below-normal temperatures, with the highest probabilities in the Northeast.

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