



Natural Resources Conservation Service
P.O. Box 2890
Washington, D.C. 20013

Weekly Report - Snowpack / Drought Monitor Update

Date: 7 March 2013

SNOTEL SNOWPACK AND PRECIPITATION SUMMARY

Temperature: [SNOTEL](#) and ACIS 7-day temperature anomaly ending 6 March shows generally warmer than normal conditions over the West with the Sierra Nevada sporting the greatest positive departures. Below average departures are scattered across the Four Corners (Fig. 1a). ACIS [7-day](#) average temperature anomalies show the greatest positive temperature departures over parts of southern California (>+6°F). The greatest negative departures occur over the Uinta Mountains of Utah (<-12°F) (Fig. 1b).

Precipitation: [ACIS](#) 7-day average precipitation amounts for the period ending yesterday show very little precipitation falling across the West, with the exception of the Olympic Mountains in Washington where up to four inches fell (Fig. 2a). However, the Northern Tier States reflect a higher percent of normal even with small totals for the week (Fig. 2b). Some additional precipitation fell over the western slope of the Colorado Rockies. In sharp contrast, note the expanse of deficits across the middle and low latitudes of the West. SNOTEL [month to date](#) precipitation percent of normal for March shows a wet week for the start of the month over the Northern Rockies; including northwestern Colorado. A dry pattern persists over much of the Four Corners and over the Lower Snake Drainage (OR, ID and NV) (Fig. 2c). For the [2013 Water Year](#) that began on 1 October 2012, the pattern continues to resemble La Niña with Arizona standing out as an exception to the dryness seen over the Southern Tier of the West (Fig. 2d).

Snow: The [7-day snow depth changes](#) for the week show some snow depth increases over the Sierra Nevada and scattered across the Northern and Central Rockies, including the central mountains in Idaho. However, elsewhere snowpack show declines of up to a foot in depth (Fig. 3a). Values decrease in a gradient from the Pacific Northwest to New Mexico. SWE values on average peak during the first week in March over the Southwest, with later peak dates as one travels northward. By the third week in April, peak SWE occurs over Montana and northern Idaho. Of course actual melt also depends on site elevation (Fig. 3b).

Week in Review: The past week featured generally dry conditions across most of the western half of the contiguous 48 states with a deep trough over the eastern half. The deep, low-pressure system over the eastern half of the contiguous 48 states yielded widespread precipitation, with rainfall totals generally less than 3.0 inches from the Ohio Valley to the Northeast, and across portions of the Mid-Atlantic. The Pacific Northwest was another stormy region, with multiple reports of more than 4 inches of precipitation during the past week. Isolated reports of 0.5-1.5 inches of precipitation came in from stations across the Central Rockies. Elsewhere, precipitation amounts were less than 0.5 inch.

The Rockies: Winter storms have brought some precipitation to portions of the Central and Northern Rockies, largely missing the southern Rockies since the start of the year. An area of D3 conditions was removed from Northwest Colorado based on standardized precipitation indices (SPIs) derived from PRISM gridded data (since this is a very data sparse region). The rest of the D3 region was retained as SNOTEL precipitation percentiles are primarily ranked

Weekly Snowpack and Drought Monitor Update Report

below the 5th percentile. Across northeastern Colorado, D4 (exception drought) was trimmed, based on recent (past 30 days) precipitation amounts being above normal.

Some of the storms that brought heavy rains to the Pacific Northwest also provided precipitation to the interior portions of the Northern Rockies. Some improvements were made to southern Idaho and northern Utah, based on a reassessment and using SPI3, SPI6, and a trailing, weighted SPI index as guiding values. Author: Matthew Rosencrans, NOAA/NWS/NCEP/Climate Prediction Center

A comprehensive narrative describing drought conditions for the nation can be found at the end of this document.

Drought Impacts Definitions

The possible impacts associated with **D4 (S, L)** drought include widespread crop/pasture losses and shortages of water in reservoirs, streams, and wells creating water emergencies. The possible impacts associated with **D3 (S, L)** drought include major crop/pasture losses and widespread water shortages or restrictions. Possible impacts from **D2 (S, L)** drought are focused on water shortages, water restrictions imposed, and crop or pasture losses. The possible impacts associated with **D1 (S, L)** drought are focused on water shortages developing in streams, reservoirs, or wells, and some damage to crops and pastures (Figs. 4 through 4c).

Soil Moisture

Soil moisture (Fig. 5) is simulated by the [VIC macroscale hydrologic model](#). The detailed, physically-based VIC model is driven by observed daily precipitation and temperature maxima and minima from approximately 2130 stations, selected for reporting reliably in real-time and for having records of longer than 45 years (and various other criteria). Another good resource can be found at: <http://www.emc.ncep.noaa.gov/mmb/nldas/drought/>.

Soil Climate Analysis Network (SCAN)

Figure 6 provides supplemental data on soil conditions (moisture and temperatures at various depths from 2 inches up to 40 inches. For more information about SCAN see [brochure](#).

U.S. Historical Streamflow

This map (Fig. 7) shows the 7-day average streamflow conditions in hydrologic units of the United States and Puerto Rico for the day of year. The colors represent 7-day average streamflow percentiles based on historical streamflow for the day of the year. Thus, the map shows conditions adjusted for this time of the year. Only stations having at least 30 years of record are used. Sub-regions shaded gray indicate that insufficient data were available to compute a reliable 7-day average streamflow value. During winter months, this situation frequently arises due to ice effects. The data used to produce this map are provisional and have not been reviewed or edited. They may be subject to significant change.

State Activities

State government drought activities can be tracked at the following URL: <http://drought.unl.edu/mitigate/mitigate.htm>. NRCS Snow Survey and Water Supply Forecasting (SSWSF) State Office personnel are participating in state drought committee meetings and providing the committees and media with appropriate SSWSF information - <http://www.wcc.nrcs.usda.gov/cgibin/bor.pl>. Additional information describing the products available from the Drought Monitor can be found at the following URLs: <http://drought.unl.edu/dm/> and <http://www.drought.gov>.

Weekly Snowpack and Drought Monitor Update Report

For More Information

The National Water and Climate Center (NWCC) Homepage provides the latest available snowpack and water supply information. Please visit us at <http://www.wcc.nrcs.usda.gov>. This document is available from the following location on the NWCC homepage - <http://www.wcc.nrcs.usda.gov/water/drought/wdr.pl>. Reports from 2007 are available online while ones from 2001-2006 can be acquired on request.

This report uses data and products provided by the Interagency Drought Monitor Consortium members and the National Interagency Fire Center.

/s/

Micheal L. Golden
Deputy Chief, Soil Science and Resource Assessment

Weekly Snowpack and Drought Monitor Update Report

SNOTEL (solid) and ACIS (dot-filled) Networks 7-Day Average Temperature Anomaly (Degrees F)

Mar 06, 2013

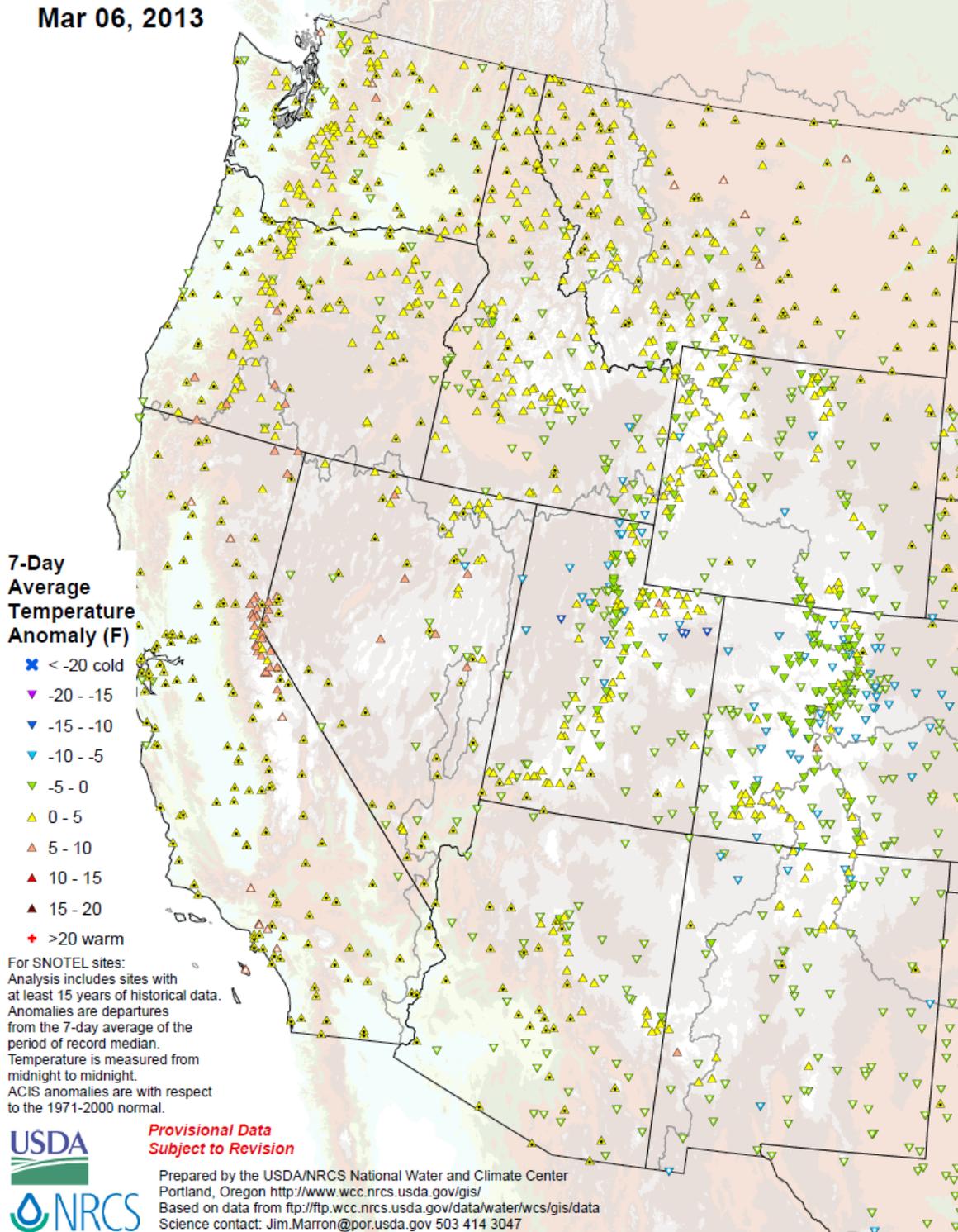
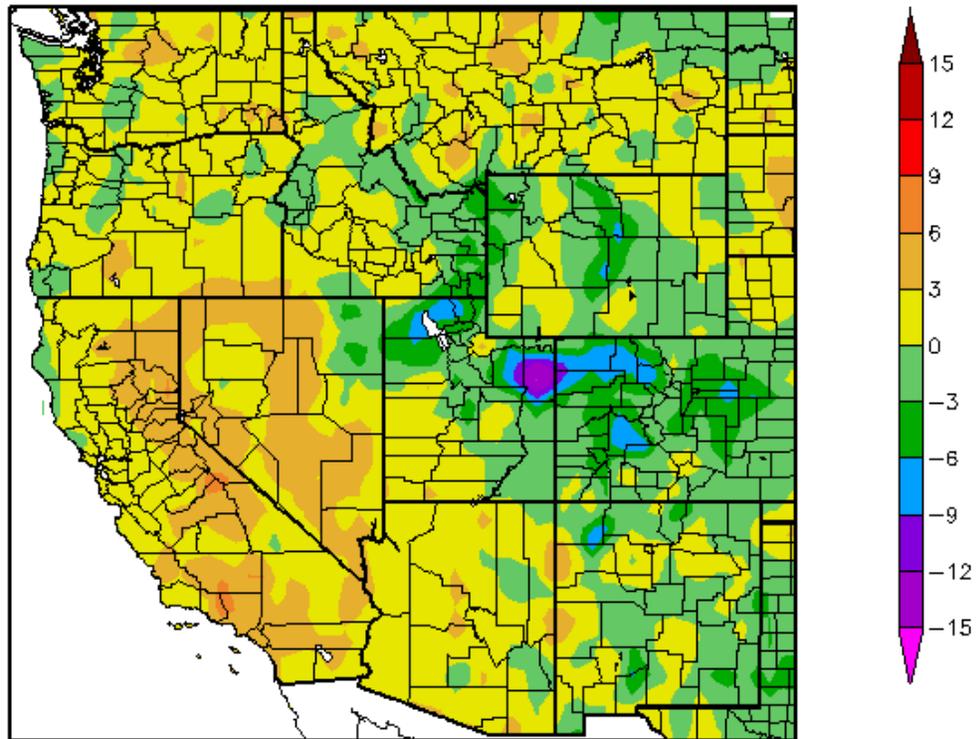


Fig. 1a: SNOTEL and ACIS 7-day temperature anomaly ending 6 March shows generally warmer than normal conditions over much of the West with the Sierra Nevada sporting the greatest positive departures. Below average departures are scattered across the Four Corners.

Weekly Snowpack and Drought Monitor Update Report

Departure from Normal Temperature (F)
2/28/2013 – 3/6/2013



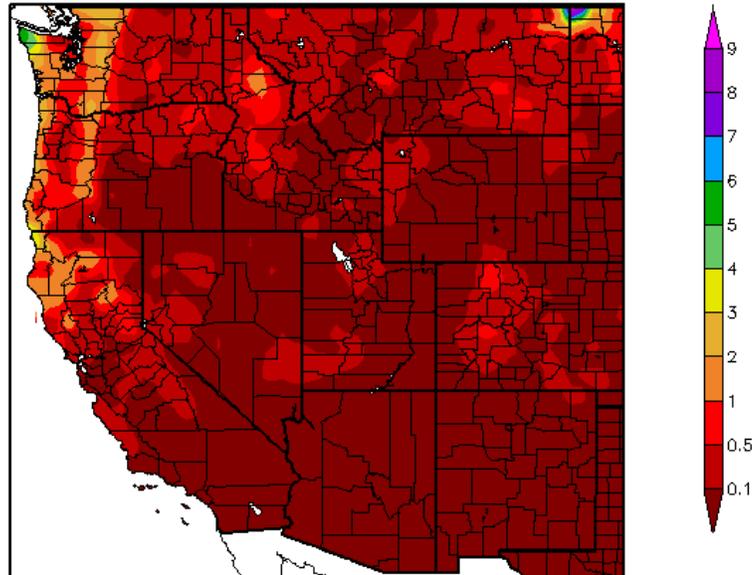
Generated 3/7/2013 at HPRCC using provisional data.

Regional Climate Centers

Fig. 1b: ACIS [7-day](#) average temperature anomalies show the greatest positive temperature departures over parts of southern California (>+6°F). The greatest negative departures occur over the Uinta Mountains of Utah (<-12°F). For more figures, see the Western Water Assessment's Intermountain West Climate [Dashboard](#).

Weekly Snowpack and Drought Monitor Update Report

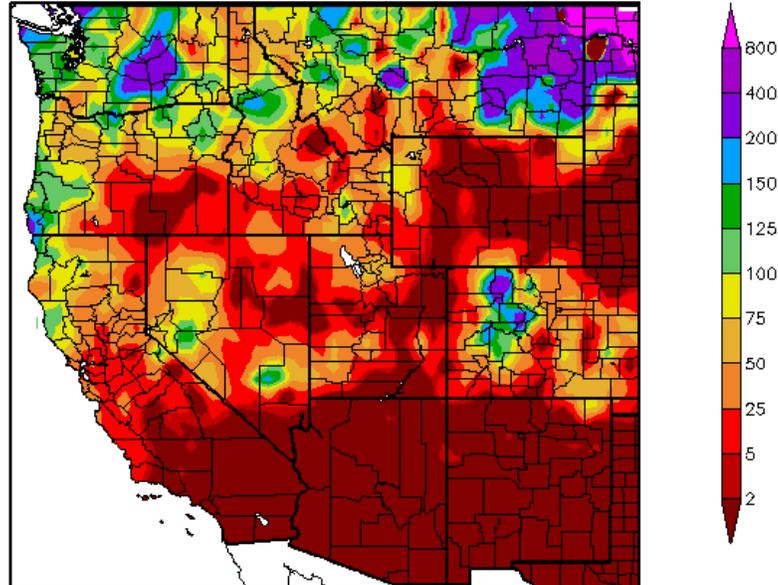
Precipitation (in)
2/28/2013 - 3/6/2013



Generated 3/7/2013 at HPRCC using provisional data.

Regional Climate Centers

Percent of Normal Precipitation (%)
2/28/2013 - 3/6/2013



Generated 3/7/2013 at HPRCC using provisional data.

Regional Climate Centers

Fig. 2a and 2b: [ACIS](#) 7-day average precipitation amounts for the period ending yesterday show very little precipitation falling across the West, with the exception of the Olympic Mountains in Washington where up to four inches fell (Fig. 2a). However, the Northern Tier States reflect higher percent of normal even with small totals for the week (Fig. 2b). Some additional precipitation fell over the western slope of the Colorado Rockies. In sharp contrast, note the expanse of deficits across the middle and low latitudes of the West.

Weekly Snowpack and Drought Monitor Update Report

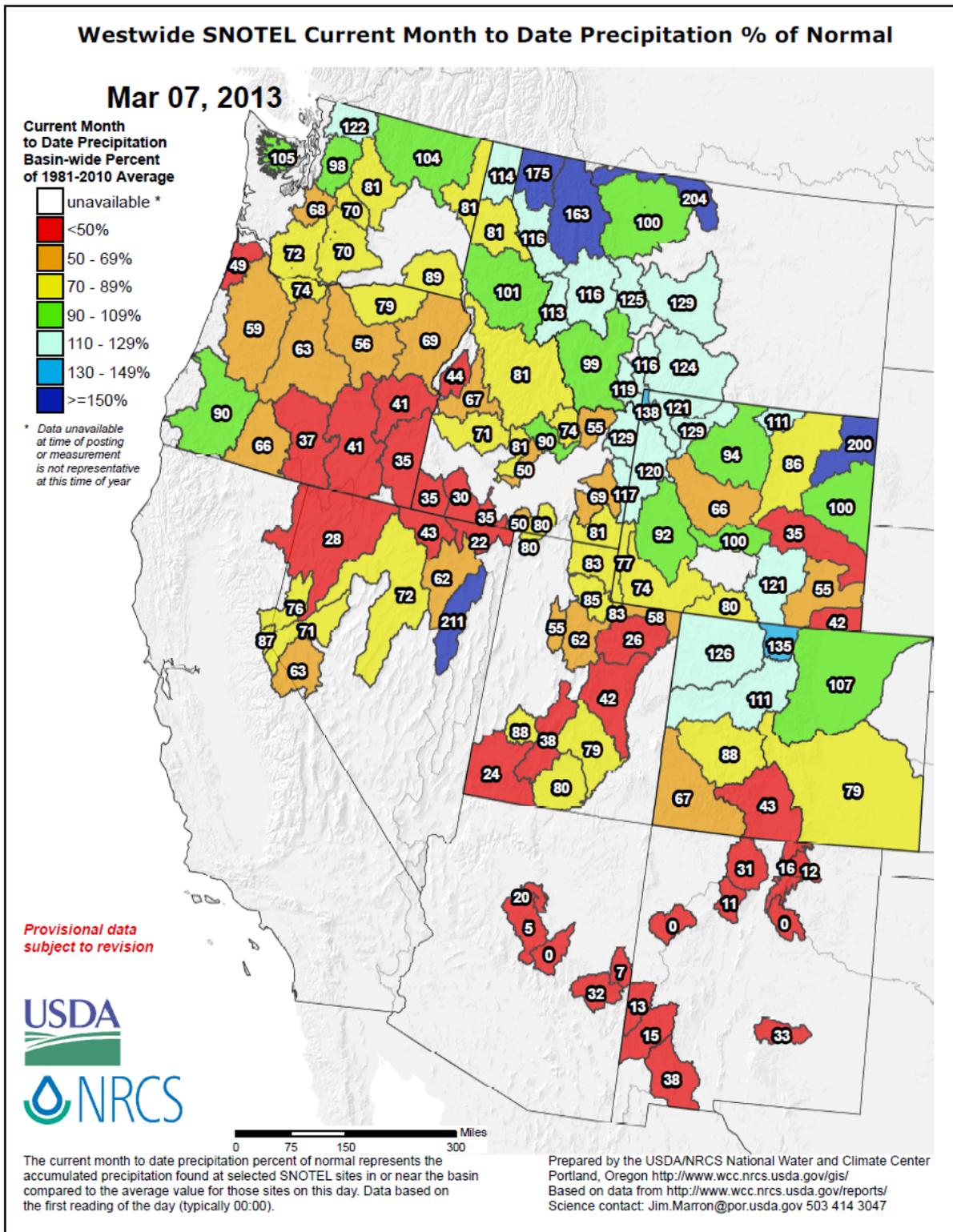


Fig. 2c: SNOTEL month to date precipitation percent of normal for March shows a wet week for the start of the month over the Northern Rockies; including northwestern Colorado. A dry pattern persists over much of the Four Corners and over the Lower Snake Drainage (OR, ID and NV).

Weekly Snowpack and Drought Monitor Update Report

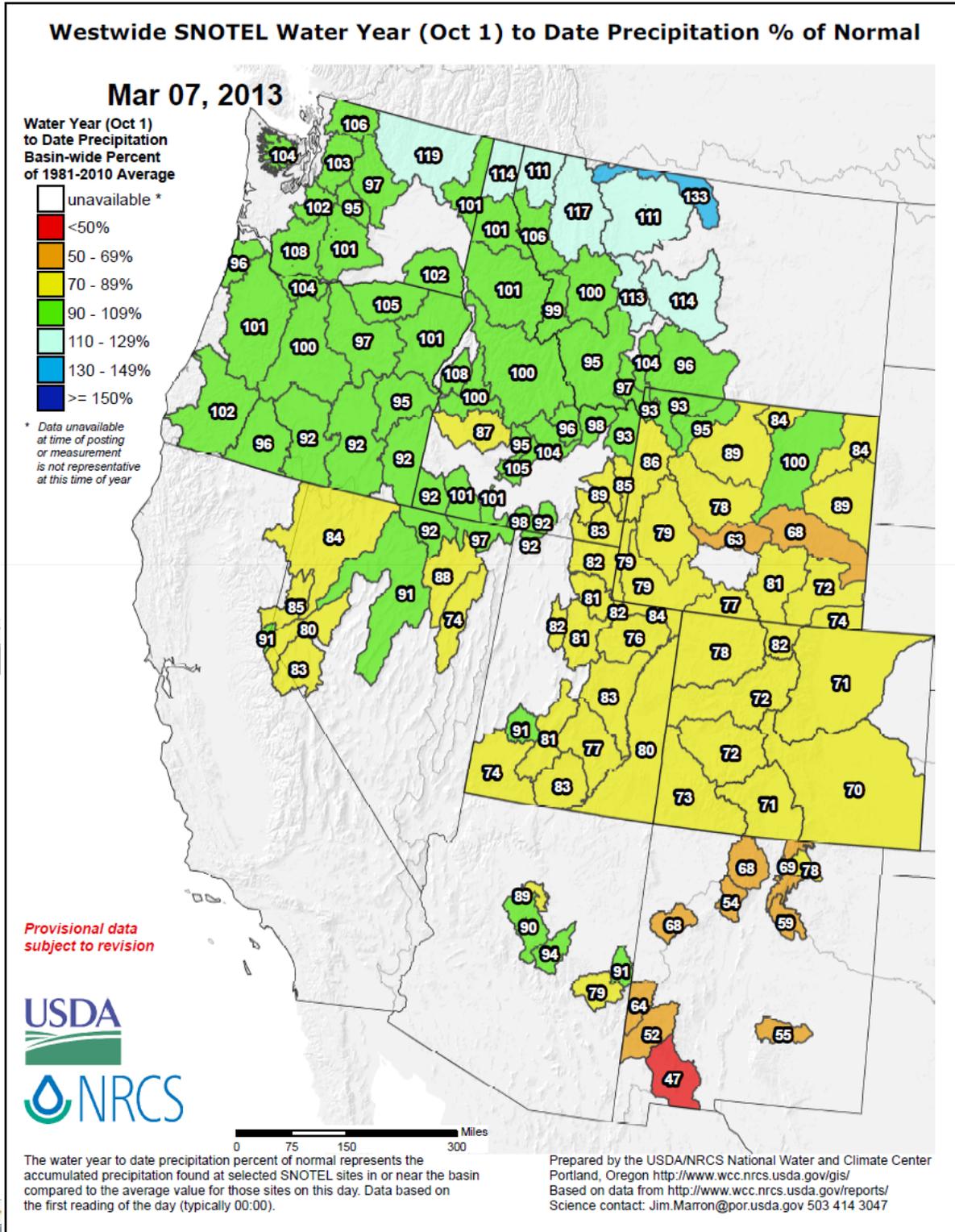


Fig. 2d: For the 2013 Water Year that began on 1 October 2012, the pattern continues to resemble La Niña with Arizona standing out as an exception to the dryness seen over the Southern Tier of the West. For additional information, daily reports by SNOTEL sites can be acquired by clicking [here](#).

SNOTEL 7-Day Snow Depth Change (Inches)

Mar 07, 2013

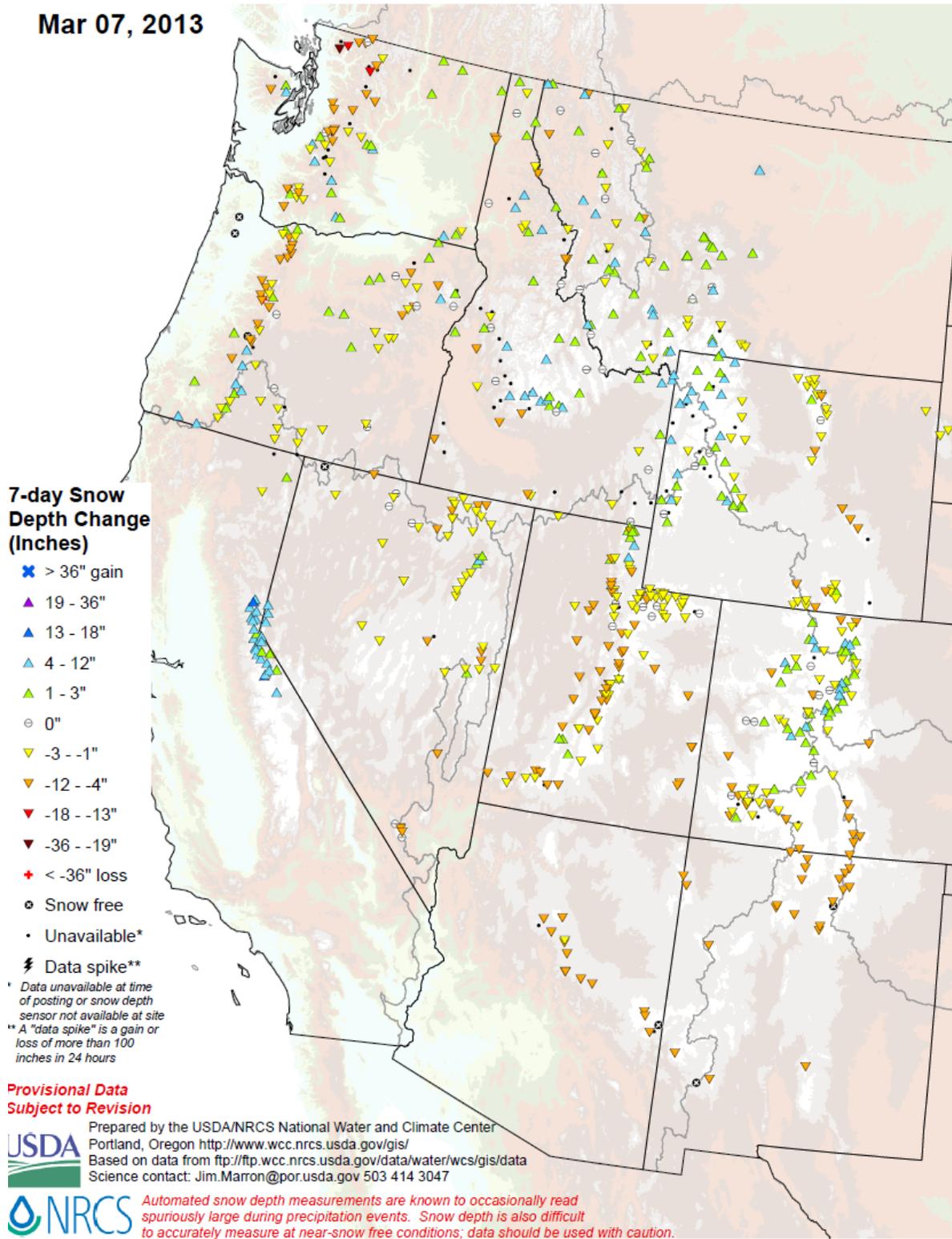


Fig. 3a: The 7-day snow depth changes for the week show some snow depth increases over the Sierra Nevada and scattered across the Northern and Central Rockies, including the central mountains in Idaho. However, elsewhere snowpack show declines of up to a foot in depth.

Weekly Snowpack and Drought Monitor Update Report

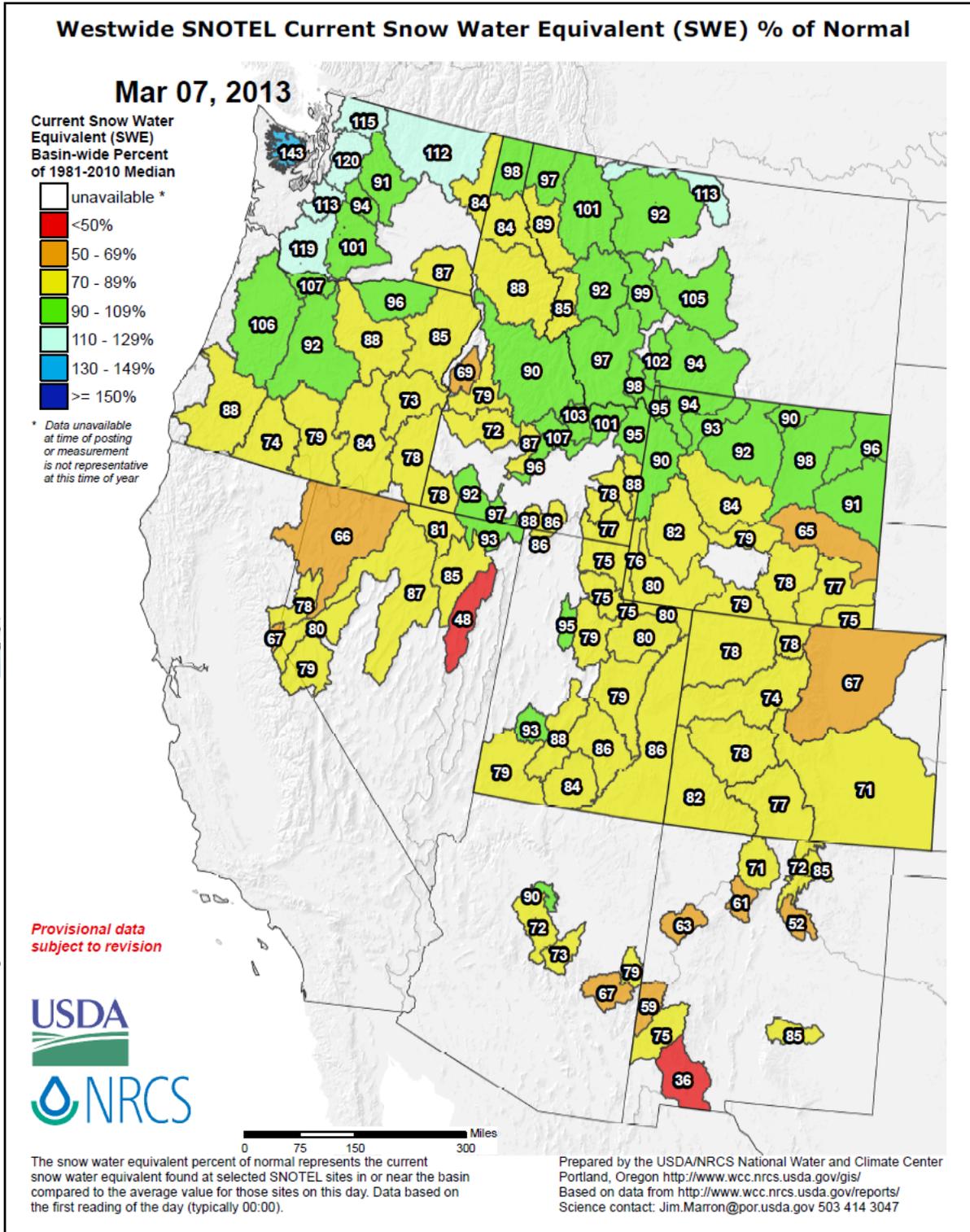


Fig. 3b: Snow-Water Equivalent (SWE): Values decrease in a gradient from the Pacific Northwest to New Mexico. SWE values on average peak during the first week in March over the Southwest with later peak dates as one travels northward. By the third week in April, peak SWE occurs over Montana and northern Idaho. Of course actual melt also depends on site elevation. For expected snowfall amounts, click [here](#). A useful basin-by-basin assessment of SWE to date can be viewed by state [here](#) and [here](#).

Weekly Snowpack and Drought Monitor Update Report

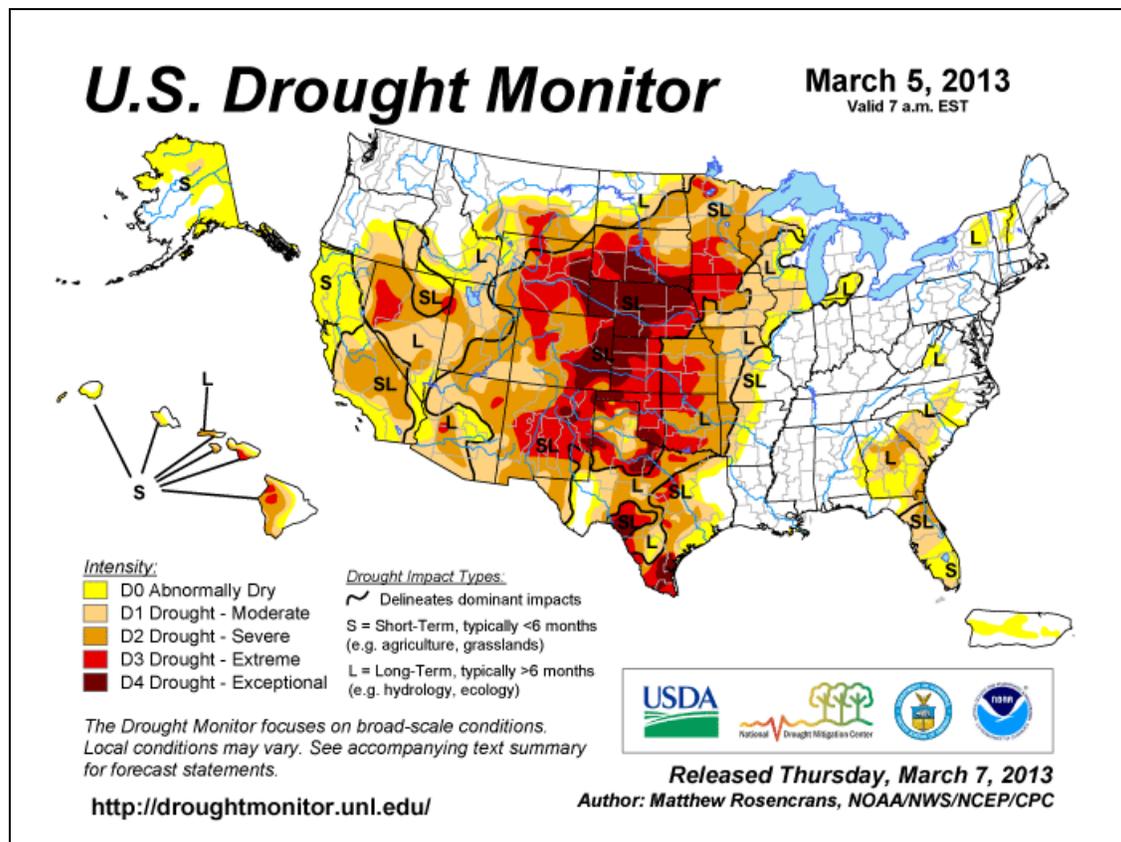


Fig. 4: Current [Drought Monitor](#) weekly summary. The exceptional D4 levels of drought are scattered across the western Corn Belt of the Plains into southeastern Colorado and Wyoming, easternmost New Mexico, and southward into Texas. For more drought news, see [Drought Impact Reporter](#). Click for the latest statistics for [California Reservoirs](#). The latest [drought indicator blend and component percentiles](#) spreadsheet is a great resource for climate division drought statistics. See Fig. 8 for the latest [Drought Outlook](#) (forecast).

For an interesting website on Lake Mead drought update, click [here](#).

Agriculture and Drought in the News

- [Feedlots, meatpackers closing with fewer US cows](#) - Feb 24, **U.S.**
- [Iowa apple growers fear second poor harvest as drought lingers](#) - March 1, **Iowa**.
- [Texas water supplier set to cut off rice farmers](#) - March 1, **Texas**

Water Supply & Quality

- [Albuquerque water board declares 'drought watch'](#) - Feb 28, **Albuquerque, New Mexico**
- [Despite drought, Minnesota lets water users exceed limits](#) - Feb 27, **Minnesota**
- [Lawn watering reduced to one day weekly in Tampa area](#) - Feb 26, **Tampa Bay area, Florida**
- [Mississippi River water levels on the rise going into spring](#) - Feb 27, **Mississippi River**

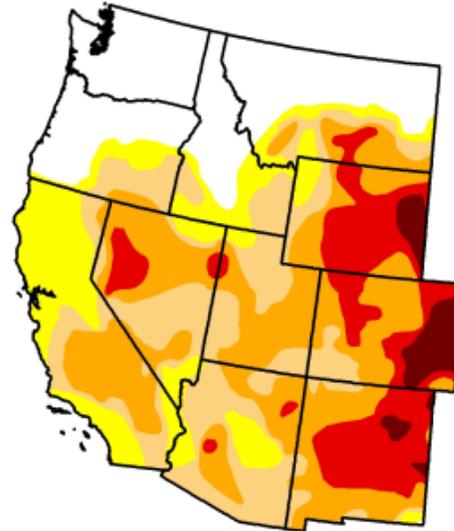
U.S. Drought Monitor

West

March 5, 2013
Valid 7 a.m. EST

Drought Conditions (Percent Area)

	None	D0-D4	D1-D4	D2-D4	D3-D4	D4
Current	21.50	78.50	63.15	41.77	15.72	3.13
Last Week (02/26/2013 map)	21.53	78.47	64.32	42.23	15.92	3.47
3 Months Ago (12/04/2012 map)	22.41	77.59	70.26	46.06	17.85	2.12
Start of Calendar Year (01/01/2013 map)	24.39	75.61	69.31	45.04	18.01	2.15
Start of Water Year (09/25/2012 map)	15.12	84.88	77.15	43.65	16.85	1.77
One Year Ago (02/28/2012 map)	31.91	68.09	45.30	17.63	2.56	0.83



Intensity:

- D0 Abnormally Dry
- D1 Drought - Moderate
- D2 Drought - Severe
- D3 Drought - Extreme
- D4 Drought - Exceptional

The Drought Monitor focuses on broad-scale conditions. Local conditions may vary. See accompanying text summary for forecast statements.



Released Thursday, March 7, 2013

<http://droughtmonitor.unl.edu>

Matthew Rosenkrans, NOAA/NWS/NCEP/Climate Prediction Center

Fig. 4a: Drought Monitor for the [Western States](#) with statistics over various time periods. Little change has occurred this past week.

In California, there are cooperative snow surveys made up of 35 or so utilities, water agencies, government agencies and the Department of Water Resources. The NRCS is one of the cooperating agencies. Through this cooperative, California has over 200 manual snow surveys and has a similar number of snow pillows. With this data they publish a Bulletin 120 every month from February through May which provides a forecast of April through July runoff. We provide daily snow reports through the California Data Exchange Center (which also posts the Bulletin 120 at

<http://cdec.water.ca.gov/snow/bulletin120/index2.html>) through the following links:

- Current PAGE6 report: <http://cdec.water.ca.gov/cgi-progs/snow/PAGE6>
 - Current DLYSWEQ report: <http://cdec.water.ca.gov/cgi-progs/snow/DLYSWEQ>
 - Current Regional Snowpack Plots: http://cdec.water.ca.gov/cgi-progs/snow/PLOT_SWC
- California also hosts a statewide water conditions page at: http://cdec.water.ca.gov/water_cond.html which has links to precipitation, reservoir storage, snowpack, runoff, and summary reports.

From the latest USDA/NASS weekly agricultural report, valid February 25, 2013:
[http://www.nass.usda.gov/Statistics by State/California/Publications/Crop Progress & Condition/index.asp](http://www.nass.usda.gov/Statistics_by_State/California/Publications/Crop_Progress_&Condition/index.asp)

Also see:
<http://www.usda.gov/oce/weather/pubs/Other/MWCACP/Graphs/USA/allhay.pdf>
http://www.usda.gov/oce/weather/pubs/Other/MWCACP/Graphs/USA/US_WheatWinter.pdf

Weekly Snowpack and Drought Monitor Update Report

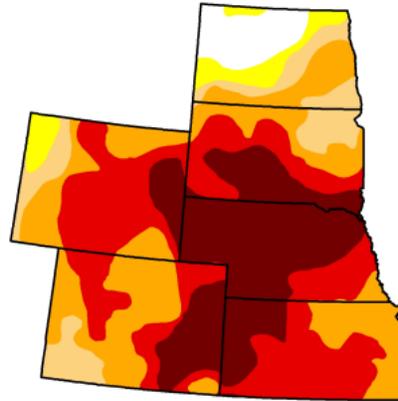
U.S. Drought Monitor High Plains

March 5, 2013
Valid 7 a.m. EST

	Drought Conditions (Percent Area)					
	None	D0-D4	D1-D4	D2-D4	D3-D4	D4
Current	4.65	95.35	91.30	82.03	55.76	25.87
Last Week (02/26/2013 map)	4.66	95.34	91.34	82.51	56.77	26.68
3 Months Ago (12/04/2012 map)	1.20	98.80	93.40	86.41	58.39	26.91
Start of Calendar Year (01/01/2013 map)	1.54	98.46	93.01	86.20	60.25	26.99
Start of Water Year (09/25/2012 map)	0.00	100.00	98.91	83.80	61.28	24.35
One Year Ago (02/28/2012 map)	44.79	55.21	21.93	5.70	1.56	0.04

Intensity:

- D0 Abnormally Dry
- D1 Drought - Moderate
- D2 Drought - Severe
- D3 Drought - Extreme
- D4 Drought - Exceptional



The Drought Monitor focuses on broad-scale conditions. Local conditions may vary. See accompanying text summary for forecast statements.

<http://droughtmonitor.unl.edu>



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Matthew Rosencrans, NOAA/NWS/NCEP/Climate Prediction Center

Fig. 4b: Drought Monitor for the [High Plains](#) with statistics over various time periods. Little change has occurred this past week. See [Kansas Drought Update](#).

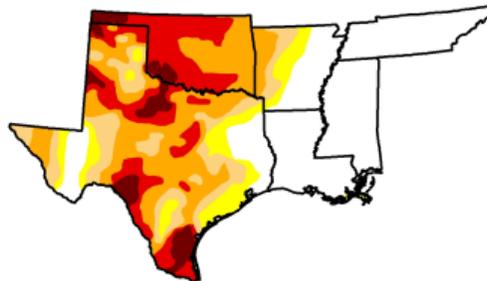
U.S. Drought Monitor South

March 5, 2013
Valid 7 a.m. EST

	Drought Conditions (Percent Area)					
	None	D0-D4	D1-D4	D2-D4	D3-D4	D4
Current	36.58	63.42	55.03	43.05	20.26	5.01
Last Week (02/26/2013 map)	36.37	63.63	54.44	40.13	19.33	4.18
3 Months Ago (12/04/2012 map)	15.98	84.02	65.41	48.19	28.30	8.87
Start of Calendar Year (01/01/2013 map)	21.18	78.82	63.69	50.50	32.80	10.98
Start of Water Year (09/25/2012 map)	24.13	75.87	66.61	51.50	29.86	9.11
One Year Ago (02/28/2012 map)	36.89	63.11	55.02	41.39	23.22	7.96

Intensity:

- D0 Abnormally Dry
- D1 Drought - Moderate
- D2 Drought - Severe
- D3 Drought - Extreme
- D4 Drought - Exceptional



The Drought Monitor focuses on broad-scale conditions. Local conditions may vary. See accompanying text summary for forecast statements.

<http://droughtmonitor.unl.edu>

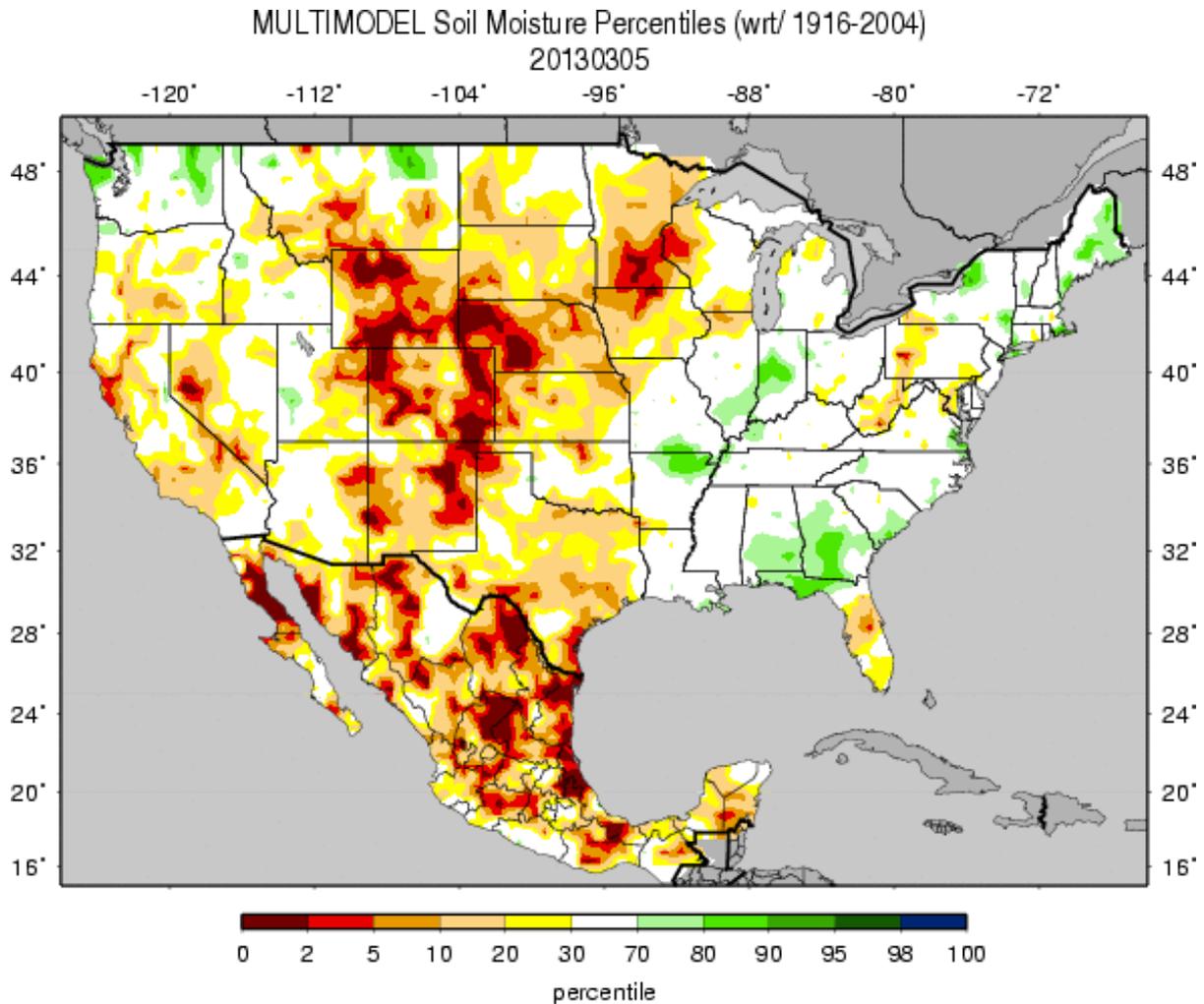


Released Thursday, March 7, 2013

Matthew Rosencrans, NOAA/NWS/NCEP/Climate Prediction Center

Fig. 4c: Drought Monitor for the [South-Central Region](#) with statistics over various time periods. Note some deterioration this week. Check out the [Texas Drought Website](#). See [Texas Reservoirs](#).

Weekly Snowpack and Drought Monitor Update Report



Figs. 5: Soil moisture ranking in [percentile](#) as of 5 March shows dryness expanding and intensifying over Western High Plains and Rockies since last week.

Useful Hydrological Links:

USDA western U.S. mountain snow water content anomaly map.

USGS (U.S. Geological Service) [observed streamflow](#); NOAA Climate Prediction Center (CPC) modeled runoff [anomalies](#) and [percentiles](#); VIC (University of Washington Variable Infiltration Capacity macro scale hydrologic model) [1-](#), [2-](#), [3-](#), and [6-month](#) and [water year-to-date](#) runoff percentiles; NLDAS (North American Land Data Assimilation System) modeled streamflow [anomalies](#) and [percentiles](#); NLDAS model runoff [anomalies](#) and [percentiles](#); USGS groundwater observations ([real-time network](#), [climate response network](#), [total active network](#)); USDA snow water content observations for the West (SNOTEL station [percentiles](#) and [percent of normal](#), SNOTEL basin [percent of normal](#) and [percent of average](#)) and Alaska ([SNOTEL station percent of normal](#), [SNOTEL basin percent of normal](#)); USDA reservoir storage as [percent of capacity](#).

Weekly Snowpack and Drought Monitor Update Report

Soil Climate Analysis Network ([SCAN](#))

17n (2168) MONTH=2013-02-05 (Daily) NRCS National Water and Climate Center - Provisional Data - subject to revision
Thu Mar 07 07:30:55 PST 2013

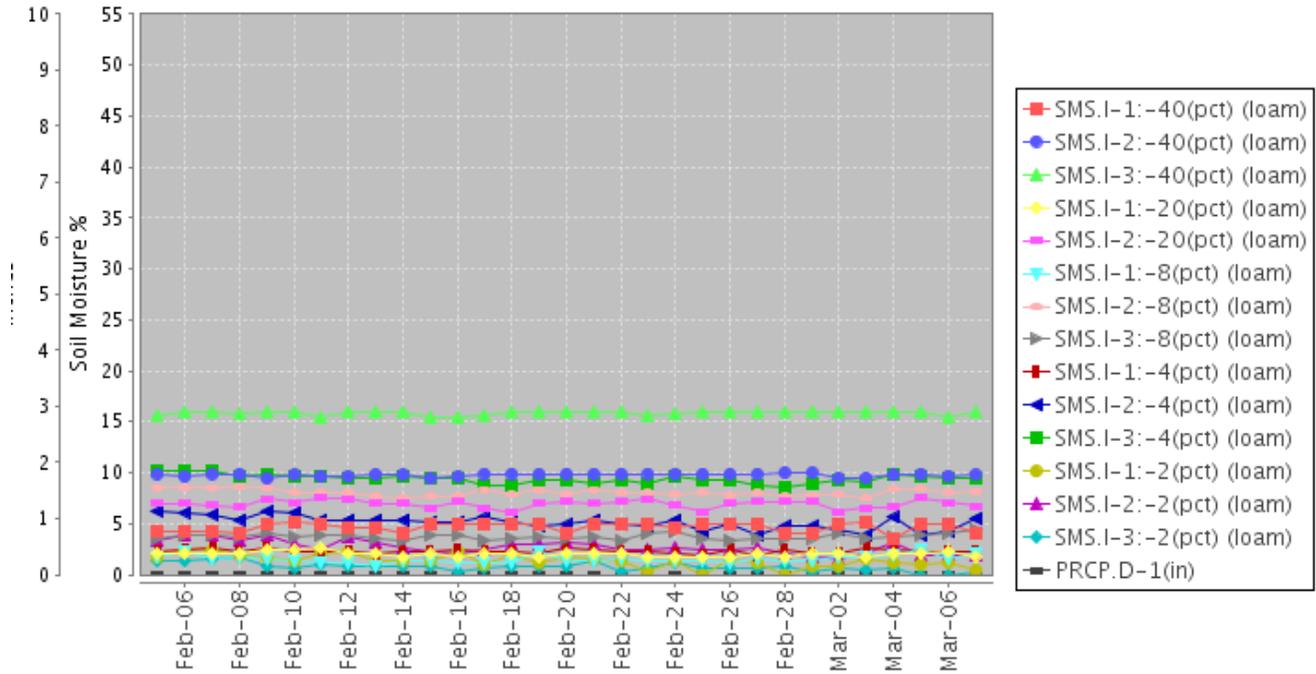


Fig. 6: This NRCS resource shows a site over [southern New Mexico](#) with low soil moisture values at all levels. This is indicative of the intensifying drought over the state.

Useful Agriculture Links:

USDA (U.S. Department of Agriculture) [observed soil moisture conditions](#), [departures and percentiles](#), and comparison to [5-year average](#) and [10-year average](#); the Palmer [Crop Moisture Index \(CMI\)](#), which intensified during the month in the West and Lower to Mid-Mississippi Valley (weeks [1](#), [2](#), [3](#), [4](#), [5](#)); CPC modeled soil moisture [anomalies](#) and [percentiles](#) for end of May, and [soil moisture anomaly change](#) compared to previous month; CPC's Leaky Bucket model [soil moisture percentiles](#); NLDAS modeled soil moisture percentiles for the [top soil layer](#) and [total soil layer](#); VIC modeled [soil moisture percentiles](#), and [soil moisture percentile change](#) compared to previous month; USDA observed [pasture and rangeland conditions](#); [Vegetation Drought Response Index \(VegDRI\)](#); the NOAA/NESDIS satellite-based [Vegetation Health Index \(VHI\)](#); the USGS agro-hydrologic model ([Soil Water Index](#), [Water Requirement Satisfaction Index](#)); Selected SNOTEL Sites (measured [2"](#), [4"](#), [8"](#), [20"](#), and [40"](#) soil moisture depths); Monthly [SCAN Report](#) from Utah.

Weekly Snowpack and Drought Monitor Update Report

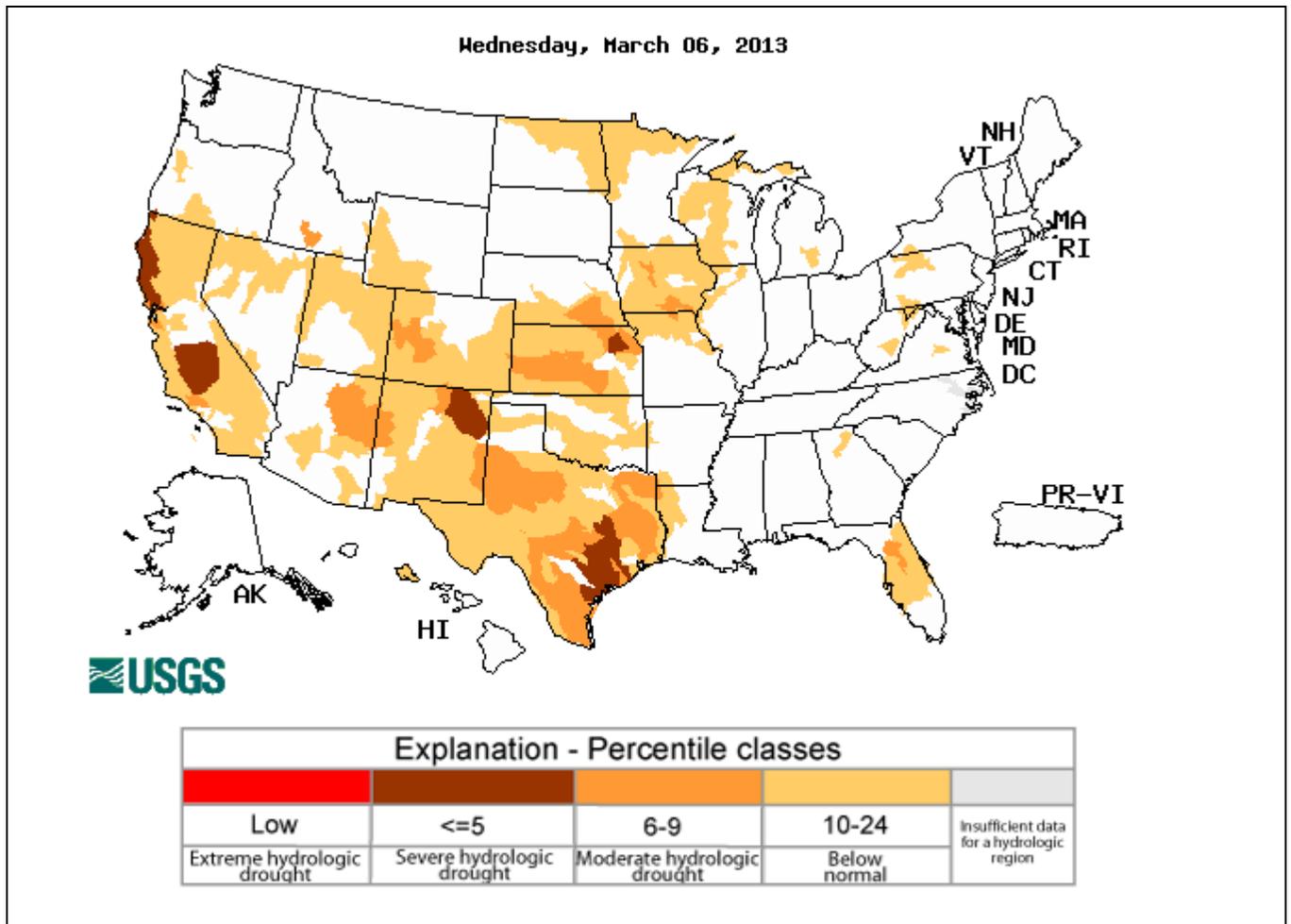


Fig. 7: Map of below normal 7-day average [streamflow](#) compared to historical streamflow for the day of the year. **Severe** conditions exist over southeastern Texas, northeastern New Mexico, California, and northeastern Kansas. As with soil moisture, streamflow data can be severely compromised by prolonged freezing temperatures. See the USGS [National Water Information System Mapper](#).

Weekly Snowpack and Drought Monitor Update Report

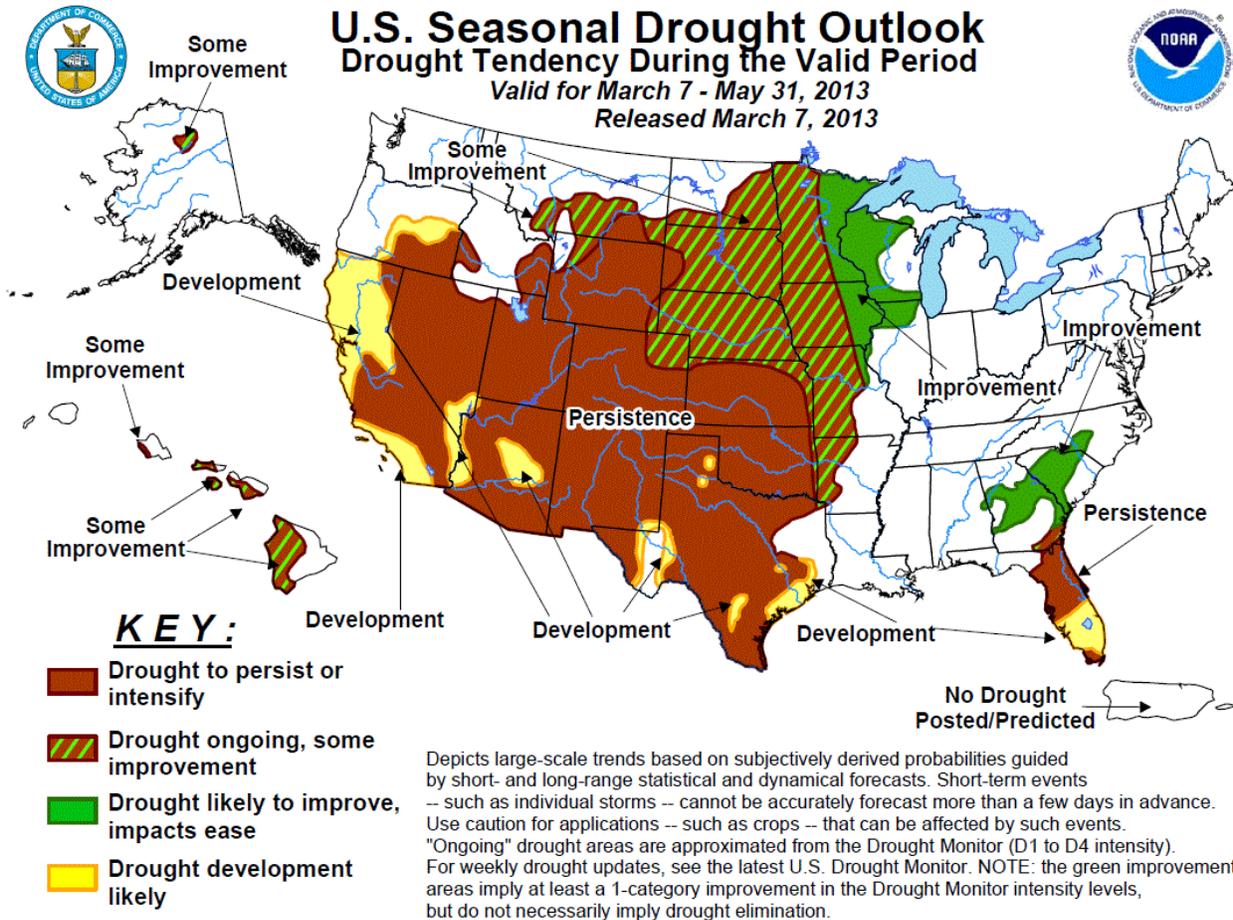
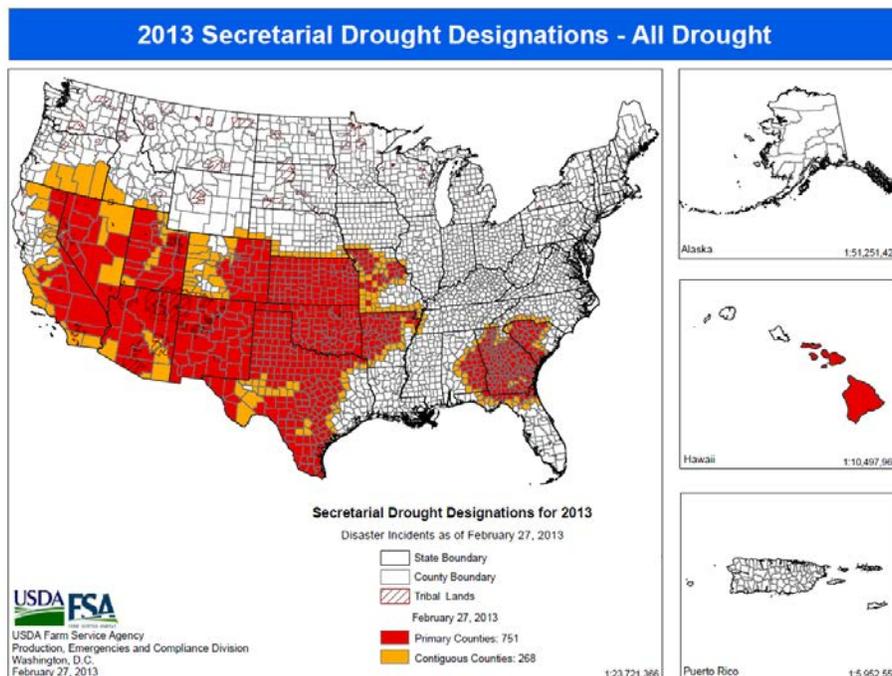


Fig. 8: U.S. seasonal Drought Outlook updated today, 7 March.



See **USDA Drought Assistance** [website](#).

Weekly Snowpack and Drought Monitor Update Report

National Drought Summary -- March 5, 2013

The discussion in the Looking Ahead section is simply a description of what the official national guidance from the National Weather Service (NWS) National Centers for Environmental Prediction is depicting for current areas of dryness and drought. The NWS forecast products utilized include the HPC 5-day QPF and 5-day Mean Temperature progs, the 6-10 Day Outlooks of Temperature and Precipitation Probability, and the 8-14 Day Outlooks of Temperature and Precipitation Probability, valid as of late Wednesday afternoon of the USDM release week. The NWS forecast web page used for this section is: <http://www.cpc.ncep.noaa.gov/products/forecasts/>.

Weather Summary: The past week featured generally dry conditions across most of the western half of the contiguous 48 states with a deep trough over the eastern half. The deep low-pressure system over the eastern half of the contiguous 48 states yielded widespread precipitation, with rainfall totals generally less than 3.0 inches from the Ohio Valley to the Northeast, and across portions of the Mid-Atlantic. The Pacific Northwest was another stormy region, with multiple reports of more than 4 inches of precipitation during the past week. Isolated reports of 0.5-1.5 inches of precipitation came in from stations across the Central Rockies. Elsewhere, precipitation amounts were less than 0.5 inch.

The Northeast and Mid-Atlantic: Generally 0.5 to locally 1.5 inches fell on the D0 areas, but the precipitation was not enough to change the intensity or coverage of the dry areas substantially. Moderate rains (0.5-1.5 inches) fell across central Virginia, prompting some trimming of the D0 (abnormal dryness) in this region.

The Southeast: Light to moderate rains (0.5 – 1.8 inches) fell across the Carolinas. No change was made to the depiction across North Carolina as below-normal streamflow conditions were reported by the United States Geological Survey (USGS) across the central Piedmont and Sand Hills region, where streamflows are currently depicted in the "less than 10th percentile" range. Recent rains were heavier across Georgia and South Carolina, ameliorating some impacts and long-term deficits, so a 1-category improvement was indicated from counties near the Georgia-South Carolina border and across southern Georgia.

D0 was scaled back across northern Florida, which benefitted from recent rains (60- and 90-day Percent of Normal Precipitation values all greater than 100), especially during the most recent 30 days (Percent of Normal Precipitation values of 200 percent or higher). In contrast to the wetter conditions across north Florida, dry conditions persisted south of a line from Daytona to Ocala, resulting in the expansion of severe drought (D2) across east central Florida. Several brushfires have been reported in Marion and Volusia Counties. Since November 1, 2012, Daytona Beach (Volusia County) has received 4.64 inches of rain, or just over 40 percent of the normal of 10.5 inches, ranking as the 7th driest period in 80 years, just crossing the D2 threshold. Similarly, since November 1 of last year, Ocala (Marion County) has received 5.4 inches, or just over 40 percent of the normal of 11.5 inches. That ranks as the 11th driest such period in 120 years, which also fits the D2 criteria. Also, D0 (abnormal dryness) was expanded across most of central Florida as dry conditions have persisted, tempered by the fact that this is the climatological dry season for most of Florida.

The Midwest: Moderate precipitation (0.5 – 1.5 inches) fell across parts of Missouri and southern Illinois. Missouri Dept. of Conservation personnel at Busch Wildlife (western St.

Weekly Snowpack and Drought Monitor Update Report

Charles County) reported that ponds and lakes have recovered nicely, adding about 18 inches during the past few weeks. These lakes had been between 2.5-3.0 feet below normal at their lowest point of this drought, and as of a few weeks ago were only 4 inches above that low point, now only about 1 foot below normal. Other ponds in Pike County, Missouri have not recovered as much, as there is still significant snow and ice pack that has not melted. Snow Water Equivalent (SWE) of the snowpack is in the 2-3 inch range, so warmer temperatures should yield considerable benefit to well depths and pond/lake levels in the days and weeks ahead through melting.

Significant precipitation has fallen across Minnesota and Wisconsin during the past 90 days, but most of it is sitting on top of the frozen ground, locked away in the snowpack. The scenario is the same across much of northeast Iowa, so no changes were made across the entire region.

The Great Plains: Most of the changes to the southern Great Plains were increased in the drought coverage and intensity across Texas. The Office of the State Climatologist for Texas reported that February as a whole was largely drier than January, and evidence of this can be seen as the 2 and 6-month SPI blend time scales tend toward drier values. The reservoir situation continues to be poor—while the eastern half of the state is comparatively well-off, west Texas continues to suffer, contributing to the persisting record-low reservoir conservation storage. Southern Texas was especially dry, with single digit relative humidity values and high winds prompting an expansion of all drought categories across this region.

The lone area of improvement (reducing the intensity of drought) was made to the Panhandle of Oklahoma. Precipitation has been above normal for the past 30 and 60 days, with a significant rain event last week. Minimal improvement was measured in local soil moisture, so D3 (extreme drought) was retained for Cimarron County.

The Rockies: Winter storms have brought some precipitation to portions of the Central and Northern Rockies, largely missing the southern Rockies since the start of the year. An area of D3 conditions was removed from Northwest Colorado based on standardized precipitation indices (SPIs) derived from PRISM gridded data (since this is a very data sparse region). The rest of the D3 region was retained as SNOTEL precipitation percentiles are primarily ranked below the 5th percentile. Across northeastern Colorado, D4 (exception drought) was trimmed, based on recent (past 30 days) precipitation amounts being above normal.

Some of the storms that brought heavy rains to the Pacific Northwest also provided precipitation to the interior portions of the Northern Rockies. Some improvements were made to southern Idaho and northern Utah, based on a reassessment and using SPI3, SPI6, and a trailing, weighted SPI index as guiding values.

Hawaii, Alaska, and Puerto Rico: Heavy precipitation fell across many parts of the Alaskan Panhandle, so the area of D0 was trimmed out. Dry conditions persisted across interior Alaska, but no change was made as enough precipitation was recorded to stay the degradation.

Precipitation deficits continued across Puerto Rico, including the high terrain. D0 (abnormal dryness) was introduced over much of the Island, along the central high lands and over southeastern portions, to reflect the below normal precipitation amounts during

Weekly Snowpack and Drought Monitor Update Report

the past 60-days.

Looking Ahead: During the next 5 days (March 7-11, 2013), moderate to heavy precipitation is forecast from the lower Mississippi Valley to the Mid-West, and across portions of the Central and Southern Rockies. Additional precipitation is likely for the northeast (early in the period) and the Pacific Northwest (episodically during the entire period). Beyond that timeframe, drier than median conditions are favored across the southern tier of the CONUS and southern Alaska, as the main storm track is forecast along the U.S.-Canada border.

Author: [Matthew Rosencrans, NOAA/NWS/NCEP/Climate Prediction Center](#)

Dryness Categories

D0 ... Abnormally Dry ... used for areas showing dryness but not yet in drought, or for areas recovering from drought.

Drought Intensity Categories

D1 ... Moderate Drought

D2 ... Severe Drought

D3 ... Extreme Drought

D4 ... Exceptional Drought

Drought or Dryness Types

S ... Short-Term, typically <6 months (e.g. agricultural, grasslands)

L ... Long-Term, typically >6 months (e.g. hydrology, ecology)

Updated March 6, 2013

USDA Highlights

Highlights for the drought-monitoring period ending 7 am EST on February 26 include:

- Overall U.S. drought coverage decreased to 54.17% of the contiguous U.S., down 1.65% from last week. This is down 6.92% from the beginning of the year and down 11.28% from the record-high coverage of 65.45% on September 25, 2012. A pair of late-winter storms produced substantial precipitation, including heavy snow, across the central and southern Plains and the Midwest, and sparked heavy rain in the Southeast.

- The portion of the contiguous U.S. in the worst category – D4, or exceptional drought – also decreased substantially (1.21%) to 5.45%. Nevertheless, D4 coverage has ranged from 5 to 7% for 29 consecutive weeks (August 14, 2012 – February 26, 2013).

Weekly Snowpack and Drought Monitor Update Report

- Hay in drought (56%), winter wheat in drought (58%), and cattle in drought (66%) all fell one percentage point from a week ago. For the first time since early-July 2012, drought encompassed less than two-thirds of the domestic cattle inventory.

Brad Rippey, USDA Meteorologist
Office of the Chief Economist
World Agricultural Outlook Board
Washington, D.C.

Phone: 202-720-2397

E-Mail: brippy@oce.usda.gov
