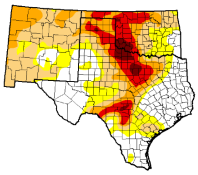
Southern Plains Drought Outlook Summary - March 17, 2015

Text dated monthly, on date above. Images and statistics update more frequently.



March 17, 2015
(Released Thursday, Mar. 19, 2015)
Valid 7 a.m. EST

Drought Conditions (Percent Area)

	None	D0	D1	D2	D3	D4
Current	20.00	17.88	34.18	15.11	10.86	2.04
Last Week (03/10/2015)	19.22	17.16	34.97	15.82	8.13	2.81
3 Months Ago (12/16/2014)	26.75	21.68	34.56	17.45	3.77	2.27
Start of Calendar Year (12/30/2014)	27.08	22.87	33.91	17.83	4.39	2.72
Start of Water Year (09/30/2014)	22.05	29.15	32.28	13.19	4.92	3.28
One Year Ago (03/18/2014)	5.90	15.84	33.38	24.91	18.22	1.46

Intensity:
D0 (Abnormally Dry)
D1 (Moderate Drought)
D2 (Severe Drought)
D3 (Extreme Drought)
D4 (Exceptional Drought)

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

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NCDC/NESDIS/NOAA

http://droughtmonitor.unl.edu/

Click below for detailed state-drought information:

- New Mexico
- Oklahoma
- Texas

Current Drought

- Much of south, southeast, east, and far west TX are now drought free.
- Little change to the core drought areas in north TX, west OK, and the TX/OK panhandles.
- Severe drought covers approx. 48% of OK, 27% of TX, and 20% of NM.
- Three months ago, severe drought covered approx. 41% of OK, 23% of TX, and 29% of NM.

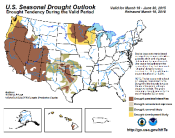
Current/Ongoing Drought Impacts

Oklahoma: Critical reservoirs in southwest OK such as Lake Altus-Lugert are less than 10% of capacity.

Texas:

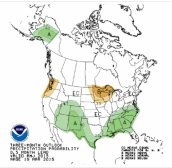
- The main reservoir serving Wichita Falls is 19% full, the lowest since its impoundment in 1964. The city continues the re-use of wastewater.
- Statewide, Texas reservoirs have risen to 69%% full, nearly a 10% increase from 3 months ago. More improvements likely in the months ahead, as the El Nino impacts persist.

New Mexico: Three of the four largest reservoirs in NM are at 18% or less of capacity, including the largest, Elephant Butte.



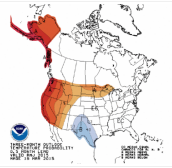
Drought Summary

- Since January 1st , nearly all of TX and eastern New Mexico have seen above normal precipitation. This has resulted in some significant drought improvement.
- However, most of the core drought areas in western Oklahoma, north central Texas, and the Red River area were drier than normal, and have thus seen little to no drought improvement.
- El Nino conditions should persist through summer. This should result in increased chances for above normal precipitation across New Mexico, south and west Texas, and the TX/OK panhandles.



3-Month Outlook - Precipitation

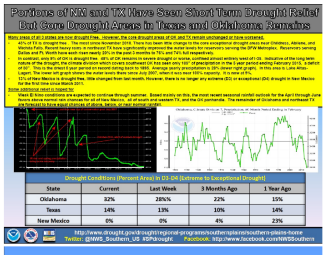
- The likelihood of El Nino conditions persisting through summer is around 50%-60%.
- **Above normal precipitation is favored through June across all of NM and most of south and west TX and the OK/TX panhandles.**
- The latest Drought Outlook shows drought improving thru June across most of TX, OK, and NM, except for the core drought areas.



3-Month Outlook - Temperature

- **Below normal temperatures are favored for eastern NM and south and west TX and the OK/TX panhandles.**
- There is no strong seasonal forecast signal for the rest of NM/TX/OK.
- Increased chances for above normal rain should result in increased runoff, helping to fill area reservoirs.

Additional Information



Portions of NM and TX Have Seen Short Term Drought Relief, But Core Drought Areas in Texas and Oklahoma Remains

Many areas of all 3 states are now drought free. However, the core drought areas of OK and TX remain unchanged or have worsened.

Much of the drought relief has occurred in the last month. There has been little change in the core exceptional drought areas near Cheyenne, Altoona, and Wichita Falls, Texas. The reservoirs in OK have high inflows, but are still very low. The main reservoir serving the DFW Metroplex. Reservoirs serving Dallas and Ft. Worth have each risen nearly 20% in the past 3 months to 75% and 74% full respectively.

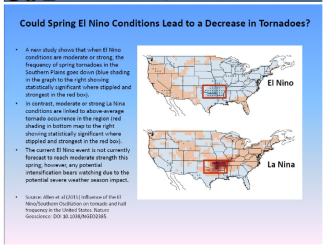
In contrast, only 8% of OK is drought free. 48% of OK remains in severe drought or worse, confined almost entirely west of I-35. Indicative of the long-term drought, the Lake Altus-Lugert reservoir in southwest OK is now only 3% full, the lowest on record since its impoundment in 1969. Lake Lugert is the lowest of 52. This is the driest 1 year period on record dating back to 1895. Average yearly precipitation is 25+ (green right graph). In this area in L. Lake Altus-Lugert. The lower left graph shows the water levels there same July 2007, when it was near 100% capacity. It is now at 3%.

Lake Altus-Lugert is the lowest of 52. Little changed from last month. However, there is no longer any extreme (D3) or exceptional (D4) drought in New Mexico for the first time since March 2014.

Some additional relief is hoped for.

Weak El Nino conditions are expected to continue through summer. Based mostly on this, the most recent seasonal rainfall outlook for the April through June months shows normal rain chances for all of New Mexico, all of south and eastern TX, and the OK panhandle. The remainder of Oklahoma and northeast TX

State	Current	Last Week	3 Months Ago	1 Year Ago
Oklahoma	32%	28%%	22%	15%
Texas	14%	13%	10%	14%
New Mexico	0%	0%	4%	23%



The Southern Plains Drought Outlook narrative is provided by the NWS Southern Region Headquarters (SRH) Regional Operations Center (ROC). The SRH ROC is one of the NOAA Weather Ready Nation Pilot Projects and a primary objective of the SRH ROC Pilot is to provide weather, water, and climate Decision Support Services to regional scale partners.

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Southern Plains Announcements

Oklahoma Water Supply Reliability and Management Challenge
Wed, Sep 17 2014 (All day)

Texas Drought Outlook Forum - Jun 24, 2014
Tue, Jun 24 2014, 9:00am to 5:00pm

New Mexico Drought Outlook & Management Considerations for Rangeland Livestock Production Workshop - May 29, 2013
Wed, May 29 2013, 7:30am to 5:00pm

Southern Plains Drought Outlook and Assessment (March 7)
Thu, Mar 7 2013, 9:00am to 5:00pm

West Texas drought outlook and assessment forum
Thu, Nov 1 2012, 9:30am to 3:00pm

April 2012 Southern Plains Drought Assessment & Outlook Forum
Thu, Apr 26 2012, 10:00am to 3:00pm

Southern Plains Drought Assessment & Outlook Forum
Tue, Nov 29 2011, 9:30am to 3:00pm

Southern Plains Bi-weekly, 2nd and 4th Thursdays, 11AM Central Time

Resources

- Facebook
- Twitter (@NWS_Southern_US)
- NWS Southern Region Headquarters
- Archive of Past Drought Outlooks
- Drought Impact Reporter
- State Climatologists
- National Drought Mitigation Center
- Southern Climate Impacts Planning Program (SCIPP)
- Climate Assessment for the Southwest (CLIMAS)
- Texas Commission on Environmental Quality