



Drought Status Report

Navajo Nation Water Management Branch
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August/September 2009

Climate Summary by CLIMAS August 26, 2009

Drought– The extent of drought has increased in Arizona but decreased in eastern New Mexico, where drought severity also has decreased.

Temperature– Seasonal temperatures have been above average in most of the Southwest, with some record-breaking temperatures in Arizona during July.

Precipitation– Despite an early and wet monsoon burst across the southern portion of the Southwest, seasonal and water year precipitation totals are below average, except in southeastern New Mexico.

ENSO– A weak El Niño event is in progress and is expected to strengthen as fall approaches. El Niño usually increases the chances of above-average winter half-year precipitation in the region.

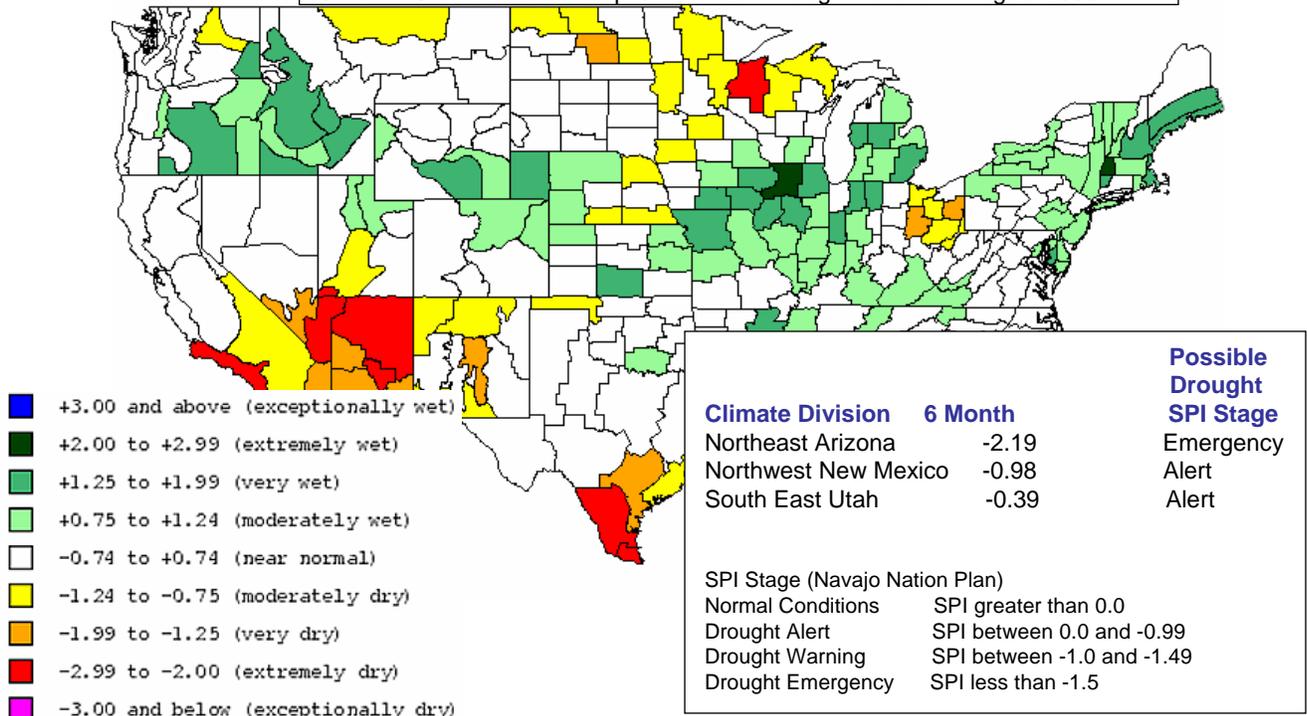
Climate Forecasts– Forecasts for the fall indicate temperatures similar to the warmest 10 years of the 1971–2000 observed conditions. Forecasts for the winter season indicate slightly increased chances of above-average precipitation in the southern half of the region.

The Bottom Line– After a timely onset, the monsoon has fizzled in most of the Southwest. Summer precipitation deficits have decreased rangeland and vegetation health across much of the region, with the major exception of southeastern New Mexico. Forecasts hold the promise of somewhat increased chances of winter season precipitation as an El Niño episode continues to develop in the tropical Pacific Ocean.

6-Month SPI by Western Regional

Climate Center

6-month Standardized Precipitation Index through the end of August 2009



Water Management Branch of Fort Defiance, AZ has a collection of rain cans placed in various areas across the Navajo Nation. On a monthly basis, these cans are checked for precipitation depth, manually. Collections are done within a 10 day window; the last 5 days of the month into the first 5 days of the following month. There are a total of 135 precipitation cans.

Navajo Nation Precipitation Collection Summary

August 2009 Measurement

The month of August has usually been a month of precipitation relief for the Navajo Nation in the past, however this season poses a different story. Not much of the Navajo Nation experienced an increase in precipitation as the SPI rating shows that the Northwest section of Arizona below -2.0, pushing it to the Emergency Drought status for the month. However, with the onset of September, it is forecasted that the much anticipated precipitation of August will be seen until then.

The Navajo Nation itself still remains to be Abnormally Dry for August 2009 Long Term Drought Status according to the upcoming Arizona Drought Preparedness Plan by the Arizona Monitoring Technical Committee.

The 2009 water year, which began Oct. 1, has been dry across the Southwest, with less than 80 percent of average precipitation in most areas of Arizona and New Mexico. The exception is extreme eastern New Mexico, which has received 110–150 percent of average precipitation. Central and southern Arizona and southwestern New Mexico have received less than 70 percent of average

Navajo Nation Average Precipitation for August 2009

