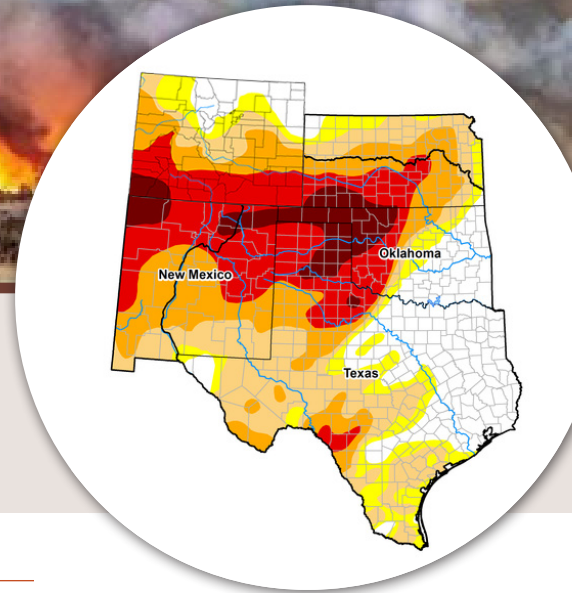


# SOUTHERN PLAINS DROUGHT UPDATE

APRIL 23, 2018



Rhea Fire in Dewey County, OK on April 12, 2018. Photo: Matt Haney



▲ Fig 1. U.S. Drought Monitor for April 24. Source: [droughtmonitor.unl.edu](http://droughtmonitor.unl.edu)

Below is a summary of the April 23 webinar on current Southern Plains drought conditions, impacts, and outlook and wildfires. The information was provided by Brian Fuchs, Climatologist with the National Drought Mitigation Center, and Todd Lindley, National Weather Service Forecast Office in Norman, Oklahoma.

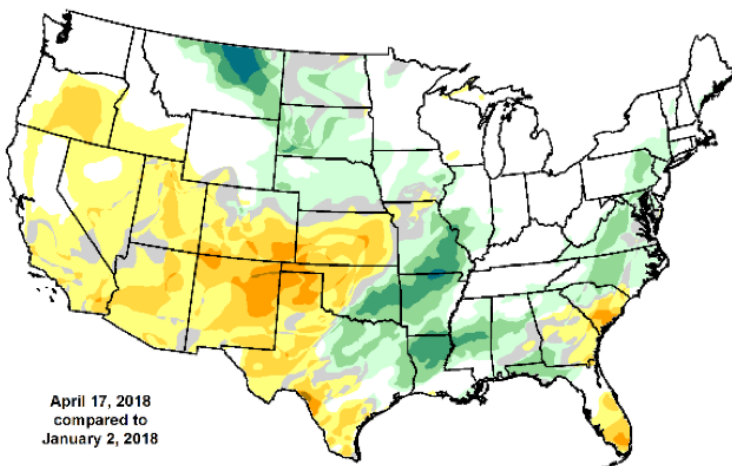
## Drought Status

The April 24 U.S. Drought Monitor (USDM) depicts the country's most intense drought in the Southern Plains and Four Corners regions, with substantial areas of Kansas, Oklahoma, Texas, New Mexico, Utah, Colorado and Arizona in "Extreme" and "Exceptional" drought.

## Meteorological Conditions and Indicators

The Southern Plains received significant moisture in September and October 2017, but "the spigot shut off" in early October, leading to a 3-4 class USDM drought degradation between January and April. Above-normal temperatures through the winter, particularly in Colorado and New Mexico, exacerbated drought conditions.

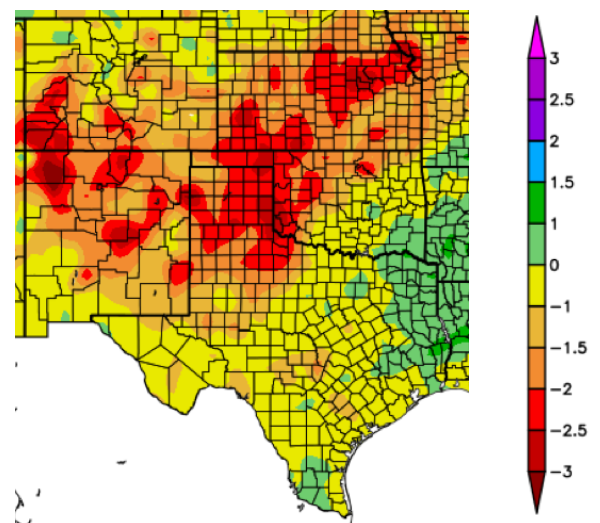
The Standardized Precipitation Index (SPI) shows the intensification of drought over the past 6 months and shows that a large area is "primed for drought development in the near future."



April 17, 2018 compared to January 2, 2018



▲ Fig. 2. U.S. Drought Monitor Class Change for CONUS. April 17, 2018 compared to January 2, 2018. Source: [droughtmonitor.unl.edu](http://droughtmonitor.unl.edu)



▲ Fig. 3. Six month SPI for the Southern Plains 10/22/2017-4/21/2018.

La Nina is a contributing factor to the drought, but not the major driver.

# SOUTHERN PLAINS DROUGHT WEBINAR

## Impacts of the Drought

**Hay:**  
18% of hay acreage is within an area experiencing drought

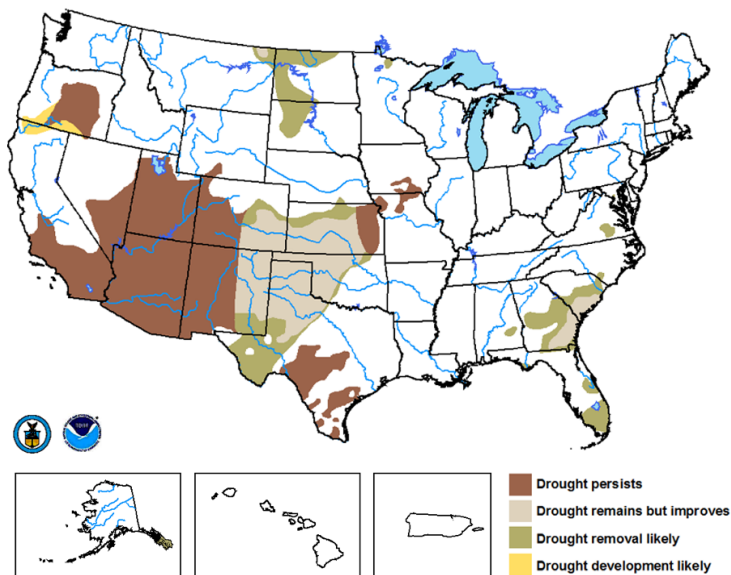
**Livestock:**  
24% of cattle inventory is within an area experiencing drought, which has led to herd reductions

**Winter wheat:**  
38% of winter wheat production is within an area experiencing drought

**Run-off:**  
Southern Colorado and northern New Mexico will be impacted by low run-off

## Regional Drought Outlook

The U.S. Seasonal Drought Outlook for May through July shows drought persisting in western Colorado and New Mexico, and in all of Utah and Arizona.



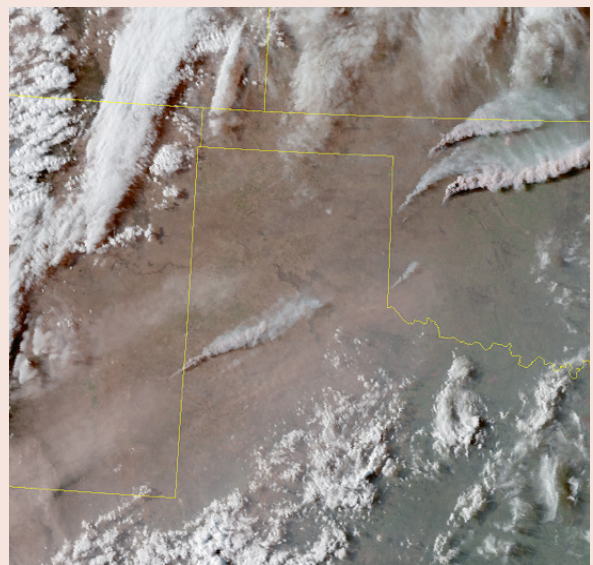
▲ **Fig. 4.** U.S. Seasonal Drought Outlook valid for April 19 - July 31, 2018. Released on April 19, 2018.

## Webinar and Summary Contributors

CO, KS, OK, NM, TX state climatologists, NOAA, NIDIS, SCIPP, USDA, NDMC, AASC, High Plains Regional Climate Center.

## Wildfire

April 12 – 18 was likely the most active week of the Southern Plains fire season with an estimated 67 fires that affected 606,856 acres and resulted in 2 fatalities; 81 structures destroyed in the region; and the death of approximately 1,100 head of cattle in Oklahoma.



▲ **Fig. 5.** GOES-East Geocolor satellite image of very large fires on April 12 over western Oklahoma, the Texas Panhandle, and eastern New Mexico.

## About the Drought Webinar Series

This drought webinar series includes March 16 webinar led by John Nielsen-Gammon (Texas State Climatologist) and April 23 webinar led by Brian Fuchs (National Drought Mitigation Center). Recordings for both webinars are available at [drought.gov](http://drought.gov).

