



NOAA
Physical Sciences
Laboratory



August 28 2025 Southern California Sector-Specific Drought Outlook Pilot

Current Drought

Southern California¹ has experienced persistent drought conditions since early 2025 with 92% of the region in Moderate Drought (D1) as of August 26, 2025 (Figure 1). September 1, 2024 to August 22, 2025 was the 3rd driest and 9th warmest such period in Southern California since 1951.

Drought Prediction and Predictability

La Niña is related to below-average precipitation and above-average temperatures in Southern California between September and May (Figure 2). La Niña is forecast to develop in late 2025 and persist into early 2026.

Sector-Specific Outlooks



Water Utilities

Reservoir storage and groundwater levels are expected to be lower in June 2026 compared to August 2025 (high confidence).



Public Health

In southern California, poor air quality is expected in September-December 2025 and April-June 2026 due to smoke from wildfires (high confidence) and in March-June 2026 due to blowing dust (medium confidence).



Agriculture

Crop stress, which may reduce agricultural productivity, is expected through at least spring 2026 in Southern California due to a second year of below-average precipitation and above-average temperatures, especially during the dormant season post-harvest (high confidence).

About the Outlook

This outlook disseminates sector-specific drought scenarios that are based on tailored monitoring and forecasting information, which will enable users to make proactive decisions ahead of drought. The focus sectors include water utilities, agriculture, and public health in Southern California. This outlook uses data available as of August 28, 2025 at 10 a.m. PT unless indicated otherwise.

Several perspectives inform sector-specific drought scenarios, including observations of current conditions and expert interpretation of many types of forecasts to anticipate the future.

[View graphics and supporting evidence.](#)



¹ Here, Southern California includes San Luis Obispo, Santa Barbara, Ventura, Los Angeles, San Bernardino, Orange, Riverside, San Diego, and Imperial counties.

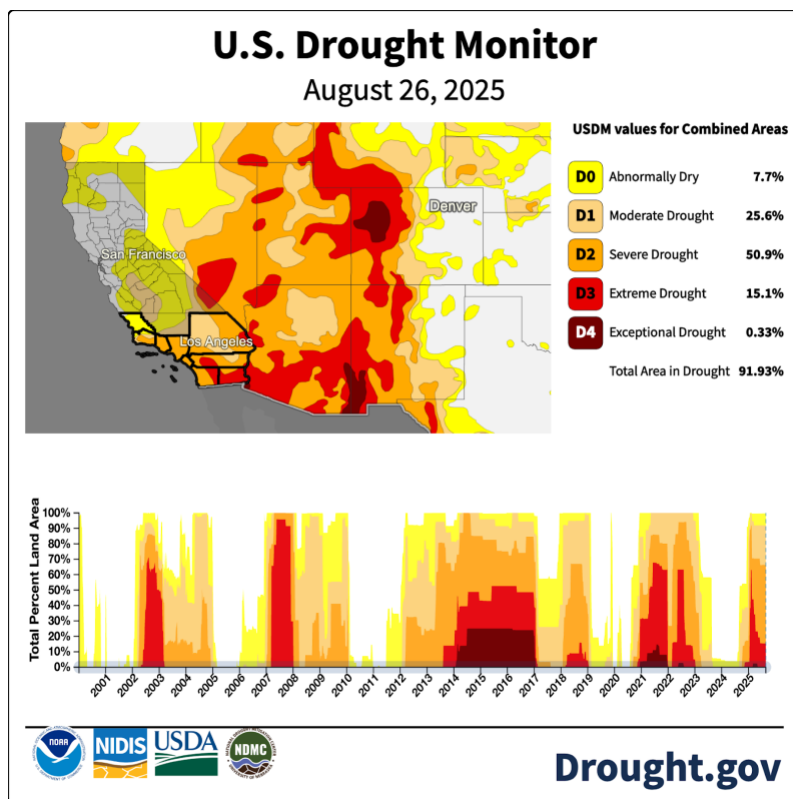


Figure 1 at left: (top) U.S. Drought Monitor as of August 26, 2025 and (bottom) area covered by drought from the U.S. Drought Monitor in San Luis Obispo, Santa Barbara, Ventura, Los Angeles, San Bernardino, Orange, Riverside, San Diego, and Imperial counties between January 2000 and August 26, 2025.

