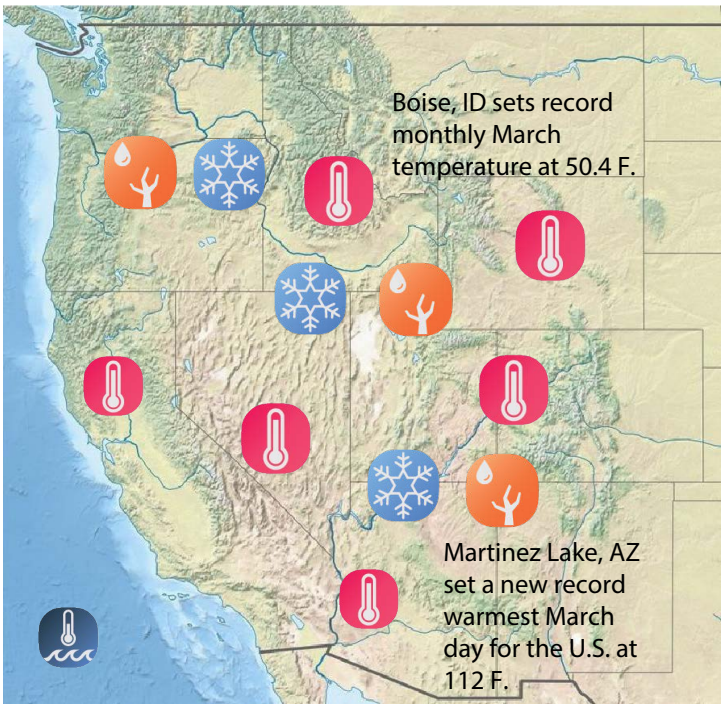
Quarterly Climate Impacts and Outlook

Western Region

June 2026

Significant Events for Mar-Apr-May 2026



Mar-Apr-May Highlights

Arizona, California, Colorado, Idaho, Nevada, New Mexico, Utah, and Wyoming recorded their warmest March on record.

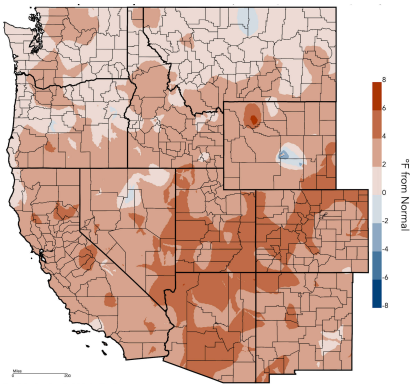
Snow drought is beginning to transition into overall drought for most mountain ranges in the West after seeing below average snowpack this Spring.

Snow water equivalent set record lows in April for Arizona, Colorado, Idaho, Nevada, New Mexico, Oregon, Utah, and Wyoming.

ENSO neutral conditions were present this Spring with a Mar-May Relative Oceanic Niño value of -0.1. El Niño conditions are expected to increase into the Autumn.

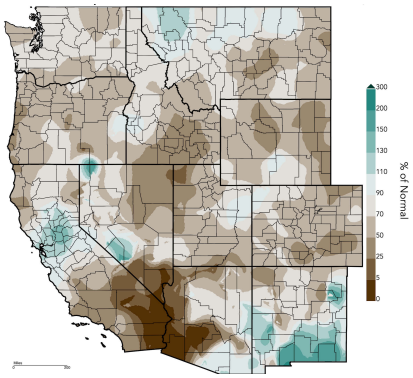
Regional Overview for Mar-Apr-May 2026

Mean Temperature Percentile
Mar-Apr-May 2026



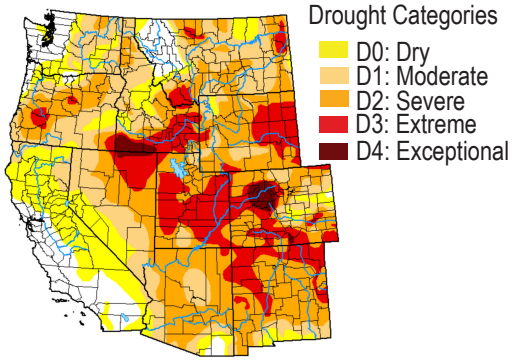
Spring temperatures were above to well above normal for most of the West. Statewide warmest Spring records were observed in Arizona, Colorado, and New Mexico. On the local scale, Reno, NV, Las Vegas, NV, Phoenix, AZ, and Sacramento, CA set their warmest Springs on record.

Precipitation Percentile
Mar-Apr-May 2026



Areas of above normal precipitation could be seen in southern New Mexico, northern Montana, central California, and parts of western Nevada. On the other hand, southern California, southern Nevada, and western Arizona saw well below normal precipitation totals for Spring.

US Drought Monitor
June 2, 2026



At the end of Spring, 75% of the West was in moderate drought (D1), 51% in severe drought (D2), 18% in extreme drought (D3), and 1% in exceptional drought. Exceptional drought areas are found in Colorado and by the Idaho-Nevada border. Most of the West saw large drought expansion, especially in Utah and Idaho. The only area of drought reduction was in western Montana.

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Regional Impacts for Mar-Apr-May 2026

Agriculture

With historic drought gripping parts of Wyoming ranchers are struggling with the decision to sell parts of their herds of cattle and sheep after a lack of rain and snowpack has left rangeland sparse on grazing grass.

Heatwave

A heatwave end of March brought unprecedented temperatures to the West with an all time highest March temperature being set in Martinez Lake, AZ at 112 F, only one degree shy of even breaking the April all time high. State records were also tied or set in all of the West, except the Pacific Northwest and MT.

Snow Drought

A combination of record warm winter temperatures and the March heat wave led to snow water equivalent levels at or below record lows for this time of year. Impacts are being felt in the Sierra Nevada, Southwest, Rockies, the Pacific Northwest, and the Colorado River Basin.

Drought and Water Supply

Colorado River water shortages continue with Lake Mead at 29% of capacity and in Tier I shortage at 1050 feet.

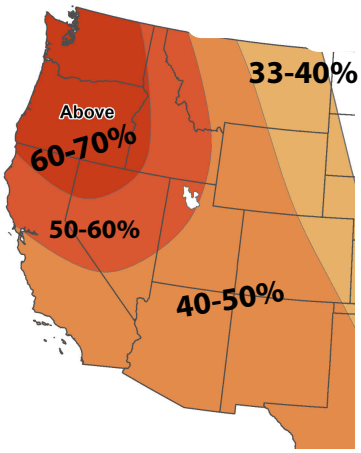
Sailor Sets Large Wildfire on the Channel Islands, CA

Figure: Plane drops water on the Santa Rosa Island wildfire. Credit: U.S. Wildland Fire Service

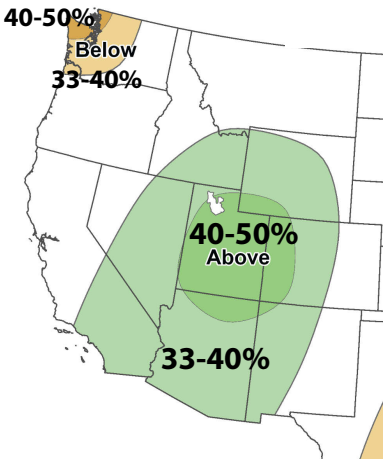
On May 15th a sailor crashed into the south coast of Santa Rosa Island and shot a flare inland which ignited the dry vegetation, starting the record largest wildfire ever for the Channel Islands. Strong winds allowed for the fire to rapidly expand at a rate of 4,000-5,000 acres for the first three days. A total of around 18,000 acres was burnt, about a fourth of the island. Firefighters fought strong winds and rough seas as they were ferried over to the island. The fire also tore through areas of rare and endemic species, including a Torrey Pines grove. Two historic buildings were also destroyed.

Regional Outlook for Jul-Aug-Sep 2026

CPC Temperature Outlook



CPC Precipitation Outlook



Numbers indicate percent chance of temperatures in warmest/coolest one-third and precipitation in wettest/driest one-third. Outlook produced June 2026.

The CPC outlook for July-September favors above normal temperatures and above normal precipitation for central and southern parts of the West, well above normal temperatures and below normal precipitation for western Washington, and above normal temperatures and equal precipitation chances elsewhere. If this outlook verifies, drought expansion will be likely for the Pacific Northwest, parts of California, western Idaho, and western Nevada. This outlook reflects an El Niño pattern as a transition over to El Niño conditions is expected.

Western Region Partners

Western Regional Climate Center
wrcc.dri.edu/my

National Integrated Drought Information System (NIDIS) - drought.gov

Western Governors' Association
westgov.org

Western States Water Council
westgov.org/wswc

NOAA/ESRL Physical Sciences Division
esrl.noaa.gov/psd

NOAA Climate Prediction Center
www.cpc.ncep.noaa.gov

National Centers for Envir. Info. (NCEI)
www.ncei.noaa.gov

USDA/NRCS National Water and Climate Center - www.wcc.nrcs.usda.gov

National Interagency Fire Center
www.nifc.gov

Western Water Assessment
wwa.colorado.edu

Climate Assessment for the Southwest
climas.arizona.edu

California Nevada Applications Program
cnap.ucsd.edu

Climate Impacts Research Consortium
pnwclimate.org/resources

NWS Western Region Forecast Offices
www.wrh.noaa.gov/