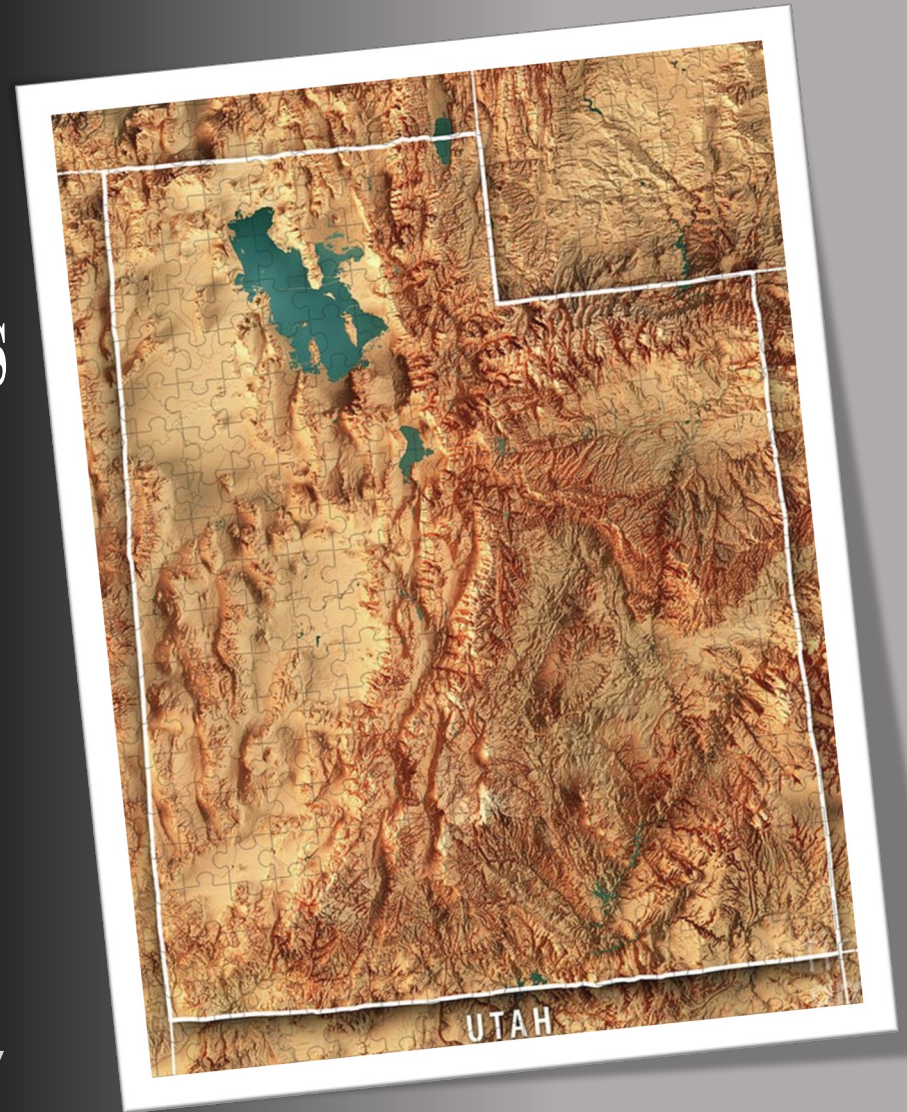


Previewing Utah's 2026 Water Year: Short-Term Relief Within Long-Term Deficits

Dr. Jon Meyer

Assistant State Climatologist
Utah Climate Center

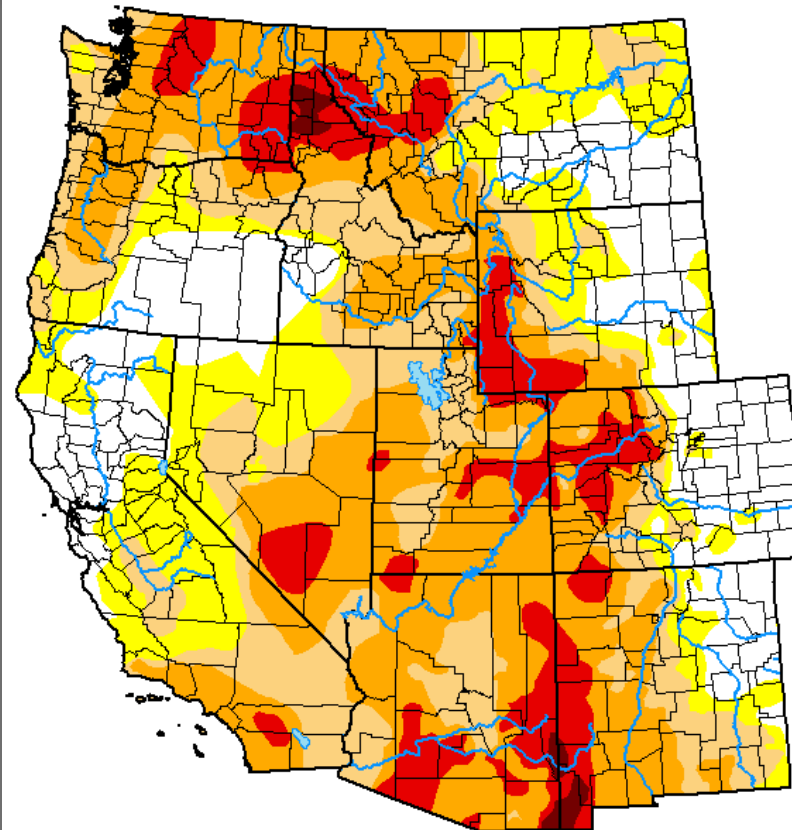
Research Assistant Professor
Dept. of Plants, Soils and Climate



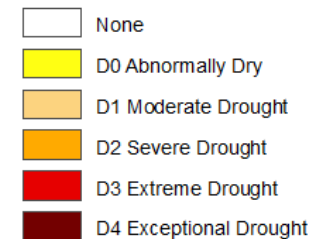
WATER YEAR 2026

October 7th, 2025
Drought Classification

Turned the page
into WY2026 with
statewide drought
conditions



Intensity:



The Drought Monitor focuses on broad-scale conditions. Local conditions may vary. For more information on the Drought Monitor, go to <https://droughtmonitor.unl.edu/About.aspx>

Author:

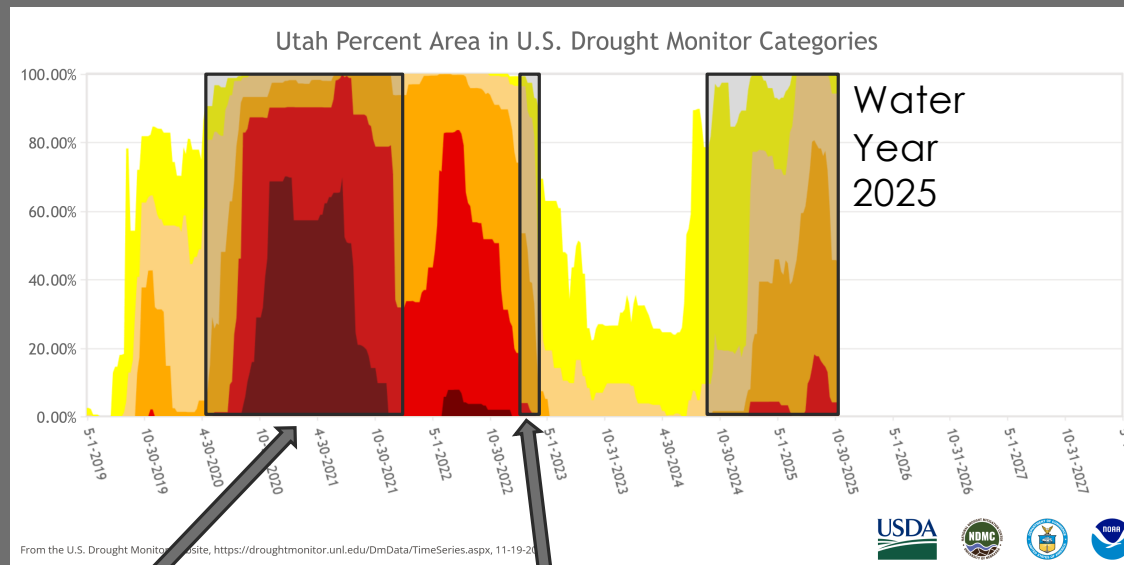
Curtis Riganti
National Drought Mitigation Center



droughtmonitor.unl.edu

REEMERGING DROUGHT

Drought Trends Over Recent Timescales

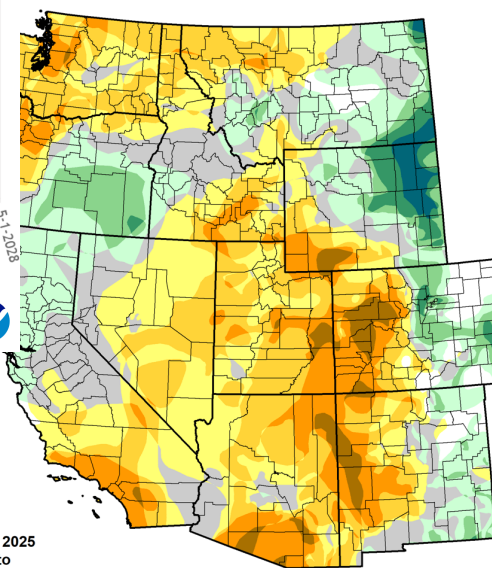


May 2020-Dec 2021: Mar 2023:

Worst statewide
drought on record

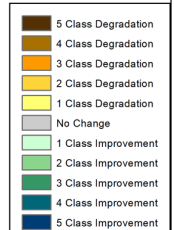
Deepest statewide
snowpack on record

U.S. Drought Monitor Class Change - West
52 Week



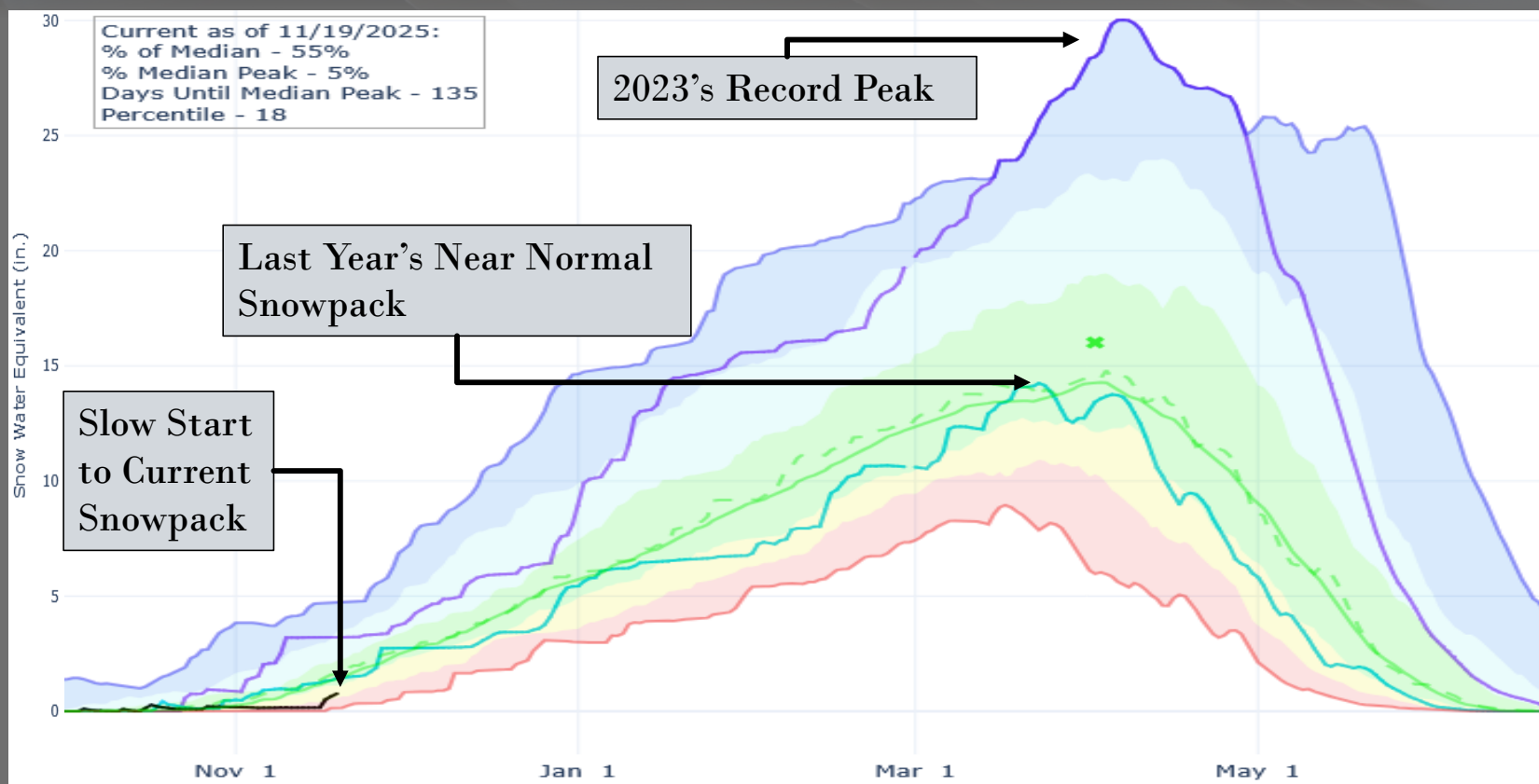
September 30, 2025
compared to
October 1, 2024

droughtmonitor.unl.edu



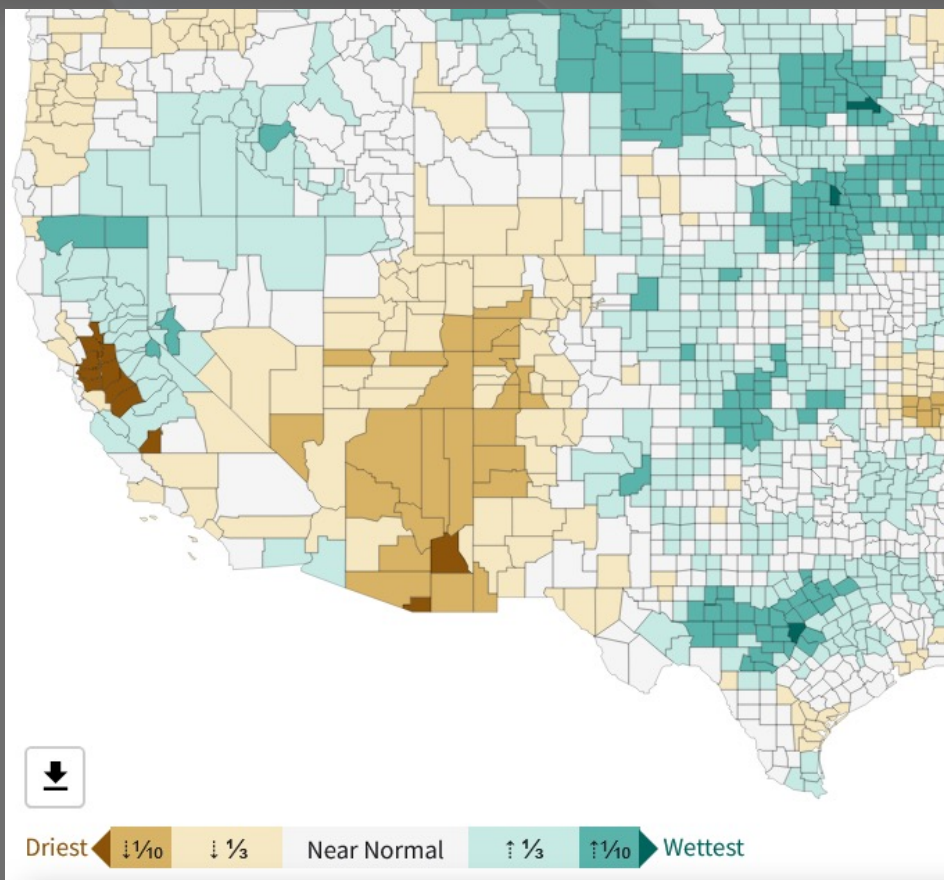
WY2025: SNOWPACK SUMMARY

NRCS SNOTEL
Observations



2025 ~~AN~~ONSOON

July-August 2025 Precipitation



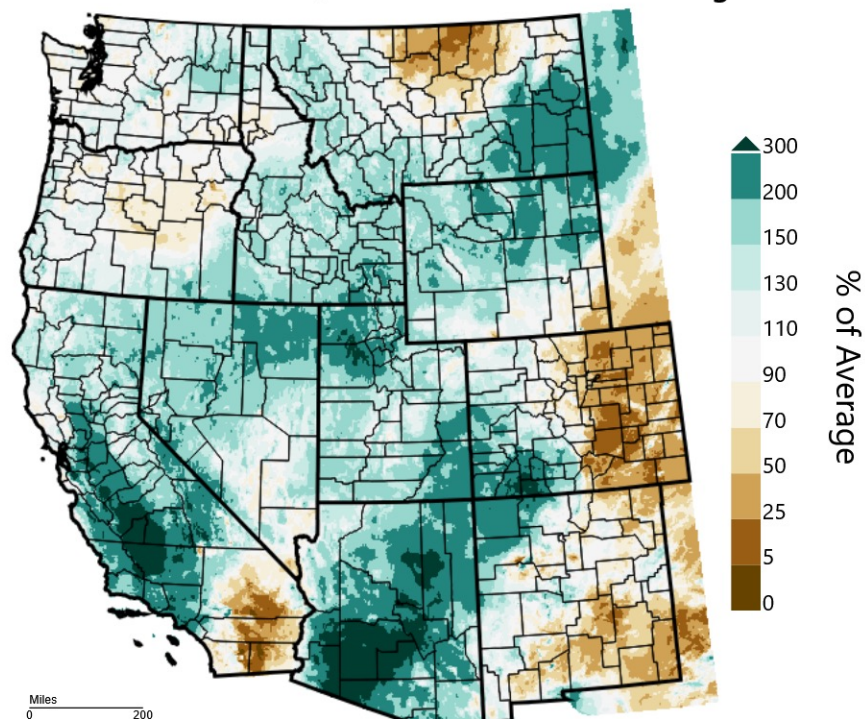
Salt Lake City's streak of 48 days without precipitation

Rank	Run Length	Missing Days	Ending Date
1	63	0	1952-11-12
2	61	0	1963-08-24
3	59	0	1944-09-17
4	56	0	1935-07-27
5	52	0	1958-11-04
6	48	0	2025-08-21
7	46	0	2005-07-28
8	45	0	1958-07-28
9	44	0	1939-12-10
10	42	0	2003-10-29
-	42	0	1978-10-31
-	42	0	1978-07-14
13	41	0	1960-07-30
14	40	0	2008-07-21
-	40	0	2003-06-19
-	40	0	1934-06-05

WY2026: AUTUMN REVERSAL

Early October
Precipitation Records

Western United States - Precipitation
October 2025, Percent of 1991-2020 Average



WestWide Drought Tracker, WRCC, Climate Engine, Data Source: PRISM Prelim, created 05 Nov 2025

> **WETTEST OCTOBER ON RECORD**
» WITH MORE THAN HALF THE MONTH TO GO

**2 FIRST ALERT
WEATHER**

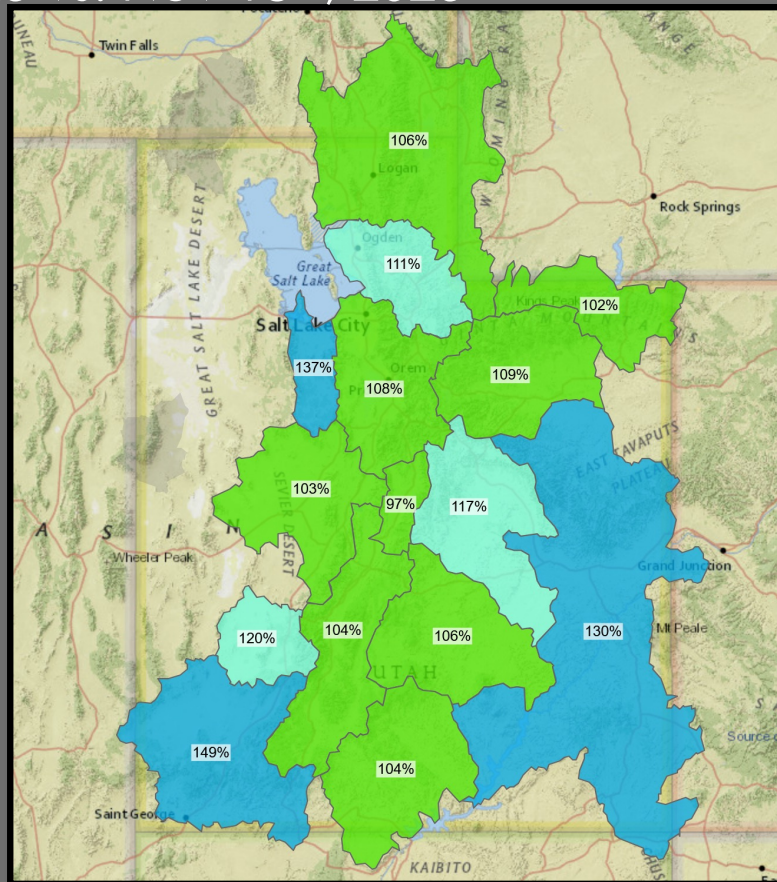
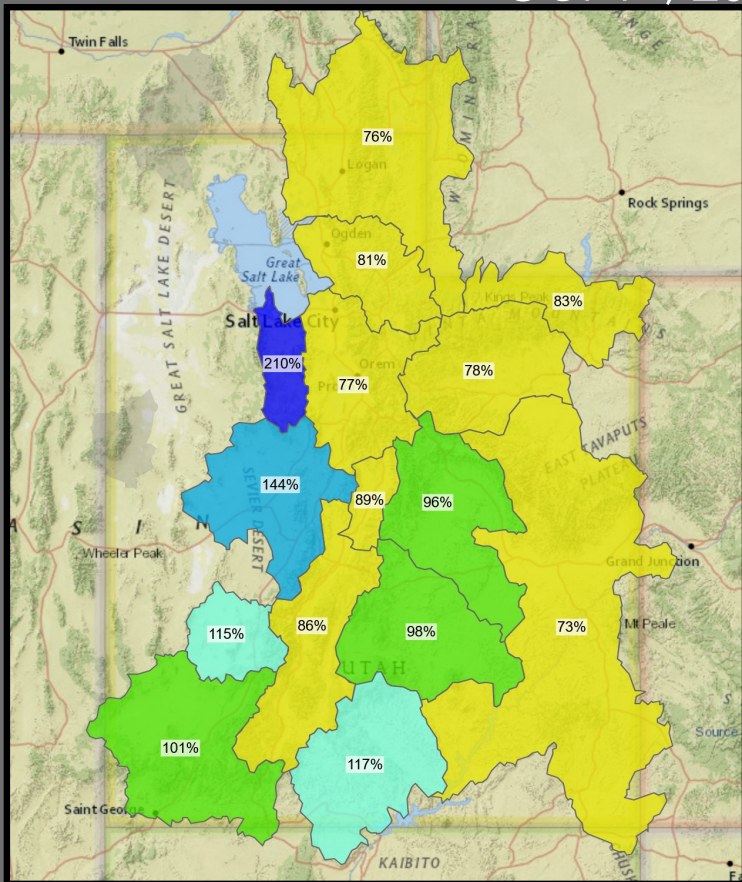
4.16"
SALT LAKE CITY

NORMAL: 1.26"
OLD RECORD: 3.91" (1981)

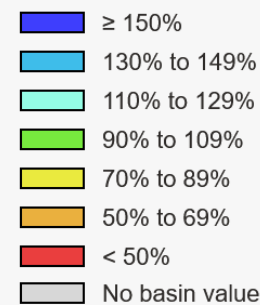
SOIL MOISTURE & SPRING RUNOFF EFFICIENCY

NRCS SNOTEL and SCAN: 8" Soil Moisture % of Median

Oct 1st, 2025 vs. Nov 18th, 2025



Soil Moisture (8 in.)
Percent of POR Median
October 1, 2025, end of
day



Watershed Boundaries

— State Watersheds

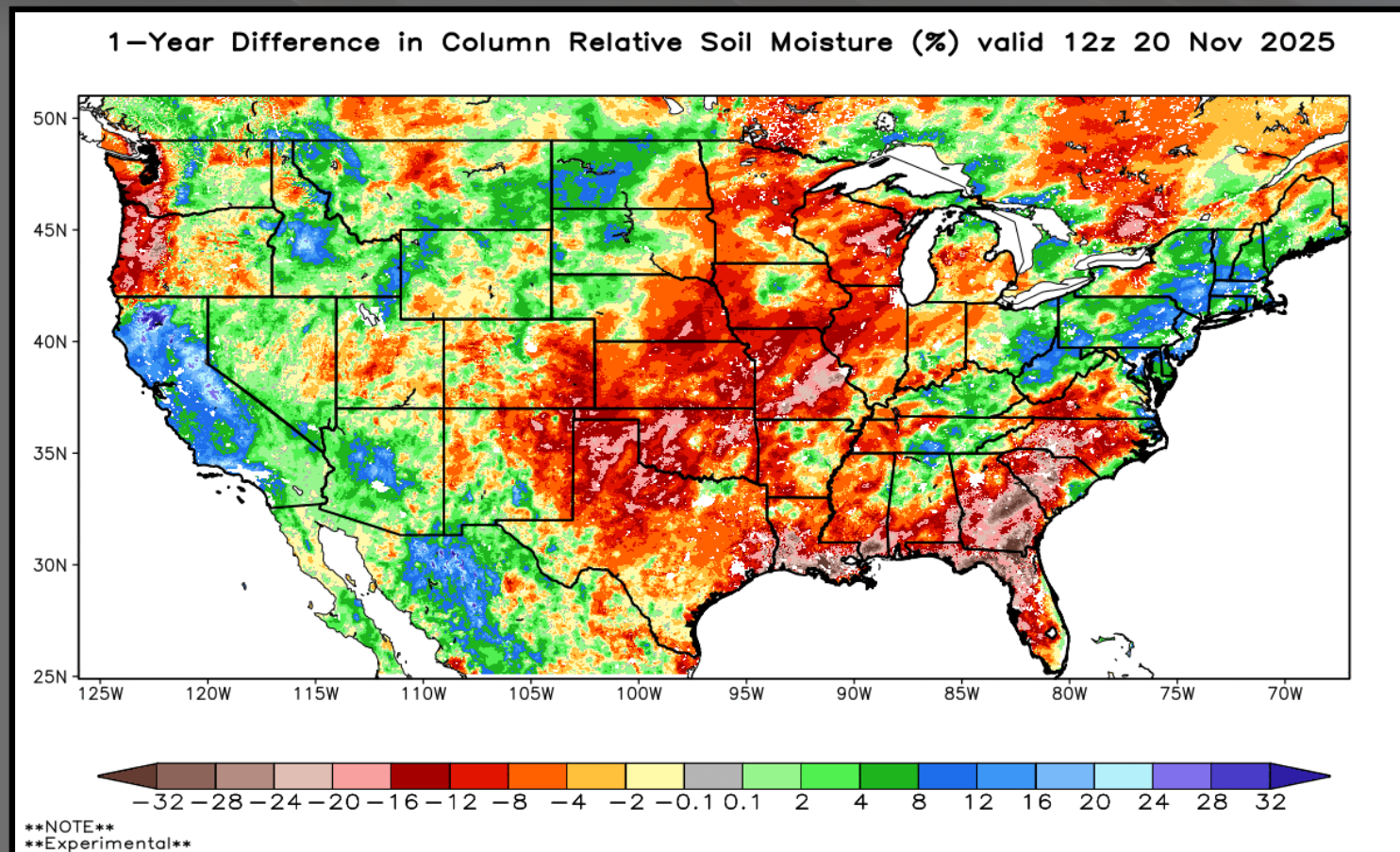
Sites with less than 20 years of data excluded



Created 11-19-2025, 04:16 PM MST

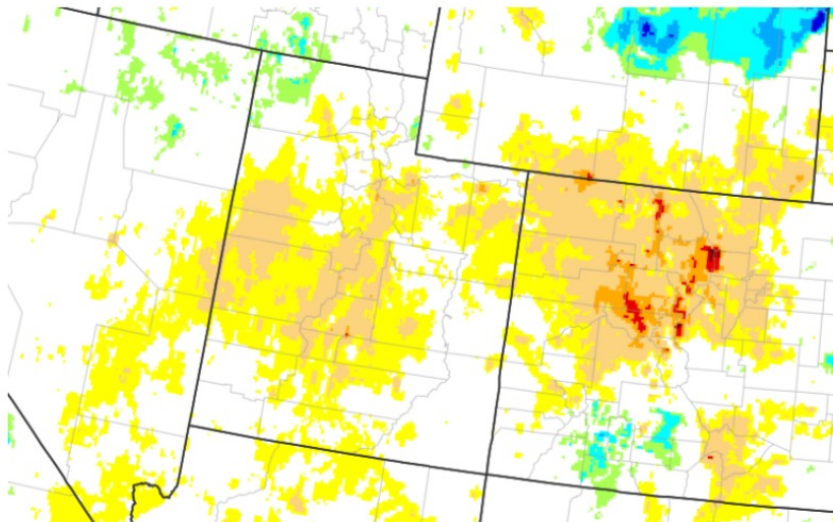
YEAR-OVER-YEAR SOIL MOISTURE CHANGES

NASA
SPoRT LIS



MULTI-INDICATOR DROUGHT BLENDS

Short-Term Multi-Indicator Drought Index (MIDI)



Dry Conditions



Wet Conditions

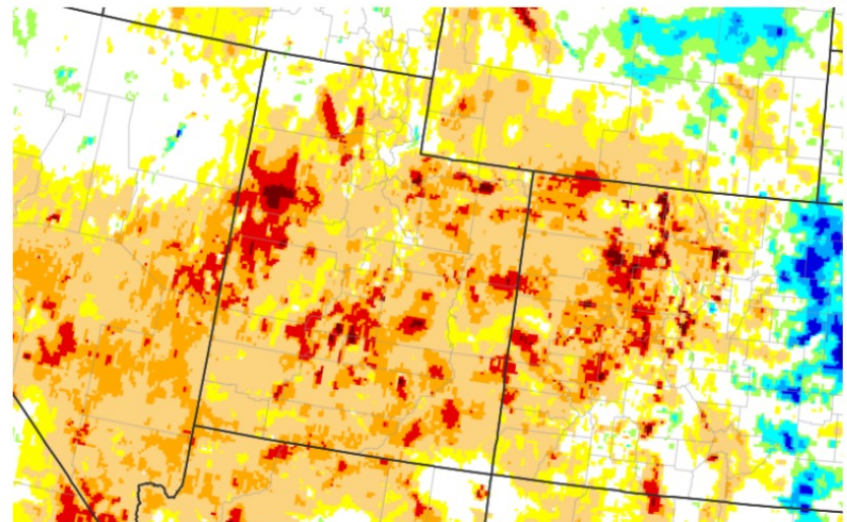


Source(s): UC Merced, via Climate Engine

Data Valid: 11/11/25

Drought.gov

Long-Term Multi-Indicator Drought Index (MIDI)



Dry Conditions



Wet Conditions

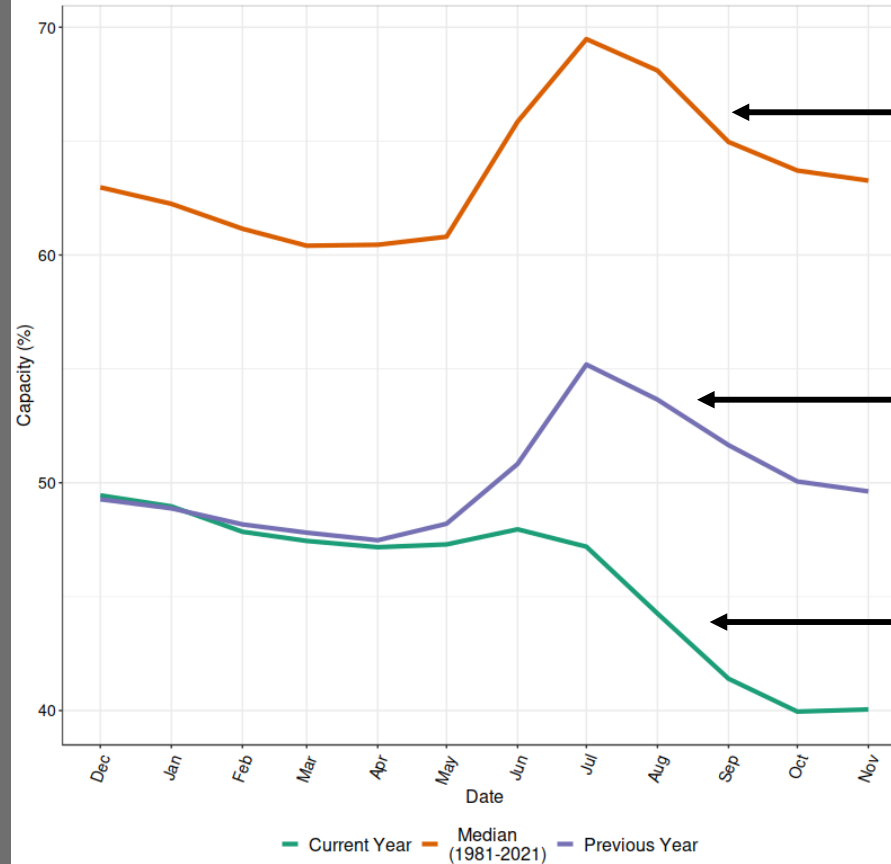


Source(s): UC Merced, via Climate Engine

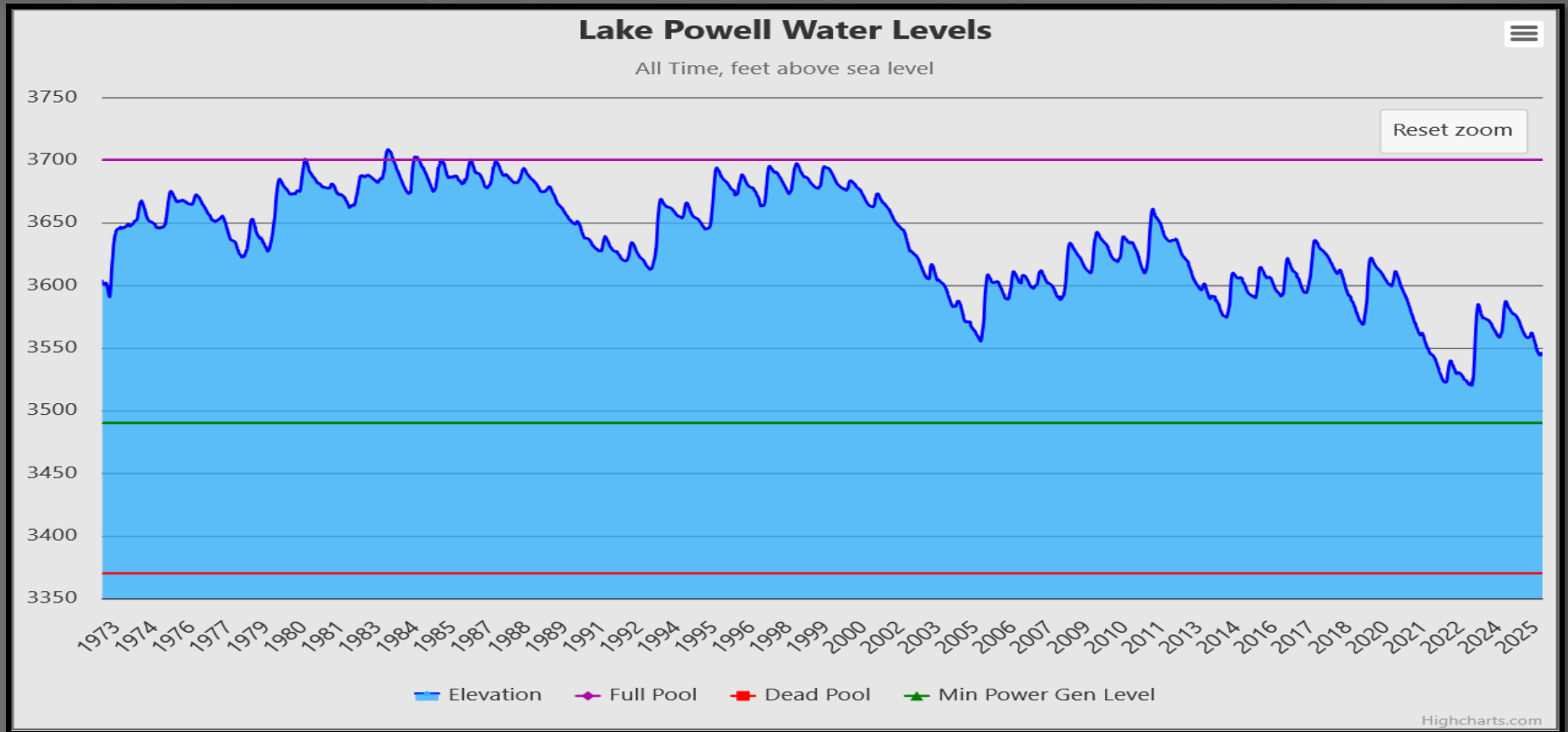
Data Valid: 11/11/25

Drought.gov

Utah Division of Water Resources



LONG TERM HYDROCLIMATE TRENDS



LONG TERM HYDROCLIMATE TRENDS

The Decreasingly-Great Salt Lake:

Roughly half of the historical extent has been lost in recent decades



LONG TERM HYDROCLIMATE TRENDS

The Decreasingly- Great Salt Lake:

Roughly half of the
historical extent has
been lost in recent
decades

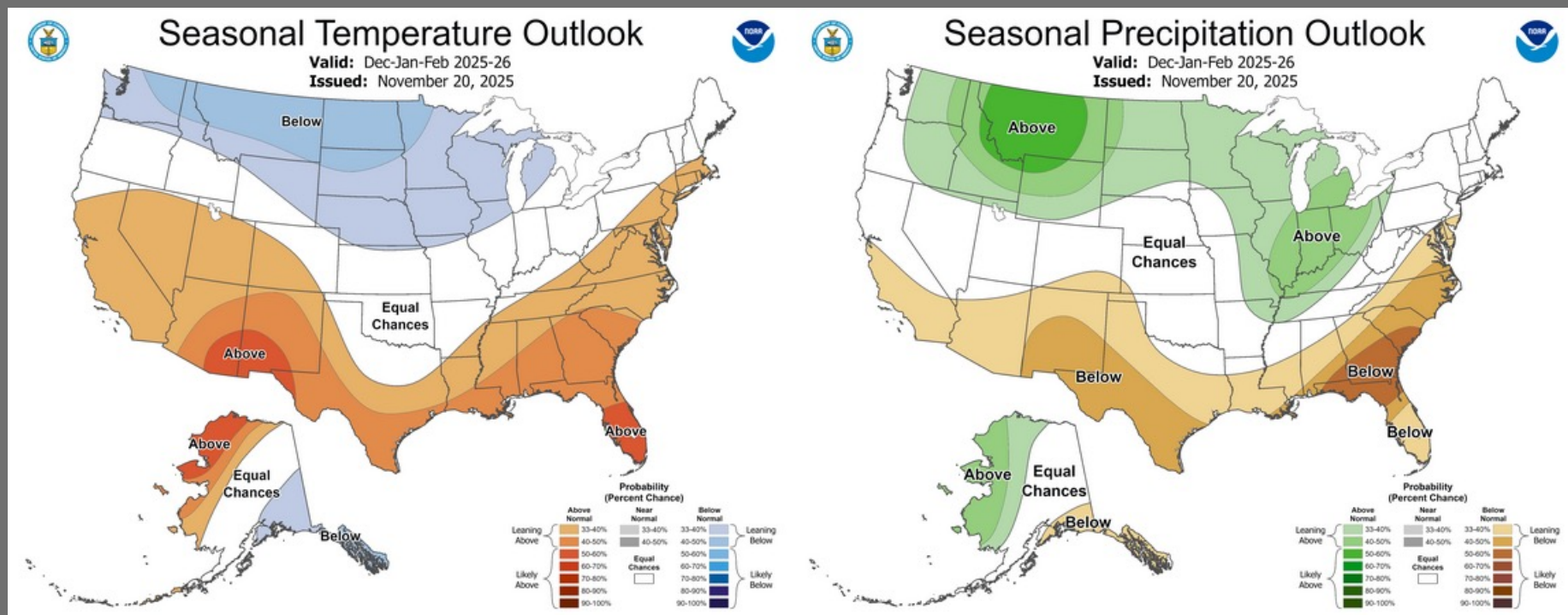


June 1985

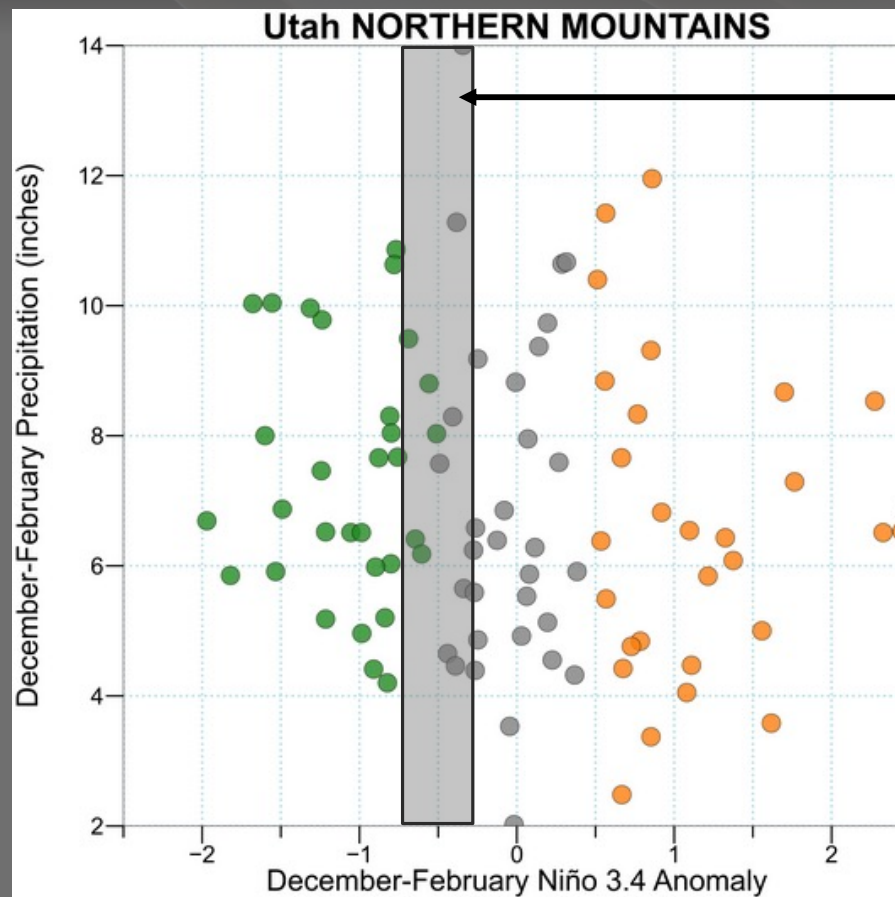


July 2022

CPC WINTER OUTLOOK



ENSO'S LACK OF PREDICTABILITY IN UTAH



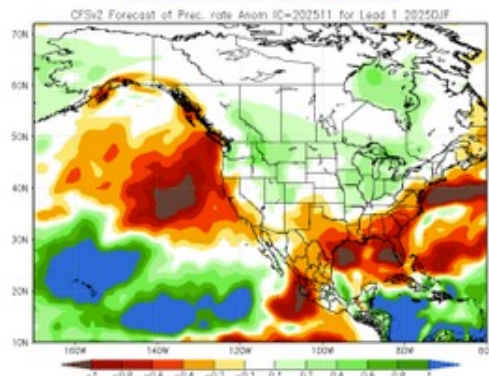
Historical Dec-Feb
Precipitation Range for weak
La Nina Years



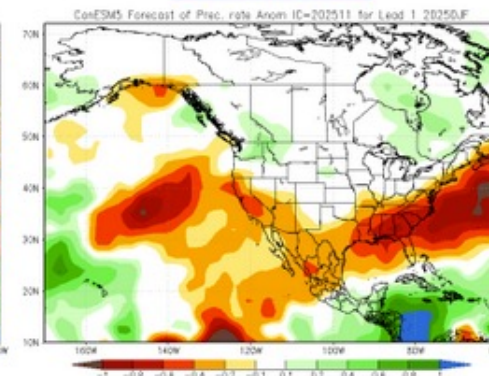
UTAH'S SEASONAL PREDICTION CHALLENGE

North American
Multi-Model
Ensemble (NMME)

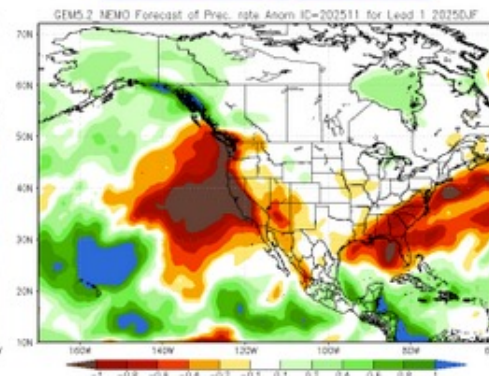
NCEP_CFSv2



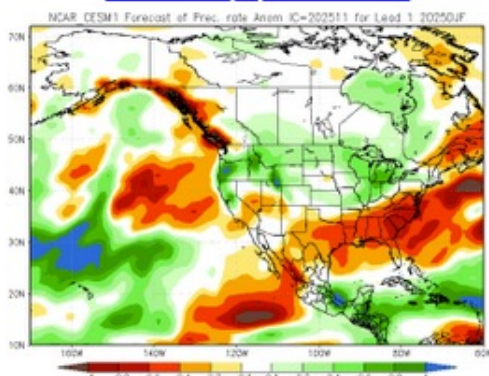
CanESM5



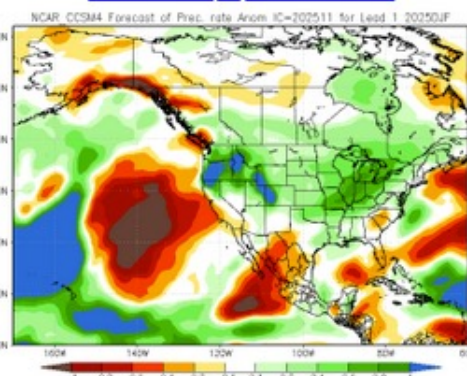
GEM5.2_NEMO



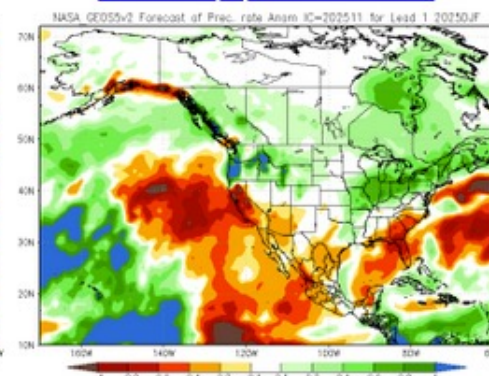
NCAR_CESM1



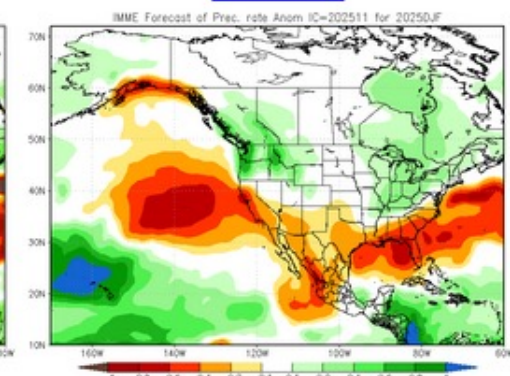
NCAR_CCSM4



NASA_GEOS5v2

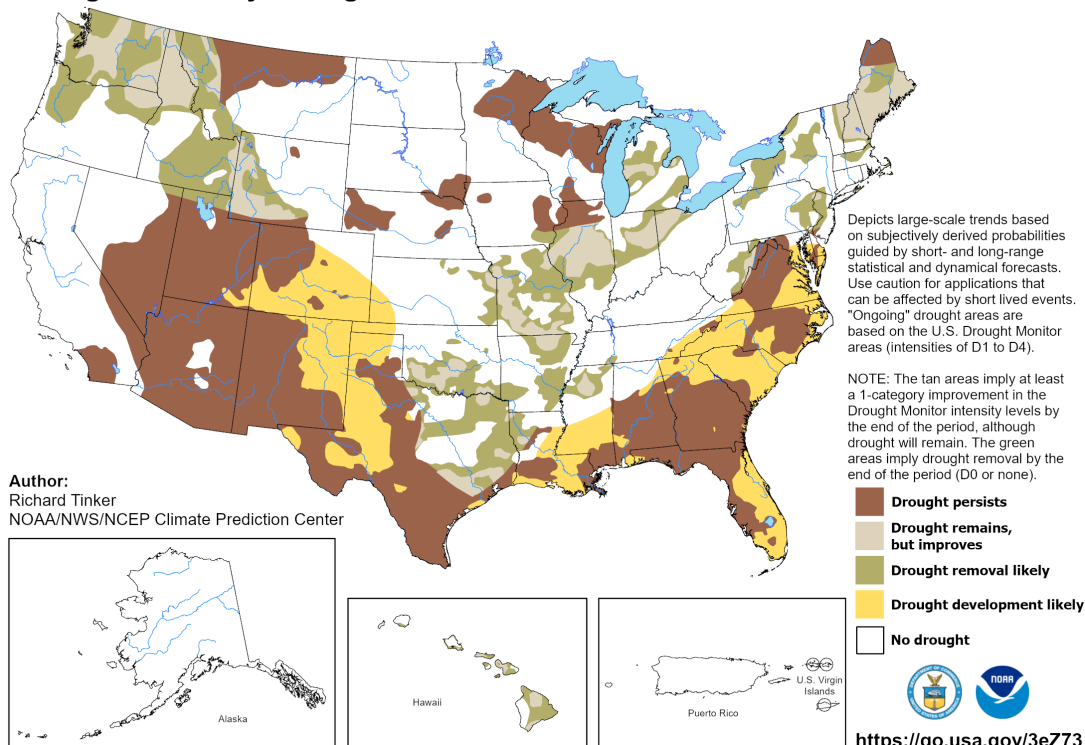


IMME



WINTER DROUGHT TENDENCY OUTLOOK

U.S. Seasonal Drought Outlook Valid for November 20, 2025 - February 28, 2026 **Drought Tendency During the Valid Period** Released November 20, 2025



SUMMARY

- Water Year 2026 began with long-term drought impacts in place from recent major drought periods and a sequence of underperforming seasonal precipitation
- Well-timed October and November rains have erased soil moisture deficits headed into the snow accumulation season
- Winter snowpack optimism is found in Utah's northern mountains, but wanes through central and southern Utah
- Spring runoff efficiency should be high; helpful for reservoir recharge
- Long-term drought relief will only come from multiple above-average years

THANK YOU!



Forecast▼ Climate Data▼ Maps▼ Resources▼

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UtahStateUniversity



JON MEYER PH.D.
UTAH CLIMATE CENTER
UTAH STATE UNIVERSITY
DEPT. OF PLANTS, SOILS AND CLIMATE
CONTACT: JON.MEYER@USU.EDU

Our Mission is to facilitate access to climate data and information, and to use expertise in atmospheric science, to interpret climate information in an accurate and innovative fashion for the public.

