February-April 2026 Outlook: Perspective for the Lower Rio Grande Valley/Deep S. Texas Region

NATIONAL WEATHER SERVICE

January 28, 2026

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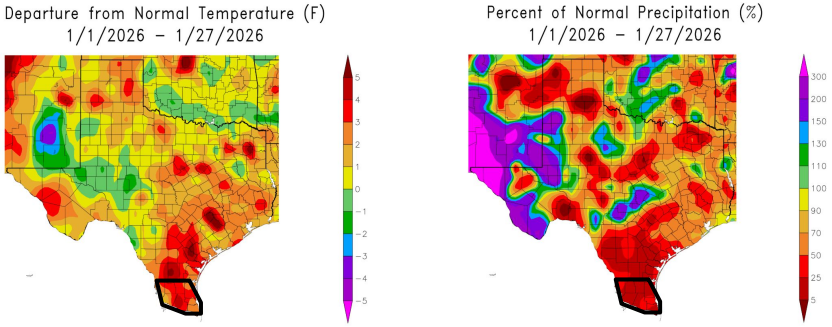
Dry and warmer than normal conditions are favored to continue through the mid-spring; drought, wildfire potential, water supply issues remain in focus; coastal hazards, and cold fronts an issue into March



January 2026:The January 25-27, 2026 Arctic Outbreak was one of the coldest on record during this timeframe

Minimum 3-Day Mean Avg Temperature for BROWNSVILLE S PADRE ISLAND INTL AP, TX

Click column heading to sort ascending, click again to sort descending.

Rank	Value	Ending Date	Missing Days
1	43.0	1948-01-27	0
2	43.5	2026-01-27	0
3	44.8	1961-01-27	0
4	45.8	1966-01-27	0
-	45.8	1920-01-27	0
-	45.8	1904-01-27	0
7	48.5	1943-01-27	0
8	49.7	1922-01-27	0
9	50.8	2003-01-27	0
10	51.7	1988-01-27	0

Period of record: 1898-12-01 to 2026-01-27

Minimum 3-Day Mean Avg Temperature for MCALLEN MILLER INTL AP, TX

Click column heading to sort ascending, click again to sort descending.

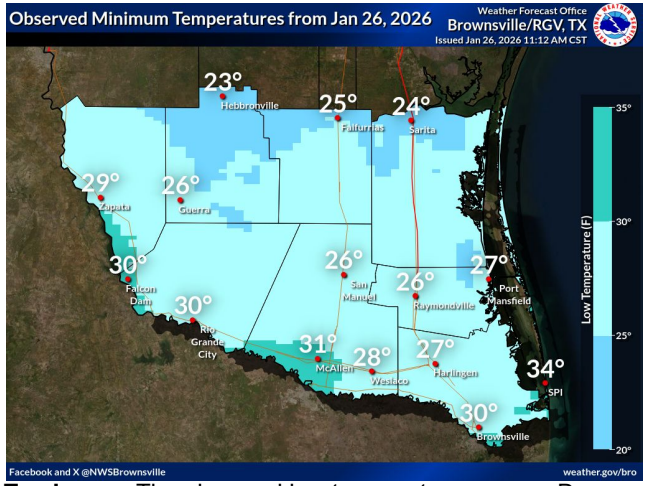
Rank	Value	Ending Date	Missing Days
1	41.8	1961-01-27	0
2	43.7	2026-01-27	0
3	45.2	1966-01-27	0
4	49.2	2003-01-27	0
5	52.8	1993-01-27	0
6	53.0	1963-01-27	0
7	53.5	2008-01-27	0
8	55.3	1988-01-27	0
9	55.8	1978-01-27	0
10	56.0	2023-01-27	0

Period of record: 1961-01-14 to 2026-01-27

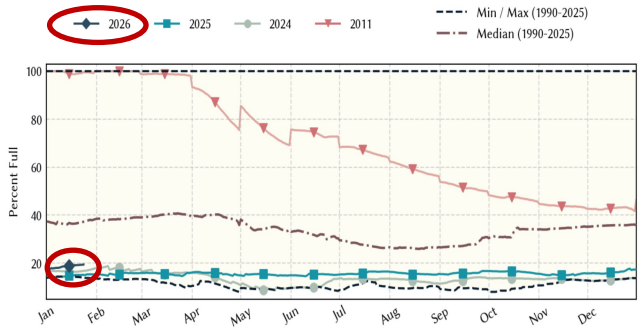
- The **First Major Arctic Outbreak of the 2025/2026 winter season** and the **coldest air mass since January 21-22, 2025** occurred January 25-27, 2026. This recent Arctic Outbreak made it **4 years in a row of at least one Arctic Outbreak event across Deep South Texas** (previous 3: 2022/23 - December, 2023/24 and 2024/25 - January).

- Widespread freezing temperatures and hard freezes (temperatures <28F) occurred during this time. The **January 25-27th, 2026 Arctic Outbreak** was **one of the coldest on record for any year during this timeframe.** Both Brownsville (BRO) and McAllen (MFE) came in **second all-time coldest average temperatures** during this 3-day span (see top image above). **All three climate sites set new daily coldest morning lows on January 26th** (top right image).

- The recent Arctic Outbreak has knocked January 2026 out of the top 10 warmest on record. Still, the near-record warm start (January 1-9) left much of the region warm for the month! As of January 28th, Brownsville sits at **16th warmest on record**. Meanwhile, McAllen sits at **12th warmest on record.**



Top Image: The observed low temperatures across Deep South Texas on the morning of Monday January 26, 2026.

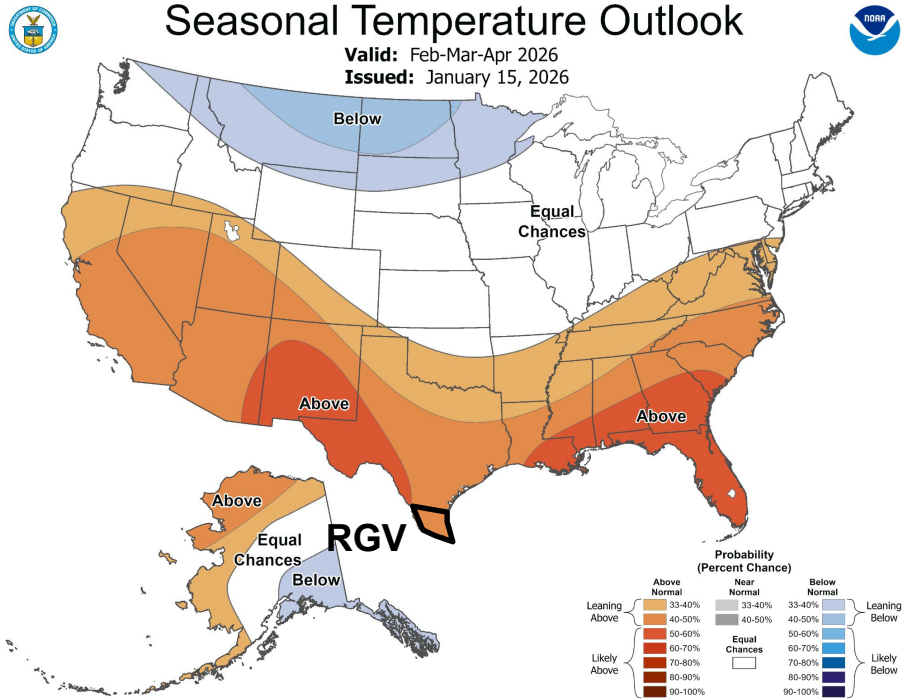


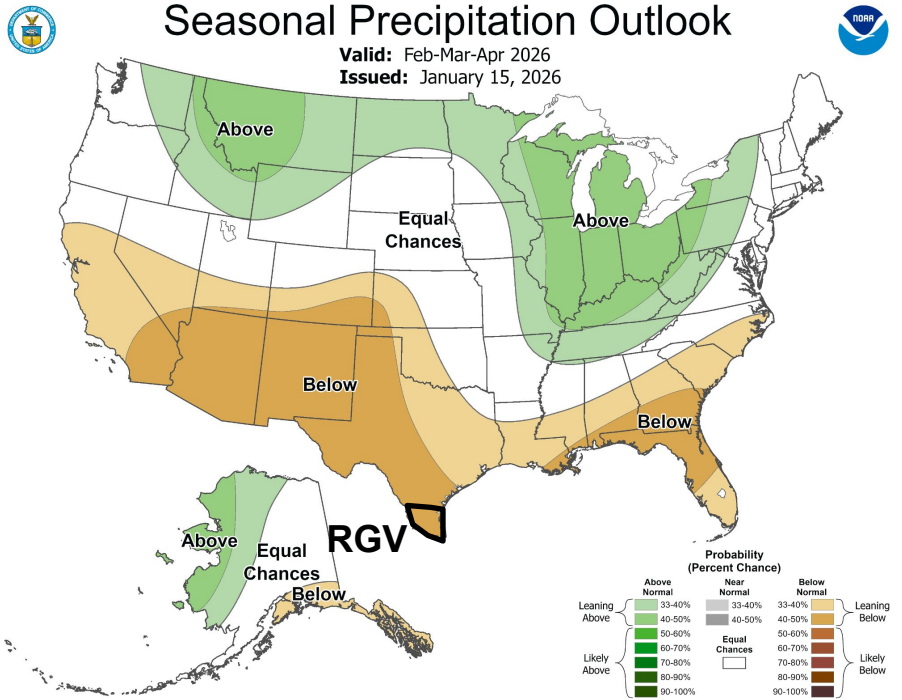
Bottom Image: Latest data from the **Rio Grande Reservoirs (Texas Share)** continue to indicate Jan 2026 levels are near 30 year lows and records, but above 2025 levels. Month-over-month shares have increased from 16.7% to 19.4%. **Credit:** Texas Water Development Board

Photos of Stunned Sea Turtles Rescued on January 28, 2026

At least 375 sea turtles were rescued from the recent Arctic Blast (photo courtesy: Sea Turtle Inc.)

Seasonal Forecast, February-April 2026 USA





<u>Confidence:</u> Medium-High (60-80%) for warmer and Medium (40-50%) for drier than normal conditions during the FMA period.

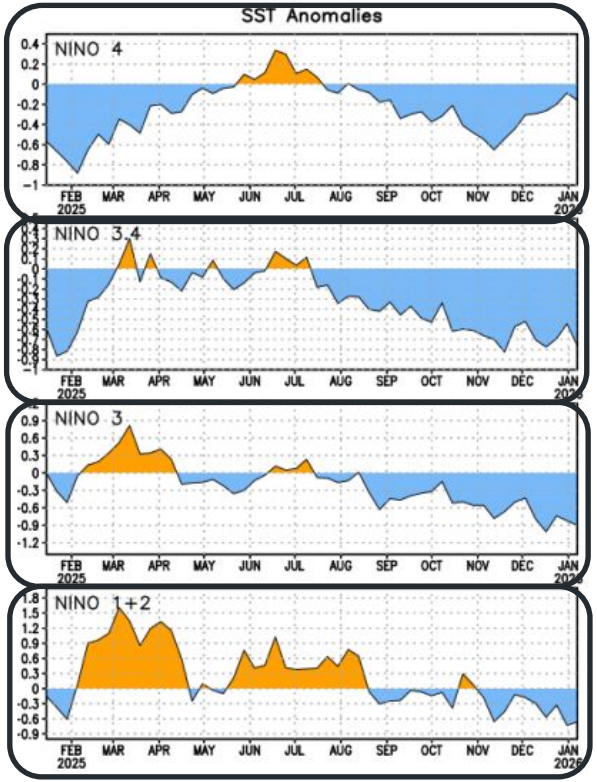
Key Takeaways: February-April 2026 Outlook

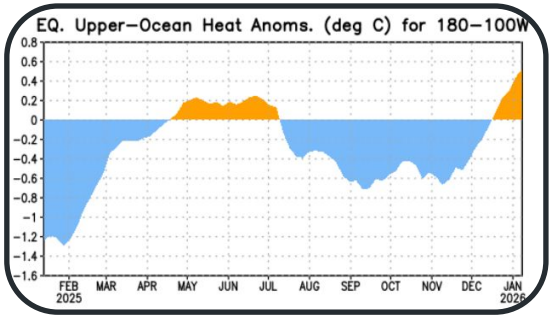
- **A warmer and *leaning* drier than normal outlook** is anticipated through the **February-April** period for the RGV/Deep South Texas region**. Heat Risk** concerns could begin developing as early as the 2nd half of March or in April. **Note:** March and April are amongst the fastest warming months in the RGV.
- **Cool/cold fronts and dry air intrusions** are expected to continue into March, though becoming less frequent. These cool/cold fronts will help to drive blustery northerly winds, which coupled with lower relative humidity values, extensively long-term drought conditions, and freeze cured grasses from the January 25-27 Arctic Blast, will increase the **potential for wildfire growth and spread.**
- **D2 (Severe Drought)** and **D3 (Extreme Drought)** conditions continue into February across the Mid-Upper Valley and Northern Ranchlands (see slide 10 for more information). **D0 (Abnormally Dry)** to **D1 (Moderate Drought)** conditions continue into February over the lower Valley (i.e. Cameron, Willacy, and eastern Hidalgo Co.) into southeastern Kenedy Co. **D4 (Exceptional Drought)** is likely to develop across the Brush Country/upper Valley, with **D2**/**D3** spreading elsewhere based on the forecast.
- Falcon Int'l Reservoir remained **near historic seasonal lows at the end of January**. **As we continue through the dry season, confidence remains near-certain (~100%) on total storage remaining just above record lows through April.**
- Occasional hazardous **coastal (tidal/surf) and marine (dangerous boating) situations** will continue as we progress through February into March.
- As we transition into March/April, **heavy rainfall and localized flooding has to be taken into consideration as the prospects for showers and thunderstorms could increase**. This is why confidence is medium (40-50%) for a drier than normal lean in the FMA period.
- **Final Note:** Additional **cold snaps** lend to the potential for one or two more freezes in early-mid February with a 20-40% confidence of occurrence. Greatest uncertainties are 1) just how far south the cold comes and 2) the placement of the full fetch of cold air (i.e. western Canada/Rockies vs. east of the Mississippi and Red River).

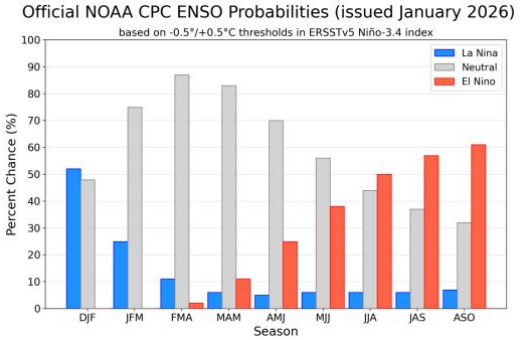
The "Why" of the Forecast: ENSO Neutral to El Nino transition, soil moisture, long-term trends, and other key climate teleconnections to play a role

- With a La Nina (weak) sited over the equatorial Pacific as of this update, a **warmer** and leaning **drier** than normal pattern is favored across Deep South Texas/RGV through the Feb-Apr (FMA) period.
- A cold snap or two is possible through mid-February and key weather/climate variables such as the placement of the mid-upper high pressure system, Arctic Oscillation, and Pacific North American Oscillation will continue to play key roles.
- A transition towards an **El Nino** in the summer of 2026 is expected. This **La Nina** to **El Nino** transition, in addition to climatology, could briefly shift the weather pattern into a **wetter pattern** during the Spring, particularly during the 2nd half of March and April.
- **Wildfire season** will remain in focus through March (peaking in February and March) due to the combination of **long-term dryness, freeze cured grasses, and occasional cool fronts** yielding at times blustery winds and low relative humidity values.

Year	DJF	JFM	FMA	MAM	AMJ	MJJ	JJA	JAS	ASO	SON	OND	NDJ
2022	-1.0	-0.9	-1.0	-1.1	-1.0	-0.9	-0.8	-0.9	-1.0	-1.0	-0.9	-0.8
2023	-0.7	-0.4	-0.1	0.2	0.5	0.8	1.1	1.3	1.6	1.8	1.9	2.0
2024	1.8	1.5	1.1	0.7	0.4	0.2	0.0	-0.1	-0.2	-0.3	-0.4	-0.5
2025	-0.4	-0.2	-0.1	0.0	0.0	0.0	-0.1	-0.3	-0.4	-0.5	-0.5	

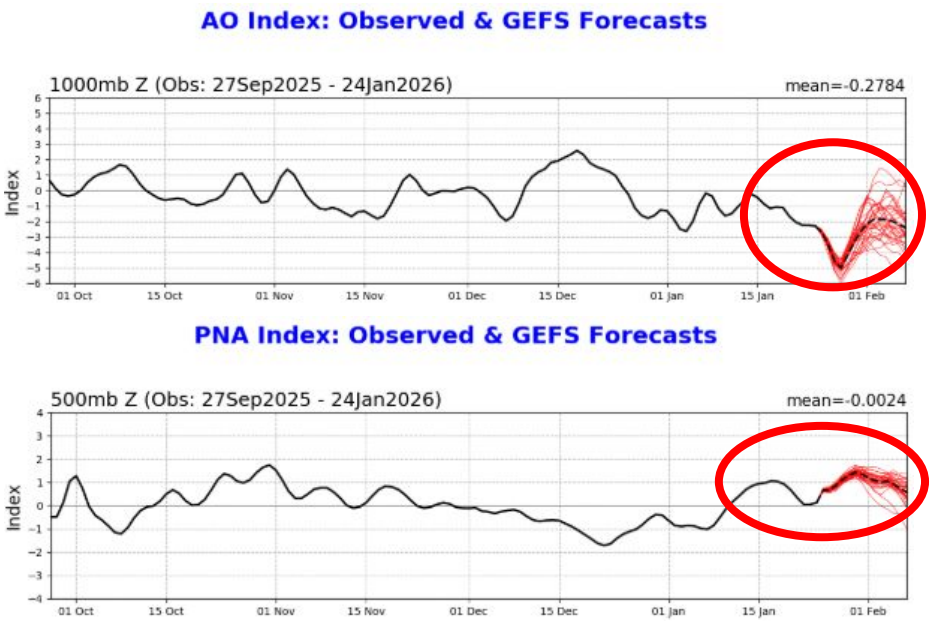


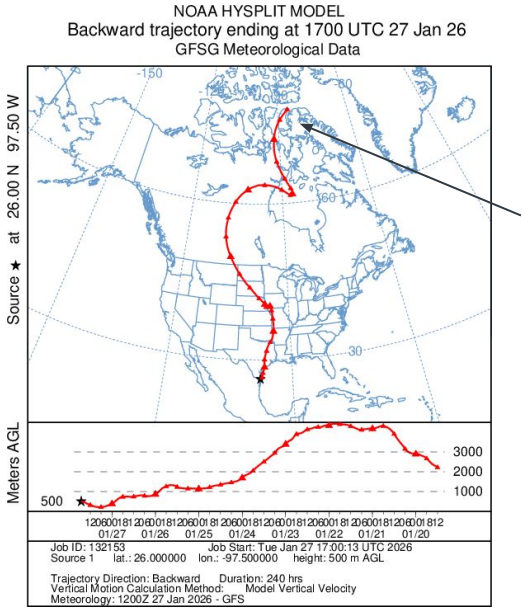




*Above right: Oceanic Niño Index. Values between -0.5 and 0.5 (gray) indicated ENSO Neutral conditions persisting since April-June 2024.

Arctic Oscillation (AO) and Pacific North American Oscillation (PNA)

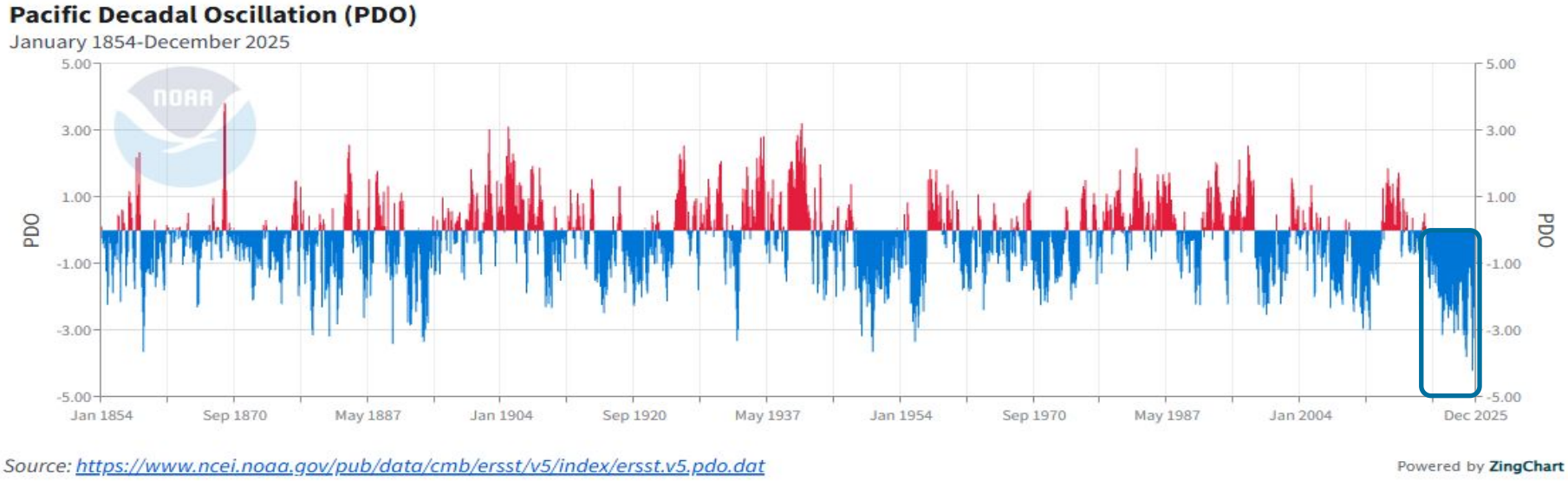




Using NOAA's Hysplit Backward Trajectory Model, this image depicts the source of our recent cold air outbreak January 25-27, 2026). It was truly an **Arctic sourced airmass!**

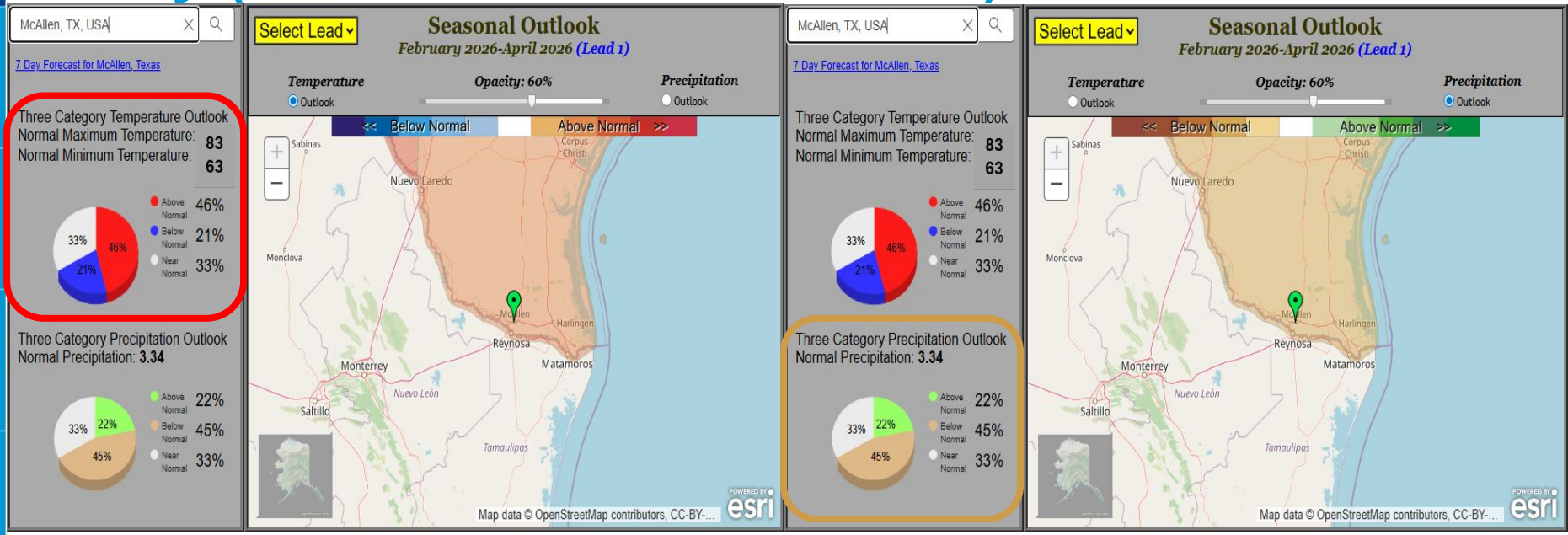
- A **negative Arctic Oscillation (-AO)** and a **positive Pacific North American Oscillation (+PNA)** has been driving the weather pattern lately (and will continue to do so into February) and is the reason for the recent Arctic Outbreak and Winter Storm that plagued much of the country.
- These indices should modify a bit into early February, but still remain favorable for additional cold fronts during the first week or so of February.

The “Why” of the Forecast: Pacific Decadal Oscillation (PDO) remains in Sharp Negative Phase



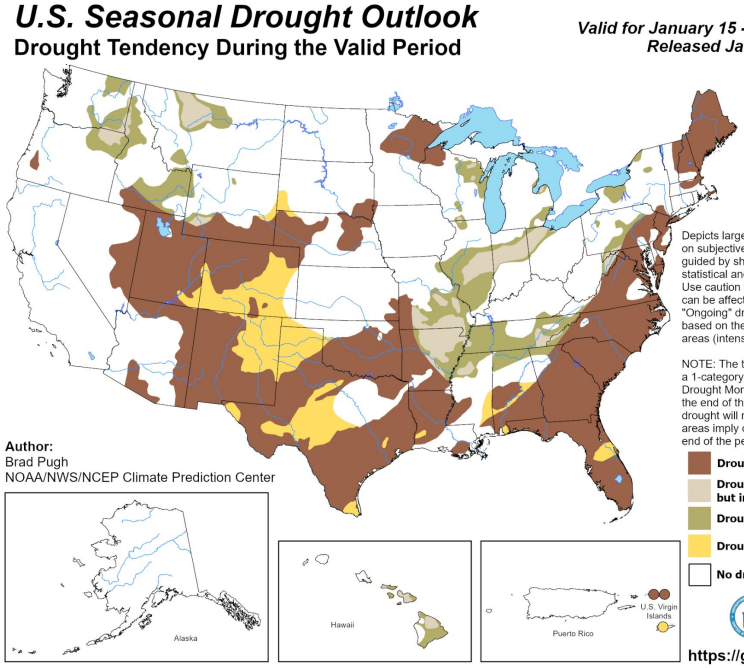
- The 2021-2025 **prolonged and strong negative PDO has persisted**, and will remain the case through early 2026. This **continues to support confidence** for a **warmer than normal pattern to persist through early 2026.**
- In addition to the sharply negative PDO, a **La Nina (weak)** currently in place will support a **drier than normal precipitation outcome** through the Feb-Apr (FMA) period. However, seasonality plus a transition to an El Nino later this summer supports a potential shift towards a **wetter pattern** (low confidence) across Deep South Texas and the Rio Grande Valley this upcoming Spring Season. **Confidence remains high** for a sharply negative PDO to continue.

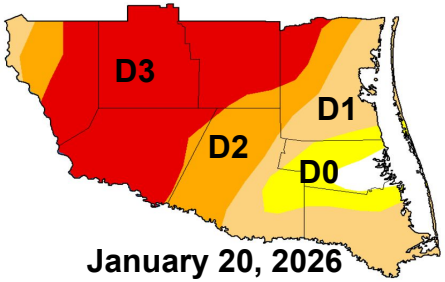
The February-April 2026 Outlook: Rio Grande Valley (McAllen as Anchor Point)

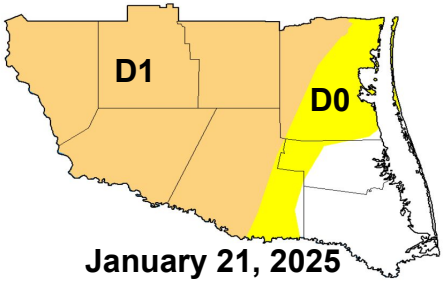


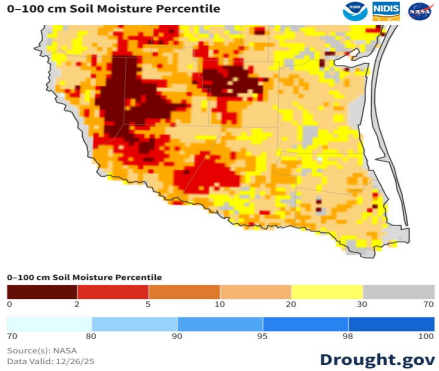
- **Temperature:** **Warmer than normal temperatures** are expected. **Confidence: Medium-High (60-80%).** RGV averages: Afternoon – Mid-Upper 70s through February; Upper 70s-Mid 80s through March; Mid 80s-Lower 90s through April. Wake-up: Mid-Upper 50s through February; Lower-Mid 60s through early April; Mid 60s-Lower 70s mid to late April.
- **Precipitation:** **Odds lean towards a drier than normal outcome though rain prospects could increase in time. Confidence: Medium (40-50%).** RGV averages: 3.5 to 4 inches (**most in March/April**).

The February-April 2026 “Droughtlook”



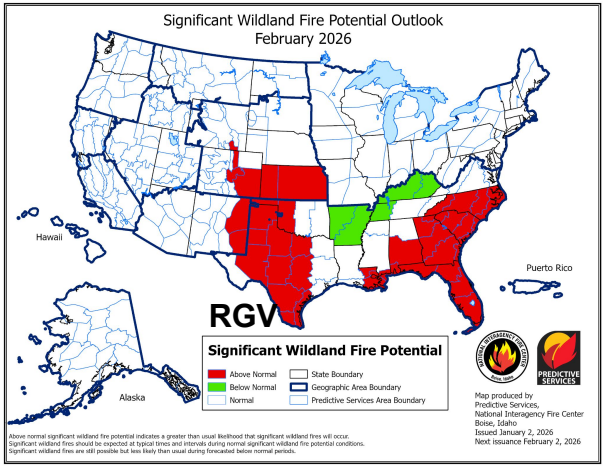


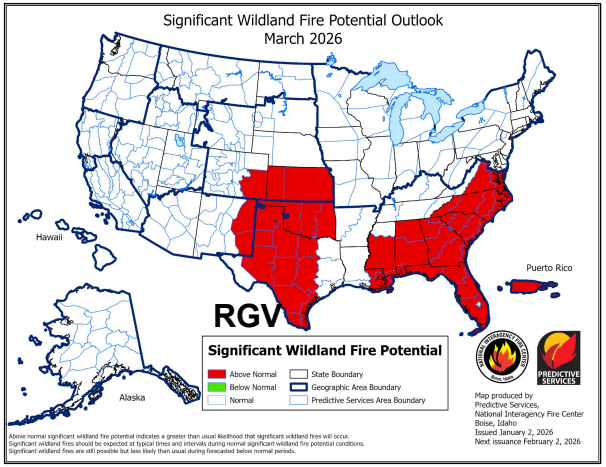


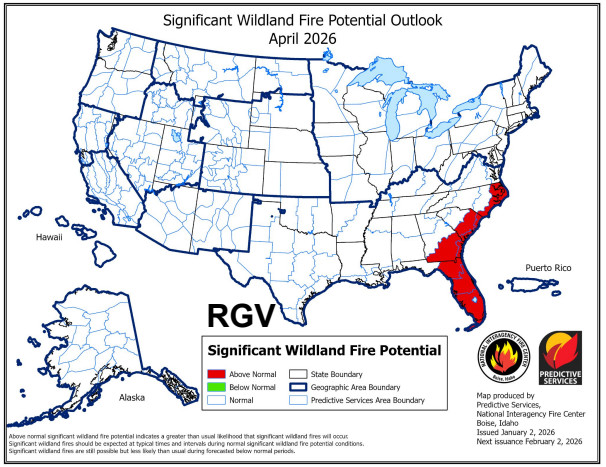


- **Year-over-Year (YoY) drought/dryness** shows deeper drought/dryness issues across Deep South Texas this year compared to 2024.
- **Extreme Drought (D3)** conditions are being observed over 44% of Deep South Texas, including all of Jim Hogg, most of Zapata, Starr, Brooks, and northwestern Kenedy counties. **Soil moisture percentages are very low** in this area.
- **Severe Drought (D2)** conditions are being observed across 18% of Deep South Texas, including portions of northwestern Zapata, eastern Starr, the western Hidalgo, southeastern Brooks, northwestern Kenedy counties.
- The seasonal drought outlook suggests **drought conditions/dryness persisting/worsening** overall over the RGV/Deep South Texas region through April.

Following the Recent Arctic Outbreak, Wildfire Concerns Have Increased as we move into the Peak Months of February and March!







- As of late January, all of Texas including all of Deep South Texas has been freeze cured after the January 25-27, 2026 Arctic Blast (see bottom right image). This combined with **prolonged dryness** over the past several months and **elevated fuels** could set the stage for **wildfire spread potential** with **February and March being peak months** (see images above).
- Additional cool fronts, though lessening in frequency and intensity in time, could yield lower relative humidity levels and blustery winds from time to time further supporting the risk for wildfires into March.

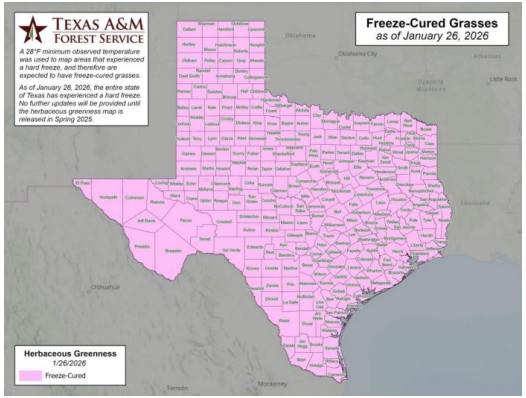
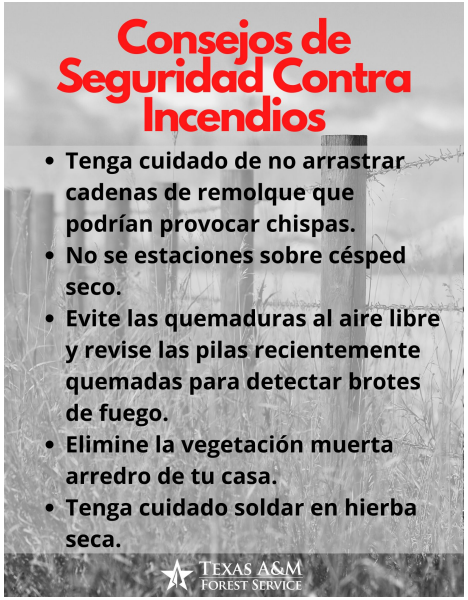


Image: Following the recent arctic outbreak January 25-27th, all of Texas has been freeze cured.

Wildfire Prevention Review

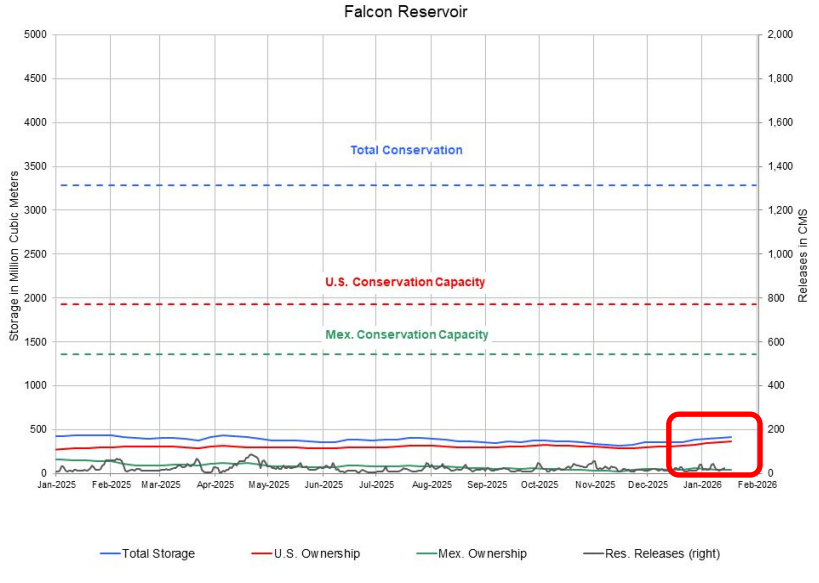
- Conditions remain stable for most locations at the end of January, though grasses have recently become freeze cured. Given the exceptional long-term dryness, wildfire spread potential is poised to **increase** through the early parts of 2026 **across the RGV with February and March** serving as peak months.
- Continue to practice fire weather safety and focus on **farm, ranch workers**, and **other persons who might drive hot vehicles** on parched brush on critical/near-critical days – especially on warm, breezy days during a dry spell.

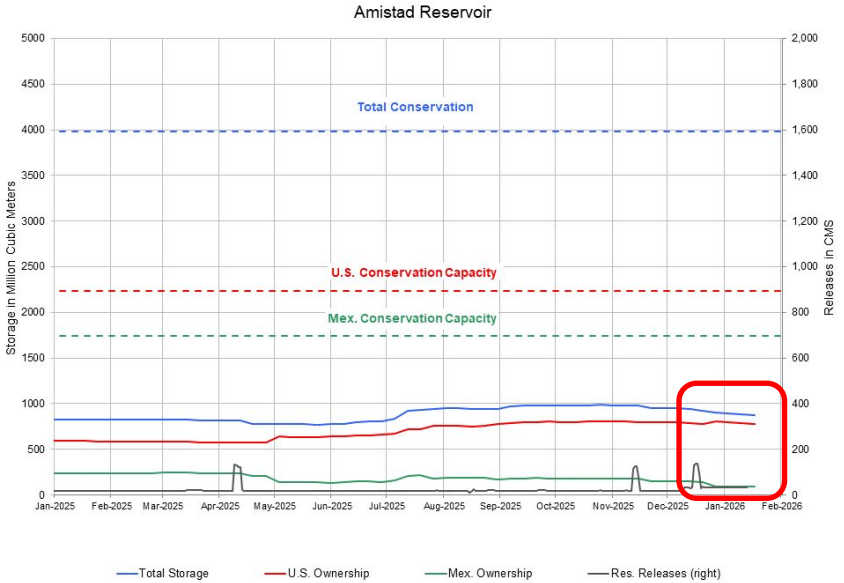
Infographics for Wildfire Prevention



- ~50 in all (20 in Spanish)! Ask us for more information.
- Thanks to **Texas A&M Forest Service** for many of these!

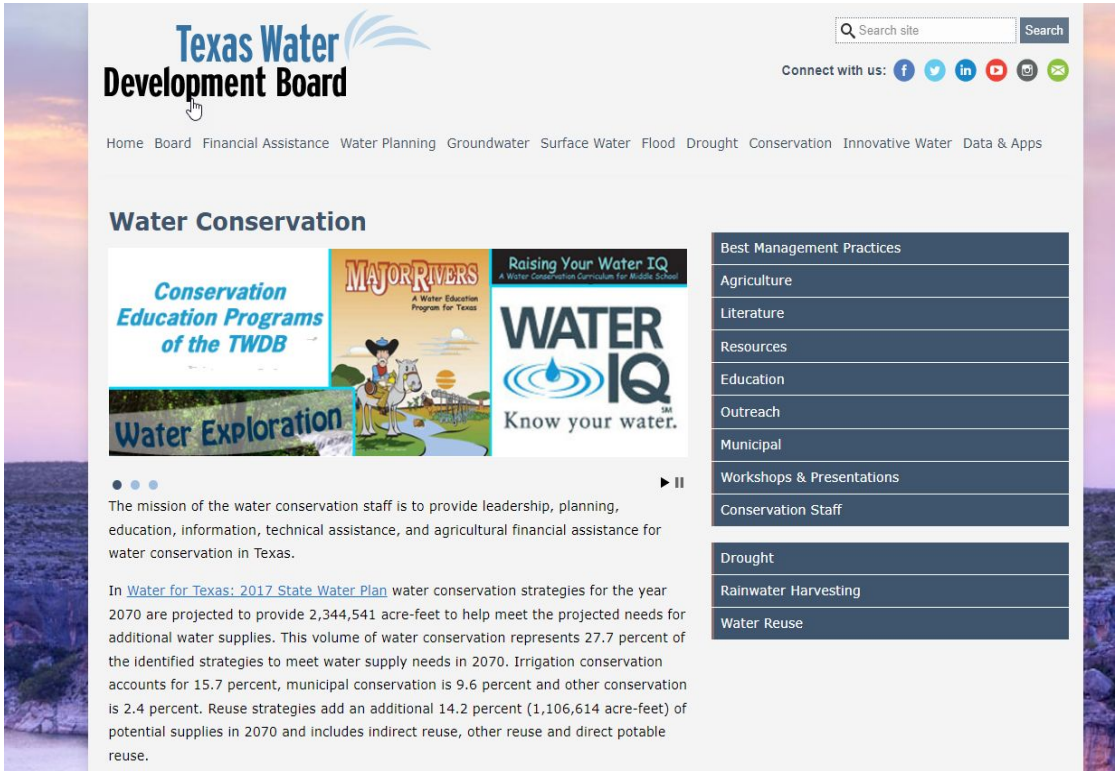
Amistad and Falcon Reservoirs have and will continue to remain just above record lows through early 2026





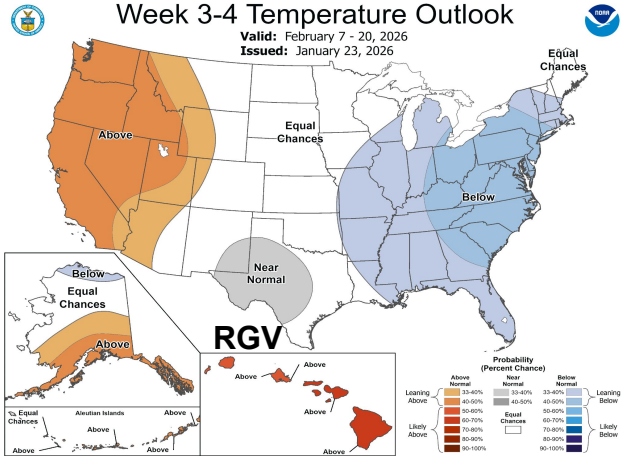
- **Falcon rose a little, at 12.9%** as of January 28 (slightly higher than the **10.9% in late December**) due to releases from Amistad in late December/early January. Levels are likely to fall slowly through April, unless additional releases are provided from Amistad.
- **Amistad fell slightly since late December and were just above all-time record lows as of late January.** Levels were at **21.7% on January 28th** (slightly lower than the **22.7% from late December**). Levels should change little or fall slowly through April.

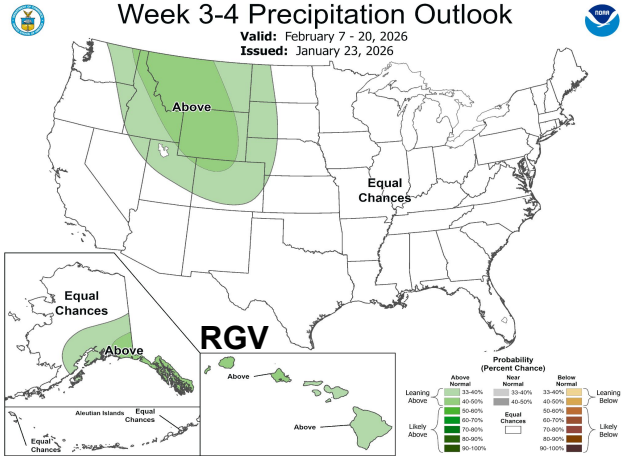
Water Conservation is Key Until Further Notice!

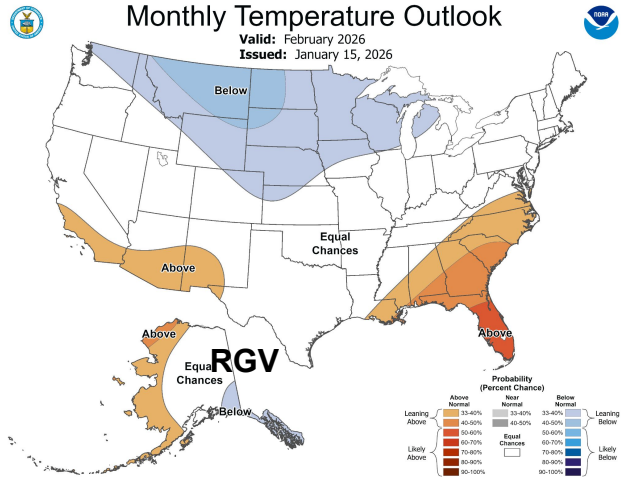


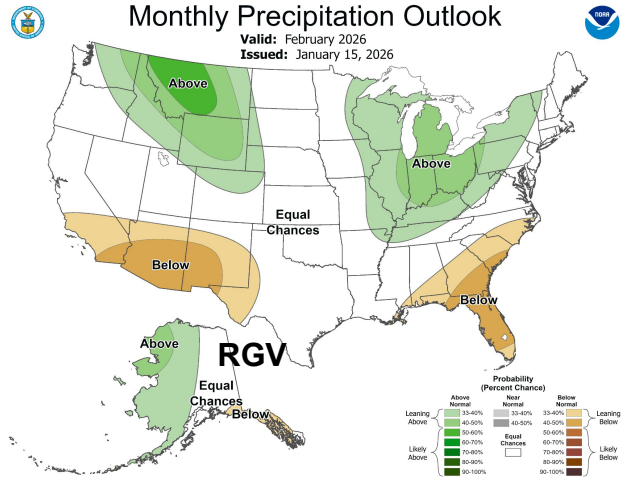
- "Stage 2/3" Restrictions continue into early 2026 in some areas, and are likely to continue **until further notice** based on inflows from Amistad and Falcon.
- Learn more at the Texas Water Development Board's Conservation Page.

February 2026: Medium-High (60-80%) Confidence on Temperature and Precipitation Trends









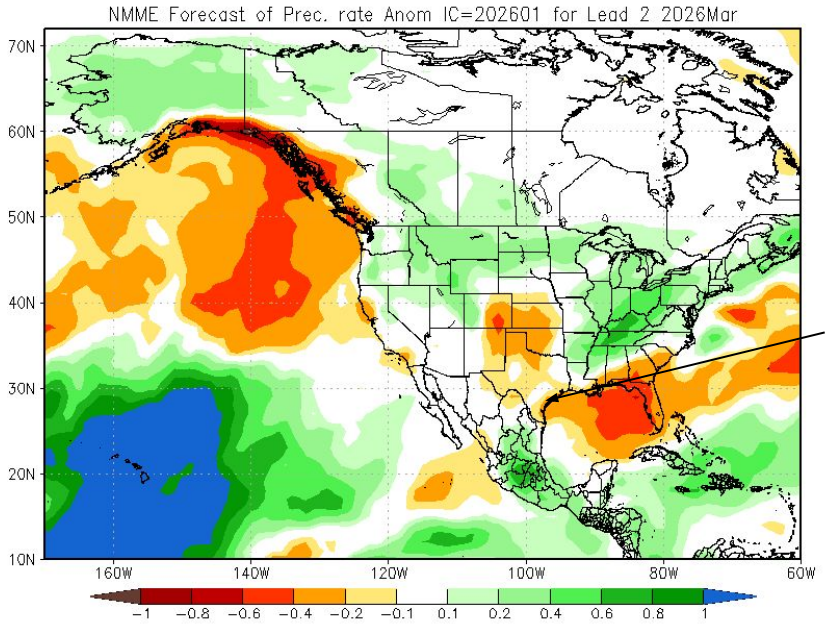
Driven by a **negative Arctic Oscillation (-AO) and a positive Pacific North American Oscillation (+PNA)**, we are in the midst of a highly amplified pattern featuring a warm West U.S. vs. a cold central and East U.S. It's this pattern that has allowed for a chunk of a Polar Vortex (PV) lobe to rotate over a good portion of Canada and the U.S. over the past few days, which resulted in the latest major Arctic Blast/Winter Storm over much of the country.

Short to medium range computer models continue to suggest this pattern persisting through the middle parts of February, with bouts of cold air intrusions impacting the country from time to time (worst over the northern and eastern US). Temperatures could moderate in late February.

Bottomline: The best chance for a drier than normal pattern in the FMA period will be February! While there will be many dry and warm days in February, there is a chance that the first part of February and middle parts of February could trend normal to cooler than normal due to one or two more cool fronts. Some much needed rain is possible too with these fronts. Greatest uncertainty is how far south the cool/cold air seeps.The final third of the month could trend warmer. **This gives way to equal chances with a slight lean towards warm and dry.**

Early Look: March 2026

Potential rainfall rate anomaly, March 2026

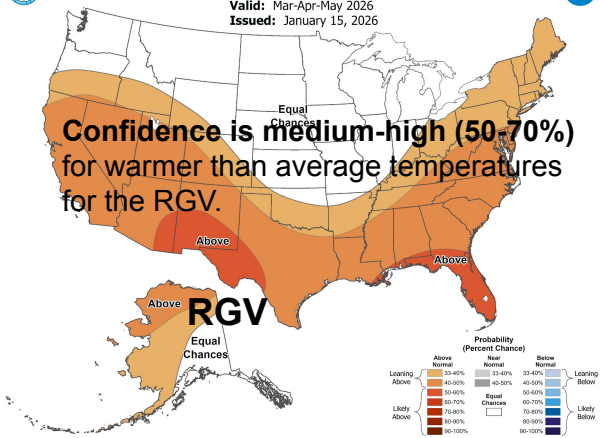


- This model's forecast for March continues to favor a **dry pattern** (note the brown/golden brown colors nearby) persisting. However, the dry signal doesn't look as strong as previous months, which indicates that there could be **more opportunities for showers and thunderstorms** (meaningful rainfall) compared to prior months, for the second half of the month. Confidence remains low (uncertain).

Spring 2026 into early Summer 2026: Warmer than normal trends favored; Equal chances for precipitation (it's possible that the pattern could turn wetter in the Spring)

Seasonal Temperature Outlook

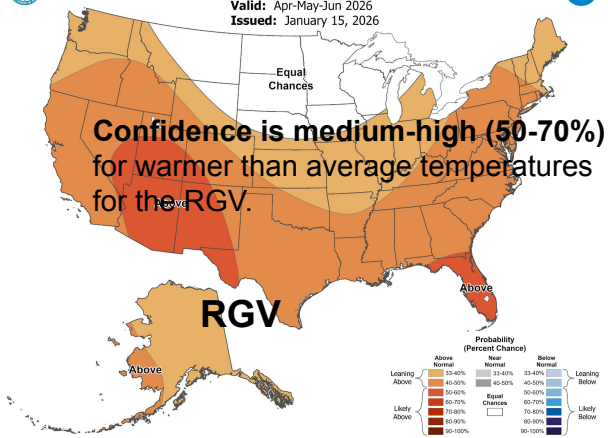
Valid: Mar-Apr-May 2026
Issued: January 15, 2026



Confidence is medium-high (50-70%) for warmer than average temperatures for the RGV.

Seasonal Temperature Outlook

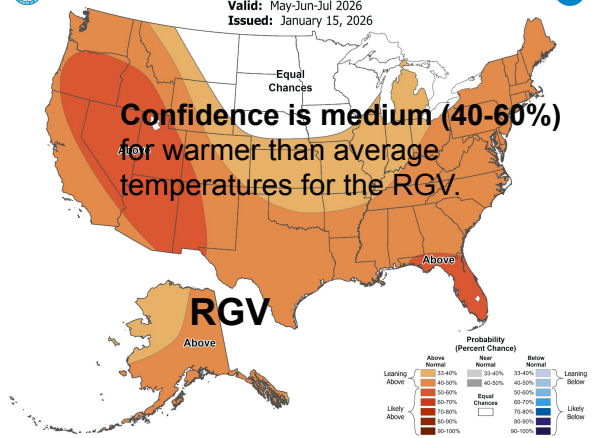
Valid: Apr-May-Jun 2026
Issued: January 15, 2026



Confidence is medium-high (50-70%) for warmer than average temperatures for the RGV.

Seasonal Temperature Outlook

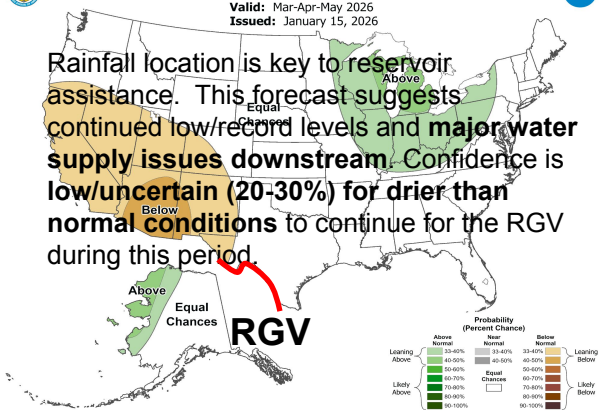
Valid: May-Jun-Jul 2026
Issued: January 15, 2026



Confidence is medium (40-60%) for warmer than average temperatures for the RGV.

Seasonal Precipitation Outlook

Valid: Mar-Apr-May 2026
Issued: January 15, 2026



Rainfall location is key to reservoir assistance. This forecast suggests continued low/record levels and **major water supply issues downstream**. Confidence is **low/uncertain (20-30%) for drier than normal conditions** to continue for the RGV during this period.

Seasonal Precipitation Outlook

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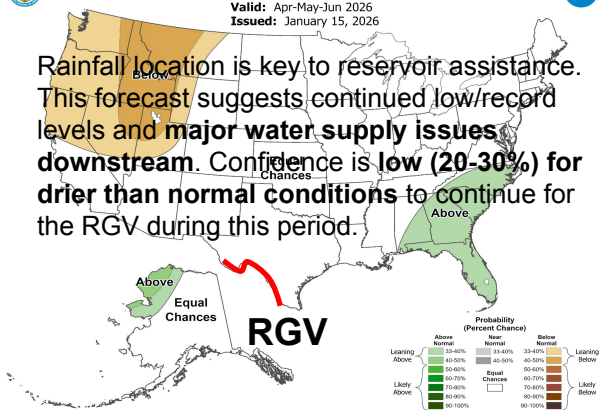

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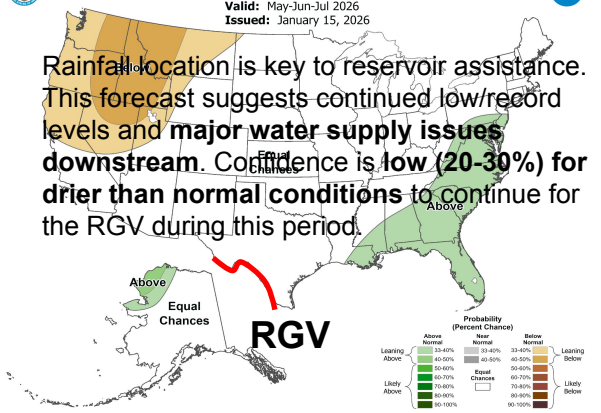

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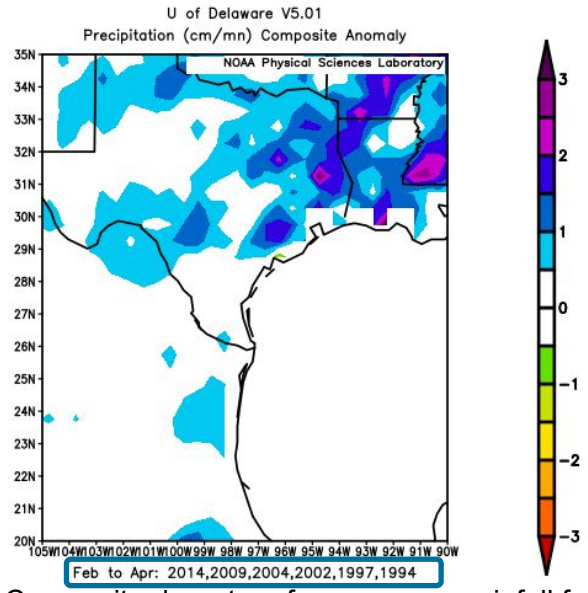
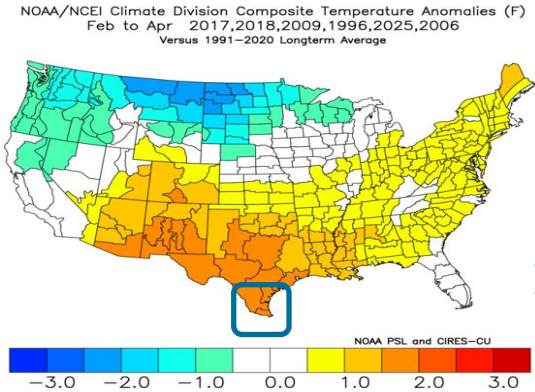
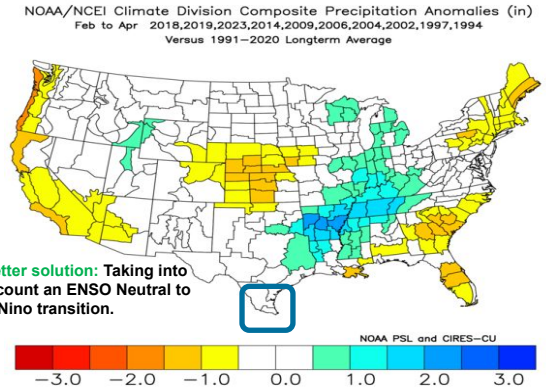
Comparing Similar ENSO Neutral to El Nino Episodes mostly within the last 30 years; February-April Periods

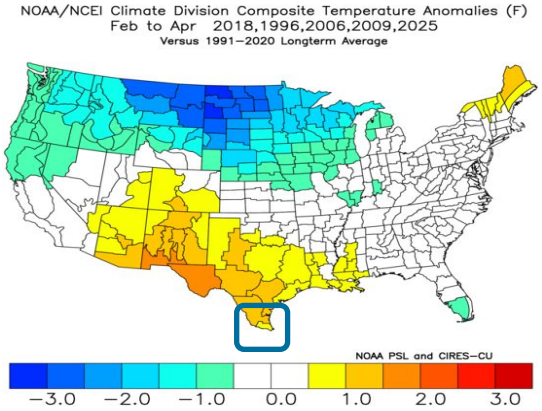


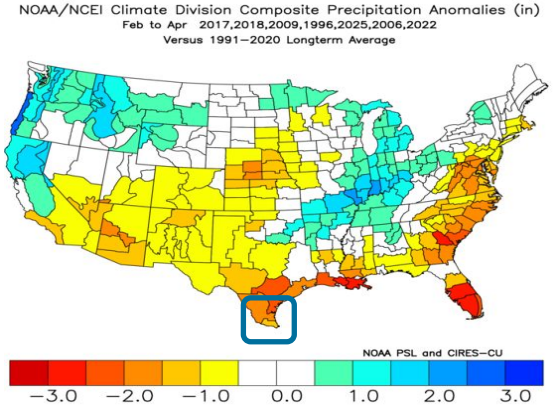
Composite departure from average rainfall for years of similar Neutral to El Nino transition episodes in the February to April window.





Wetter solution: Taking into account an ENSO Neutral to El Nino transition.





- **Top:** Composite temperature (left) and precipitation (right) anomalies for similar Neutral to El Nino transition episodes leading into February-April, since 1950.
- **Bottom Left:** Same, but without the 2017 season.
- **Bottom Right:** Same, but added the 2017, 1996, 2025, and 2022 seasons, and took out 2019, 2023, 2014, 2004, 2002, 1997, and 1994 seasons.

Bottom Lines

- A **warmer** and **drier** than normal pattern is anticipated during the **February-April time period**, though **wetter trends could develop in March and/or April** (low confidence). **Heat Risk** concerns could begin increasing as early as late March/April.
- Sufficient inflows from Mexican and International reservoirs serving the Lower Rio Grande watershed remain **unlikely.** The combined share of water **in Amistad and Falcon will likely to continue at or below Stage 2/3 triggers (25% or less) until further notice.** Water conservation, smart irrigation, and rainwater harvesting are **critical actions to continue as we move through the remainder of Winter and into the Spring months.**
- **Drought conditions** continue and could worsen across parts, if not all of the RGV/Deep South Texas as time progresses. **D2 (Severe Drought) and D3 (Extreme Drought)** begins February for the Mid-Upper Valley and Northern Ranchlands (see slide 9 for more information). Meanwhile, **D0 (Abnormally Dry) to D1 (Moderate Drought)** conditions begin February over Lower Valley (i.e. Cameron, Willacy, eastern Hidalgo, and southeastern Kenedy Counties). **D4 (Exceptional Drought; highest level)** becoming likely for the Brush Country/upper Valley in February or March with **D2/D3** likely spreading further east into the lower/mid Valley.
- **We're entering peak Fire weather season of February and March!** Grasses across all of the RGV/Deep South Texas ranchlands have become freeze cured after the recent January 25-27, 2026 Arctic Blast. This **coupled with elevated fuels and prolonged antecedent dry conditions** will result in increased fire weather concerns through March. **Cool/cold fronts** yielding **low relative humidity (RH) values** and **increased winds** will be critical through March.
- Occasional hazardous **coastal (tidal/surf) and marine (dangerous boating) situations** will continue as we progress through February into March.
- **Additional strong cool/cold fronts** are possible through mid-February. **Confidence: 20-40%.**