



**NATIONAL
WEATHER
SERVICE**

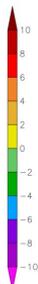
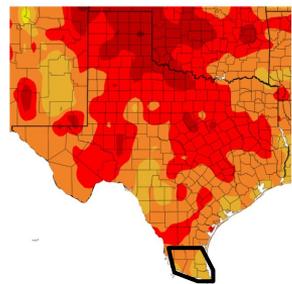
March-May Spring 2026 Outlook: Perspective for the Lower Rio Grande Valley/Deep S. Texas Region

February 27, 2026

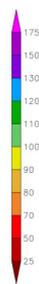
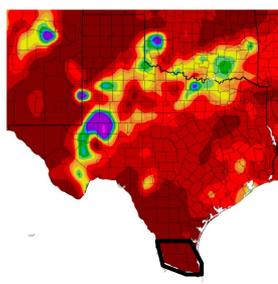
Andrei Evbuoma, Barry Goldsmith, & Rodney Chai
NWS Brownsville/Rio Grande Valley, Texas

Warmer than normal conditions are favored to continue through the spring; precipitation outlook is a toss-up; drought, wildfire potential, water supply issues remain in focus

Departure from Normal Temperature (F)
2/1/2026 - 2/25/2026



Percent of Normal Precipitation (%)
2/1/2026 - 2/25/2026



SMAC ranch fire (2011)



February 2026: February will finish as one of the warmest on record; the stretch since December 1st has also been one of our driest on record

Maximum 26-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	72.8	2017-02-26	0
2	71.1	1962-02-26	0
3	70.5	2000-02-26	0
4	70.4	2026-02-26	1
5	70.1	2018-02-26	0
6	69.6	1957-02-26	0
7	69.6	1932-02-26	0
8	69.3	2008-02-26	0
9	69.2	2013-02-26	0
10	69.0	2009-02-26	0

Period of record: 1898-12-01 to 2026-02-26

Maximum 26-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	74.7	2017-02-26	0
2	72.5	1962-02-26	0
3	72.1	2026-02-26	1
4	71.3	2000-02-26	0
5	71.3	2008-02-26	0
6	71.0	1999-02-26	0
7	70.1	2013-02-26	0
8	69.9	2009-02-26	0
9	69.7	2018-02-26	0
10	68.6	2016-02-26	0

Period of record: 1961-01-14 to 2026-02-26

Minimum 88-Day Total Precipitation 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	0.18	1899-02-26	57
2	0.45	1952-02-26	0
3	0.64	1971-02-26	0
4	0.80	2023-02-26	0
5	0.91	2026-02-26	1
-	0.91	1954-02-26	0
7	1.04	1953-02-26	0
8	1.05	2009-02-26	0
9	1.17	1917-02-26	0
10	1.19	1974-02-26	0

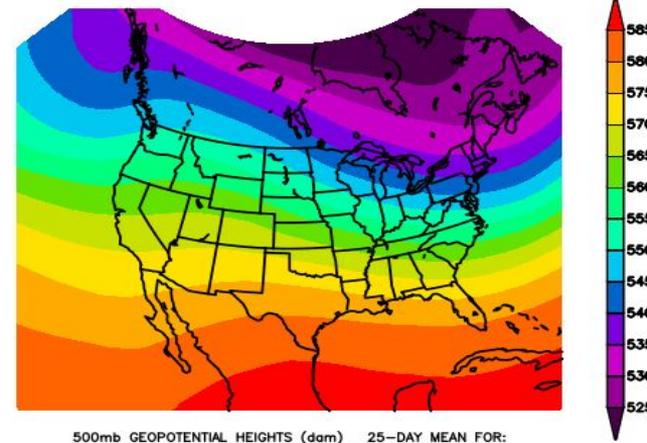
Period of record: 1898-12-01 to 2026-02-26

Minimum 88-Day Total Precipitation for MCALLEN MILLER INTL AP, TX

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

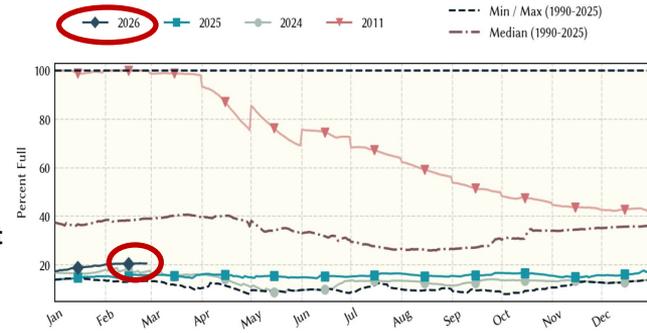
Rank	Value	Ending Date	Missing Days
1	0.32	1999-02-26	0
2	0.33	1962-02-26	0
3	0.44	2016-02-26	0
4	0.63	2006-02-26	0
5	0.69	1961-02-26	44
6	0.72	2009-02-26	0
7	0.83	1971-02-26	0
8	0.90	2026-02-26	3
9	0.95	2023-02-26	0
10	0.99	2013-02-26	0

Last value also occurred in one or more previous years.
Period of record: 1961-01-14 to 2026-02-26



500mb GEOPOTENTIAL HEIGHTS (dam) 25-DAY MEAN FOR: Sun FEB 01 2026 - Wed FEB 25 2026
NCEP OPERATIONAL DATASET

Top Image: 500 mb mean geopotential heights position from Feb 1-25, 2026.



Bottom Image: Latest data from the Rio Grande Reservoirs (Texas Share) continue to indicate Feb 2026 levels are near 30 year lows and records, but above 2025 levels. Month-over-month shares have increased from 19.7% to 20.6%. Credit: Texas Water Development Board

2026 is picking up where 2025 left off as the year is off to a hot start. Consistent days of **unseasonably warm temperatures** (some days well above normal levels) **plus** the **lack of a February Arctic Express Outbreak Event** allowed for February 2026 to surge near the top of the record books along the Rio Grande Valley. **Brownsville** and **McAllen** will both finish in the **top 5 warmest all-time for February 2026**. **If this is hot start is any indication for what's to come, we are in for a very hot summer and year ahead!**

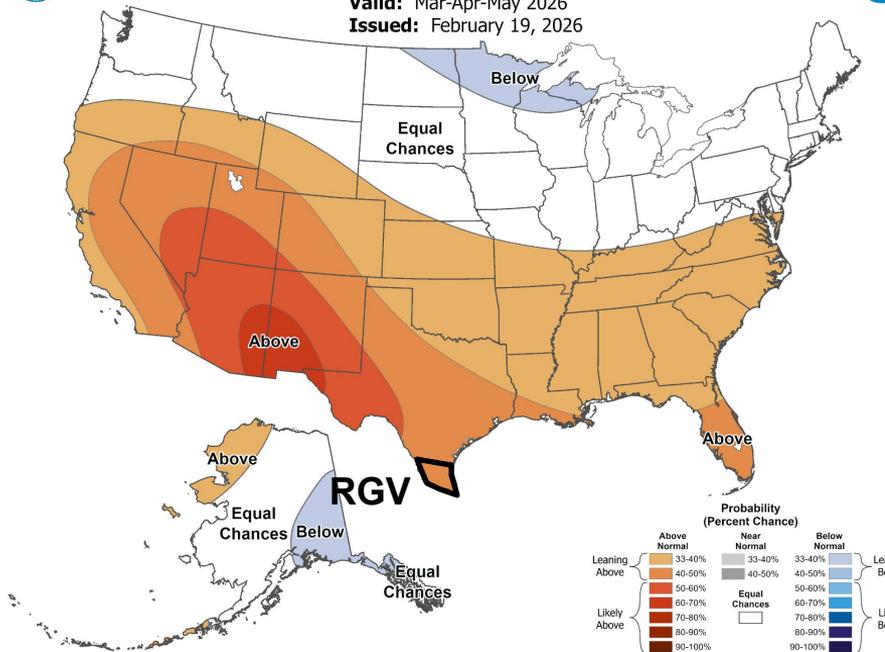
Given that all of Deep South Texas is under a drought, including **D3 (Extreme Drought)** to **D4 (Exceptional Drought)** across the Northern Ranchlands and the Upper Valley and that there is a positive feedback loop (relationship) between the heat and dryness, it's worth pointing out just how dry it's been. **Since December 1st, Brownsville** is in the **top 5 driest of all time**. Meanwhile, **McAllen** is **top 8th driest**. **Both will likely continue to move up the ranks if dryness continues.**

Seasonal Forecast, March-May 2026 USA



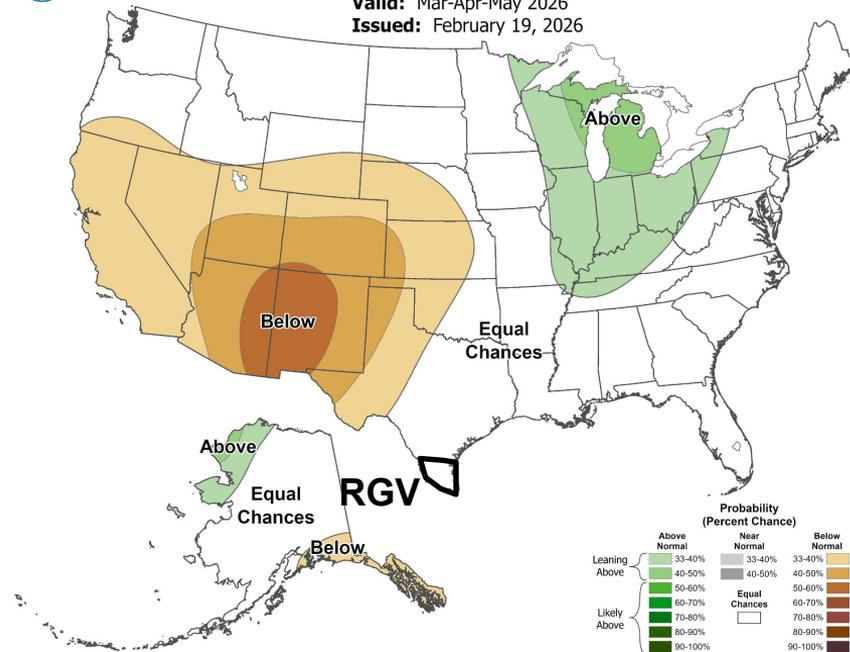
Seasonal Temperature Outlook

Valid: Mar-Apr-May 2026
Issued: February 19, 2026



Seasonal Precipitation Outlook

Valid: Mar-Apr-May 2026
Issued: February 19, 2026



Confidence: Medium-High (60-80%) for warmer than normal temperatures during the March-May period. Equal chances for above, normal, or below normal precipitation. Precipitation Confidence: Low-Medium (33%).



Key Takeaways: March-May 2026 Outlook

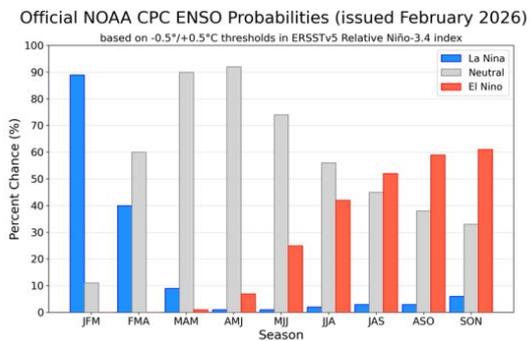
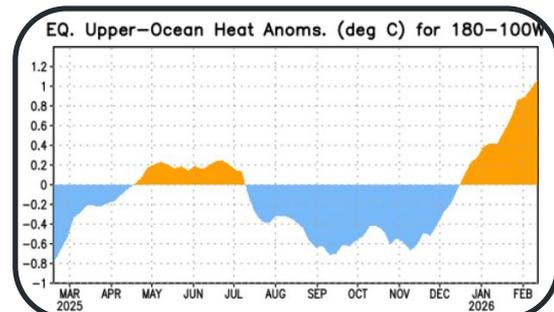
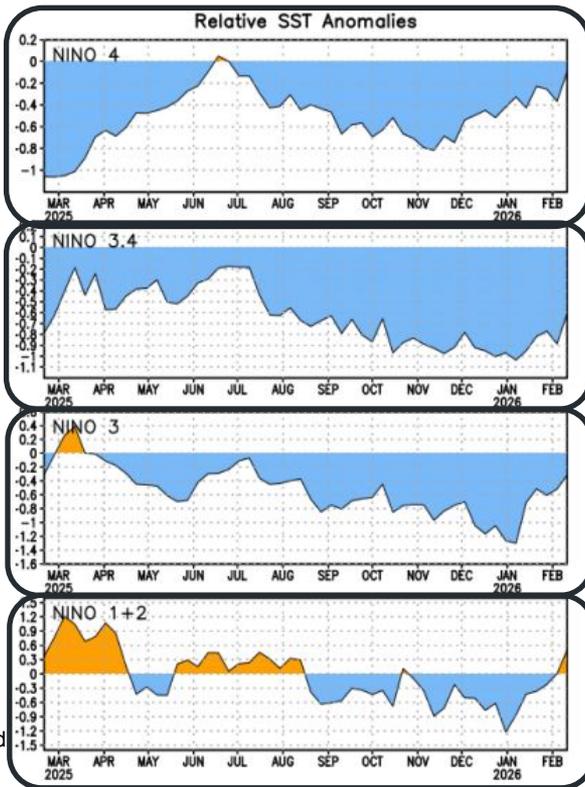
- **A warmer than normal outlook** is anticipated through the **March-May** period for the RGV/Deep South Texas region. **Heat Risk** concerns could begin developing as early as the 2nd half of March or in April. **Note:** March, April, and May are amongst the fastest warming months in the RGV.
- Meanwhile, **precipitation outlook is a true toss-up!** Can seasonality and the trend towards an El Niño later this summer/fall bring us **breakthrough rains** and support a **wetter pattern**? **Or** Will a weak La Niña, negative Pacific Decadal Oscillation (-PDO), and a perpetual drought keep the **drought theme in place**?
- **Peak fire weather season** will continue **through March!** The combination of breezy winds, low relative humidity values, combustible/freeze cured fuels, and extensively long-term drought with very low soil moisture will increase the **threat for robust wildfire growth and spread through March**.
- **D3 (Extreme Drought)** and **D4 (Exceptional Drought)** conditions continue into March across the Mid-Upper Valley and Northern Ranchlands (see slide 8 for more information). **D1 (Moderate Drought)** to **D2 (Severe Drought)** conditions continue into March over the mid-lower Valley (i.e. Cameron, Willacy, and eastern Hidalgo County) into east-southeastern Kenedy County.
- Falcon Int'l Reservoir remained **near historic seasonal lows at the end of February**. **Confidence remains near-certain (~100%) on total storage remaining just above record lows through May**.
- Occasional hazardous **coastal (tidal/surf) and marine (dangerous boating) situations** will continue as we progress through March into April.
- As we transition into March/April, **severe thunderstorms (winds, hail, tornadoes)**, **heavy rainfall, and localized flooding** has to be taken into consideration as the prospects for showers and storms could increase. This is why we have equal chances for a wetter or drier than normal pattern March through May.

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

- With a weak **La Niña** still sited over the equatorial Pacific, and a negative Pacific Decadal Oscillation (-PDO) in place as of this update, a **warmer** than normal pattern is favored across Deep South Texas/RGV through the Mar-May (MAM) period.
- A transition towards an **El Niño** this spring/early summer 2026 is expected. This **La Niña** to **El Niño** 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. **This combined with the extensively long-term drought is why our precipitation outlook is a toss-up (50/50 chance for dry or wet pattern).**
- Peak wildfire season** is in place and will remain in focus through March due to the combination of **long-term dryness, freeze cured grasses, breezy winds, and low relative humidity values.**

*Above right: Oceanic Niño Index. Values between -0.5 and 0.5 (gray) indicates ENSO Neutral conditions April-June 2024. ENSO Neutral conditions transitioned to a mainly weak La Niña July 2024 has persisted to present. Values between -0.5 and -1.0 (blue) indicates a weak La Niña.

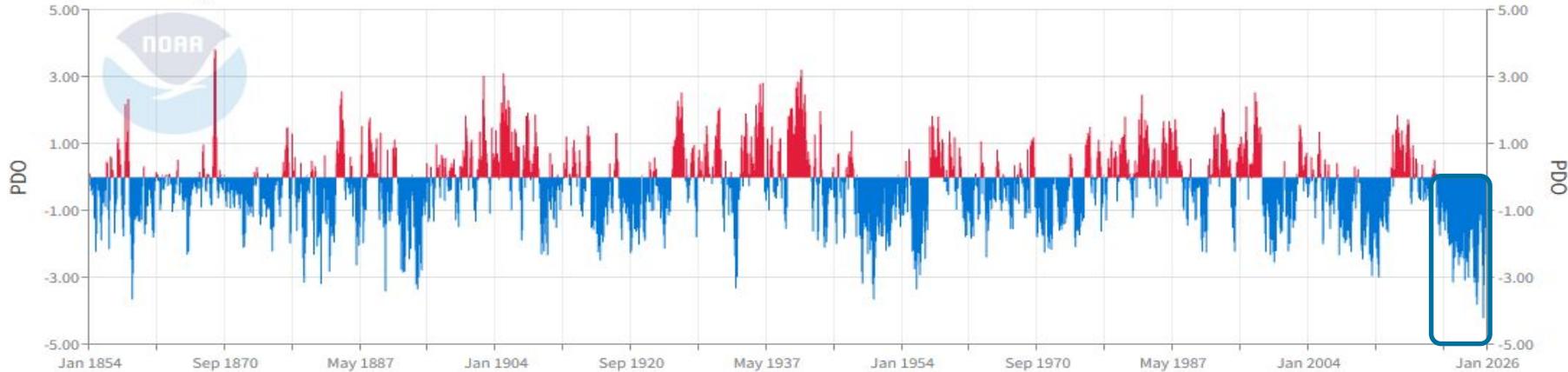
Year	DJF	JFM	FMA	MAM	AMJ	MJJ	JJA	JAS	ASO	SON	OND	NDJ
2022	-1.2	-1.2	-1.3	-1.3	-1.2	-1.0	-0.9	-1.0	-1.1	-1.1	-1.0	-1.0
2023	-0.8	-0.6	-0.4	-0.2	0.1	0.4	0.6	0.9	1.1	1.4	1.5	1.5
2024	1.2	0.9	0.5	0.1	-0.3	-0.5	-0.5	-0.6	-0.8	-0.8	-0.9	-1.1
2025	-1.1	-0.9	-0.7	-0.5	-0.5	0.0	-0.5	-0.6	-0.8	-0.9	-0.9	-1.0



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

Pacific Decadal Oscillation (PDO)

January 1854-January 2026



Source: <https://www.ncei.noaa.gov/pub/data/cmb/ersst/v5/index/ersst.v5.pdo.dat>

Powered by ZingChart

- The 2021-2026 **prolonged and strong negative PDO has persisted**, and will remain the case through mid 2026. This **continues to support confidence** for a **warmer than normal pattern to persist through mid 2026.**
- In addition to the sharply negative PDO, a **La Nina (weak)** and ongoing drought in place will support a **drier than normal precipitation outcome** through the Mar-May (MAM) period. However, **seasonality plus a transition to an El Niño this spring/early summer 2026** supports a potential shift towards a **wetter pattern** across Deep South Texas and the Rio Grande Valley this Spring. Overall, **precipitation odds Mar-May are a toss-up** as a result. **Confidence remains high** for a sharply negative PDO to continue.

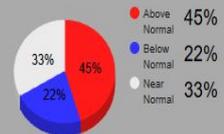


The March-May 2026 Outlook: Rio Grande Valley (McAllen as Anchor Point)

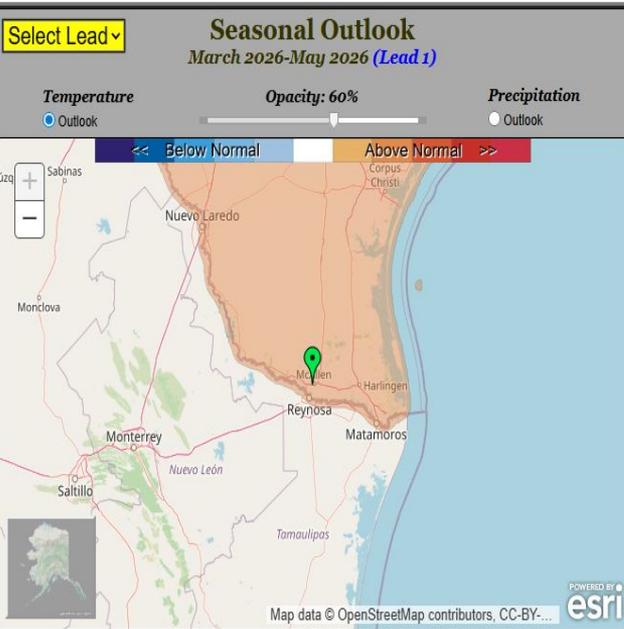
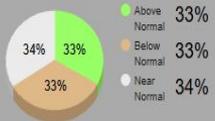
McAllen, TX, USA

7 Day Forecast for McAllen, Texas

Three Category Temperature Outlook
 Normal Maximum Temperature: **88**
 Normal Minimum Temperature: **68**



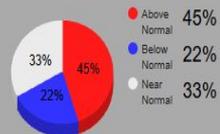
Three Category Precipitation Outlook
 Normal Precipitation: **4.52**



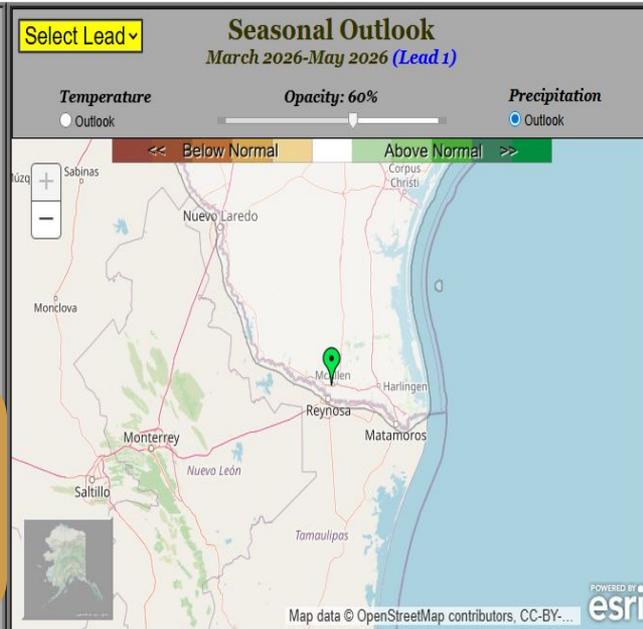
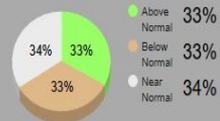
McAllen, TX, USA

7 Day Forecast for McAllen, Texas

Three Category Temperature Outlook
 Normal Maximum Temperature: **88**
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Three Category Precipitation Outlook
 Normal Precipitation: **4.52**



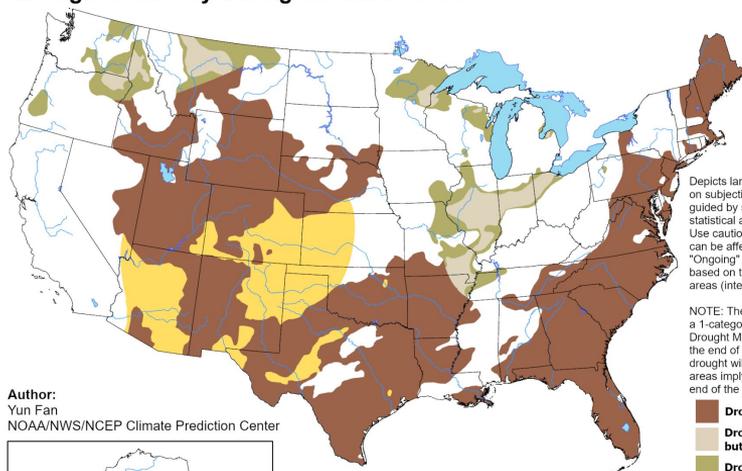
- **Temperature:** **Warmer than normal temperatures** are expected to continue. **Confidence: Medium-High (60-80%).** RGV averages: Afternoon – Upper 70s-Mid 80s through March; Mid 80s-Lower 90s through April; Upper 80s to mid 90s through May. Wake-up: Lower-Mid 60s through early April; Upper 60s-Mid 70s mid April to early May.
- **Precipitation:** Odds are a toss-up though **rain prospects could increase in time.** **Confidence: Low-medium (33% for above, normal, or below normal).** RGV averages: 5 to 6 inches (**most in May**).



The March-May 2026 “Droughtlook”

U.S. Seasonal Drought Outlook Drought Tendency During the Valid Period

Valid for February 19 - May 31, 2026
Released February 19, 2026

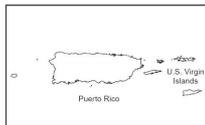
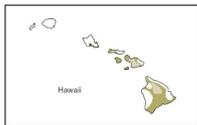


Depicts large-scale trends based on subjectively derived probabilities guided by short- and long-range statistical and dynamical forecasts. Use caution for applications that can be affected by short lived events. “Ongoing” drought areas are based on the U.S. Drought Monitor areas (intensities of D1 to D4).

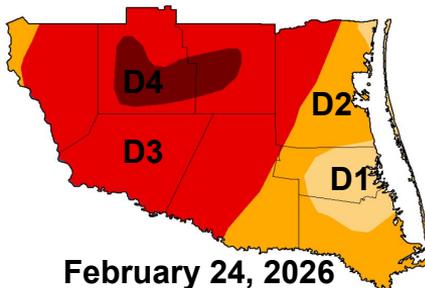
NOTE: The tan areas imply at least a 1-category improvement in the Drought Monitor intensity levels by the end of the period, although drought will remain. The green areas imply drought removal by the end of the period (D0 or none).

- Drought persists
- Drought remains, but improves
- Drought removal likely
- Drought development likely
- No drought

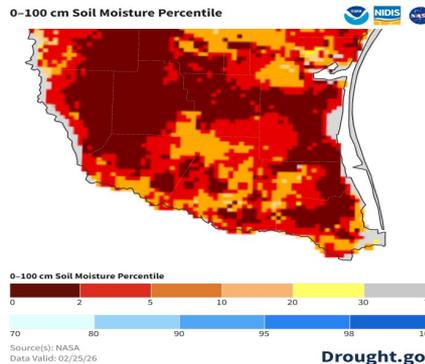
Author:
Yun Fan
NOAA/NWS/NCEP Climate Prediction Center



<https://go.usa.gov/3eZ73>

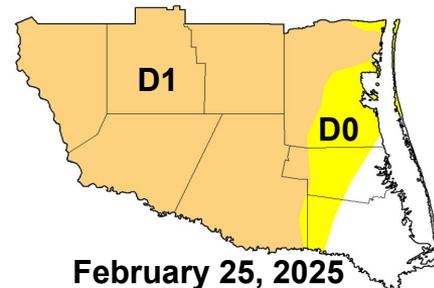


February 24, 2026



Source(s): NASA
Data Valid: 02/25/26

[Drought.gov](https://drought.gov)



February 25, 2025

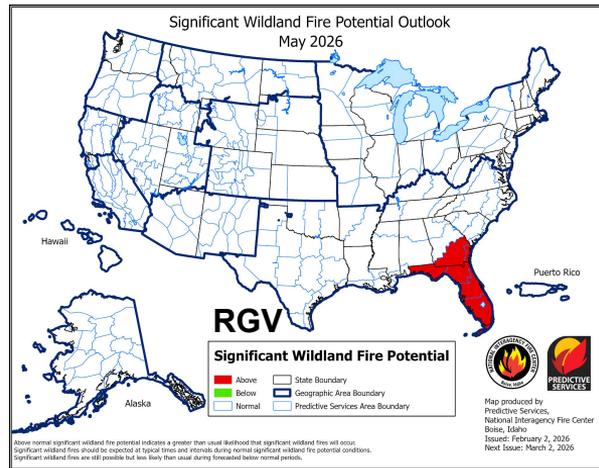
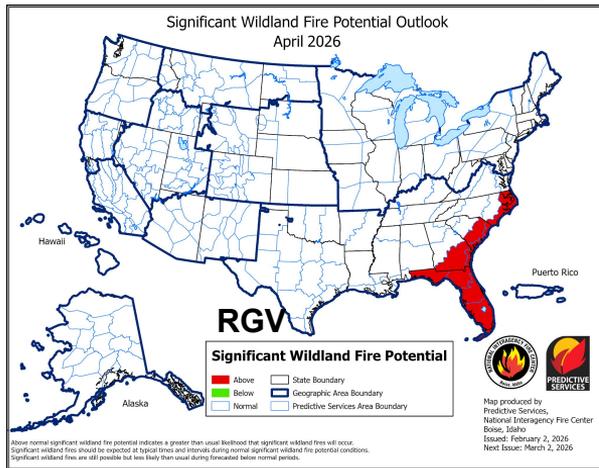
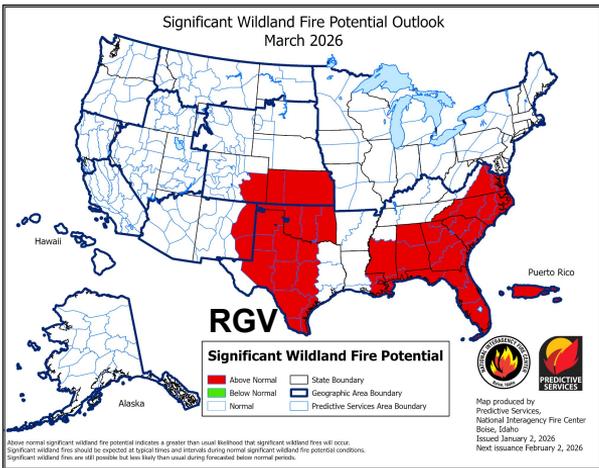
Drought Classification

- None
- D0 (Abnormally Dry)
- D1 (Moderate Drought)
- D2 (Severe Drought)
- D3 (Extreme Drought)
- D4 (Exceptional Drought)
- No Data

- **Year-over-Year (YoY) drought/dryness** shows much deeper drought/dryness issues across Deep South Texas this year compared to 2025.
- **Exceptional Drought (D4)** conditions are being observed across nearly 8% of Deep South Texas, including the central portions of Jim Hogg and Brooks counties. **Soil moisture percentages are very low** in this area.
- **Extreme Drought (D3)** conditions are being observed over 58% of Deep South Texas, including all of Starr, most of Jim Hogg, Zapata, Brooks, Hidalgo, and western Kenedy counties. **Soil moisture percentages are very low** in this area.
- **Severe Drought (D2)** conditions are being observed over 25% of Deep South Texas, including northwestern Zapata, southeastern Hidalgo, western Willacy, and most of Kenedy and Cameron counties.
- The seasonal drought outlook suggests **drought conditions/dryness persisting** overall over the RGV/Deep South Texas region through May.



Peak Wildfire Season is here and will remain in focus through March!



- In response to the recent **Jan 25-27 2026 Arctic Blast Event**, grasses/brush across all of Deep South Texas and the Rio Grande Valley have become **freeze-cured**. This has aided in **above normal fuels** across the region.
- The combination of **the extensively long-term drought** and **elevated fuels** will keep **wildfire spread potential concerns** in the picture **through March** (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** through March.
- **Drylines** will become **critical**, particularly on breezy days with winds out of the south or north, through March.
- Any **breakthrough rains** and/or **moisture levels** will become more important in the weeks ahead, particularly late March through at least April as days with a return flow out of the south boosting relative humidity (RH) values will be greater than days with winds out of the north.

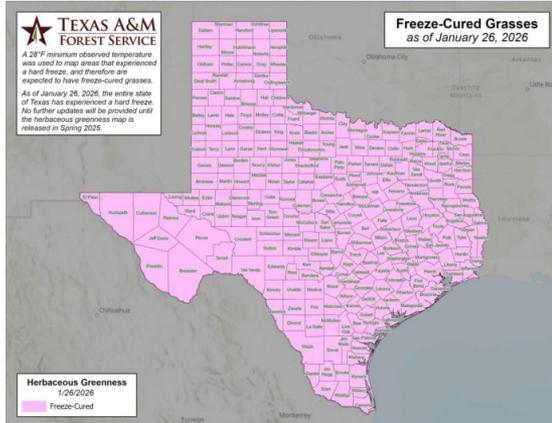


Image: Following the recent arctic outbreak January 25-27th, all of Texas has been freeze cured.



Wildfire Prevention Review

- Conditions remain dry to very dry at the end of February, with drought worsening already freeze-cured grasses and brush. Given the exceptional long-term dryness, wildfire spread potential concerns will remain elevated through **March**.
- 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-hot, breezy days during a dry spell**.



Infographics for Wildfire Prevention

Fire Weather SAFETY TIPS

- Be careful to not drag trailer chains that could cause sparks.
- Do not park on dry grass.
- Avoid outdoor burning and check recently burned piles for flare-ups.
- Clear out dead vegetation from around your home.
- Be careful when welding in dry grass.

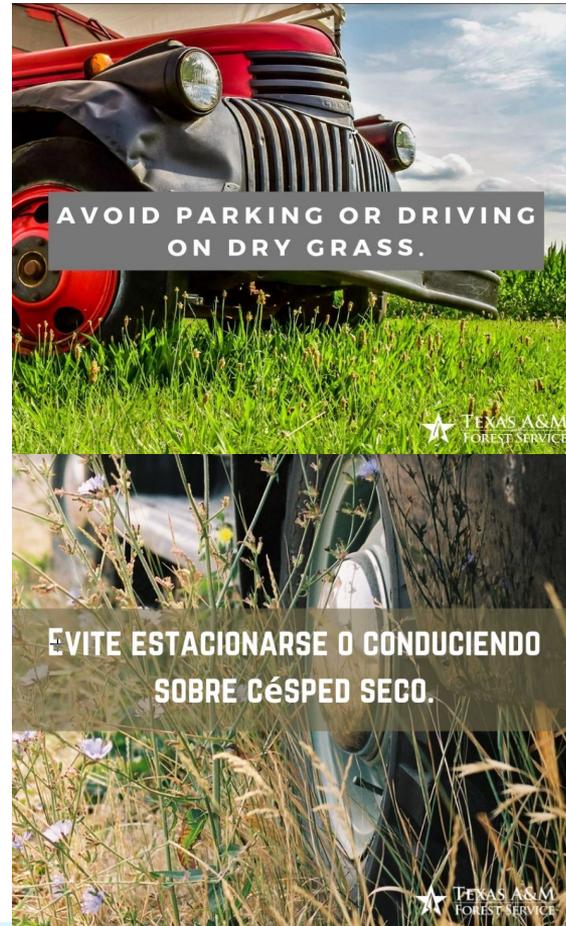


Consejos de Seguridad Contra Incendios

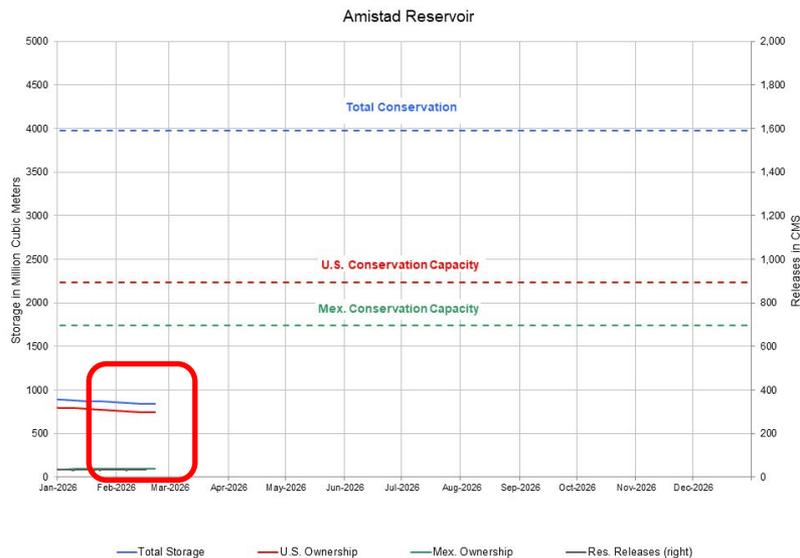
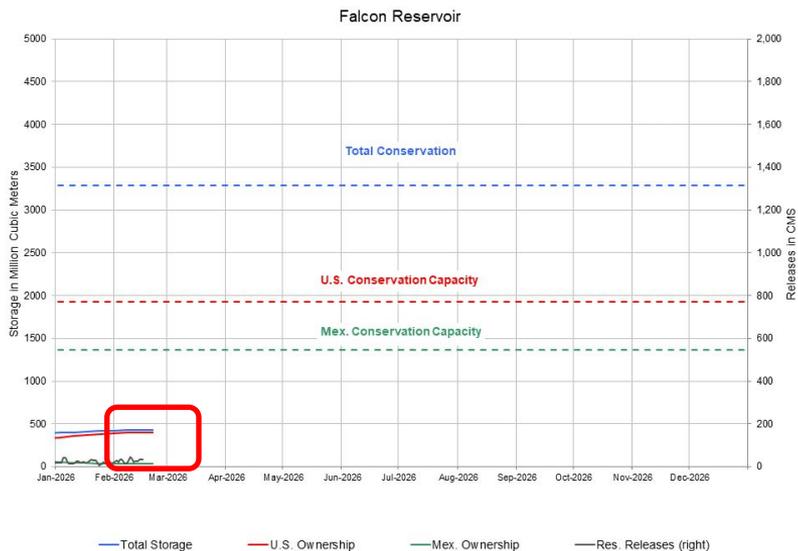
- Tenga cuidado de no arrastrar cadenas de remolque que podrían provocar chispas.
- No se estacione sobre césped seco.
- Evite las quemaduras al aire libre y revise las pilas recientemente quemadas para detectar brotes de fuego.
- Elimine la vegetación muerta alrededor de tu casa.
- Tenga cuidado soldar en hierba seca.



- ~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 slightly, at 13.1% as of February 27th** (slightly higher than the **12.9% from late January**) due to releases from Amistad in late January/early February. Levels are likely to fall slowly through May, unless additional releases are provided from Amistad - or periodic thunderstorm systems develop.
- **Amistad fell slightly and remains just above all-time record lows as of late February.** Levels were at **20.9% on February 27th** (slightly lower than the **21.7% from late January**). Levels should change little or fall slowly through May, unless periodic thunderstorm systems develop.

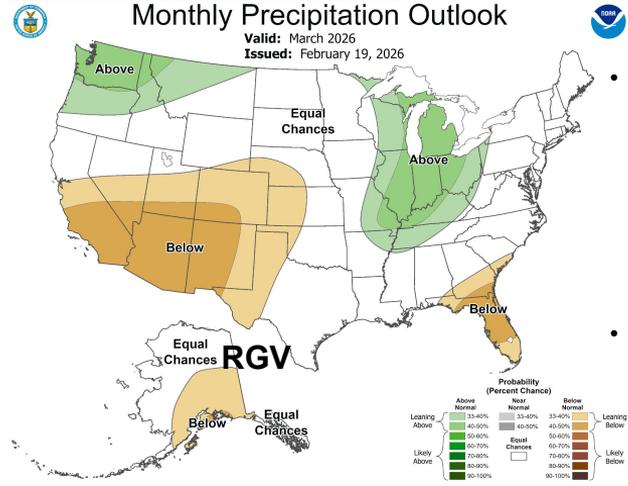
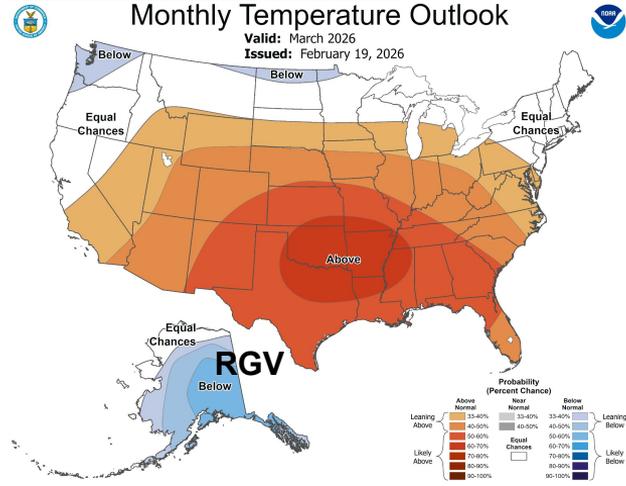
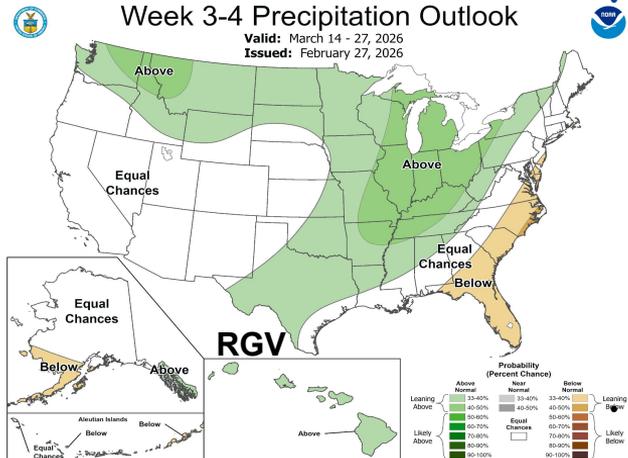
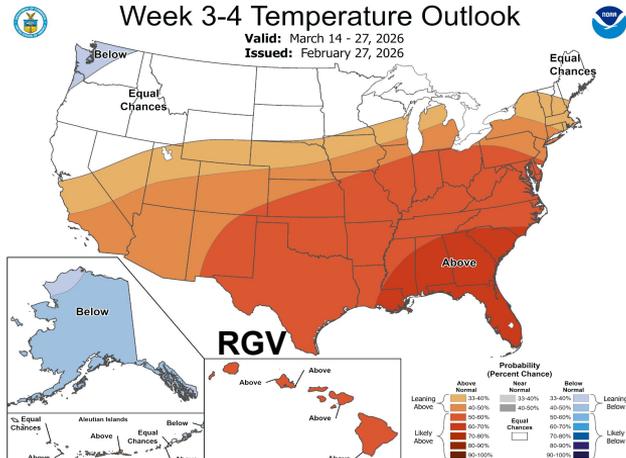
Water Conservation is Key Until Further Notice!

- “Stage 2/3” Restrictions will continue through early 2026 (at least) 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](#).

The screenshot displays the Texas Water Development Board website. At the top left is the logo for the Texas Water Development Board. A search bar is located at the top right. Below the logo is a navigation menu with links: Home, Board, Financial Assistance, Water Planning, Groundwater, Surface Water, Flood, Drought, Conservation, Innovative Water, and Data & Apps. The main heading is "Water Conservation". Below this heading are three featured items: "Conservation Education Programs of the TWDB", "Water Exploration", and "Raising Your Water IQ: A Water Conservation Curriculum for Middle School". To the right of these items is a vertical menu with the following categories: Best Management Practices, Agriculture, Literature, Resources, Education, Outreach, Municipal, Workshops & Presentations, Conservation Staff, Drought, Rainwater Harvesting, and Water Reuse. Below the featured items is a paragraph of text: "The mission of the water conservation staff is to provide leadership, planning, education, information, technical assistance, and agricultural financial assistance for water conservation in Texas." Below this paragraph is another paragraph: "In [Water for Texas: 2017 State Water Plan](#) water conservation strategies for the year 2070 are projected to provide 2,344,541 acre-feet to help meet the projected needs for additional water supplies. This volume of water conservation represents 27.7 percent of the identified strategies to meet water supply needs in 2070. Irrigation conservation accounts for 15.7 percent, municipal conservation is 9.6 percent and other conservation is 2.4 percent. Reuse strategies add an additional 14.2 percent (1,106,614 acre-feet) of potential supplies in 2070 and includes indirect reuse, other reuse and direct potable reuse."

March 2026: Medium-High (60-80%) Confidence on Temperature; Equal Chances on Precipitation

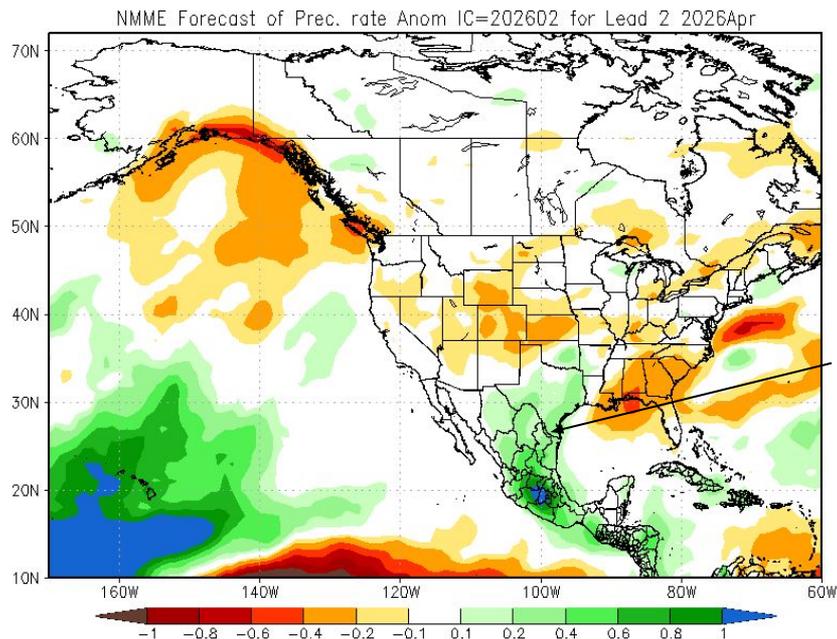
The combination of a **weak La Nina**, a **negative Pacific Decadal Oscillation (-PDO)**, and an **extensively long-term drought** will **support warmer than normal temperatures prevailing through March** across Deep South Texas and the Rio Grande Valley. A **strengthening sun angle** combined with the **perpetual drought** in place could often support **overachieving temperatures** to occur during the month as well as the potential for an instance or two of some **early season heat risk** developing (especially mid-upper valley) during during the second half of March.



Medium-long range weather/climate models/ensembles are bullish on the idea of **warmer than normal temps prevailing through March**.

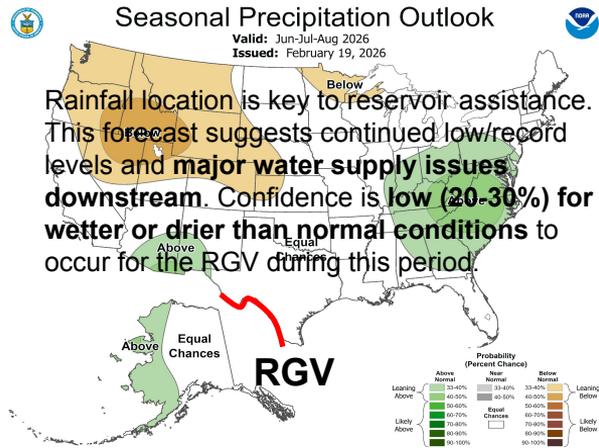
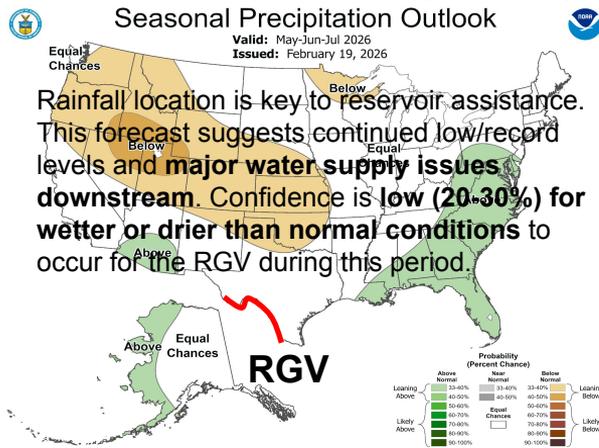
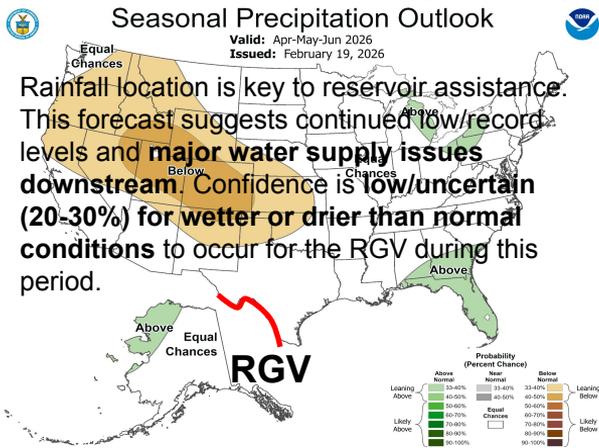
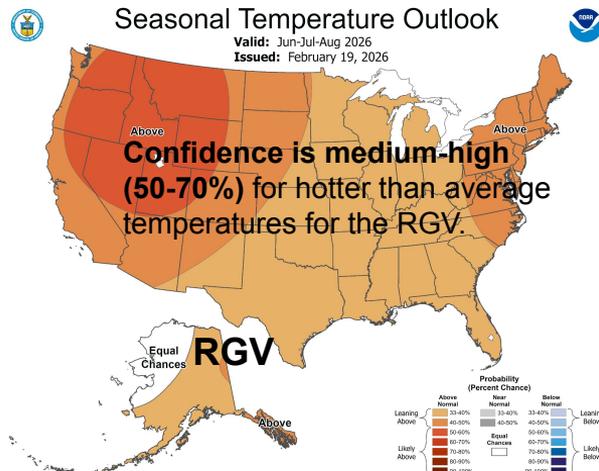
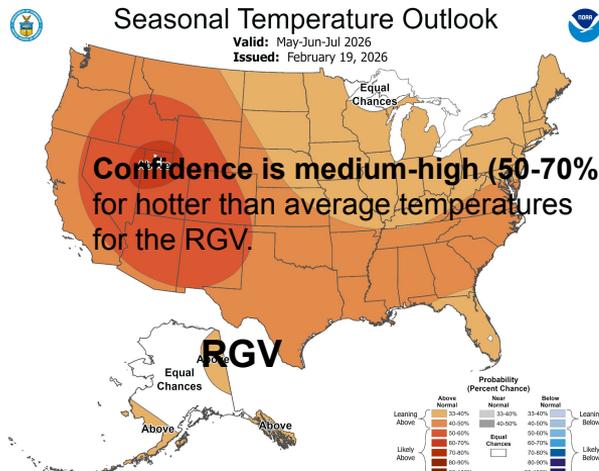
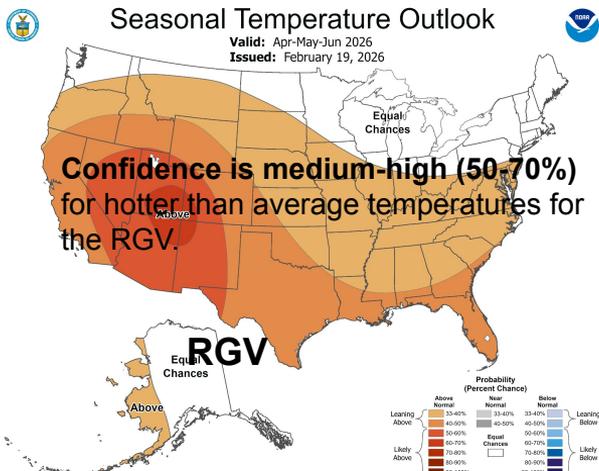
- Precipitation odds are equal for above, normal, or drier than normal. Factors include a -PDO, a weak La Nina, climatology, ongoing drought conditions, and a trend from ENSO Neutral to an El Nino later this summer/fall. **The second half of March going into April** is the timeframe to watch to see if the pattern begins to turn wetter.
- Should the weather pattern flip wetter, **showers and storms** will be capable of producing **heavy rainfall and localized flooding**. **Severe storms** capable of **damaging winds, large hail, and/or tornadoes** will also be possible in any storms that develop later in March.

Potential rainfall rate anomaly, April 2026



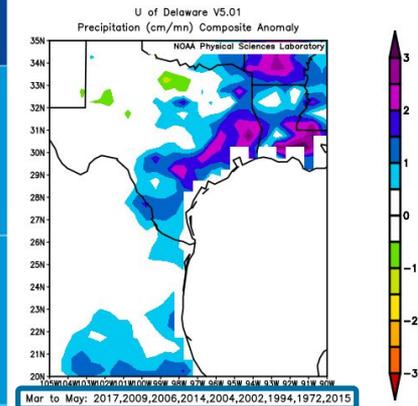
- This model's forecast for April favors a **wetter pattern** (note the light green colors nearby) emerging.
- Confidence, however, remains low (33%) for this occurrence. However, it is something to consider.

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

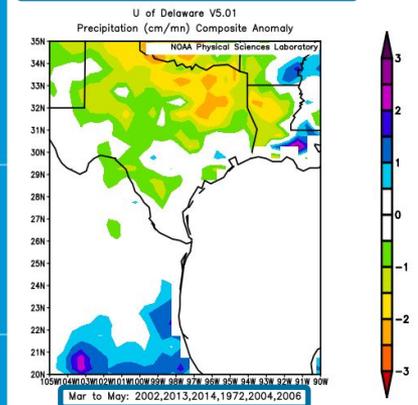


Comparing Similar ENSO Neutral to El Nino Episodes mostly within the last 30 years;

March-May Periods

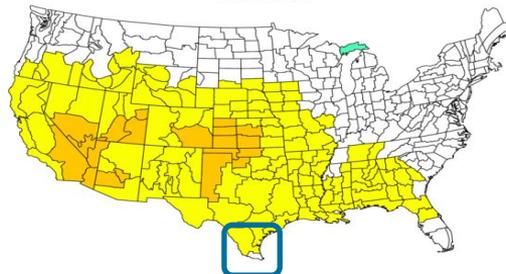


Wet Case

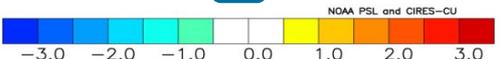
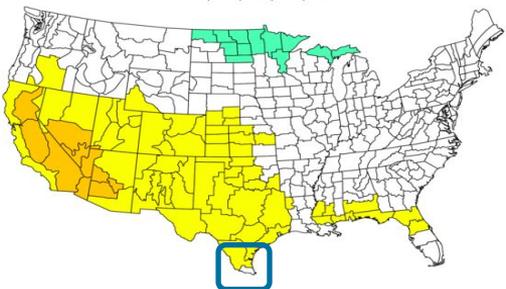


Dry Case

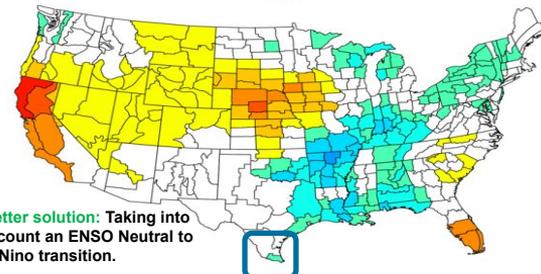
NOAA/NCEI Climate Division Composite Temperature Anomalies (F)
Versus 1991–2020 Longterm Average
Mar to May 1972,1986,1997,2002,2006,2009,2018,2012,2014,2015
2004,2020,2025



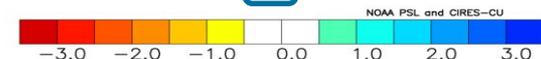
NOAA/NCEI Climate Division Composite Temperature Anomalies (F)
Versus 1991–2020 Longterm Average
Mar to May 1972,1986,1997,2002,2006,2009,2018,2012,2014,2015
2004,2020,2025,2013,2022



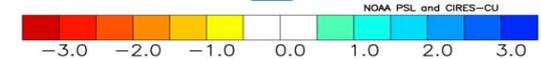
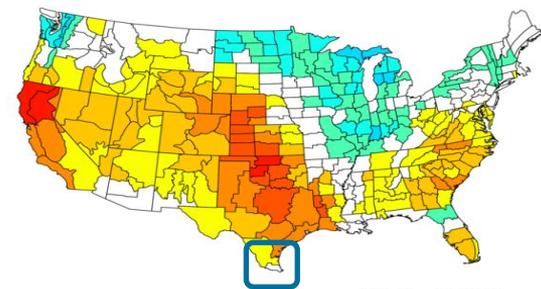
NOAA/NCEI Climate Division Composite Precipitation Anomalies (in)
Versus 1991–2020 Longterm Average
Mar to May 2017,2009,2006,2025,2022,2014,2004,2002,1994,1972
2015



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



NOAA/NCEI Climate Division Composite Precipitation Anomalies (in)
Mar to May 2002,2013,2014,1972,2004,2006,2022
Versus 1991–2020 Longterm Average



- **Top:** Composite temperature (left) and precipitation (right) anomalies for similar Neutral to El Nino transition episodes leading into March-May, since 1950.
- **Bottom Left:** Same, but added the 2013 and 2022 seasons.
- **Bottom Right:** Same, but added the 2013 season, and took out 2017, 2009, 2025, 1994, and 2015 seasons.

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



Bottom Lines

- A **warmer than normal pattern** is anticipated during the **March-May time period**. Precipitation odds are a toss-up, though **wetter trends could develop in March and/or April** (low-medium confidence). **Heat Risk** concerns could begin increasing as early as late March/April as forecast temperatures look to overachieve.
- 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 Spring months**.
- **Drought conditions** continue and could worsen across parts, if not all of the RGV/Deep South Texas as time progresses. **D3 (Extreme Drought) and D4 (Exceptional Drought)** is occurring over the Mid-Upper Valley and Northern Ranchlands (see slide 8 for more information). Meanwhile, **D1 (Moderate Drought) to D2 (Severe Drought)** conditions are taking place over Lower Valley (i.e. Cameron, Willacy, eastern Hidalgo, and east-southeastern Kenedy Counties).
- **Peak Fire Weather Season will continue through March!** Grasses across all of the RGV/Deep South Texas ranchlands remain freeze and drought-cured following the recent [January 25-27, 2026 Arctic Blast](#) and lack of any rain in February. This, **coupled with elevated fuels and prolonged antecedent dry conditions**, will result in increased fire weather concerns through at least March. Days with **low relative humidity (RH) values** and **increased winds** will be critical through March.
- Don't "sleep" on the potential for **flash flooding**, especially in **late March and April**. While a repeat of March 26-28, 2025, is not expected, **flood safety and readiness** needs to be in back of mind. Any storms that develop could become **severe producing damaging winds, large hail, and/or tornadoes**.
- Occasional hazardous **coastal (tidal/surf) and marine (dangerous boating) situations** will continue as we progress through March.

