

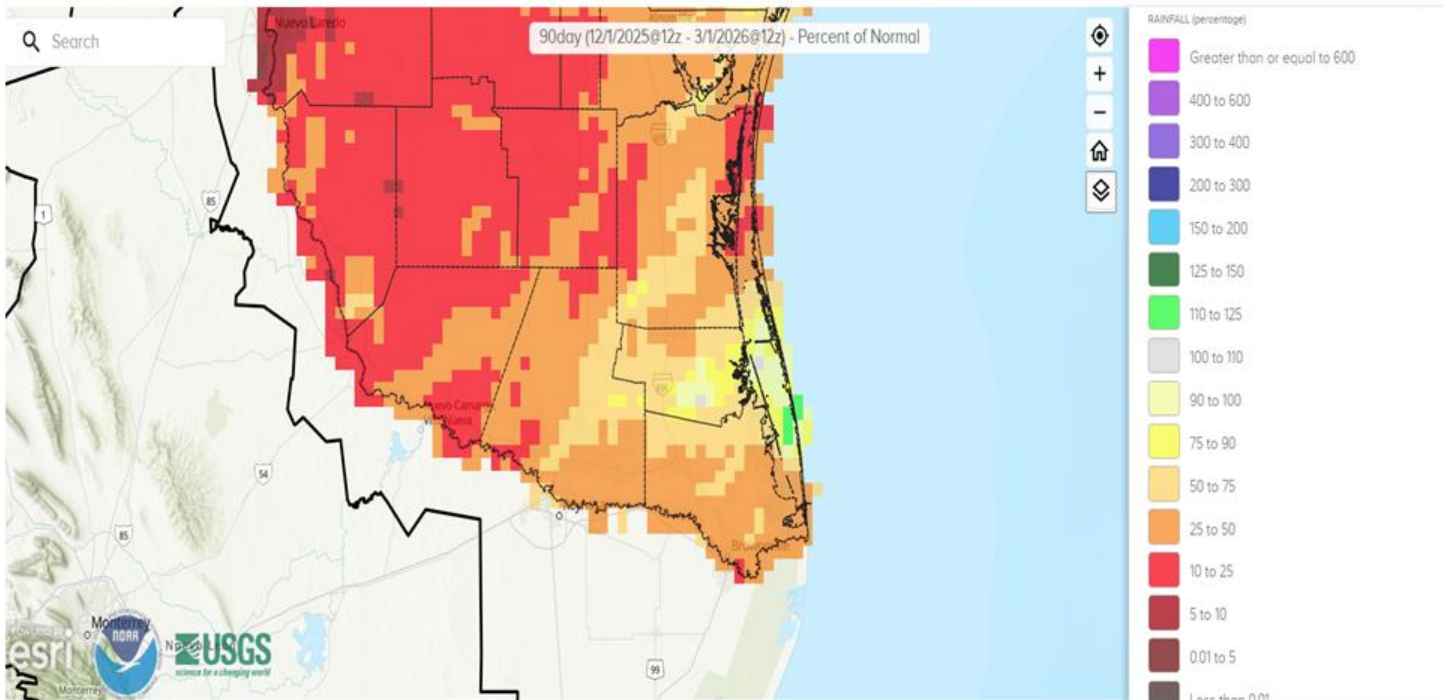
Rio Grande Valley Winter 2025-2026 Review

**Winter 2025/2026 Weather Story for the Rio Grande Valley:
Spring in Winter, With Little Rainfall
Top-Ten Heat and Widespread Dryness Worsens Drought, Impacts Ranchers**

By Barry Goldsmith
Warning Coordination Meteorologist
NWS Brownsville/Rio Grande Valley



Above: Parched ground and dried grasses – a result of steadily worsening drought with “freeze-cured” grasses in late January – at Estero Llano Grande State Park near Weslaco, TX, in late February 2026.



- Brooks, Starr, Jim Hogg, Zapata: 10-25% of December-February Average
- Remainder (Except southern/eastern Willacy): 25-75%
- Southern/Eastern Willacy: 75-90%

Average: 2.5 to 3.5 inches

Figure 1. Rainfall percentage of average, December 1 2025 through March 1 (7 AM) 2026. Other than a few moderate rain events in December and January, favoring southern and eastern Willacy, the vast majority of the Rio Grande Valley/Deep S. Texas Ranchlands ended up at 10-50% of seasonal averages.

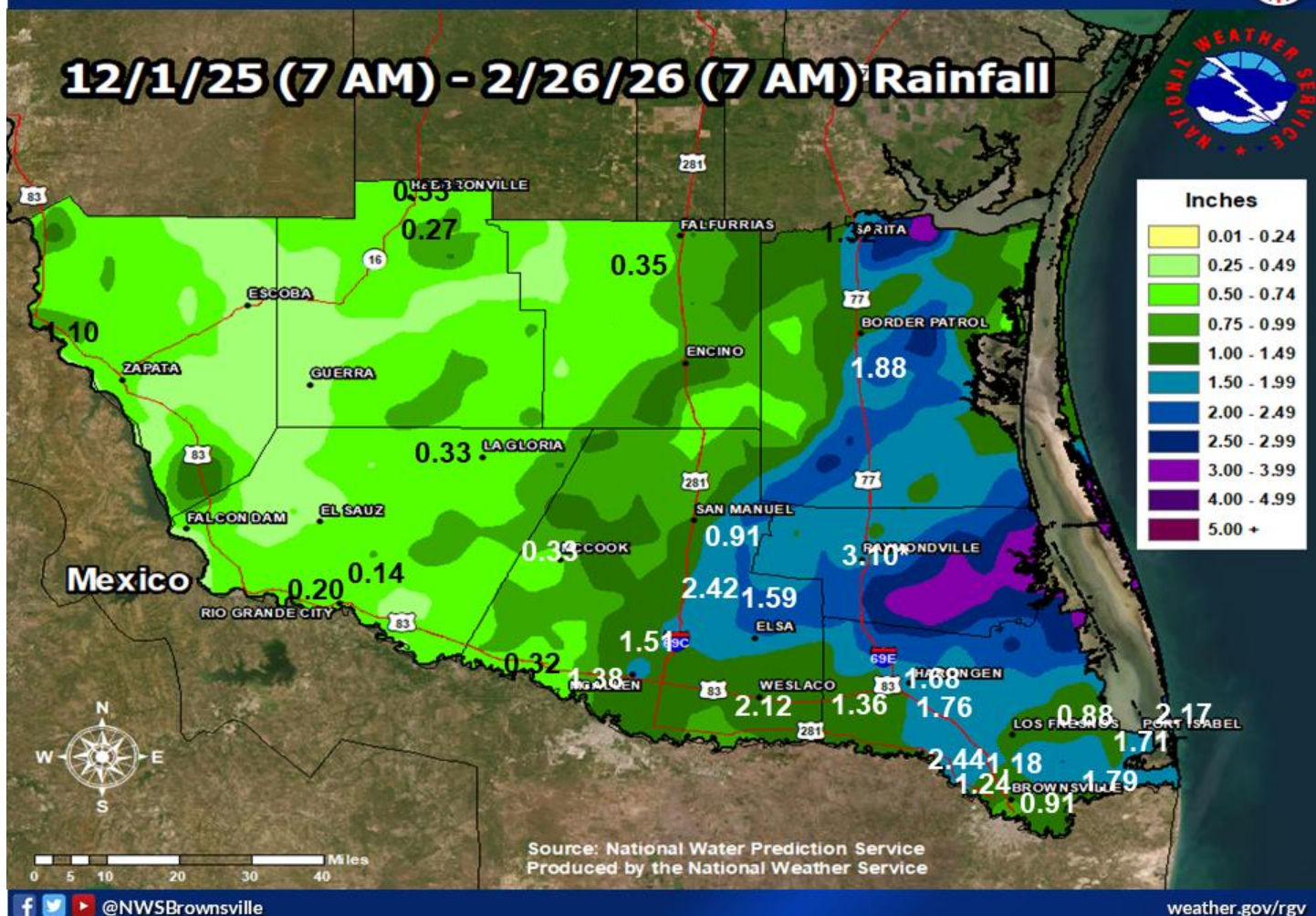
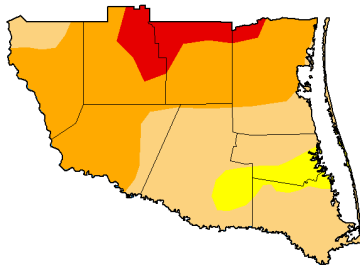


Figure 2. Annotated rainfall map for winter 2025/2026 across the Lower Rio Grande Valley/Deep South Texas ranch region. Annotated values (in inches) are from selected Community Collaborative Rain, Hail, and Snow (CoCoRaHS) observers, along with several cooperative (COOP), Automated Surface Observing System (ASOS), and Texas Mesonet stations with sufficient and trusted values for the season. Map was produced on February 26; no rain fell thereafter.

U.S. Drought Monitor
Brownsville/Rio
Grande Valley, TX WFO



December 2, 2025
(Released Thursday, Dec. 4, 2025)
Valid 7 a.m. EST

	Drought Conditions (Percent Area)					
	None	D0-D1	D1-D2	D2-D3	D3-D4	D4
Current	0.00	100.00	03.41	53.92	8.35	0.00
Last Week 11-25-2025	0.00	100.00	100.00	53.28	8.35	0.00
3 Months Ago 09-02-2025	55.32	44.68	24.27	0.00	0.00	0.00
Start of Calendar Year 01-01-2025	15.16	83.84	88.20	0.00	0.00	0.00
Start of Water Year 09-30-2024	64.70	35.30	3.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
One Year Ago 12-03-2024	4.30	95.70	20.61	0.00	0.00	0.00

Intensity:
None
D0 Abnormally Dry
D1 Moderate Drought
D2 Severe Drought
D3 Extreme Drought
D4 Exceptional Drought

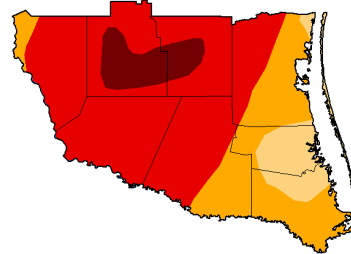
The Drought Monitor focuses on broad-scale conditions. Local conditions may vary. For more information on the Drought Monitor, go to <https://droughtmonitor.unl.edu/About.aspx>

Author:
David Simeral
Western Regional Climate Center



droughtmonitor.unl.edu

U.S. Drought Monitor
Brownsville/Rio
Grande Valley, TX WFO



February 24, 2026
(Released Thursday, Feb. 26, 2026)
Valid 7 a.m. EST

	Drought Conditions (Percent Area)					
	None	D0-D1	D2-D3	D3-D4	D4	
Current	0.00	100.00	100.00	91.30	66.14	7.99
Last Week 02-17-2026	0.00	100.00	97.23	88.95	60.20	7.99
3 Months Ago 10-24-2025	0.00	100.00	100.00	53.28	8.35	0.00
Start of Calendar Year 01-01-2026	6.11	93.89	74.66	56.87	20.56	0.00
Start of Water Year 09-30-2025	64.70	35.30	3.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
One Year Ago 02-24-2025	11.03	88.97	76.88	0.00	0.00	0.00

Intensity:
None
D0 Abnormally Dry
D1 Moderate Drought
D2 Severe Drought
D3 Extreme Drought
D4 Exceptional Drought

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:
Brad Rippey
U.S. Department of Agriculture



droughtmonitor.unl.edu

Figure 3. U.S. Drought Monitor differences between December 2nd, 2025 and February 24th, 2026. Top-ten heat combined with below average rainfall (including top ten driest mainly along/west of IH-69C and US 281) enhanced evaporation rates, worsening already drying soil-moisture conditions headed out of November. By the end of February, all of the region was in some level of drought. Extreme or greater drought expanded from less than 10% of the area to 66% of the region by the end of February.

Winter 2025/2026: Jackrabbit Warm Start

Weather Forecast Office
Brownsville/Rio Grande Valley, TX



January 18; 26-27 Freezes Not Enough to Disrupt Overall Top-Ten Heat

Maximum 3-Month Mean Avg Temperature
for Brownsville Area, TX (ThreadEx)

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

Rank	Value	Ending Date	Missing Days
1	69.7	1890-02-28	0
2	68.9	2017-02-28	0
3	68.1	1950-02-28	0
4	68.0	2026-02-28	0
5	67.8	1971-02-28	0
6	66.7	1952-02-29	0
7	66.2	1957-02-28	0
8	66.1	2000-02-29	0
9	66.0	1972-02-29	0
10	66.0	1923-02-28	0

Period of record: 1878-01-01 to 2026-03-02

Maximum 3-Month Mean Avg Temperature
for McAllen Area, TX (ThreadEx)

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

Rank	Value	Ending Date	Missing Days
1	70.2	2017-02-28	0
2	68.7	1950-02-28	0
3	68.5	2026-02-28	0
4	66.8	1952-02-29	0
5	66.6	2023-02-28	0
6	66.5	1971-02-28	0
7	66.5	1957-02-28	0
8	66.4	2000-02-29	0
9	66.3	2013-02-28	0
10	66.1	2020-02-29	0

Period of record: 1941-06-01 to 2026-03-02

Maximum 3-Month Mean Avg Temperature
for HARLINGEN, TX

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

Rank	Value	Ending Date	Missing Days
1	68.1	2017-02-28	3
2	67.9	1950-02-28	0
3	67.5	1957-02-28	5
4	66.5	1952-02-29	1
5	65.9	1916-02-29	5
6	65.7	1934-02-28	0
7	65.6	2020-02-29	4
8	65.5	1927-02-28	1
9	65.4	2000-02-29	1
10	65.3	1923-02-28	0
11	65.1	1932-02-29	2
12	65.0	2026-02-28	4
13	64.6	1956-02-29	2
14	64.6	2013-02-28	2
15	64.4	1935-02-28	1

Period of record: 1912-02-07 to 2026-03-03

Maximum 3-Month Mean Avg Temperature
for RIO GRANDE CITY, TX

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

Rank	Value	Ending Date	Missing Days
1	67.2	1950-02-28	1
2	66.0	1932-02-29	0
3	64.8	2017-02-28	6
4	64.6	1957-02-28	1
5	64.1	2023-02-28	4
6	64.0	1952-02-29	0
7	63.8	2026-02-28	2
8	63.8	2025-02-28	3
9	63.7	2000-02-29	2
10	63.6	1933-02-28	1

Period of record: 1897-01-01 to 2026-03-03

Other Locations:

- Weslaco: 11th (since 1914)
- Raymondville: 13th (since 1913)
- Port Mansfield: 2nd (since 1959)
- McCook: 8th (since 1941)

*Some data removed for accuracy.

Figure 4. Top-ten warmest conditions that featured in December returned in February, locking in a top-ten warmest December 2025-February 2026 period across the Lower Rio Grande Valley. A late January "Arctic Express" event wasn't enough to overcome the persistent warmth that was featured in Winter 2025/2026. This continued the trend of top-ten warmest seasons, from [autumn 2025](#).

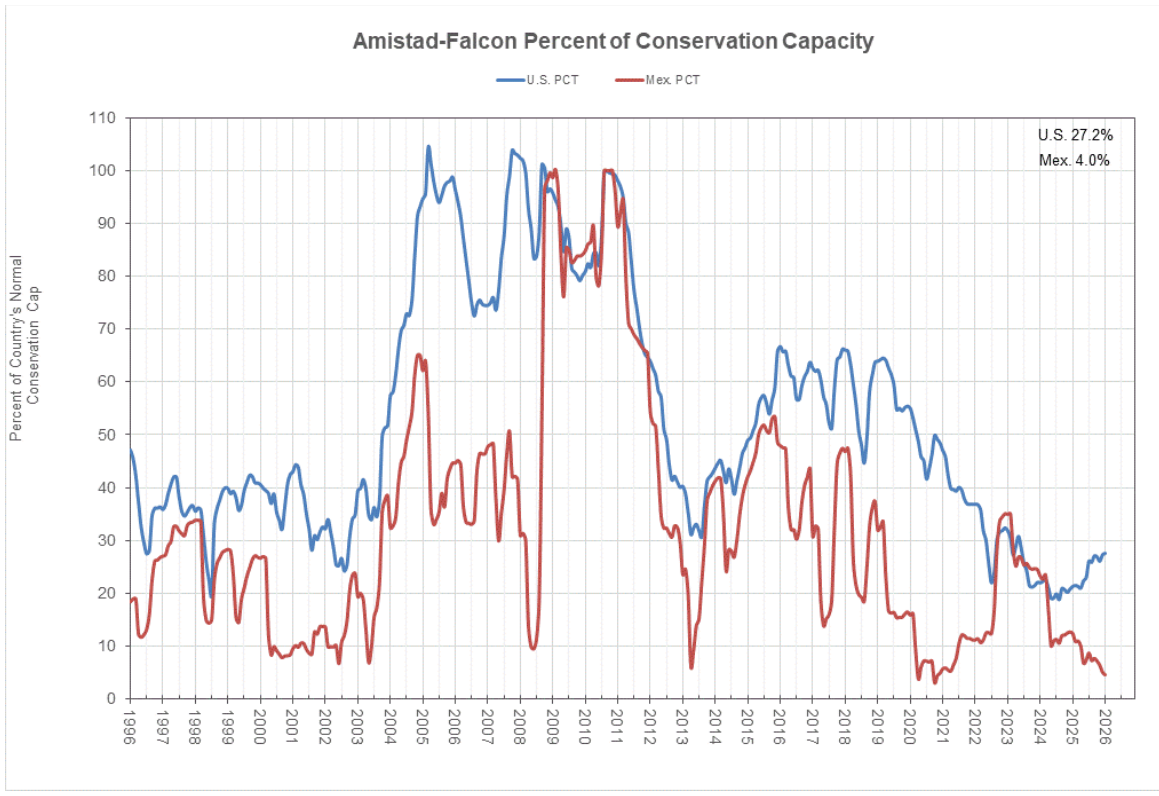


Figure 5. U.S. International Boundary and Water Commission (IBWC) combined percentage of conservation capacity for Amistad and Falcon International Reservoirs at the start of March 2026 continued to show dire conditions for total water share. While the US percent of conservation hovered just above 25%, Mexico’s share dipped to 4%. The total values remained just around or just above seasonal records set in Autumn 2024. Falcon was constituted in 1954; Amistad in 1971.

Month-by-Month Summary

December 2025 was fairly non-descript, with dryness/drought gradually increasing in coverage through the month across the Brush Country and mid/upper Valley. “Just-in-time” rainfall between the 16th and 17th, courtesy of a weak surface trough along the coast, induced by a weak but notable upper-level trough that slid across south Texas early on the 17th. The rainfall (Figure 6), which provided 1” to nearly 3” across southern Willacy, southeastern Hidalgo, and northern Cameron County, actually improved dryness/drought by one category in these areas – from abnormal dryness (drought level 0 of 4) to no category, and from moderate drought (level 1 of 4) to abnormal dryness (level 0 of 4).

Otherwise, the warm to occasionally hot conditions that prevailed in November didn’t miss a beat in December, with temperatures generally ranking among the top-ten warmest on record across the Valley. The nine days surrounding Christmas/Christmas Eve (December 20-29) felt more like the end of April than late December, ensuring the high ranking.

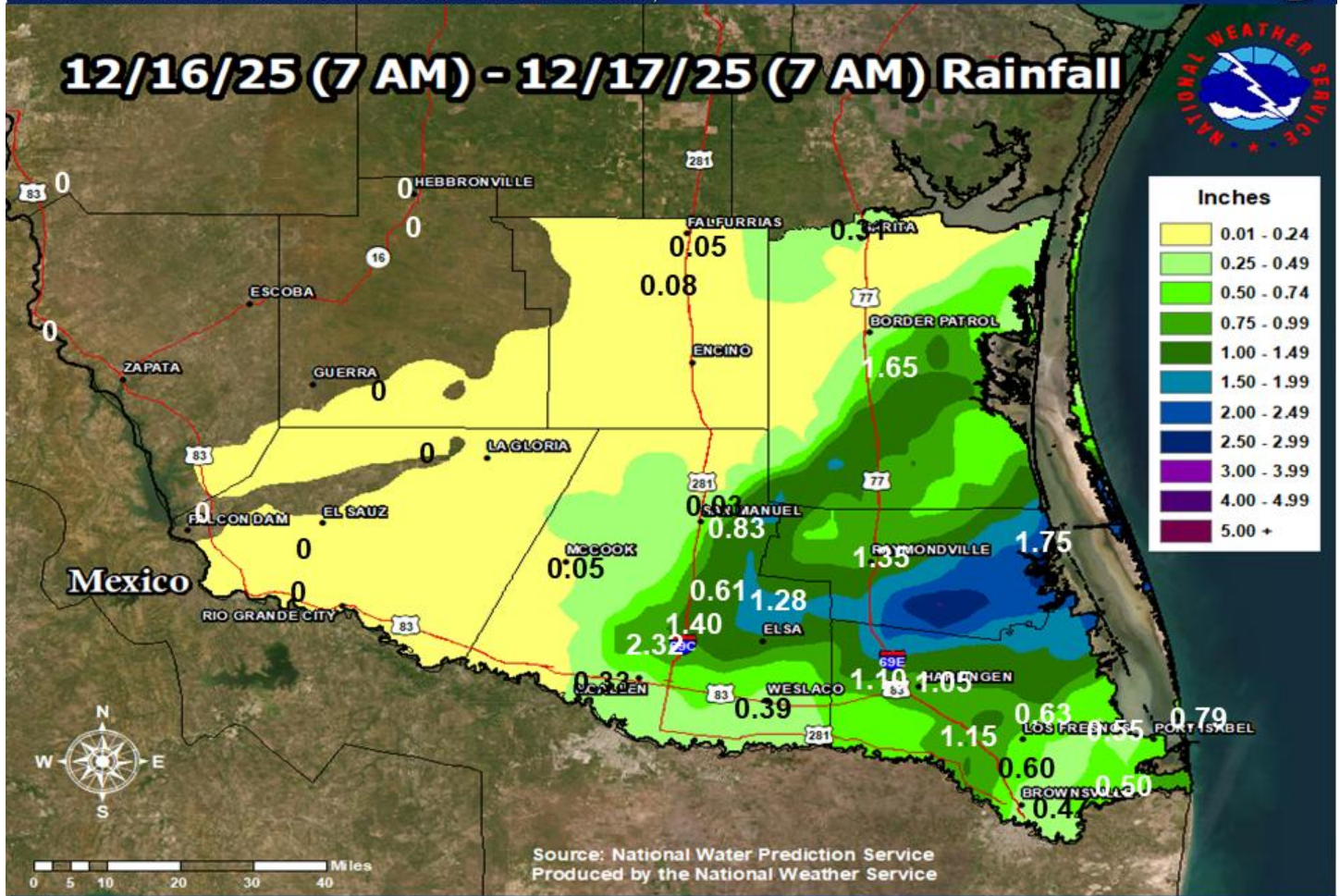
December 16-17, 2025 Rainfall (Preliminary)

Weather Forecast Office
Brownsville/Rio Grande Valley, TX



More Welcome Rain for Portions of the Lower/Mid Valley

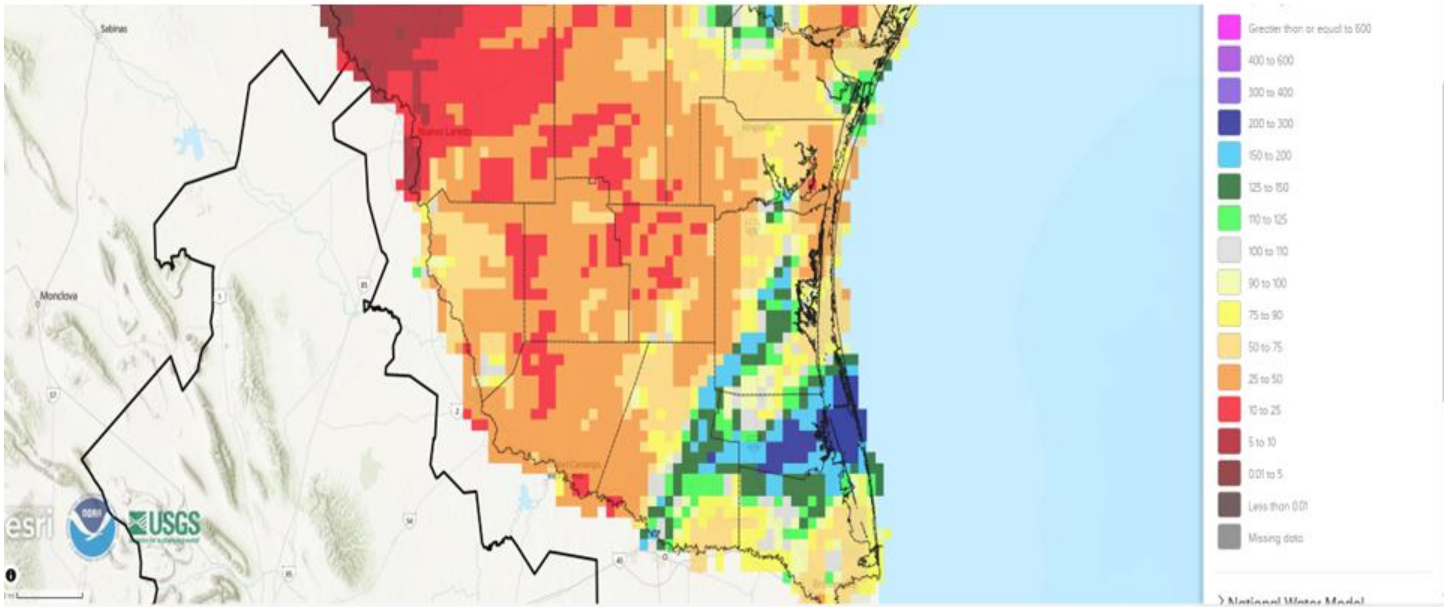
12/16/25 (7 AM) - 12/17/25 (7 AM) Rainfall



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Figure 6. Annotated rainfall map for December 16-17, 2025, showing locally heavy rain from showers/thunderstorms associated with a coastal low pressure area across Willacy, northern Cameron, and portions of eastern Hidalgo and southern Kenedy County. This was the only substantial rain event in the region during December, but sufficient to reduce drought/dryness across the “lower” Valley to close the month.



- Brooks, Starr, Jim Hogg, Zapata: 10-50% of December Average
- Willacy, Parts of northern Cameron, Eastern Hidalgo, southern/central Kenedy: 125-300%
- Southern Cameron: 50-75%.

Monthly Average: 0.5 to 2"

Figure 7. Rainfall percentage of average December 2025. As the region had seen many times in 2025 and prior years, “just-in-time” rainfall occurred near the coast – in this case, a swath of Willacy, eastern Hidalgo, northern Cameron, and southern Kenedy – to briefly improve drought/dryness conditions in these regions (Figure 8).

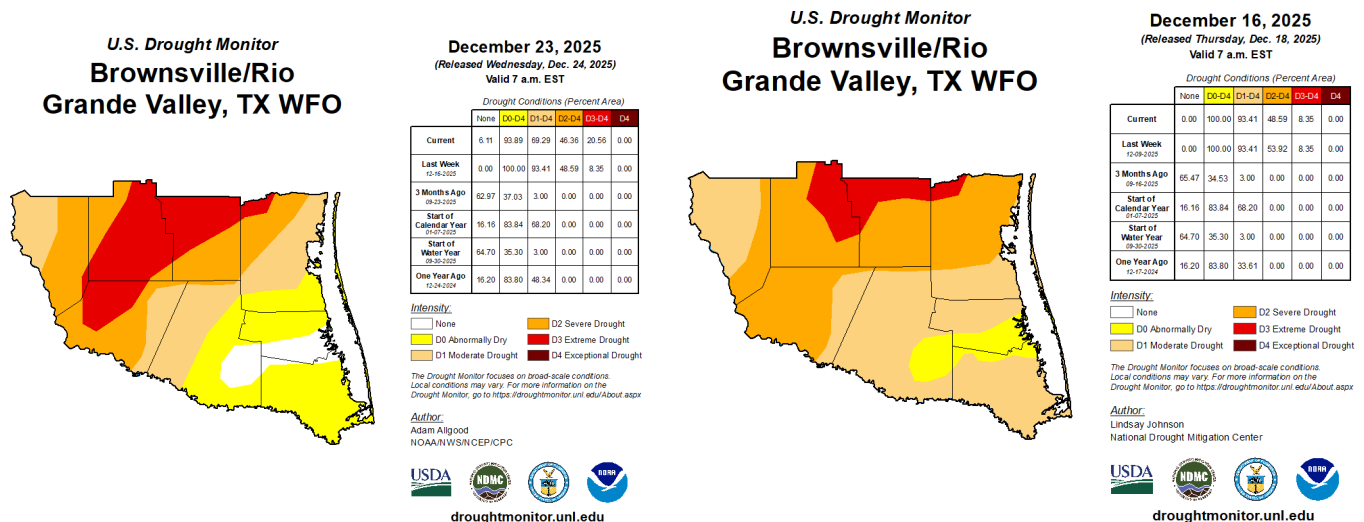


Figure 8. Drought/dryness improvement (left, December 23 Drought Monitor) following rainfall on December 16-17 in the lower Valley (Cameron, Willacy, eastern Hidalgo) northward into southern Kenedy County.

December 2025 Temperature Rankings

Weather Forecast Office
Brownsville/Rio Grande Valley, TX



Maximum 1-Month Mean Avg Temperature for Brownsville Area, TX (ThreadEx)

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

Rank	Value	Ending Date	Missing Days
1	73.2	2021-12-31	0
2	71.2	1889-12-31	0
3	70.9	2024-12-31	0
4	70.2	1984-12-31	0
5	69.8	1970-12-31	0
6	68.9	2025-12-31	0
7	68.8	1933-12-31	0
8	67.9	1948-12-31	0
9	67.7	1921-12-31	0
10	67.6	2016-12-31	0
Period of record: 1878-01-01 to 2026-03-02			

Maximum 1-Month Mean Avg Temperature for McAllen Area, TX (ThreadEx)

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

Rank	Value	Ending Date	Missing Days
1	71.5	2021-12-31	0
2	69.4	2024-12-31	0
3	69.4	1984-12-31	0
4	68.8	2025-12-31	0
5	68.6	1970-12-31	0
6	67.9	2016-12-31	0
7	67.5	2012-12-31	0
8	67.3	2007-12-31	0
9	67.2	2015-12-31	0
10	67.0	1948-12-31	0
Period of record: 1941-06-01 to 2026-03-02			

Maximum 1-Month Mean Avg Temperature for HARLINGEN, TX

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

Rank	Value	Ending Date	Missing Days
1	72.3	2021-12-31	1
2	68.4	2024-12-31	3
3	68.2	1984-12-31	0
4	67.9	1933-12-31	0
5	67.5	1921-12-31	0
6	66.7	1948-12-31	0
7	66.4	2016-12-31	3
8	66.2	2025-12-31	0
9	66.1	2012-12-31	0
10	66.1	1949-12-31	0
Period of record: 1912-02-07 to 2026-03-03			

Maximum 1-Month Mean Avg Temperature for RIO GRANDE CITY, TX

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

Rank	Value	Ending Date	Missing Days
1	69.2	2021-12-31	0
2	67.1	2024-12-31	0
3	66.2	1933-12-31	3
4	66.0	1970-12-31	0
5	65.9	2025-12-31	1
6	65.8	1946-12-31	4
7	65.8	1984-12-31	0
8	64.8	1948-12-31	0
9	64.4	1949-12-31	0
10	63.4	1971-12-31	0
Period of record: 1897-01-01 to 2026-03-03			

Other Locations:

- Weslaco: 12th (since 1914)
- Raymondville: 11th (since 1913)
- Port Mansfield: 5th (since 1958)
- McCook: 9th (since 1941)

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Figure 9. December 2025 temperature rankings (period of record in gray box) for selected Lower Rio Grande Valley locations. Rankings for most available locations ended in the top 15 warmest on record, dating back more than 100 years for some. Several spots ended up in the top ten hottest, a continuation of autumn’s (September-November) heat.

January 2026 will be remembered as a tale of multiple seasons – from a “jackrabbit” hot start (through the 9th) before back-and-forth cooling and warming preceded the season’s first freezes – initially, a light freeze across the Hebbronville through Sarita area on the 18th and 19th, before [a true “Arctic Express”](#) arrived during the afternoon and evening of the 24th into the 25th, which led to back-to-back mornings of hard freezes (<28°F for 2 hours or more) across the rural Valley mainly north of Interstate 2, with freezes in all other areas on the 26th and for all but the Cameron and southeast Willacy County coast, including Brownsville, on the 27th. Very low wind chill temperatures accompanied the freeze and hard freeze on the 26th. Figures 10 and 11 show the January 26th observed low temperatures and observed minimum wind chill, respectively.

grasses and brush, especially along and west of IH-69C/US 281 from Brooks/Hidalgo into northwest Kenedy County and out to Zapata County. The sharp cold, which featured temperatures that failed to reach 50°F near the coast for more than 60 hours, neutralized much of the month’s top-ten warmth through the 24th – but it was not enough to derail a top 25-50% warmest-on-record finish for the month.

January rainfall continued to be paltry across the upper Valley, Brush Country, and Rio Grande Plains – but was also low across the remainder of the region, leading to gradual worsening of drought conditions in most areas by the start of February.

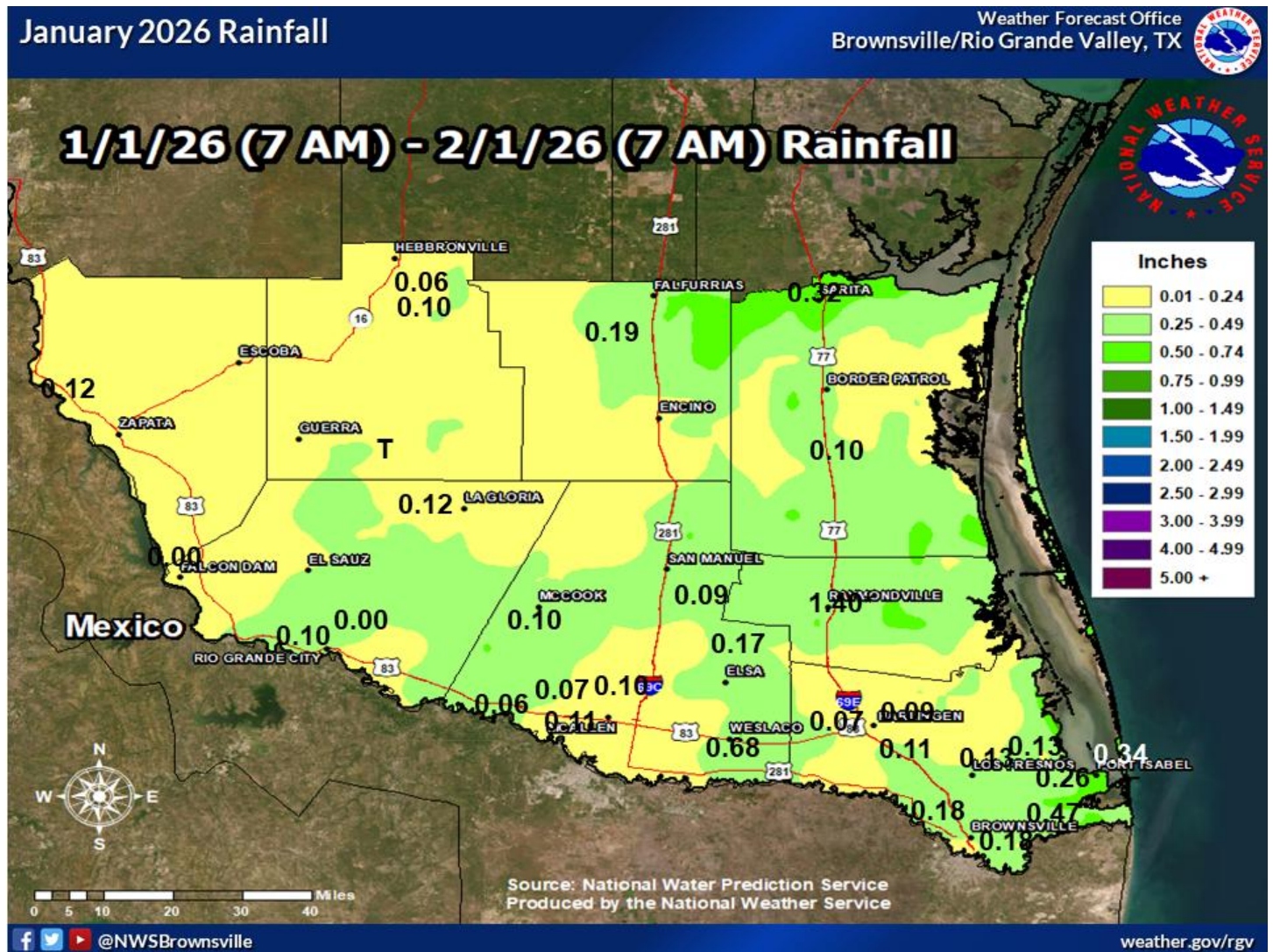


Figure 12. January 2025 rainfall map, including selected annotated values from CoCoRaHS observers, NWS cooperative observers, and Automated Surface Observing Systems (ASOS) data, and the Texas Mesonet. Note that the shown value in Raymondville (1.40”, an NWS cooperative observer location), is likely in error.

February 2026 restored the “heat beat” following the brief interlude of ‘winter’, Valley-style, that closed January. Once again, temperatures came back on the warm highway that was so common during the last four months of 2025, with readings among the top five-to-ten warmest on record in most areas, including top five for Brownsville and McAllen. Equally notable was the literal lack of rainfall (Figure 13), where the only measured rain was across eastern Brooks and northern Kenedy County – with the only observed total to display being 0.07” in Sarita (Texas Mesonet location). The combination of warmth and dryness gradually worsened drought across the entire region, with the highest category (Exceptional, level 4 of 4) appearing

across Jim Hogg and Brooks County – which would expand further across the ranchlands/upper Valley by March 3 (not shown).

The combination of increasingly parched grass and brush, along with periodic gusty winds and low to very low humidity at times during the afternoon, aided a few documented wildfires in Hidalgo (two), Cameron (one), and Starr (one). None of the wildfires grew to over 100 acres.

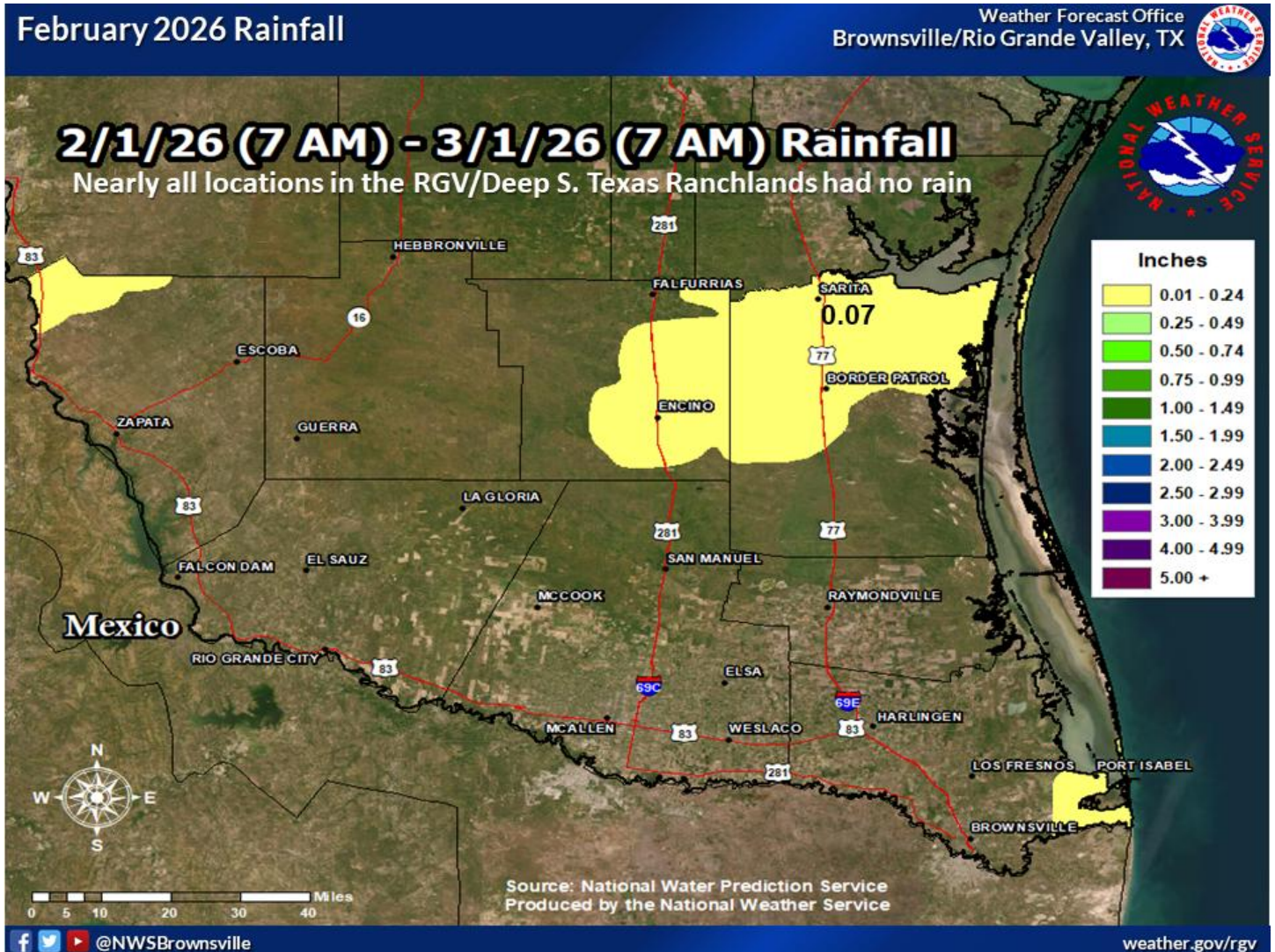


Figure 13. February 2026 rainfall map, including selected annotated values from CoCoRaHS observers, NWS cooperative observers, and Automated Surface Observing Systems (ASOS) data, and the Texas Mesonet.

February 2026 Temperature Rankings



Maximum 1-Month Mean Avg Temperature for Brownsville Area, TX (ThreadEx)

Maximum 1-Month Mean Avg Temperature for McAllen Area, TX (ThreadEx)

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

Rank	Value	Ending Date	Missing Days
1	73.3	2017-02-28	0
2	71.0	2026-02-28	0
3	70.8	2018-02-28	0
4	70.4	1962-02-28	0
5	70.3	2000-02-29	0
6	69.3	1932-02-29	0
7	69.2	2009-02-28	0
8	69.1	1957-02-28	0
9	68.9	1999-02-28	0
10	68.8	2008-02-29	0
Period of record: 1878-01-01 to 2026-03-02			

Rank	Value	Ending Date	Missing Days
1	75.3	2017-02-28	0
2	72.9	2026-02-28	0
3	71.4	1962-02-28	0
4	71.4	1999-02-28	0
5	71.4	2000-02-29	0
6	70.7	2008-02-29	0
7	70.5	2018-02-28	0
8	70.3	2009-02-28	0
9	70.0	1957-02-28	0
10	69.5	2013-02-28	0
Period of record: 1941-06-01 to 2026-03-02			

Maximum 1-Month Mean Avg Temperature for HARLINGEN, TX

Maximum 1-Month Mean Avg Temperature for RIO GRANDE CITY, TX

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

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

Rank	Value	Ending Date	Missing Days
1	72.7	2017-02-28	0
2	72.4	1962-02-28	4
3	70.3	1932-02-29	1
4	69.9	1957-02-28	0
5	69.8	1944-02-29	3
6	69.7	2000-02-29	1
7	69.3	1999-02-28	2
8	69.0	1927-02-28	0
9	68.7	1954-02-28	0
10	68.4	1950-02-28	0
11	68.2	1943-02-28	1
12	68.0	2009-02-28	1
13	68.0	2008-02-29	1
14	67.6	1925-02-28	0
15	67.5	2013-02-28	1
16	67.5	2023-02-28	2
17	67.4	2026-02-28	4
18	67.3	1945-02-28	3
19	67.2	1938-02-28	0
20	67.1	1952-02-29	1
Period of record: 1912-02-07 to 2026-03-03			

Rank	Value	Ending Date	Missing Days
1	71.7	1932-02-29	0
2	70.6	1962-02-28	0
3	69.9	2017-02-28	1
4	69.7	1957-02-28	0
5	68.9	2000-02-29	1
6	68.9	1930-02-28	0
7	68.7	1904-02-29	0
8	68.3	1950-02-28	0
9	68.2	2008-02-29	2
10	67.7	2026-02-28	0
Period of record: 1897-01-01 to 2026-03-03			

Other Locations:

- Weslaco: **9th** (since 1914)
- Raymondville*: **24th** (since 1913)
- Port Mansfield: **3rd** (since 1959)
- McCook: **7th** (since 1941)

* multi-day low temps may have biased the data in Jan.

Figure 14. February 2026 temperature rankings (period of record in gray box) for selected Lower Rio Grande Valley locations. Rankings for most available locations ended up in the top-ten hottest on record, dating back more than 100 years for some

Winter 2025/2026 picked up where autumn 2025 left off – warm and dry overall, with one not-surprising freeze/hard freeze during late January, a situation that has occurred despite generally warm and dry winters since the winter of 2022/2023 (four in a row). Aside from the welcome rain near the coast on December 16-early December 17, there were no notable rainfall (or precipitation, for that matter) during the season.

The big story was the steady worsening of drought, for which Extreme (level 3 of 4) to Exceptional (level 4 of 4) covered 66% of the Rio Grande Valley/Deep South Texas ranchland region by the end of February. The forecast for spring (March-May) offered some hope for drought-relieving rainfall – particularly from late March through April – but this remains to be seen. As we saw in 2025 (historic rainfall and flooding) and in 2023 (at least five wind/tornado/hail events), spring rains often come with unwelcome hazards from water and wind – so something to be mindful of as we move deeper into meteorological spring 2026.

The warmth and drought had an increasing negative impact on farming and ranching across the Deep South Texas ranch country and Lower Rio Grande Valley. According to the March 4th Texas Crop and Weather Report for the region, soil moisture conditions were extremely poor, and many were delaying spring planting until adequate moisture arrived. Spring green-up, which typically begins in mid to late February, did not begin on time. Those beginning spring planting were expecting a critical irrigation need to sustain any growth.

Rangeland was in poor condition, to the point that ranchers were reducing cattle herds, and in some cases, liquidating them. The report can be found [here](#).

Should the rains *not* come, drought will remain steady or worsen further, and water shortage issues are likely to expand. With the reservoirs that supply up to 90% of water currently used by agriculture and several municipalities across the Rio Grande Valley still sitting at or just above seasonal low records, additional rainfall deficits would be felt by farmers, ranchers, and even residents/businesses in the form of water restrictions. The drought, if combined with strong, drying winds, could create favorable wildfire spread/growth conditions through spring.

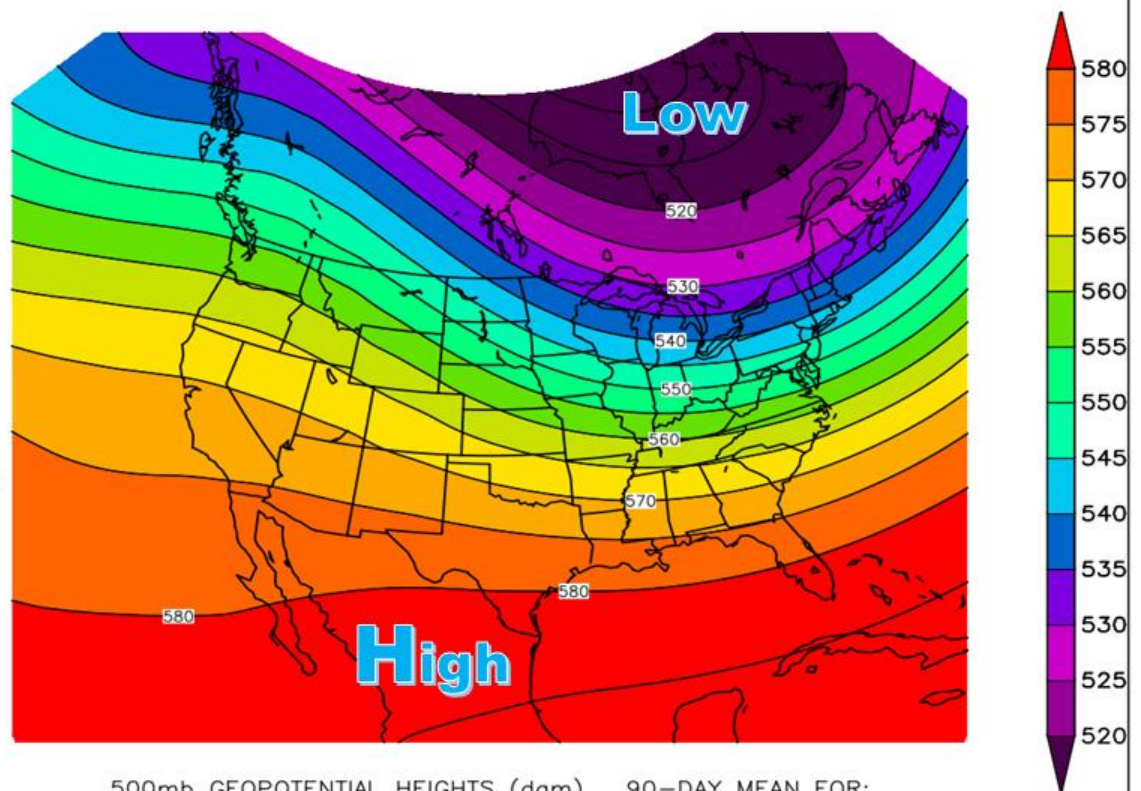
Winter 2025/2026 Steering Pattern

Weather Forecast Office
Brownsville/Rio Grande Valley, TX



Flat high pressure ridge stretched from northern Mexico through the RGV

Warm and dry conditions dominated the RGV, while persistent cold outbreaks favored locations from the northern Plains to east of the Mississippi River.



500mb GEOPOTENTIAL HEIGHTS (dam) 90-DAY MEAN FOR:
Mon DEC 01 2025 – Sat FEB 28 2026
NCEP OPERATIONAL DATASET

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Figure 15. December-February mean 500-mb steering pattern (~18,000 ft). High pressure ridge had flattened as is typical in winter, but still remained in play across northern Mexico and far south Texas, the key driver of the expected top-ten warmest and for many, top-ten driest winter on record. While there was the expected freeze/hard freeze window between January 18 and 27, the vast majority of cold air slid east-southeast from the arctic through the upper Midwest, Great Lakes, and northeast U.S.

