Winter 2025-2026 Outlook

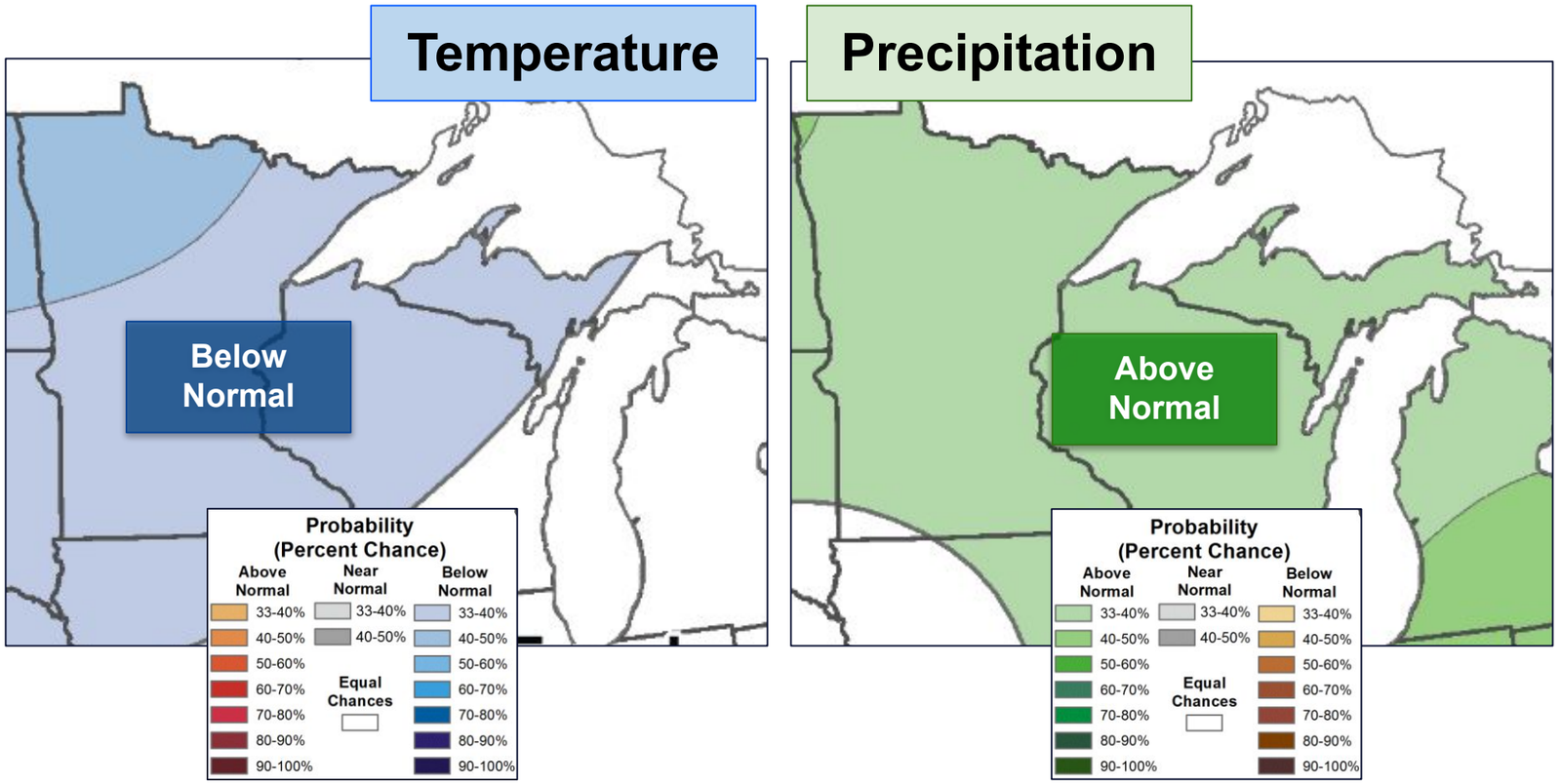
October 16, 2025
12:32 PM CDT

For the period December-January-February

*This outlook is not an indicator of daily weather events, but a **summation of the entire season.***

- ***Slight (33-50%)*** **chance for below normal temperatures and above normal precipitation.**
  - Confidence is **low** at this time.
  - **Short-range weather pattern changes will play a big role** in temperature and precipitation trends this season.
- The seasonal Drought Outlook indicates **drought conditions are expected to persist** through the winter season.

NOAA Climate Prediction Center Dec-Jan-Feb Outlook



The seasonal outlook above **depicts only the most likely outcome** where there is greater confidence, but this is **not** the only possible outcome.

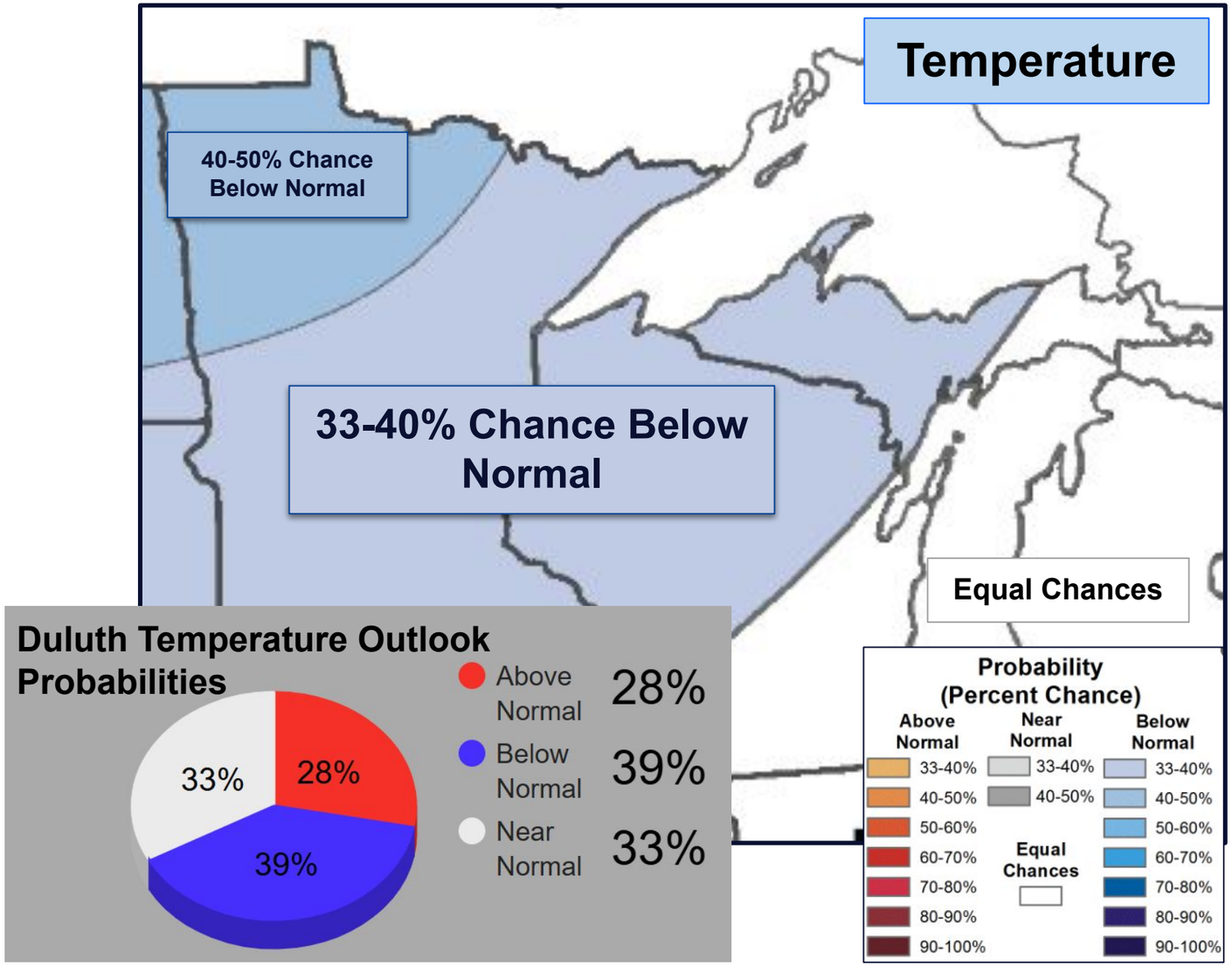
Climate Prediction Center Forecast

October 16, 2025
12:32 PM CDT

Temperatures for the period December-January-February

Overview

- 33-50% chance of **below normal temperatures** over the three month period.
  - Best chance (40-50%) over central to NW Minnesota.
- Uncertainty:
  - Does not forecast how overall below normal temperatures manifest. Could be increased frequency of bursts of arctic air, just slightly below normal temps, etc…



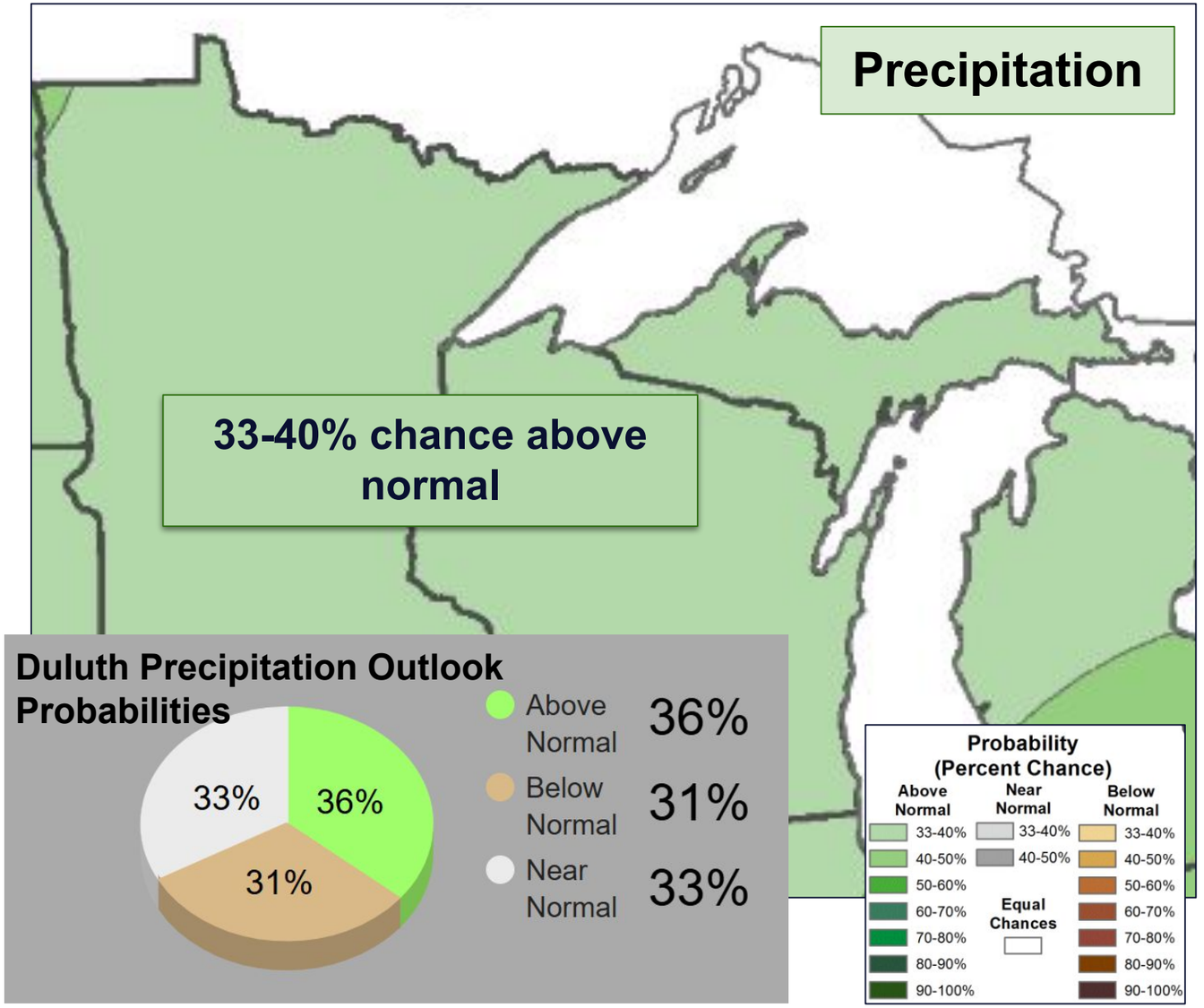
Climate Prediction Forecast

October 16, 2025
12:32 PM CDT

Precipitation for the period December-January-February

Overview

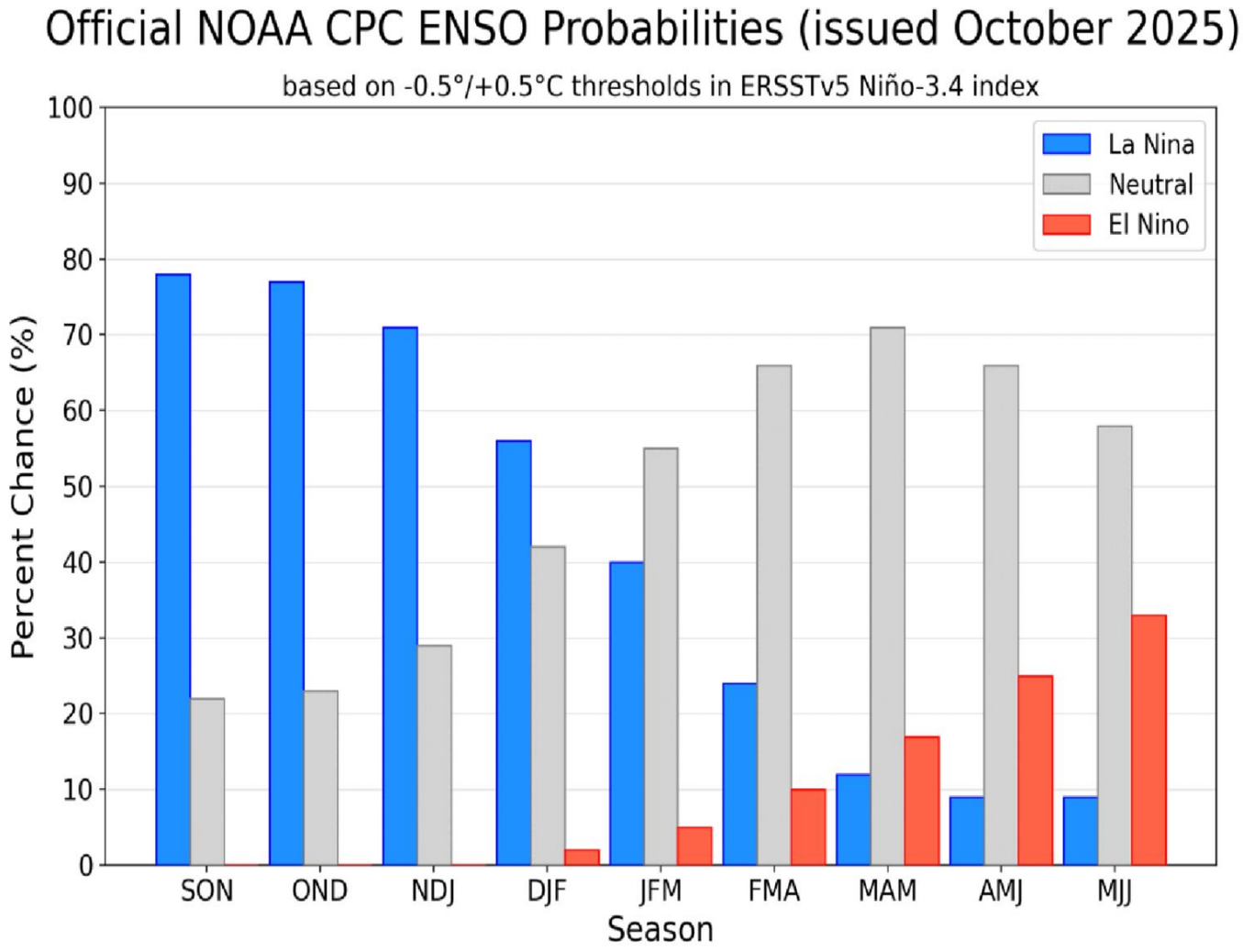
- Most of the area has **slightly increased probabilities (33-40%) for above normal precipitation.**
  - "Above normal" could mean **more snow, or more wet or mixed precipitation events**.
  - However, with the cross over of below average temperature chances, snow is more likely.
- Snow storms will likely occur at times this winter. However, **the frequency, number, and intensity of these events cannot be predicted on a seasonal timescale**.



La Nina/El Nino Probabilities

October 16, 2025
12:32 PM CDT

- 50-60% chance of winter **beginning in weak La Niña, then transitioning to neutral phase** in Jan-March 2026.
- This La Niña will likely be weakening during the winter, so its strength is uncertain.
  - There is a **56% chance of a weak La Niña**, **18% chance moderate**, and **just a 2% chance for a strong**.
  - The strength of La Niña can impact temperatures, precipitation, and snowfall.
- Since 1990, **La Niñas have been highly variable** with winter temperatures and precipitation in the Northland.



Patterns that we cannot predict this far out will likely be the main drivers behind snowfall this year. The factors that can change the weather pattern (eg. jet stream placement and strength) are usually predicted on the timescale of 1-3 weeks out, rather than months.

Recent Weak La Nina & Neutral Winters

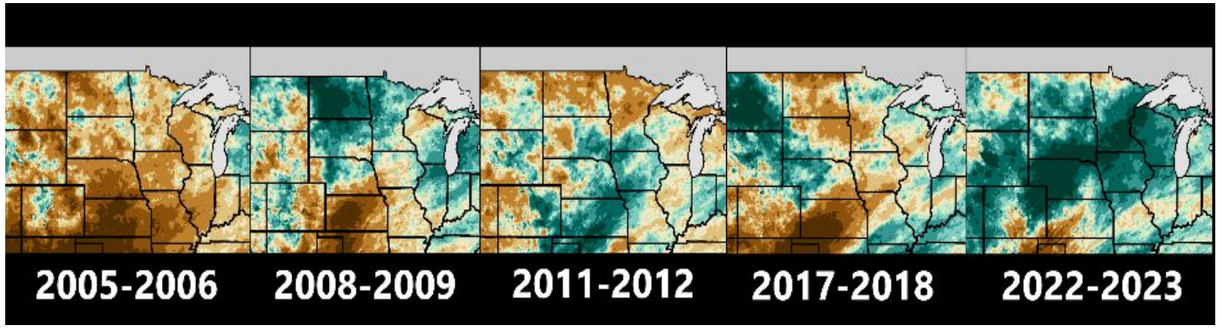
October 16, 2025
12:32 PM CDT

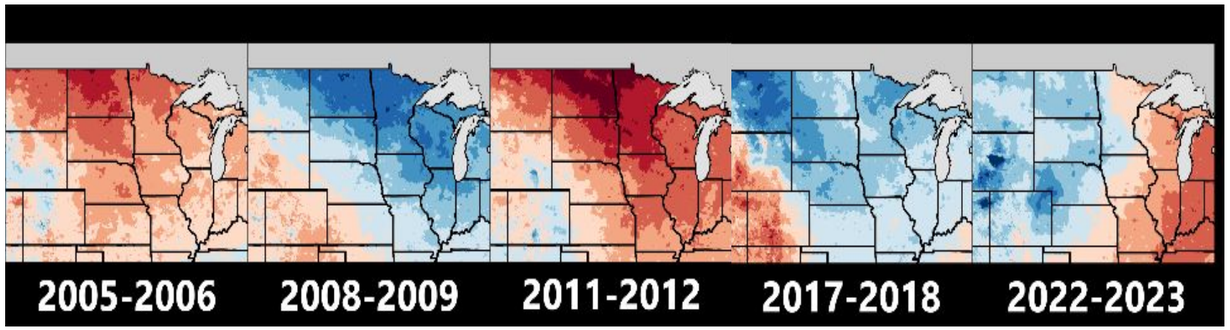
No such thing as a “typical” weak La Nina/Neutral pattern for our area

Precipitation Departure from Normal

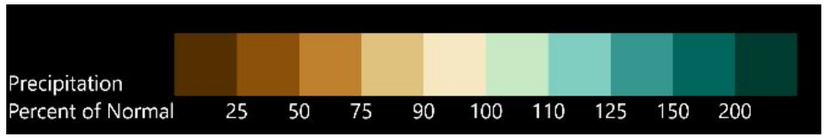
Temperature Departure from Normal

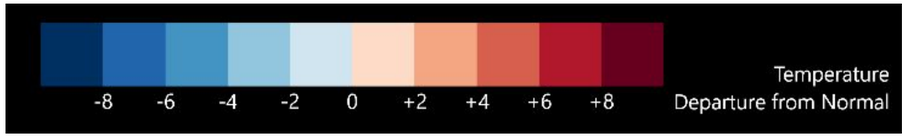
Weak La Nina



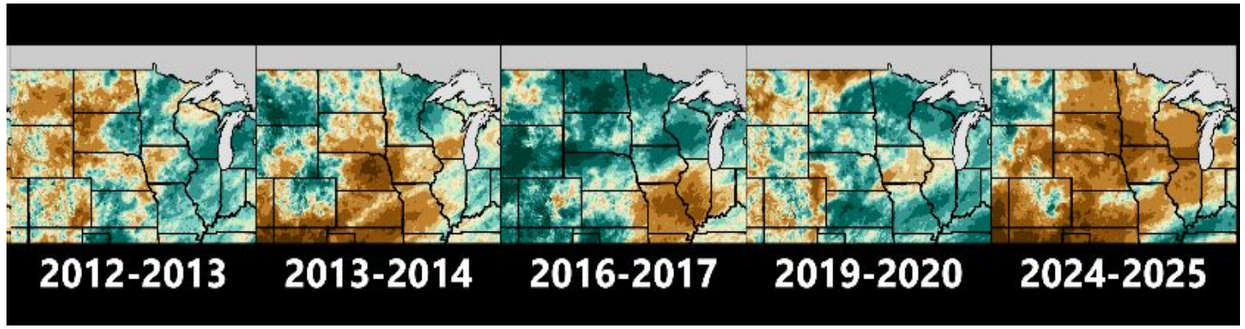


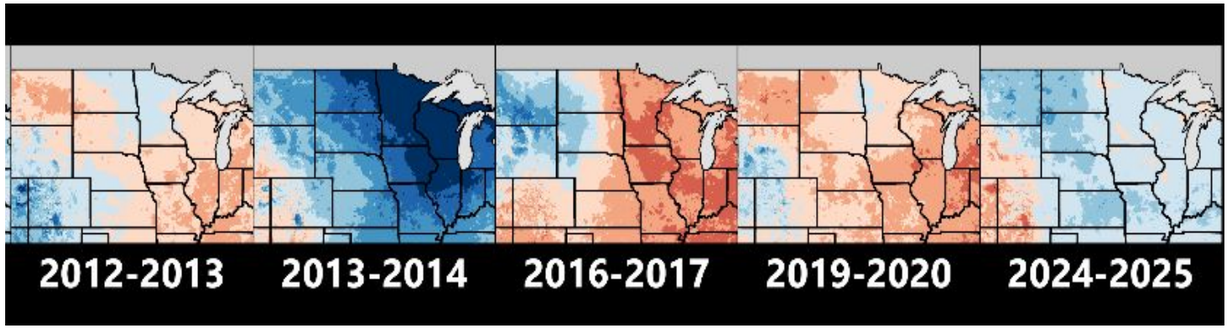
Sample size = 12





Neutral





Sample size = 24

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
U.S. Department of Commerce

National Weather Service
Duluth, MN

Past La Nina Snowfall

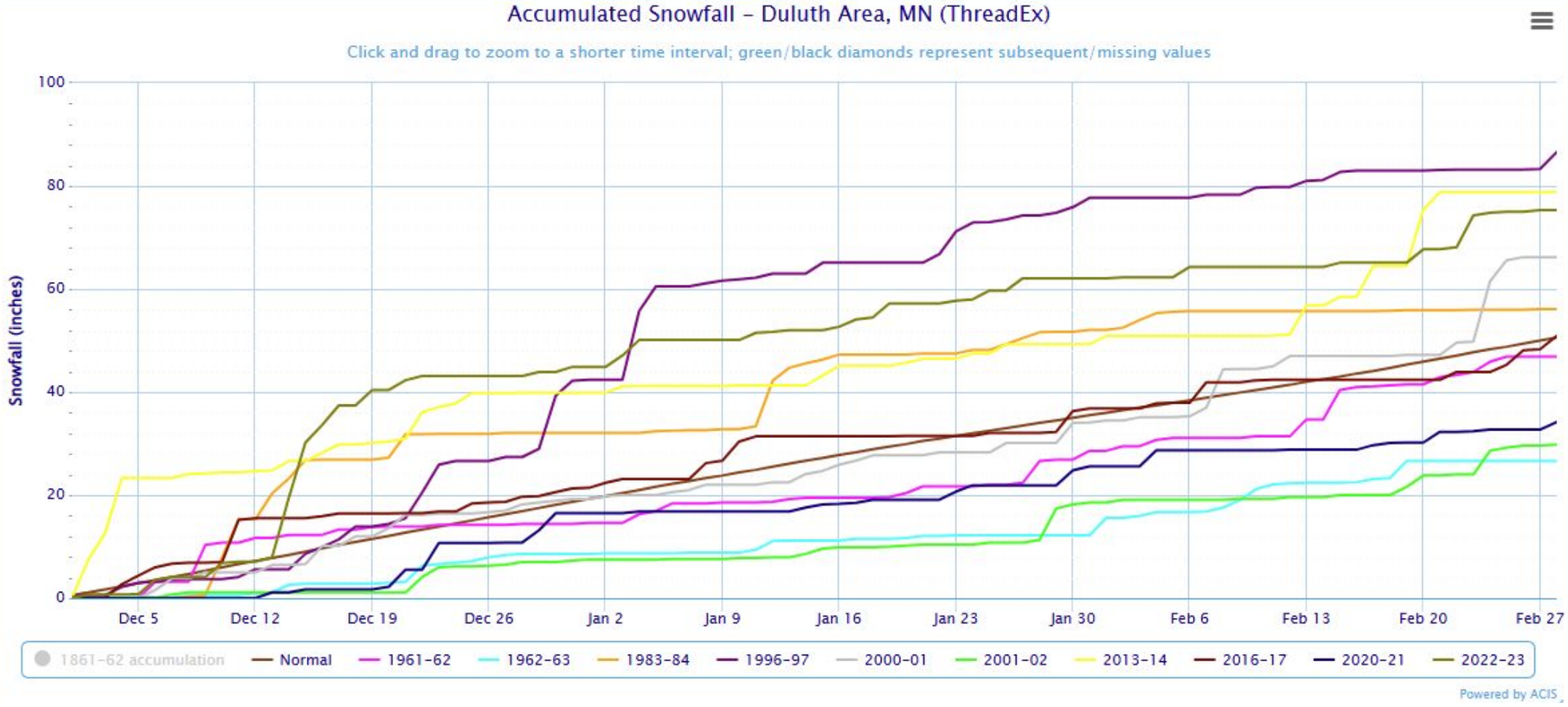
October 16, 2025
12:32 PM

No such thing as a “typical” weak La Nina pattern for our area

- “Average” snowfall over several La Nina winters is made up of highly variable year-to-year amounts.
- Since 1990, **La Niñas have been highly variable** with winter temperatures and precipitation in the Northland.

Dec-Feb Snowfall Amounts at Duluth, MN in similar winters

1991-2020 Normal: 50.6”
1961–62: 46.9”
1962–63: 26.6”
1983–84: 56.1”
1996–97: 86.6”
2000–01: 66.2”
2001–02: 29.8”
2013–14: 78.8”
2016–17: 50.9”
2020–21: 34.2”
2022–23: 75.3”



Drought Outlook

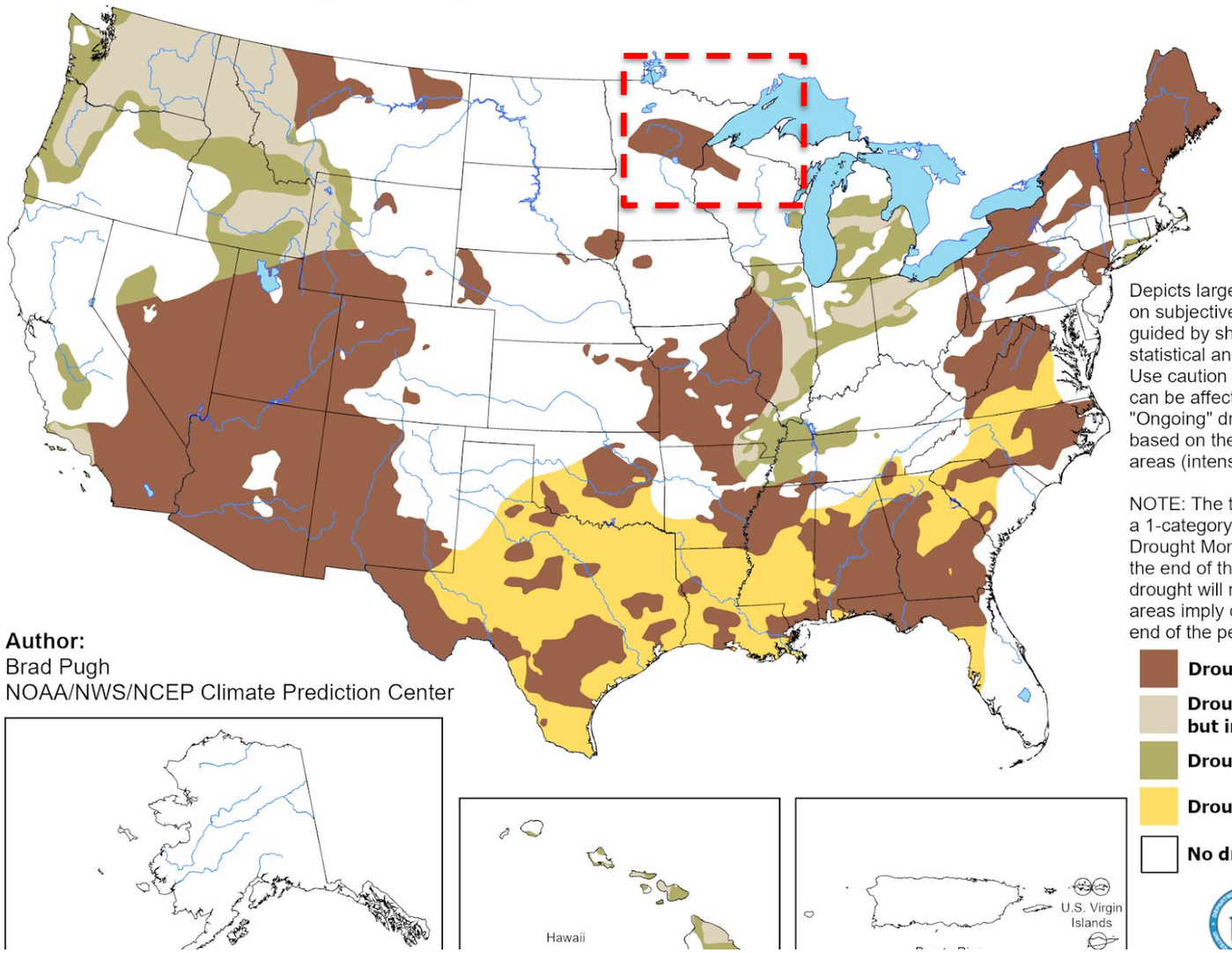
For Late October through January

October 16, 2025
12:32 PM CDT

➔ Where drought has developed, **improvements are not expected.**

Drought Tendency During the Valid Period

Released October 16, 2025



Author:
Brad Pugh
NOAA/NWS/NCEP Climate Prediction Center

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).

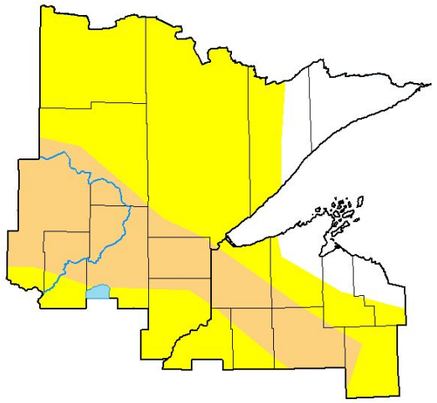
NOTE: The tan areas imply at least a 1-category improvement in the Drought Monitor intensity levels by the end of the period, although drought will remain. The green areas imply drought removal by the end of the period (D0 or none).

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

Hawaii

U.S. Virgin Islands

U.S. Drought Monitor
Duluth, MN WFO



October 7, 2025
(Released Thursday, Oct. 9, 2025)
Valid 8 a.m. EDT

Drought Conditions (Percent Area)

	None	D0-D4	D1-D4	D2-D4	D3-D4	D4
Current	12.59	87.41	28.95	0.00	0.00	0.00
Last Week 09-30-2025	28.80	71.20	3.44	0.00	0.00	0.00
3 Months Ago 07-08-2025	58.84	41.16	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Start of Calendar Year 01-07-2025	0.73	99.27	79.88	10.47	0.00	0.00
Start of Water Year 10-01-2024	2.57	97.43	71.52	0.00	0.00	0.00
One Year Ago 10-08-2024	1.72	98.28	87.83	52.38	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:
Curtis Riganti
National Drought Mitigation Center

droughtmonitor.unl.edu

Summary

October 16, 2025
12:32 PM CDT

What is Expected

- ***Slight* chance for below normal temperatures and above normal precipitation.**
  - Confidence is **low** at this time.
  - **Short-range predictors will likely play a big role** in temperature and precipitation trends this season.
- A weak **La Niña** is expected to continue into early winter and then is likely to transition to a neutral phase by late winter.
- The seasonal Drought Outlook indicates **drought conditions are expected to persist** through the winter season.

Next CPC Winter Outlook will be issued on Thursday, November 20, 2025.

What is Uncertain

- La Niña can have **high variability for temperature and precipitation in the Northland** - and is sensitive to other climate patterns than cannot be predicted at this lead time.
- Cannot predict exact timing, intensity, or frequency of winter weather events. This includes seasonal snowfall amounts.
- Comparing how winter conditions in previous La Niña years does not make a forecast because every winter is unique and sample sizes are small.
  - Climate patterns and connections like El Niña and La Niña simply tilt the odds towards certain seasonal values.

For additional details and outlooks, visit the Climate Prediction Center (CPC) Website: https://www.cpc.ncep.noaa.gov/

Help Verify the Outlook!

October 16, 2025
12:32 PM CDT

Join CoCoRaHS to Observe Snowfall and Winter Precipitation!

What is CoCoRaHS?

CoCoRaHS, or the Community Collaborative Rain, Hail, and Snow network, is a grassroots network of volunteers of all ages and backgrounds working together to measure and map precipitation.

- ➔ CoCoRaHS data is used by the National Weather Service, state climatologists, emergency managers, civil engineers, researchers, and more!
- ➔ Ground truth observations inform meteorologists and hydrologists, **leading to better forecasts**!
- ➔ Collecting daily weather data is a great activity for kids and curious adults, and only takes 5 minutes!

Image courtesy Dave Johnson, MN-SL-18


Image courtesy Tessa Levens, WI-BY-29

Join today!

www.cocorahs.org

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
U.S. Department of Commerce