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

MEDIA ADVISORY

Contact: Tina Stall (Tina.A.Stall@noaa.gov)
WFO Honolulu (w-hfo.operations@noaa.gov)

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
October 22, 2026

2026 Dry Season Rainfall Summary for Hawai‘i (May through September 2026)

- The Climate Prediction Center’s (CPC) dry season forecast favored development of a strong El Niño with above-normal precipitation for all Hawaiian Islands through early autumn 2026, which aligned with past El Niño impacts in Hawai‘i.
- El Niño conditions emerged in June and have strengthened into the very strong category (greater than +2.0°C sea surface temperature anomaly in the Niño 3.4 region) as of October 8, with a value of +2.1°C.
- Rainfall totals for the May through September season were nearly all above average across the state, with many twice or more of their averages. Some leeward areas of O‘ahu, Moloka‘i, and the Big Island came in below average (mainly 70 to 90%).
- Drought conditions (D1 or greater) changed little throughout the dry season, with only around 3% of the state affected (Mauna Kea area of the Big Island) at the start of May and no official drought statewide from the end of May through September. Abnormal dryness (D0) remains in the Kona and South Kohala Districts of the Big Island.
- Overall, the 2026 dry season ranked as the 3rd wettest in the last 30 years (using average rankings from 8 representative sites around the state)
    - 2015 was the wettest in the last 30 years and was a strong El Niño year.

Wet Season (October 2026 through April 2027) Outlook

- From NOAA’s Climate Prediction Center (CPC): El Niño Advisory in effect. As of October 2026, El Niño is in the very strong category and is expected to continue strengthening through the end of 2026, with a *high chance for a historic event*. A transition back to ENSO neutral is favored by the end of spring 2027.
- *Rainfall forecast:* Consistent with a winter El Niño event, the climate model consensus favors unusually high probabilities for *below normal rainfall* statewide through early spring 2027.
- Rainfall amount and distribution can be influenced by the strength of El Niño
    - Stronger El Niño events have generally favored below normal rainfall during the winter season in Hawai‘i in recent decades (since 1980s), with the highest chances during the latter half of the winter into spring.

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Wet Season (October 2026 through April 2027) Outlook - cont'd

    - However, the strength of the El Niño doesn't necessarily correlate with the strength of the impacts, only that certain impacts are *more likely* to occur. In addition, precipitation, among other weather elements, is inherently difficult to forecast in the longer time ranges (weeks to months), with no guarantees for "typical" conditions.
- Other potential impacts:
    - Probabilities favor above normal temperatures across the state through early winter, transitioning to equal chances for above, below, or near normal temperatures for most of the spring.
    - El Niño winters in Hawai‘i tend to favor weaker than normal trade winds due to the subtropical high being forced closer to or over the islands.
- *Drought Outlook:* If the rainfall forecast verifies, anticipate drought conditions to develop in many areas across the state during the second half of the winter and potentially worsen through the spring.
    - Sectors sensitive to short-term rainfall deficits are likely to have the earliest and most severe impacts.
        - Agriculture: Non-irrigated crops and pastures.
        - Water supply: Systems utilizing surface water inputs, and residents on rainfall catchment systems.
        - Wildfires: Higher potential for "out of season" fires due to a prolonged period of dry fuels and additional fuel load from several heavy rain events in 2026. Wildfire danger can be exacerbated by strong wind episodes, which are still possible during El Niño winters.
    - Prepare for water supply shortages by implementing water conservation measures and limiting unnecessary water use both indoors and outdoors.

Preparedness Reminders

- Prepare for drought conditions by conserving water whenever possible and avoid unnecessary water use both indoors and outdoors.
- Create defensible space by clearing dry vegetation around homes and other structures to slow or prevent wildfire spread.

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Wet Season (October 2026 through April 2027) Outlook - cont'd

- Despite the below-average rainfall forecast for the 2026-2027 wet season, residents should still prepare for isolated heavy rain events. Flash flooding can still happen within a drought.
    - Do not drive on roads with fast-flowing water.
        - Just 1 to 2 feet of fast-flowing water can sweep most vehicles off a road.
        - Roads may also be severely undercut and collapse.
    - Do not walk across flooded streams. Wait for the water to recede.
    - If you live in or travel through a flood-prone area, have an evacuation plan and identify alternate routes ahead of time.
    - Stay informed of rapidly-changing conditions.
        - Check out the latest forecasts, watches, warnings, and advisories via the media, NOAA Weather Radio, internet, or a weather mobile phone app.
        - Wireless Emergency Alerts (WEA) on mobile phones notify you if you're in a significant, life-threatening flash flood warning area.

Maps: Statewide Dry Season % Average Rainfall:
https://www.weather.gov/images/hfo/hydrosum/Kau_26_percentavg.png
Dry Season Totals by Island:
Kauaʻi: https://www.weather.gov/images/hfo/hydrosum/kauai_26_kau.gif
Oʻahu: https://www.weather.gov/images/hfo/hydrosum/oahu_26_kau.gif
Molokaʻi/Lānaʻi: https://www.weather.gov/images/hfo/hydrosum/molan_26_kau.gif
Maui: https://www.weather.gov/images/hfo/hydrosum/maui_26_kau.gif
Big Island: https://www.weather.gov/images/hfo/hydrosum/bigis_26_kau.gif

On the Web:
NOAA National Weather Service Honolulu HI: https://www.weather.gov/hfo/
NOAA Climate Prediction Center: Latest ENSO Diagnostic Discussion
Latest Monthly/Seasonal Outlook Discussion for Hawaiʻi
Drought Outlooks
U.S. Drought Monitor: https://droughtmonitor.unl.edu/CurrentMap/StateDroughtMonitor.aspx?HI