



Drought Information Statement for Central North Carolina

Valid January 9, 2026

Issued By: NWS Raleigh

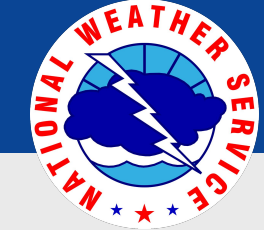
Contact Information:

- This Drought Information Statement will be updated by January 23, 2026.
- Please see all currently available products at <https://drought.gov/drought-information-statements>.
- Please visit <https://www.weather.gov/RAH/DroughtInformationStatement> for previous statements.
- Questions or comments can be sent to barrett.smith@noaa.gov

- Severe Drought (D2) has developed in the western and central Piedmont areas of North Carolina.

- Moderate Drought (D1) continues across the Coastal Plain and Sandhills.





Current Drought Conditions

January 8, 2026
7:27 AM EST

Graphic Courtesy of the North Carolina State Climate Office

North Carolina Drought Update

Created By:

North Carolina
Drought Management Advisory Council
www.ncdrought.org

NORTH CAROLINA
CLIMATE OFFICE
climate.ncsu.edu

NC STATE
@NCSCO

For the assessment period ending **Jan. 6, 2026**
From the US Drought Monitor, with input from the NC DMAC

The Main Takeaway

A dry ending to 2025 and beginning of 2026 have led to further expansion of Moderate Drought (D1) and Severe Drought (D2) across more than 83% of North Carolina.

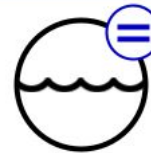
This Week's Summary

The holidays came and went without significant rainfall, leaving most of the state in drought as we begin 2026. While our current dry spell began in mid-August, the dryness ramped up in November. Aside from some showers in coastal areas in early December, we've seen limited precipitation over the past 2 months, including less than 2.5 inches across central and western NC.

The Current Impacts

Statewide, streamflow levels have fallen much below normal, topsoils are drying out even in shaded areas, and many winter crops are stunted and struggling.

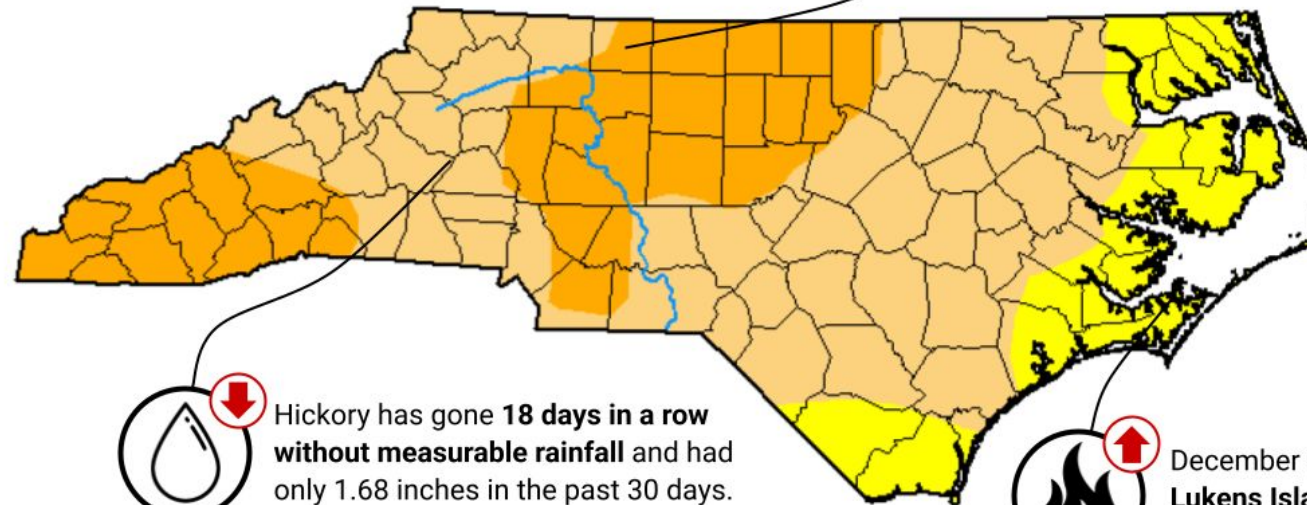
For your local drought status, visit www.ncdrought.org



Duke Energy and TVA are **holding western reservoirs higher than their normal winter targets** in case ongoing drought makes refilling them more difficult this spring.



Stokes County Extension reports **leaf wilt and stunted growth affecting cereal grains**.



Hickory has gone **18 days in a row without measurable rainfall** and had only 1.68 inches in the past 30 days.



December ended with the **370-acre Lukens Island wildfire**, which started following an escaped debris burn.

Last Week's Drought Status



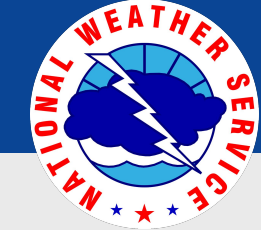
Statewide Coverage by Category

Category	Current Coverage	Change Since Last Week
D0: Abnormally Dry	16.56%	-18.51%
D1: Moderate Drought	54.60%	-5.04%
D2: Severe Drought	28.84%	+28.53%
D3: Extreme Drought	0.00%	0.00%
D4: Exceptional Drought	0.00%	0.00%



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

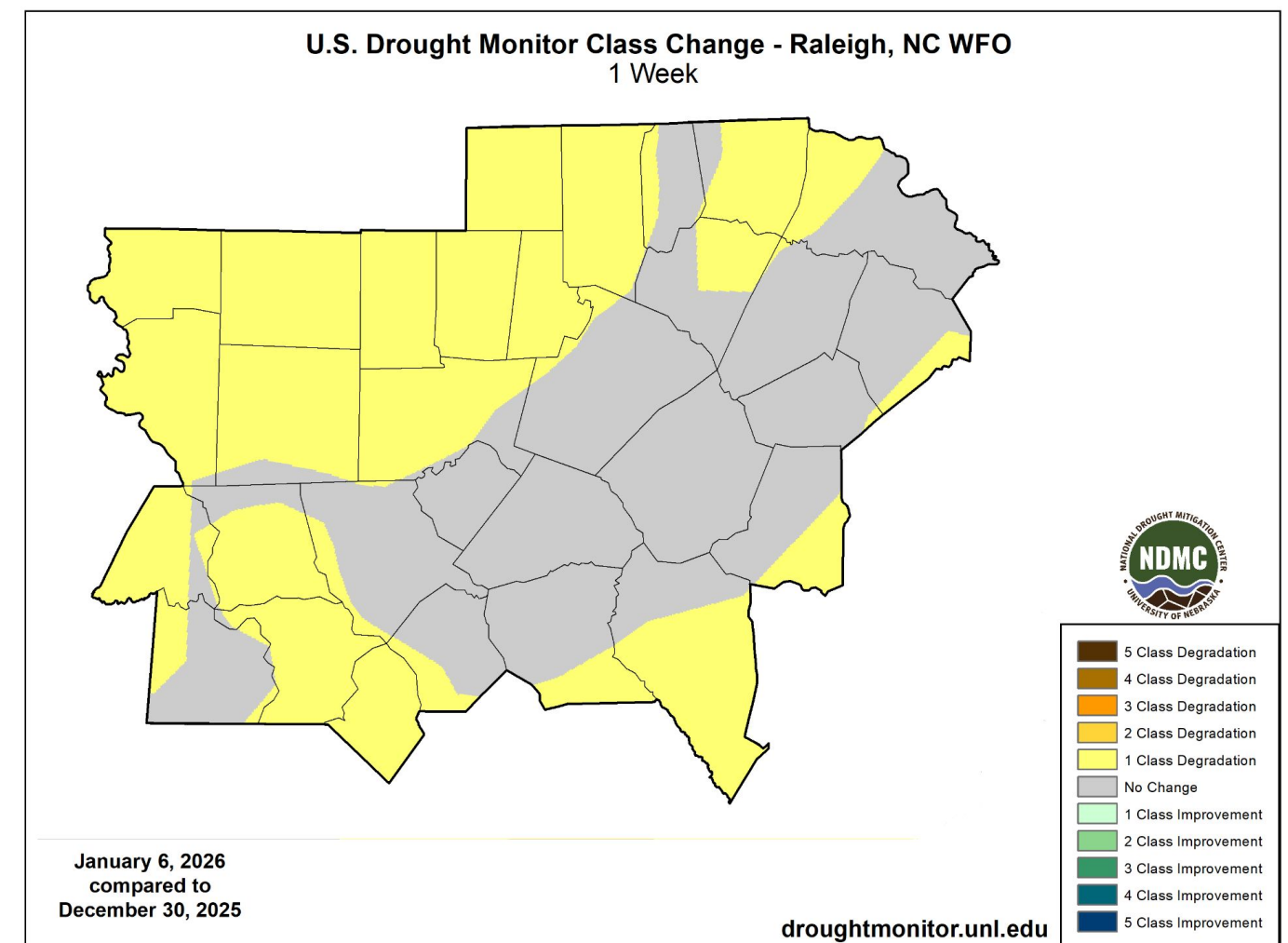
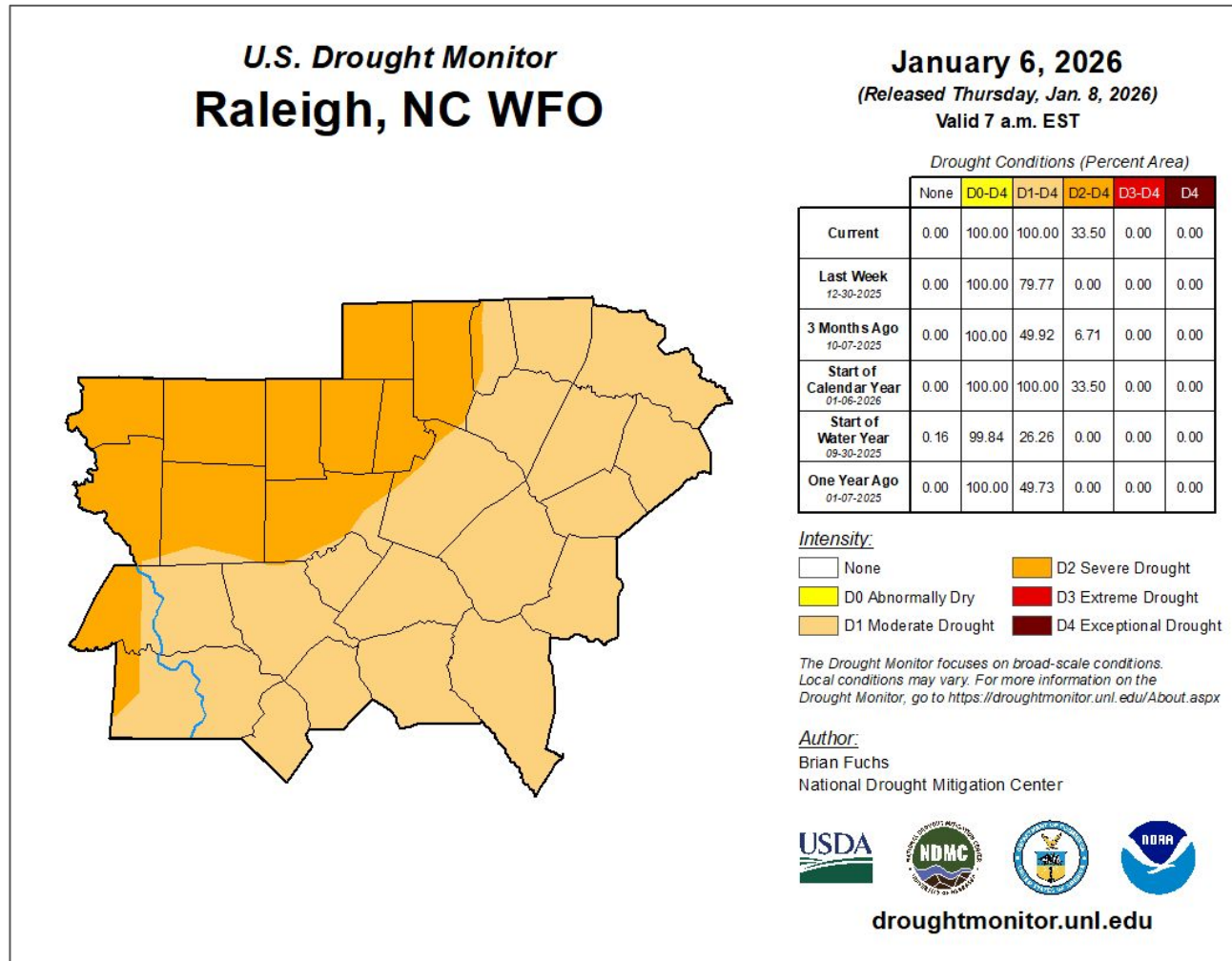
National Weather Service
Raleigh, NC



Current Drought Conditions

January 8, 2026
7:27 AM EST

Latest U.S. Drought Monitor Map and One-Week Change



Main Takeaways

- There was significant expansion of Severe Drought (D2) across the western Piedmont, and also some expansion of Moderate Drought in the southern Piedmont and Coastal Plain.

Image Caption:

Left: [U.S. Drought Monitor valid 8am January 6th.](#)

Right: [U.S. Drought Monitor 1-week change map valid 8am January 6th.](#)



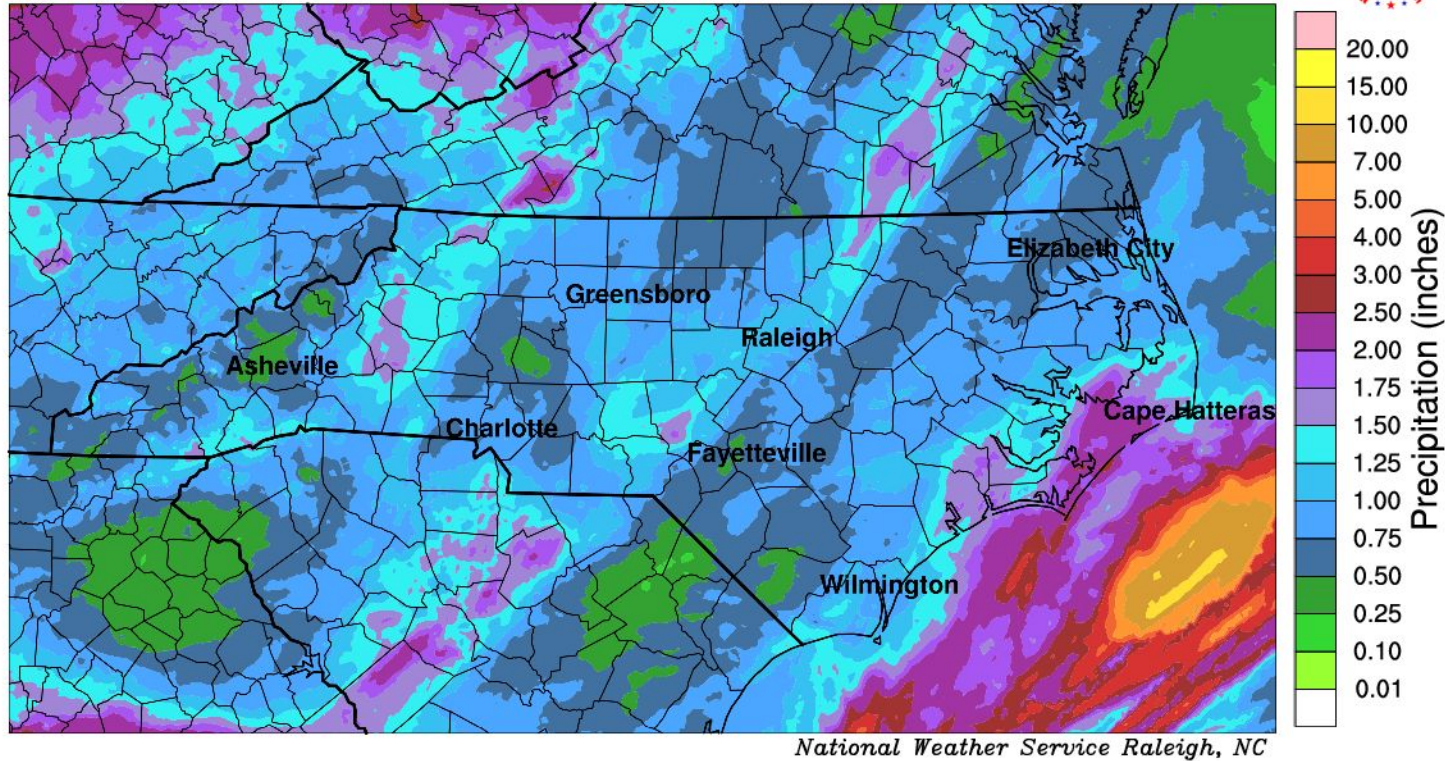


Observed Precipitation

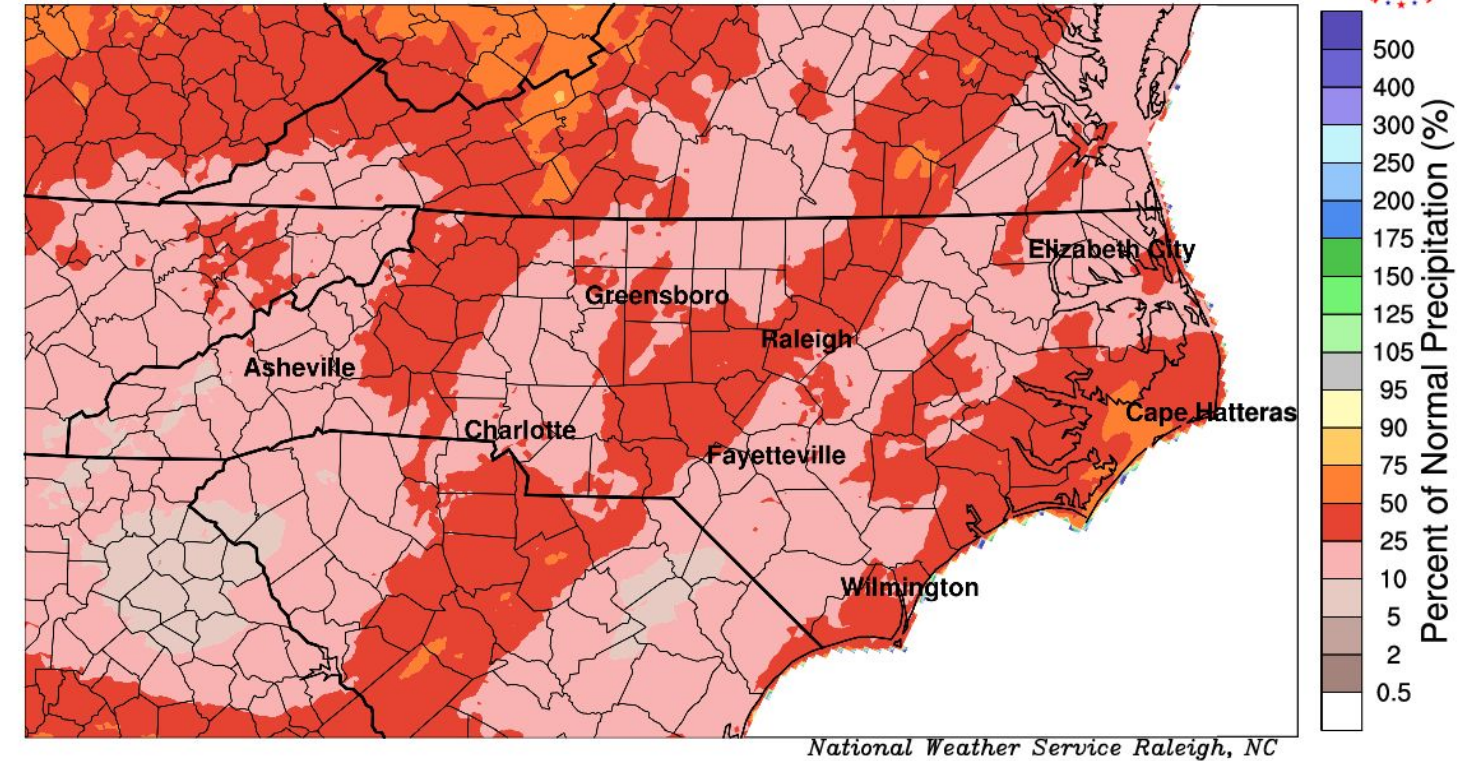
January 8, 2026
7:27 AM EST

Latest 30-Day Rainfall and Percent of Normal Rainfall

NWPS 30-Day Observed Precipitation
Valid: 7 AM EST Thursday January 08, 2026



NWPS 30-Day Observed Percent of Normal Precipitation
Valid: 7 AM EST Thursday January 08, 2026



Main Takeaways

- Very dry across central NC over the past 30 days.
 - Most areas have seen less than 25% of normal rainfall
- Rainfall deficits are a little less extreme at 90 days, running closer to 50% or normal.
- Additional statistics → [Local Rainfall Summary](#)

Past 90 Days Stats	Observed Precipitation	Departure From Normal	Percent of Normal
Raleigh-Durham	5.17	-5.17	53%
Greensboro	3.99	-5.34	43%
Fayetteville	5.93	-2.83	68%

Image Captions:
Left - 30 Day Observed Precipitation for NC; Right - Percent of Normal Precipitation for NC
Data Courtesy NWS National Water Prediction Service. Data over the past 30 days ending January 8, 2026

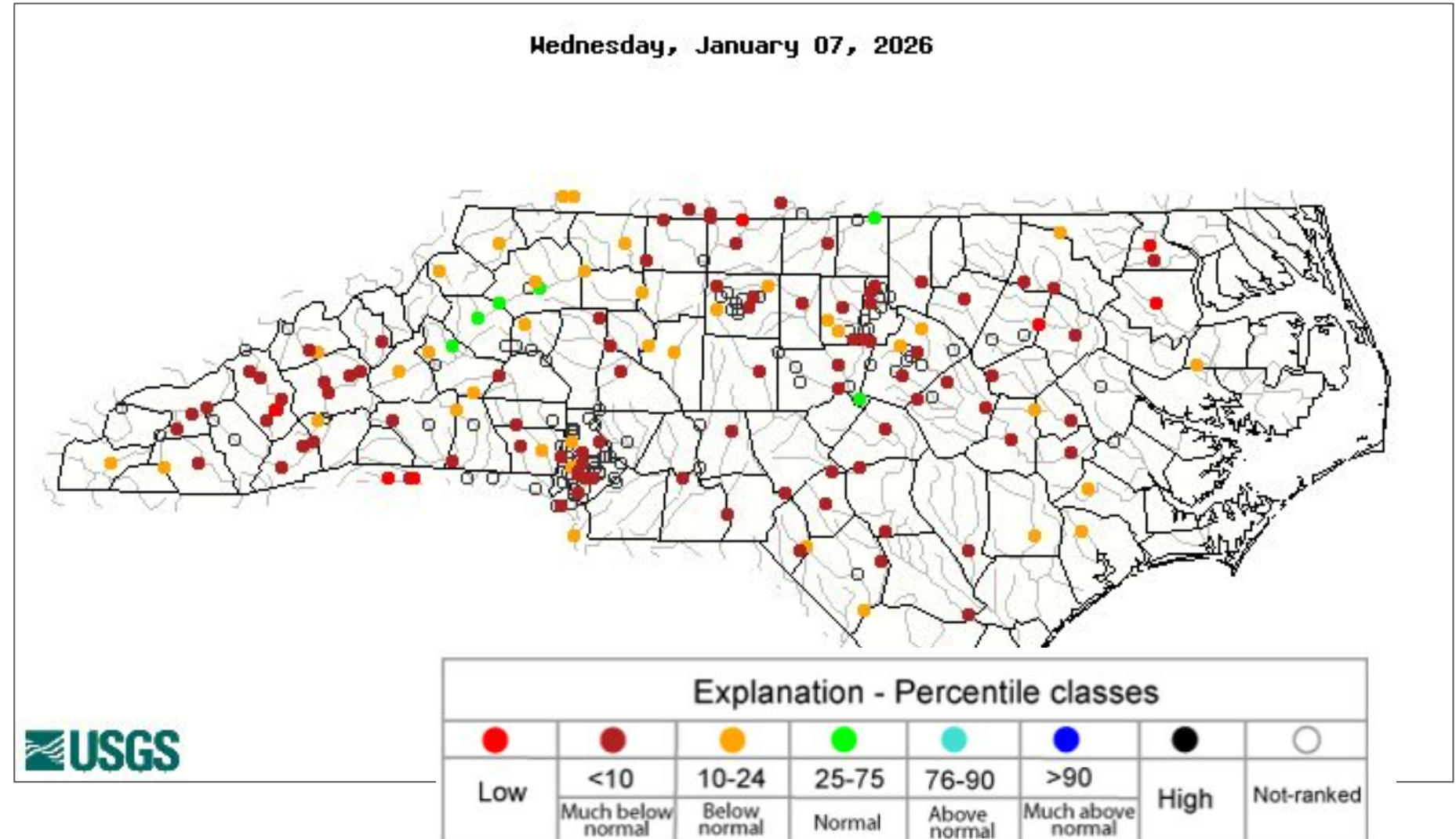




Hydrologic Conditions and Impacts

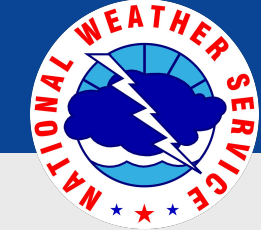
January 8, 2026
7:27 AM EST

- Streamflows are very low across most central NC river basins.
- Nearly all sites are reporting below the 25th percentile and many sites are below to the 10th percentile for the calendar day.



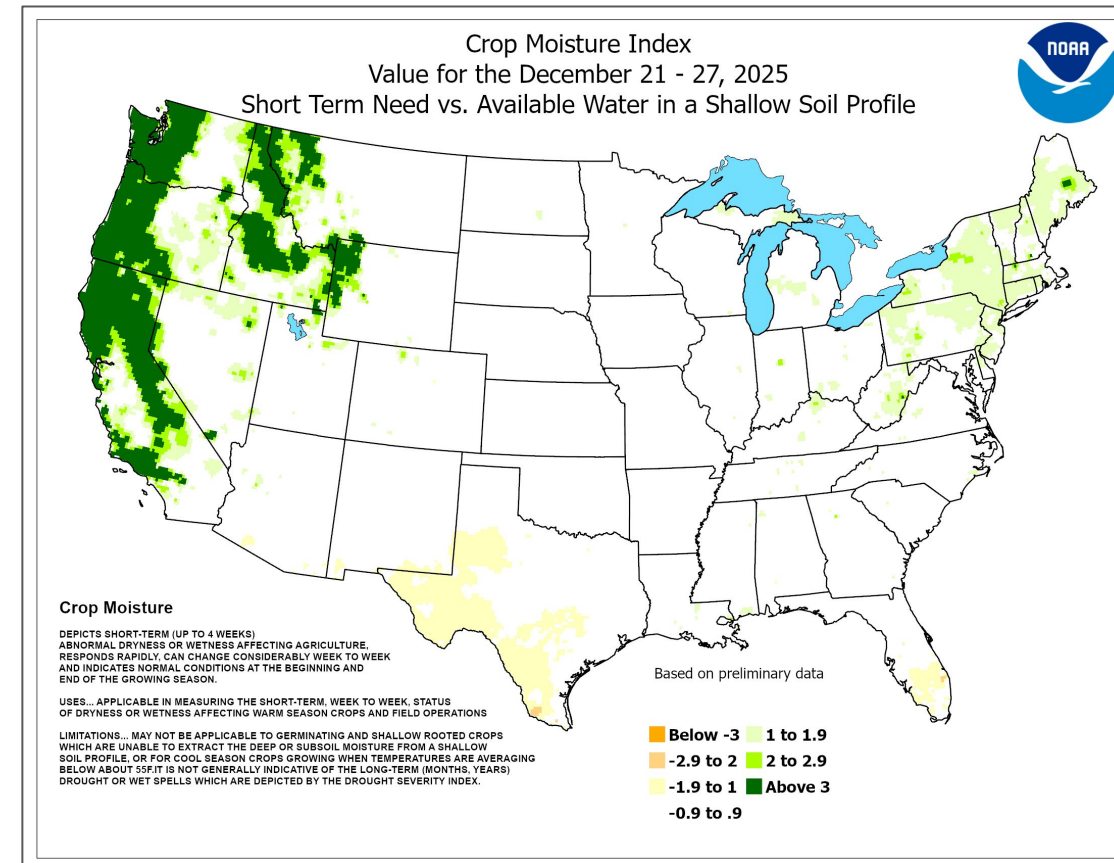
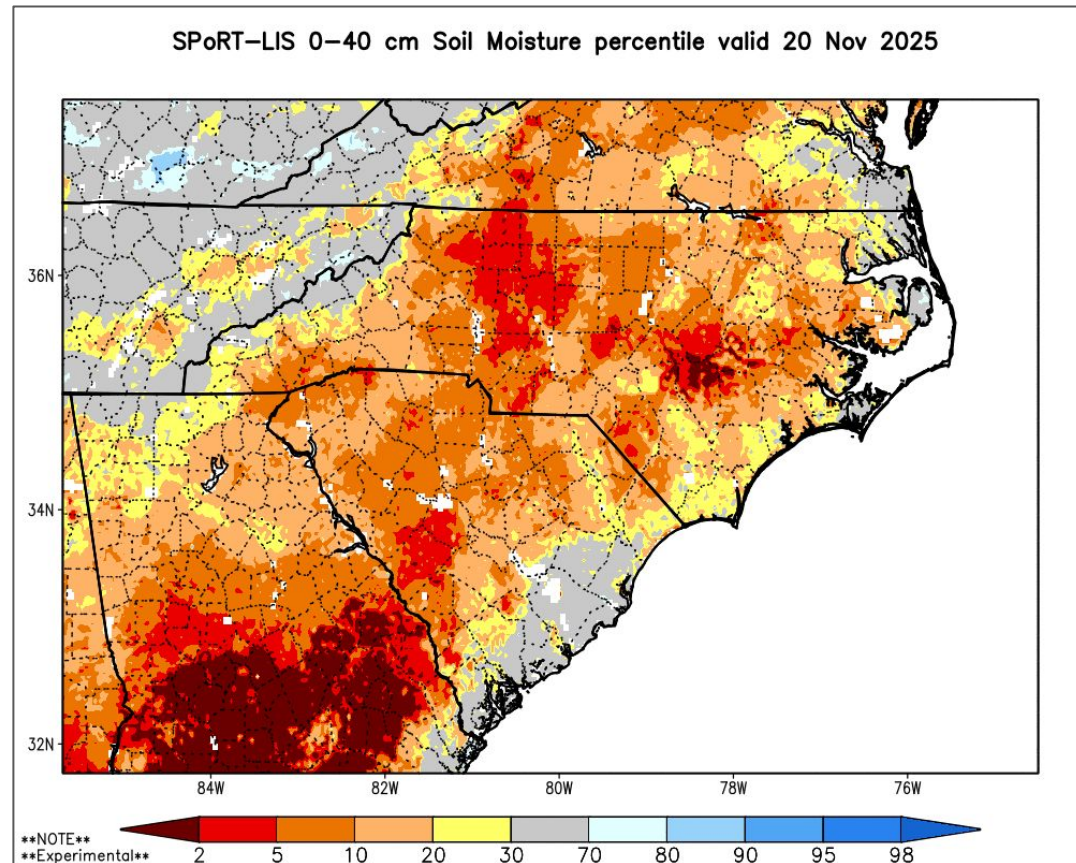
USGS 28 day average streamflow valid January 7, 2026





Agricultural Impacts

January 8, 2026
7:27 AM EST



- Soil moisture remains in the 5-10th percentile for the time of year in the central Coastal Plain, but in other areas conditions have improved. The short term Crop Moisture Index has improved to the near normal range.
- Recent rainfall has provided some assistance in Fall season planting.

Left: NASA SPoRT LIS [Soil Moisture 100cm Soil Moisture Percentile](#) valid November 20, 2025
Right: [Crop Moisture Index by Division](#). Weekly value for period ending November 1, 2025





Precipitation Forecast

January 8, 2026
7:27 AM EST

Latest 7-Day Precipitation Forecast

- **Next 7 days:**
 - A cold front will cross the region this upcoming weekend, with the heavier rainfall across the Tennessee Valley.
 - If the system holds together, some areas in the western Piedmont could see up to an inch of rain.
 - However, the trend in rainfall amounts will be downward as it moves east, so there is some uncertainty in how far east those better totals will extend.
 - These rainfall amounts are still at or well below normal for the 7-day period.

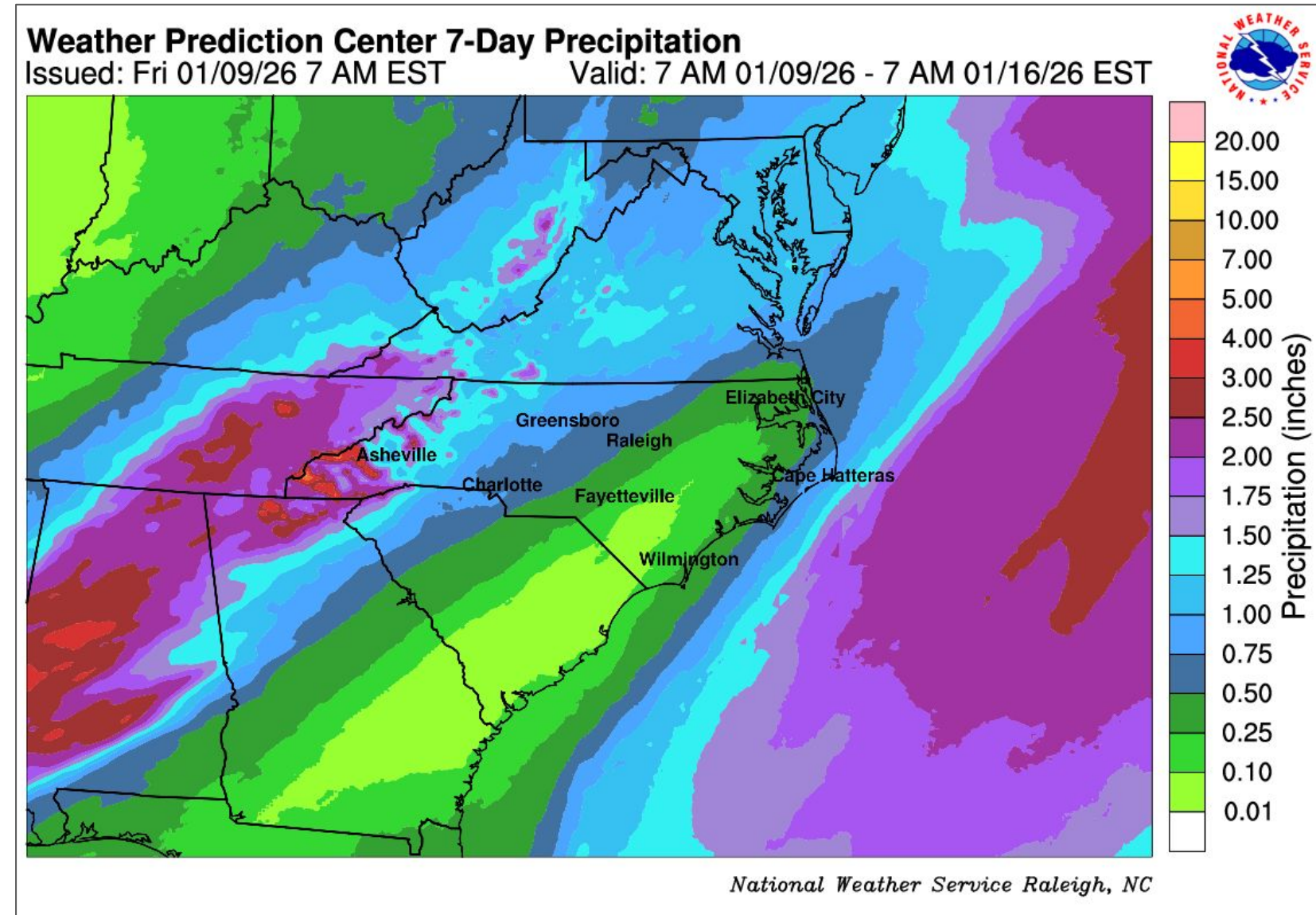


Image Caption: Weather Prediction Center [7-day precipitation forecast](#) valid Thursday January 9th to Thursday, January 16th.





8-14 Day Outlook

January 8, 2026
7:27 AM EST

Temperature and Precipitation Outlook

Main Takeaways

- The Days 8-14 Outlook favors near normal temperatures for the middle of January.
- There is a slight lean (33-40%) to above normal rainfall across eastern NC.

Possible Impact

- The overall pattern over the next one to two weeks favors drier conditions, and unless a significant rainfall event unfolds later in the period, drought conditions should persist or worsen.

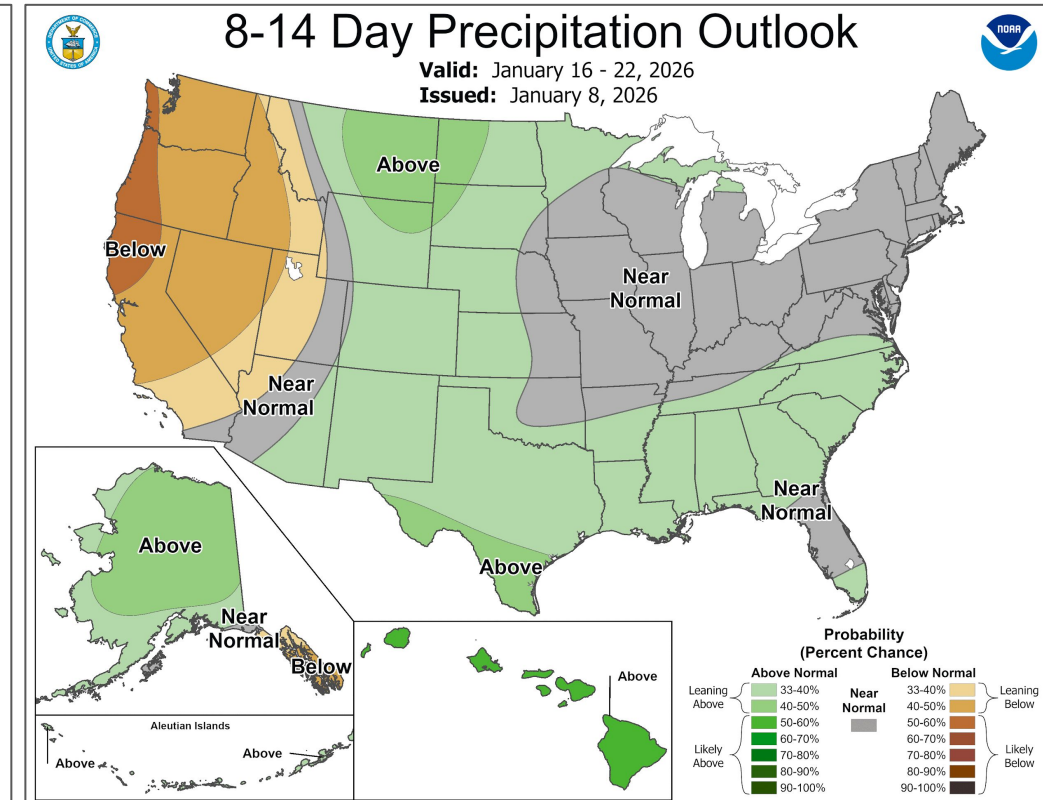
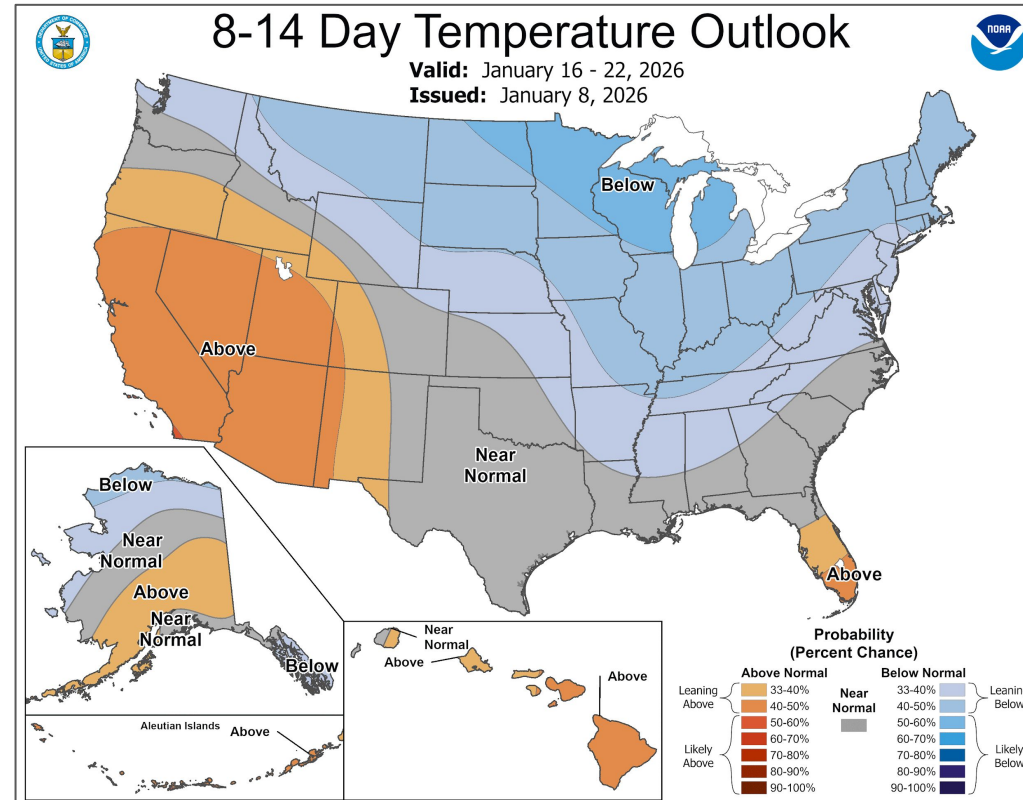


Image Captions:
Left - [Climate Prediction Center 8-14 Day Temperature Outlook.](#)
Right - [Climate Prediction Center 8-14 Day Precipitation Outlook.](#)
Valid January 16-22, 2026





Weeks 3-4 Outlook

January 8, 2026
7:27 AM EST

Temperature and Precipitation Outlook

Main Takeaways

- There are generally equal chances of above or below normal temperatures and precipitation for the second half of January

Possible Impact

This pattern also suggests drought conditions may continue to even worsen in some areas given the overall lack of expected rainfall.

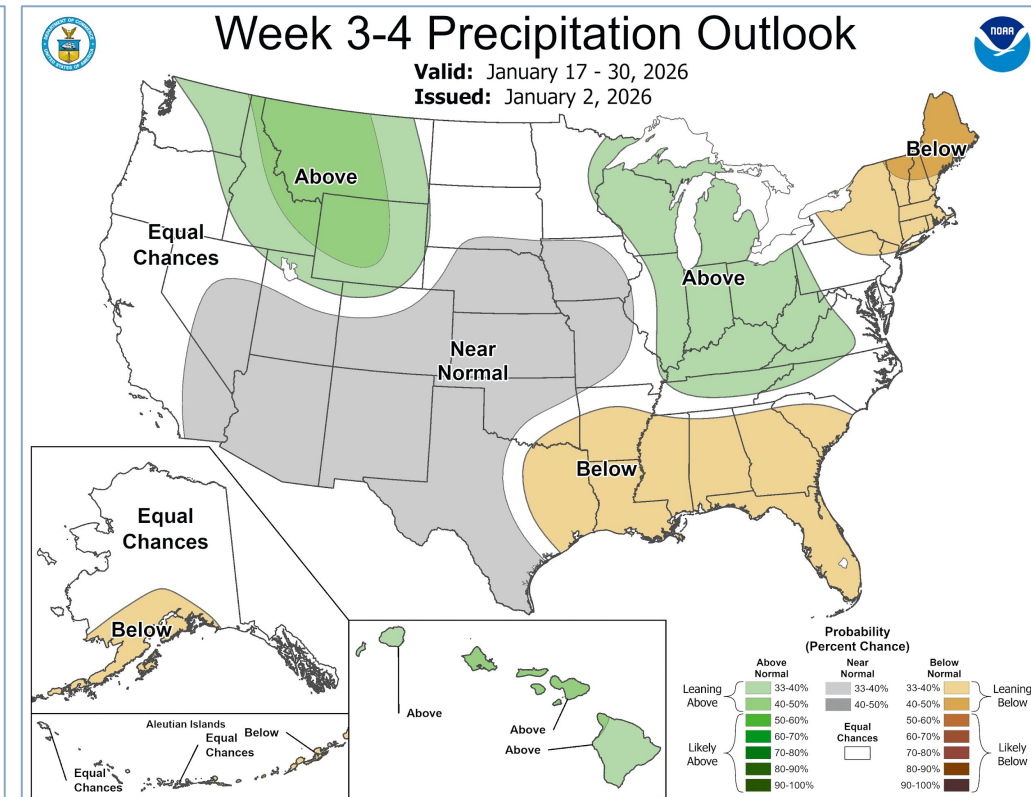
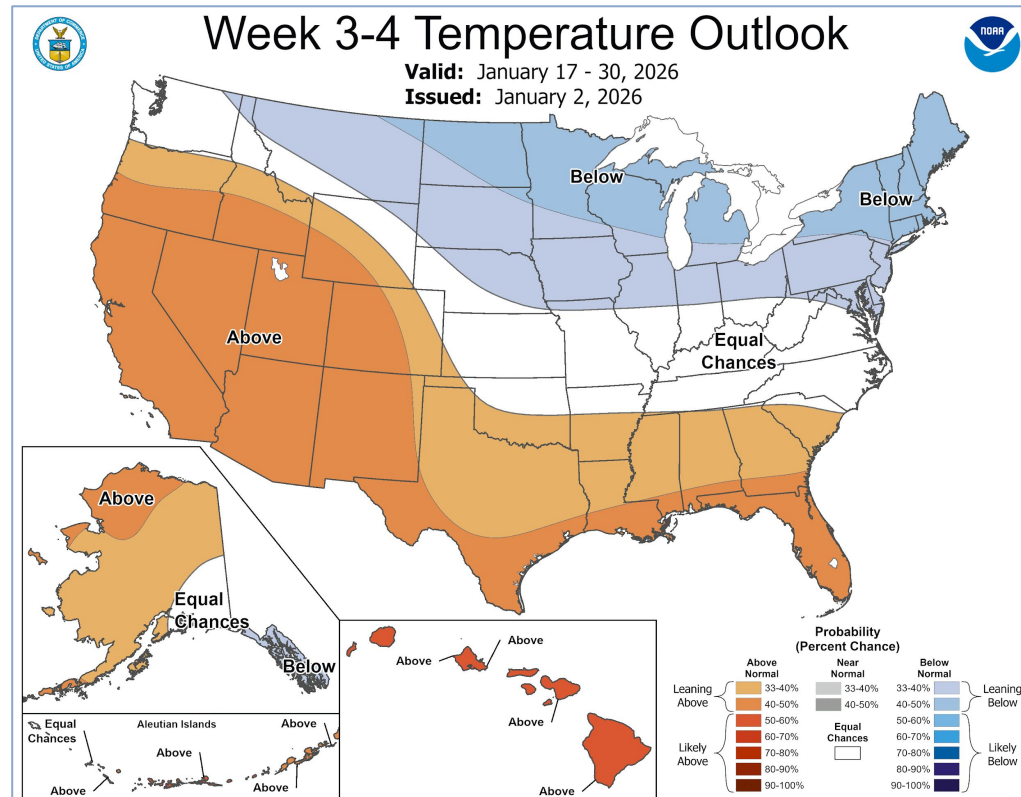


Image Captions:
Left - [Climate Prediction Center Weeks 3-4 Temperature Outlook.](#)
Right - [Climate Prediction Center Weeks 3-4 Precipitation Outlook.](#)
Valid January 17-30, 2026

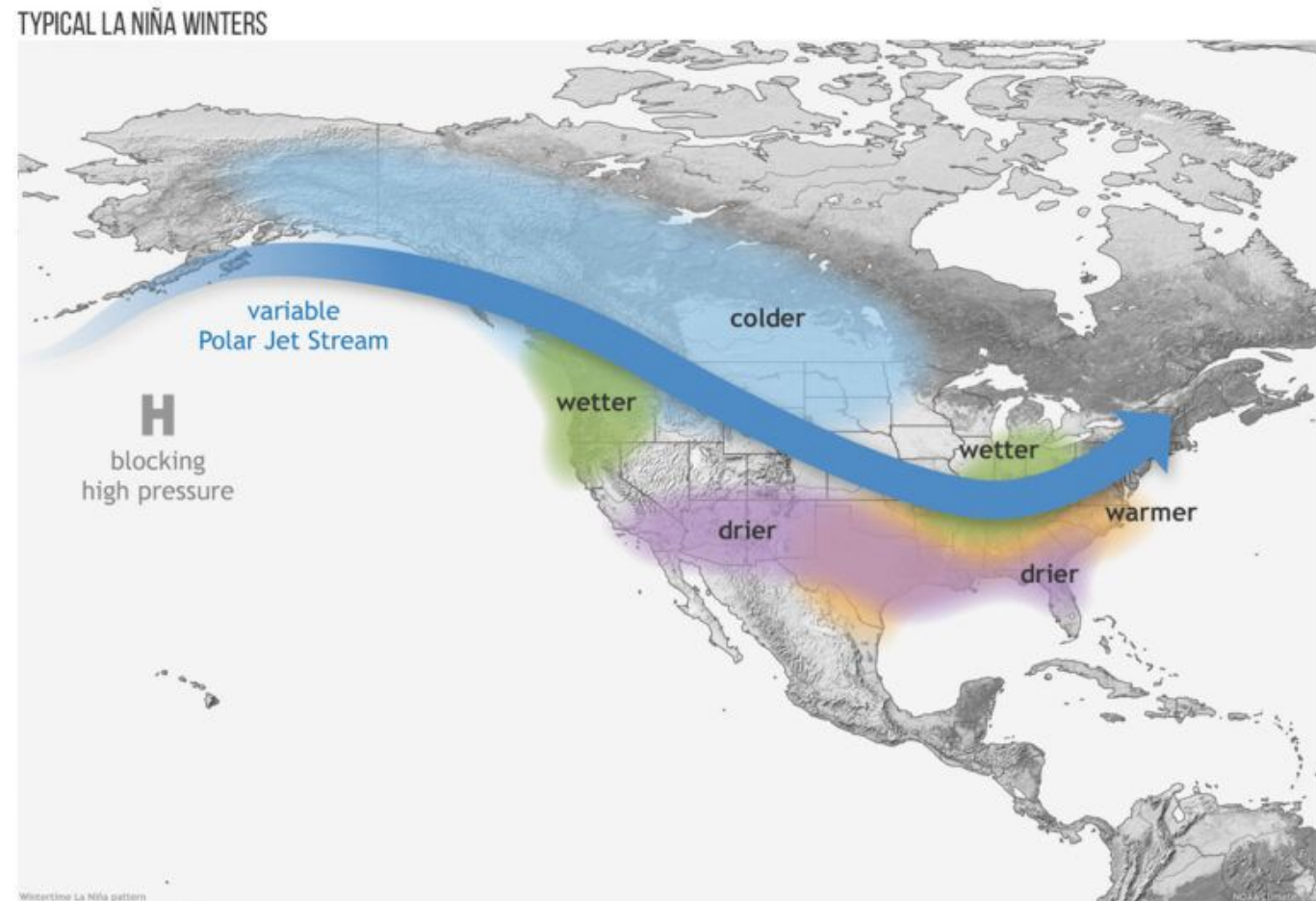


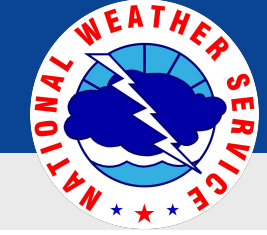


We are currently in a La Niña phase and La Niña is forecast to continue through February 2026, with a transition to ENSO-neutral likely by March 2026 (55% chance).

La Niña Winters Favor drier conditions along the southern tier of the CONUS with warmer conditions favored across the southeast.

Keep in mind these conditions are an average over the seasonal time period, so variations between warm/cold and wet/dry will still occur.





Seasonal (3-Month) Climate Outlook

January 8, 2026
7:27 AM EST

Seasonal Temperature and Precipitation Outlook

Main Takeaways

- There are increased probabilities of above normal temperatures across the southern and eastern U.S.
- Below normal rainfall is favored for January through March

Possible Impact

- While week to week variations in weather will occur, a La Niña winter continues to favor the persistence or worsening of drought if rainfall is below normal across NC.

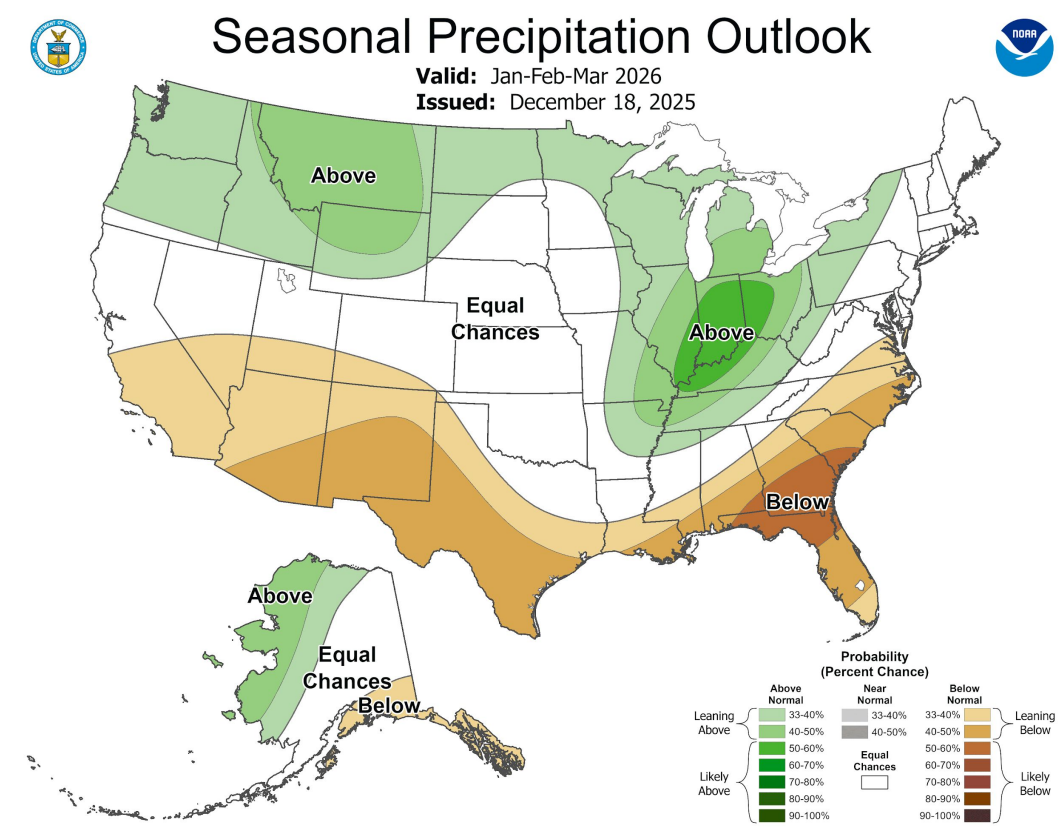
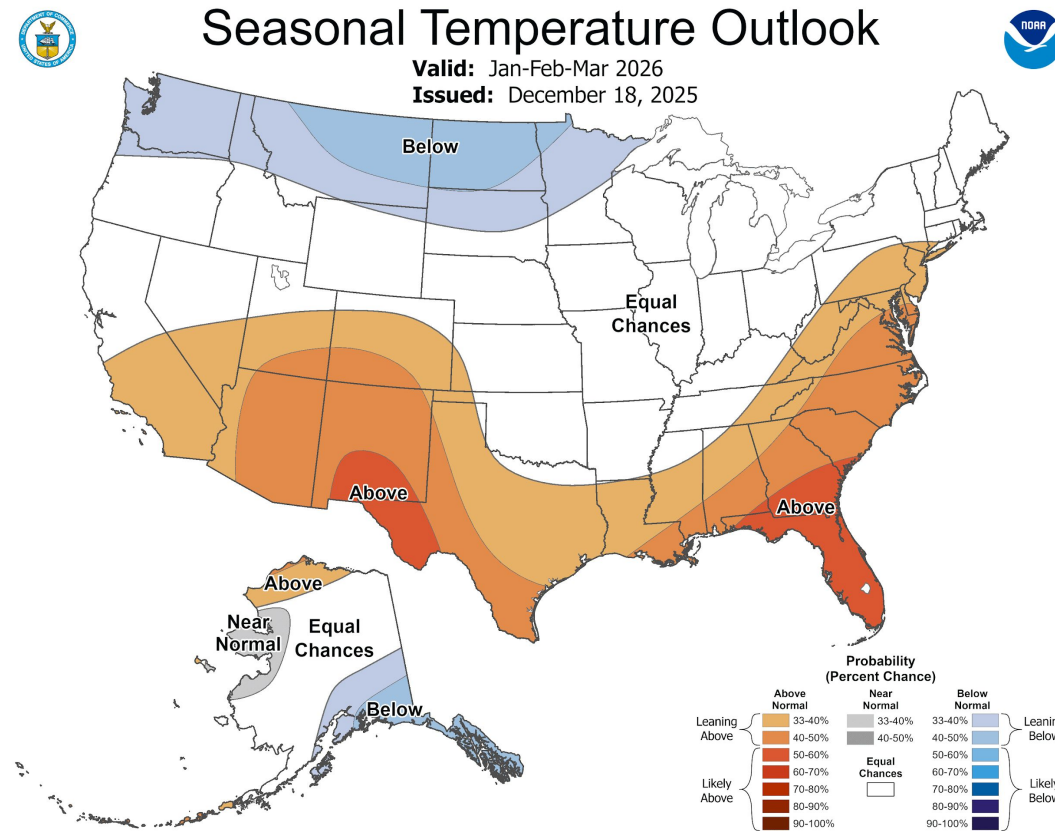
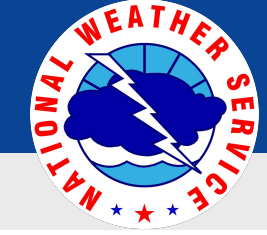


Image Captions:
Left - [Climate Prediction Center Seasonal Temperature Outlook](#).
Right - [Climate Prediction Center Seasonal Precipitation Outlook](#).
Valid January to March, 2026.



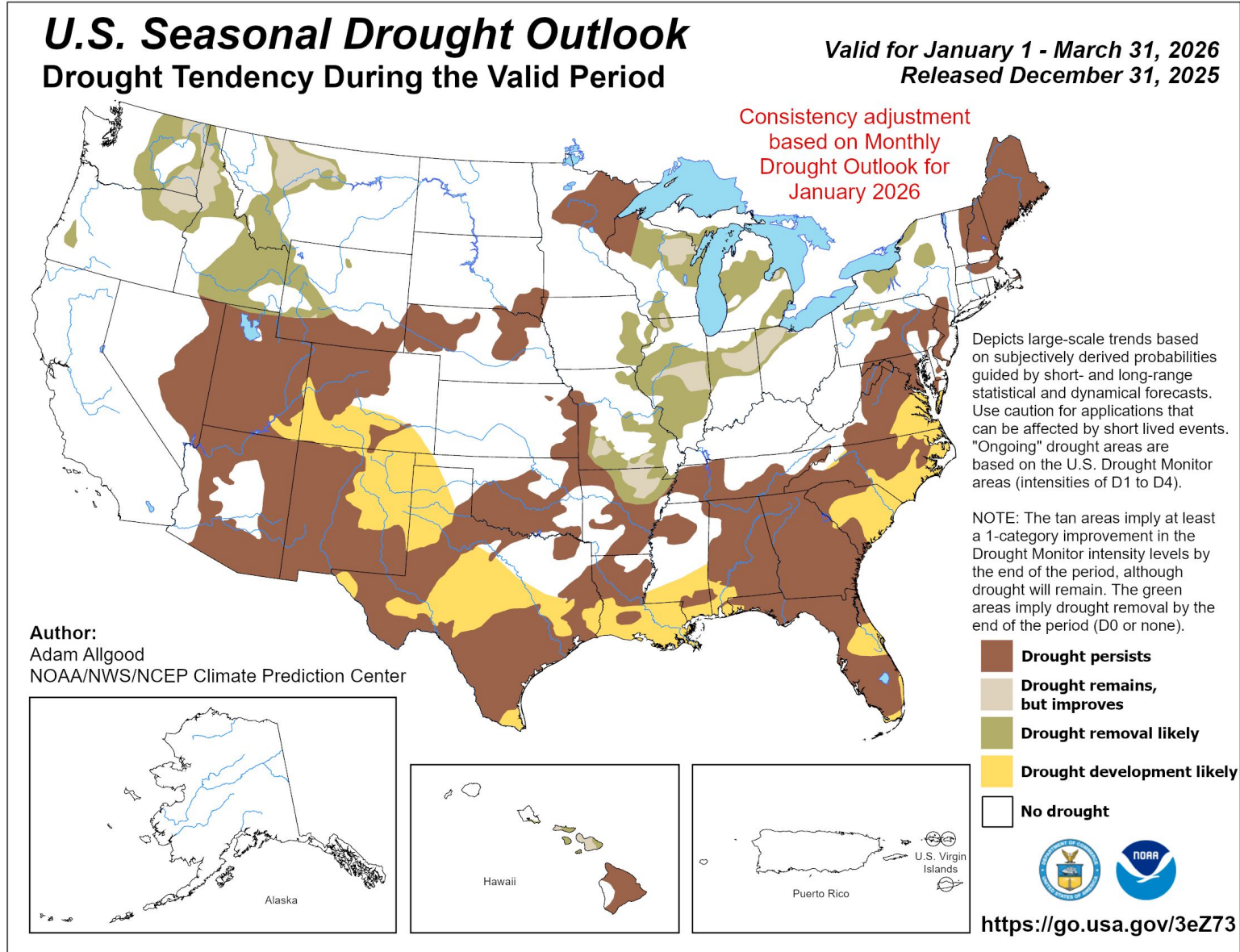


Drought Outlook

January 8, 2026
7:27 AM EST

The latest monthly and seasonal outlooks can be found on the [CPC homepage](#)

- Drought is expected to persist across portions of eastern NC through the winter and possibly continue to expand across the Coastal Plain.



Links to the latest:

[Climate Prediction Center Monthly Drought Outlook](#)

[Climate Prediction Center Seasonal Drought Outlook](#)



National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
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National Weather Service
Raleigh, NC