Monthly Climate Report

NWS Reno NV

Issued: 1/08/2026

Weather Synopsis & Highlights:

Temperatures in December were well above normal areawide, with average temperatures ending anywhere between 3 to 10 degrees above average (Figure 1). Reno set a new record for the warmest monthly average temperature for December at 43 degrees. Meanwhile, precipitation for most of the region was above normal, especially across Mono County and western NV from Mineral-Lyon County northward across the southern half of Washoe County, eastern Lassen County, and the Surprise Valley where totals were 100-300% above December averages. But, precipitation was below average for the month in the inner basin and range with precipitation between 50-90 percent of average (Figure 2).

December was a tale of two halves, with a persistent ridging pattern keeping the region dry for the first half of the month. Temperatures for most days through mid-month were well above average, with highs generally in the 50s to lower 60s for western NV and northeast CA valleys. Valley inversions led to areas of urban haze in far western NV for several mornings, and persistent fog/low stratus over around the Tahoe basin especially from the 11th through 15th (Photos 1 and 2).

For the 2nd half of December, a much more active weather pattern returned with a series of storms reaching the Sierra and western NV. The first storm on the 16th-17th brought strong winds with gusts 45-60 mph in lower elevations, isolated gusts up to 80 mph in wind prone areas and around 100 mph for Sierra ridges. Rainfall amounts ranged between 0.25-0.75” from the Tahoe basin northward across northeast CA-northwest NV, with around 1” reported near the Oregon border and near the Sierra crest west of Lake Tahoe. The remainder of the region was shadowed out from significant rainfall, with spotty amounts up to 0.10” across urban areas of far western NV, and dry conditions persisting from west central NV southward to Mono County. Snow levels remained quite high (above 9000 feet) so no relief from the Sierra snow drought occurred with this storm.

The next storm produced similar conditions on the 19th, with strong wind gusts of 50-60 mph across lower elevations of far western NV, isolated gusts 65-80 mph in wind prone areas and around 100 mph for Sierra ridges. Rainfall amounts ranged between 0.25-0.75” from Alpine and northern Mono County northward across the Tahoe basin and northeast CA, with around 1” reported near the Sierra crest west of Lake Tahoe. The remainder of the region was shadowed out from significant rainfall, with spotty amounts less than 0.10” across urban areas of far western NV, and dry conditions persisting from west central NV southward to southern Mono County. Snow was again sparse, with 1-5” reported above 7000 feet for the northern portion of the Tahoe basin.

The third storm followed on the night of the 20th through the 22nd, producing more significant rainfall across northeast CA and the Tahoe basin, with amounts ranging from 2-6”. Rainfall amounts dropped to 1-2” in foothill locations of far western NV, with varied amounts between 0.10” and 1” for the main urban areas of far western NV. and little to no precipitation from west central NV southward to Mono County. Snow levels dipped as low as

7000 feet at times with up to 6” down to this elevation, with the most significant snowfall totals of 12-20 inches above 8000 feet around the Tahoe basin.This storm also produced strong winds on the 21st, with gusts 50-65 mph across western NV and eastern CA, while wind prone areas from Reno southward to Mono-Mineral counties and Sierra ridge tops received peak gusts between 70-90 mph.

The final round of storms produced the most widespread precipitation and travel impacts, mainly from the night of the 23rd through the 26th. Additional rainfall of 1.5”-3” fell across the main urban areas of far western NV, with liquid totals of 3-6” across the eastern Sierra, Tahoe Basin, northeast CA and foothills west of Reno and Carson City. Lesser amounts between 0.25” and 1” extended into northwest NV and east of the Reno-Carson City region to remaining areas west of US-95, with less than 0.25” near and east of US-95 in west central NV. Snowfall in the Sierra from this multi-day event was generally 3-6 feet in areas above 7000 feet, with 1-2 feet down to lake level in the Tahoe Basin (Photo 4) and along US-395 above 6000 feet in Mono County (Photo 3). Northeast CA received between 1-6” of snowfall, with 8-18” west of US-395 near and above 5000 feet in Lassen and Plumas counties. For western NV, snowfall was limited to 1” or less below 5000 feet, with 1-5” in foothill locations between 5000-6000 feet, and up to 9” above 6000 feet near Virginia City.

The final 5 days of 2025 were dry with valley inversions keeping temperatures in lower elevations near to below average through the 28th, with the coldest lows of the season so far in snow-covered Sierra valleys (lows below zero in coldest sites of Mono County). Some warming returned for the final two days of the year with highs edging upward to near 50 degrees.

Hydrology:

December started out with a whimper as described above in the weather summary. Snowpack was at or near record low conditions for the eastern Sierra by mid-month. Fortunately these conditions changed rapidly in the last 10 days of the month, ending with near normal snowpack in the eastern Sierra (Figure 3). Warm temperatures and above normal water year precipitation have helped keep mountain soil moisture well above normal (Figures 4 and 5). Water year mountain precipitation, as measured by NRCS SNOTEL, is well above normal for the Eastern Sierra, and above to near normal for northern Nevada (Figure 6). The mountain snowpack tells a very different story, climbing to near normal conditions by the end of the month for the eastern Sierra, but remaining well below normal for northern Nevada (Figure 7).

Streamflows ramped up in NE California and the eastern Sierra with significant rain on wet soils before the rain/snow elevations dropped late Christmas eve. Relatively high flows continued through the end of the month in this area leading to mostly above normal monthly streamflows with the notable exception of the Humboldt and NE Nevada (Figure 8).

Minor flooding was reported early on December 22nd along Robbers Creek near Westwood where flooding impacted several outbuildings and was likely exacerbated by debris build up (Photo 6). Minor flooding also occurred along the Susan River near Susanville where the river crested just above minor flood stage just after midnight on the 22nd and again late morning on the 24th (Figure 9). Impacts along the Susan were limited to inundation of the bike path and low lying area in town, agricultural fields and several rural roads near Standish. Please report any additional flooding impacts that we may have missed.

Water year observed streamflow is above normal for most major rivers and streams in NE California and far western Nevada, but below normal for the Humboldt and most of NE Nevada. Preliminary April-July runoff

forecasts are near normal for NE California and far western Nevada, and well below normal for the Humboldt and NE Nevada (Figure 10). Keep in mind these seasonal water supply forecasts will continue to gain in skill through the snow accumulation season and may change dramatically. Major reservoirs are generally near or above normal storage for this time of year, with Lake Tahoe and the Walker Basin well above normal storage (Figure 11).

Drought Update:

Water year precipitation has helped further shrink the portion of the NWS Reno service area highlighted as abnormally dry by the US Drought monitor (Figure 12). Now only the Surprise Valley, the eastern portions of Pershing, Churchill and Mineral counties are designated as abnormally dry, with the remainder of the service area (~73%) drought free. One main reason to consider abnormally dry conditions in these aforementioned areas is due to the lack of snow (Snow Water Equivalent) this winter. With the exception of the Truckee, Walker, Carson, and Mono basins, other basins in the HSA are at 30-50% SWE. As for the current water year, temperatures have been well above average (Figure 13) throughout the region, contributing to a slow start to the snow season. However, precipitation has been well above average across the entire HSA (Figure 14), leading to little drought concerns at the end of December..

Additional Information on Drought and Climate:

Report Drought conditions here
Nevada statewide Drought update
NV State Climate Office
NV Living with Drought
Drought Monitor
New Drought.gov
California Nevada Drought Early Warning System
NOAA CPC Drought page
CNAP Drought tracker
California Nevada River Forecast Center
WRCC Drought Tracker
WRCC Enso page
WRCC Monthly Climate Summaries
Evaporative Demand Drought Index
US Seasonal Drought Outlook

Contact NWS Reno Climate Team
rev.climate@noaa.gov 775-673-8100
https://www.weather.gov/rev/

Photos:

Photo 1: Western NV experienced over a week of stagnant air due to strong high pressure aloft and limited mixing. Photo courtesy of University of Nevada, Reno, Nevada Seismological Lab, and the BLM.

Photo 2: Lake Tahoe and surrounding areas experienced several days of persistent fog and low stratus between the 11th and 15th. This kept temperatures some 20 degrees cooler compared to surrounding mountains. Photo courtesy of University of Nevada, Reno, Nevada Seismological Lab.

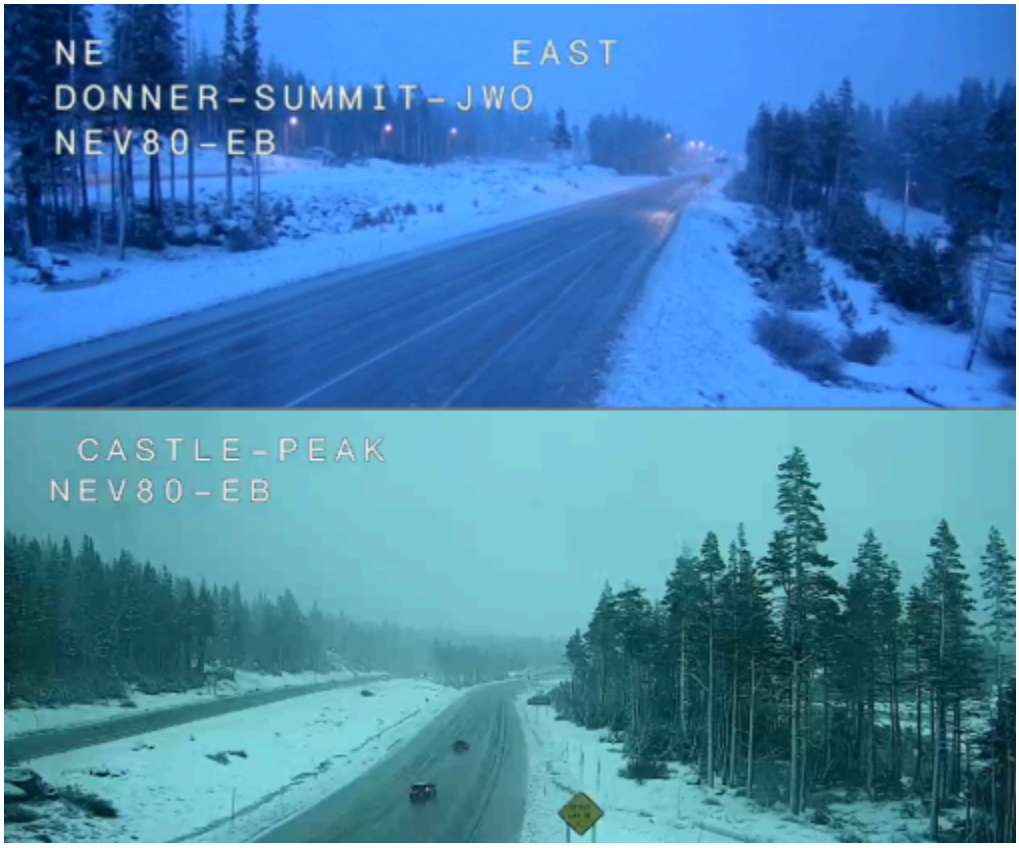


Photo 3: Snowfall moved into the area just in time for Christmas, leading to several days of new snow throughout the eastern Sierra. Photo courtesy of Caltrans.

Photo 4: Where's my car? 2' of new snow by early 12/26 near Lake Davis CA. Photo courtesy of Tim Bardsley

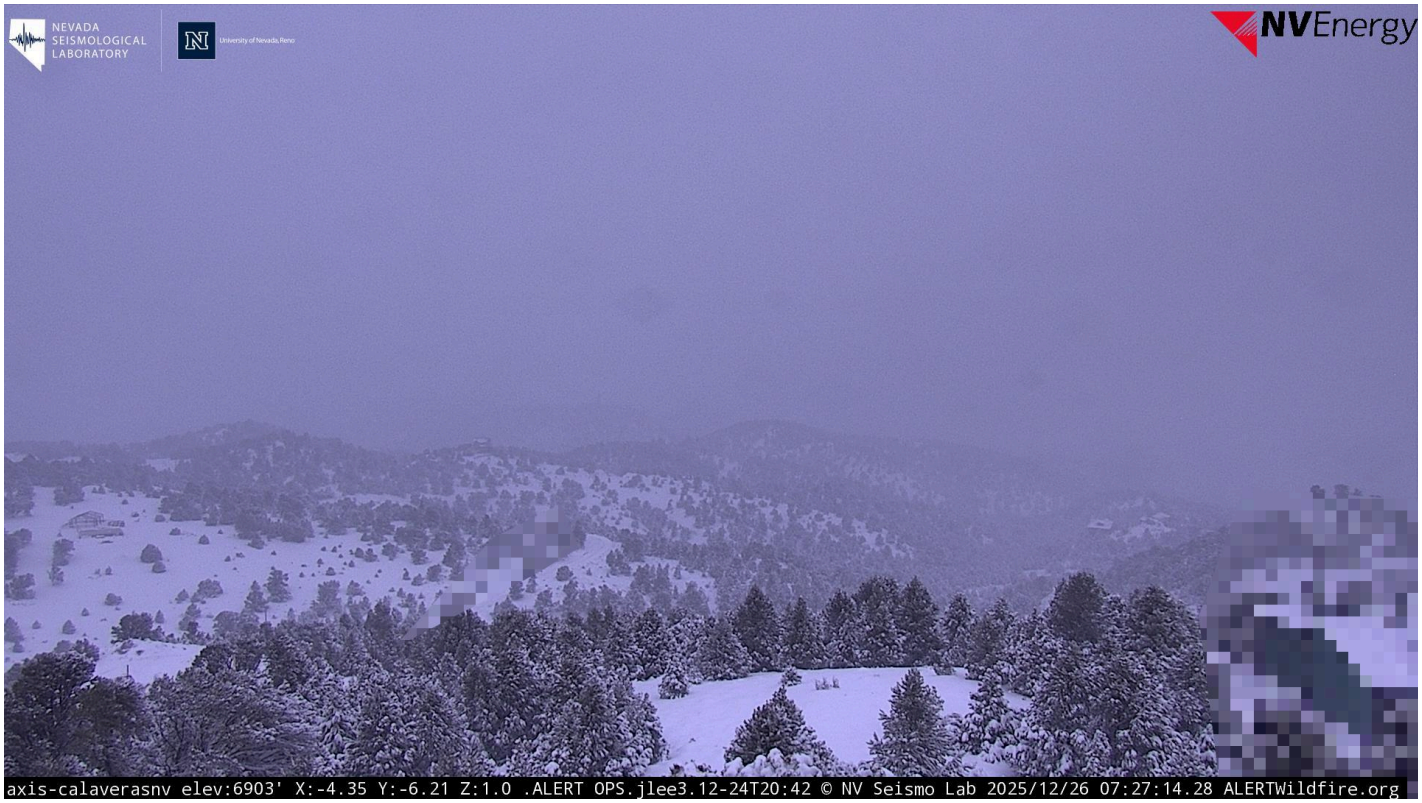


Photo 5: The Virginia foothills received 6 to 12 inches of snow during the 3 day Christmas storm. Light flurries were recorded in Reno. Photo courtesy of University of Nevada, Reno, Nevada Seismological Lab, and NVEnergy.

Photo 6: Robbers Creek in Westwood CA. out of bank flooding December 22nd, photo courtesy of Lassen County.

Figures:

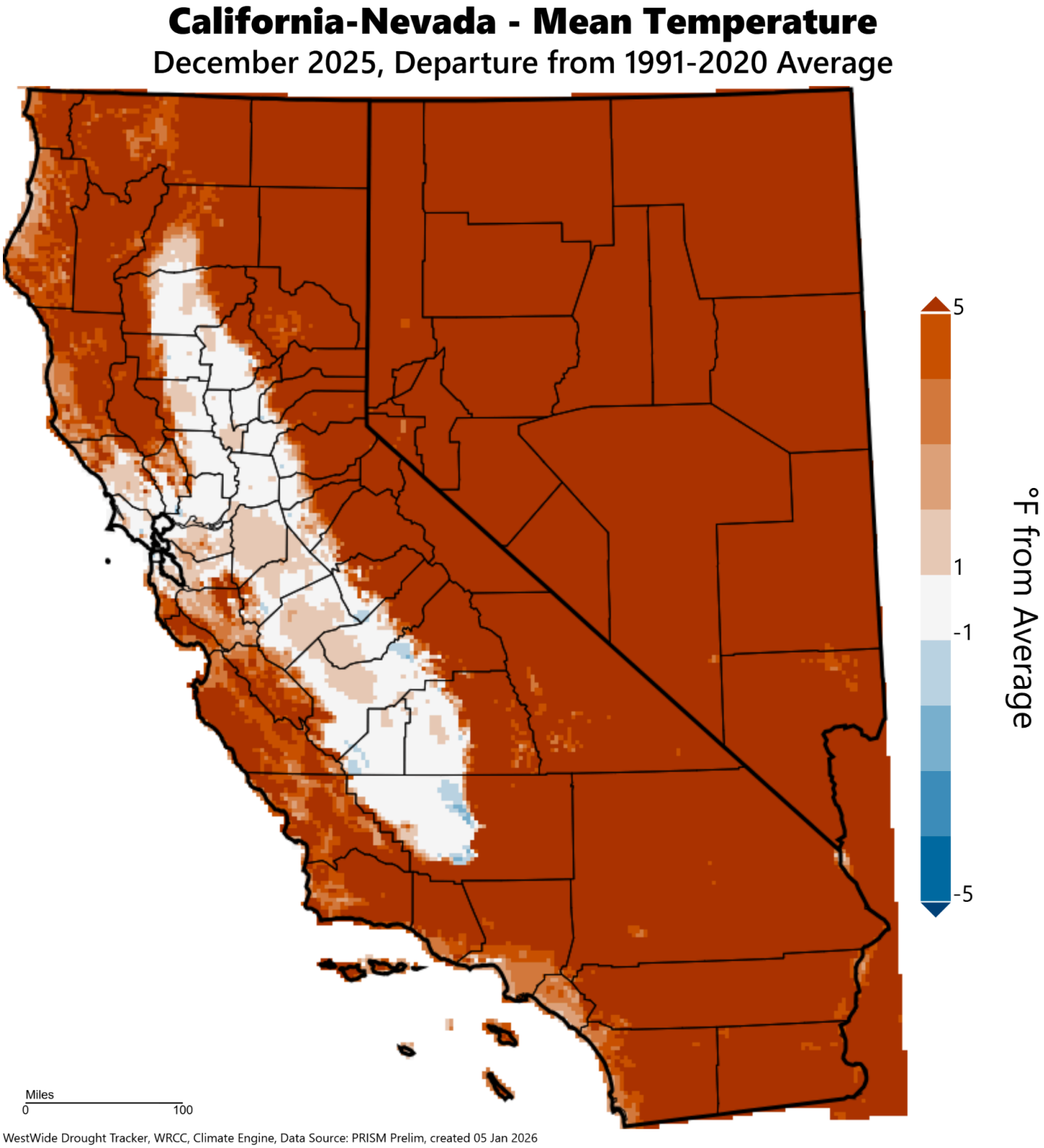


Figure 1: Departure from normal temperatures for December 2025.(WWDT)

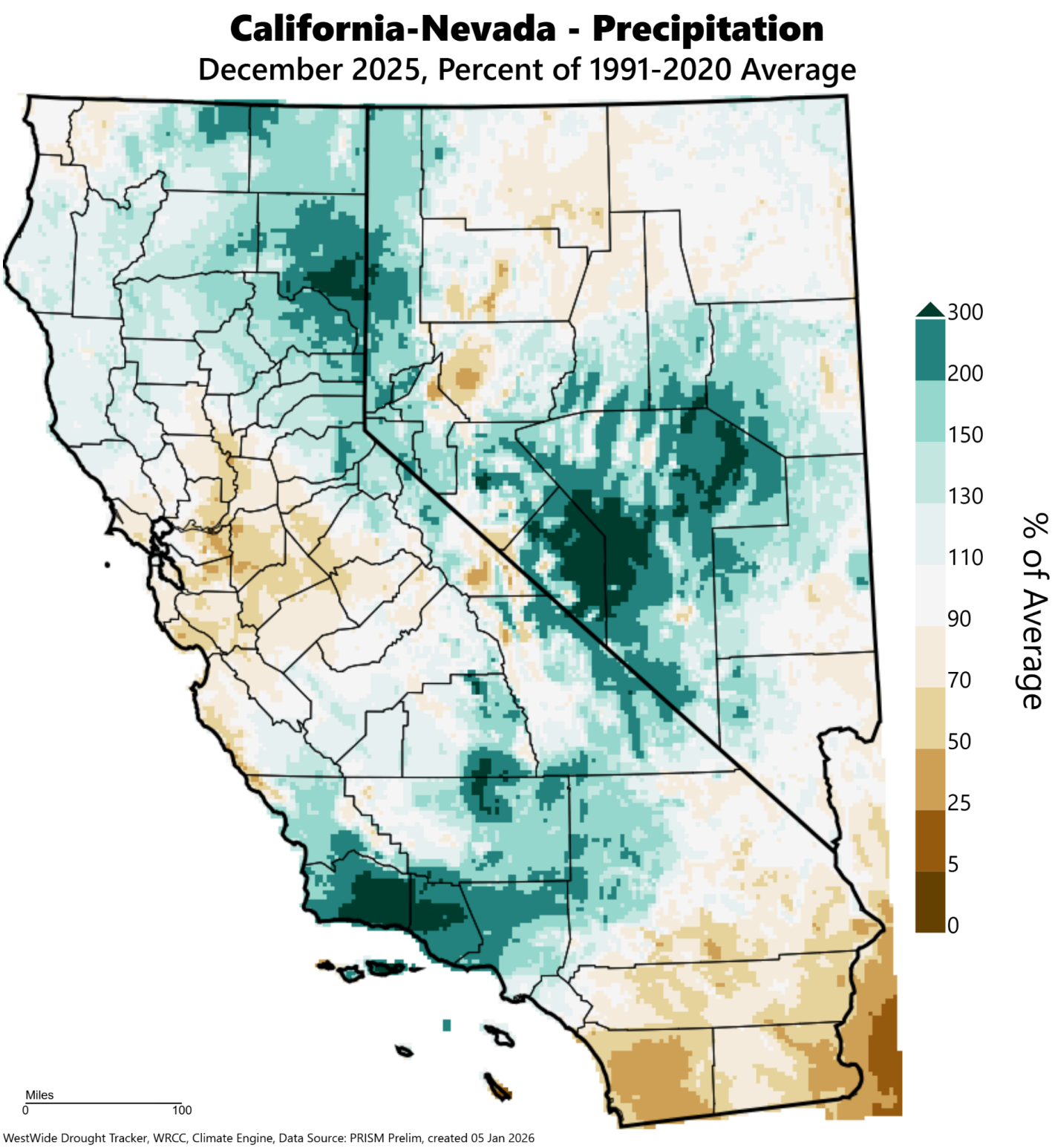


Figure 2: Percent of normal precipitation for November 2025. (WWDT)

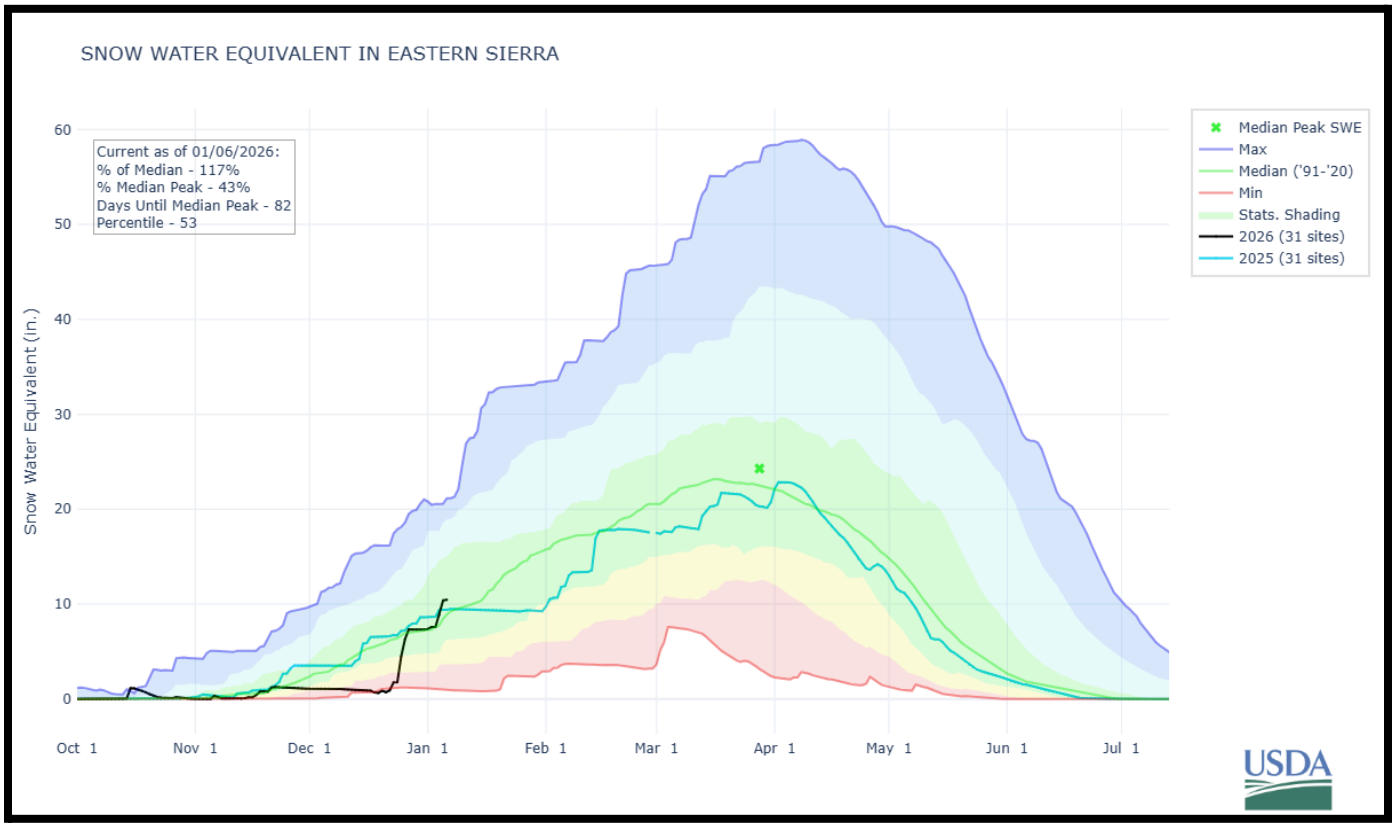
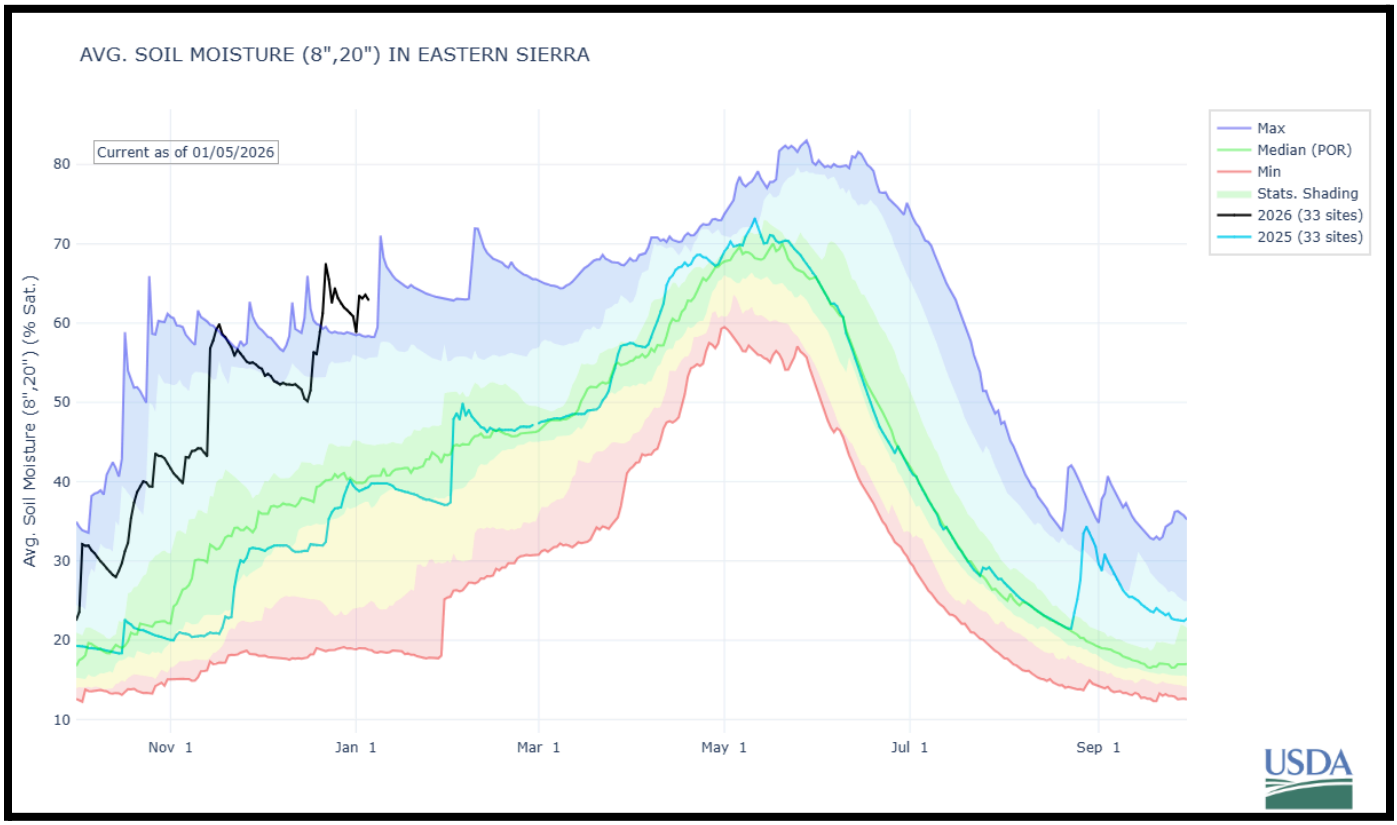


Figure 3. NRCS SNOTEL snow water equivalent (SWE) for the combined Tahoe, Truckee, Carson and Walker basins. This year in black with last year in green and historic ranges shaded. Note until ~ December 21st, this year was near record low for the past ~45 years of record. By early January conditions are slightly above normal.



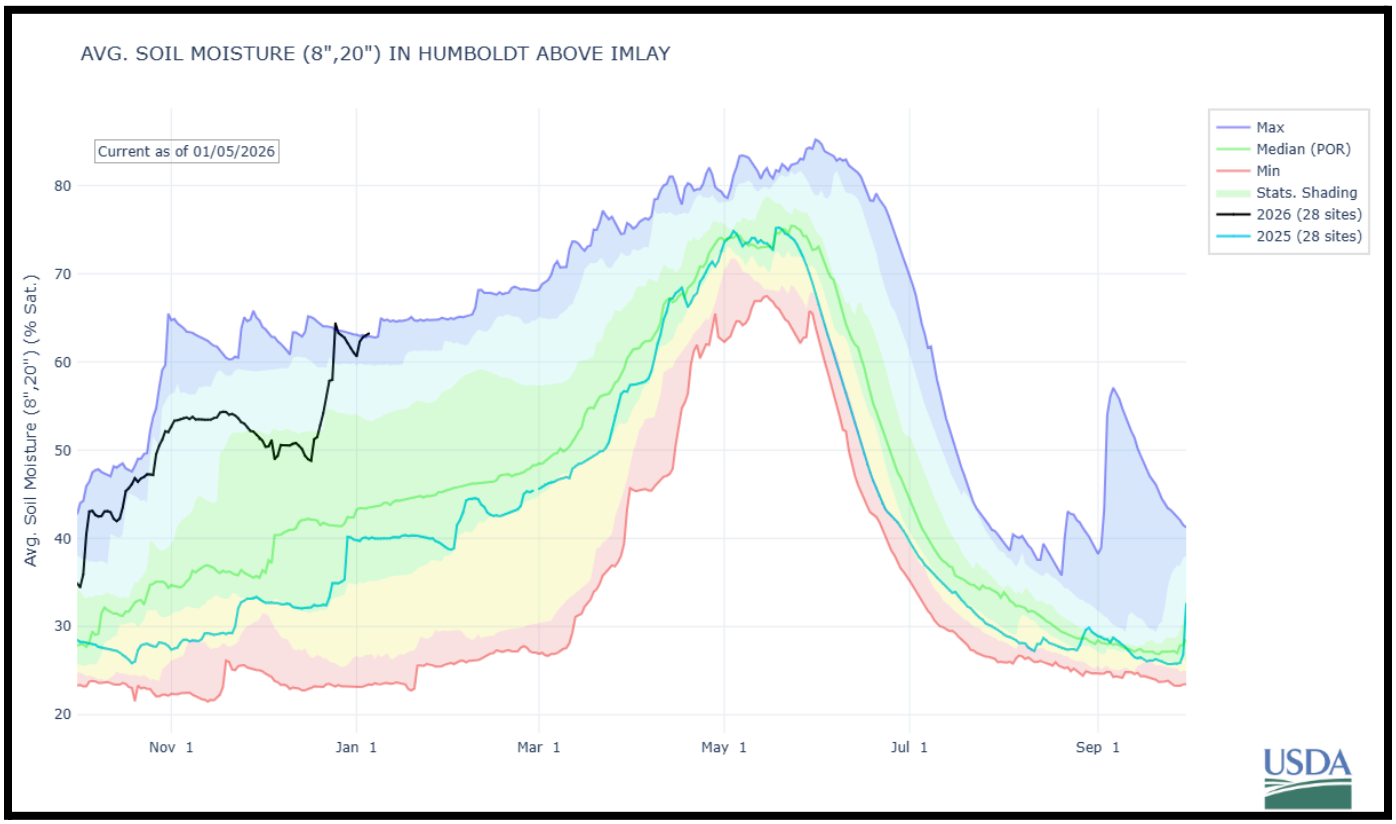


Figure 4.: NRCS SNOTEL soil moisture for the combined Tahoe, Truckee, Carson and Walker basins (top), and Humboldt basin (bottom) indicated in black for the water year 2026. Water year 2025 is plotted in green for additional perspective.

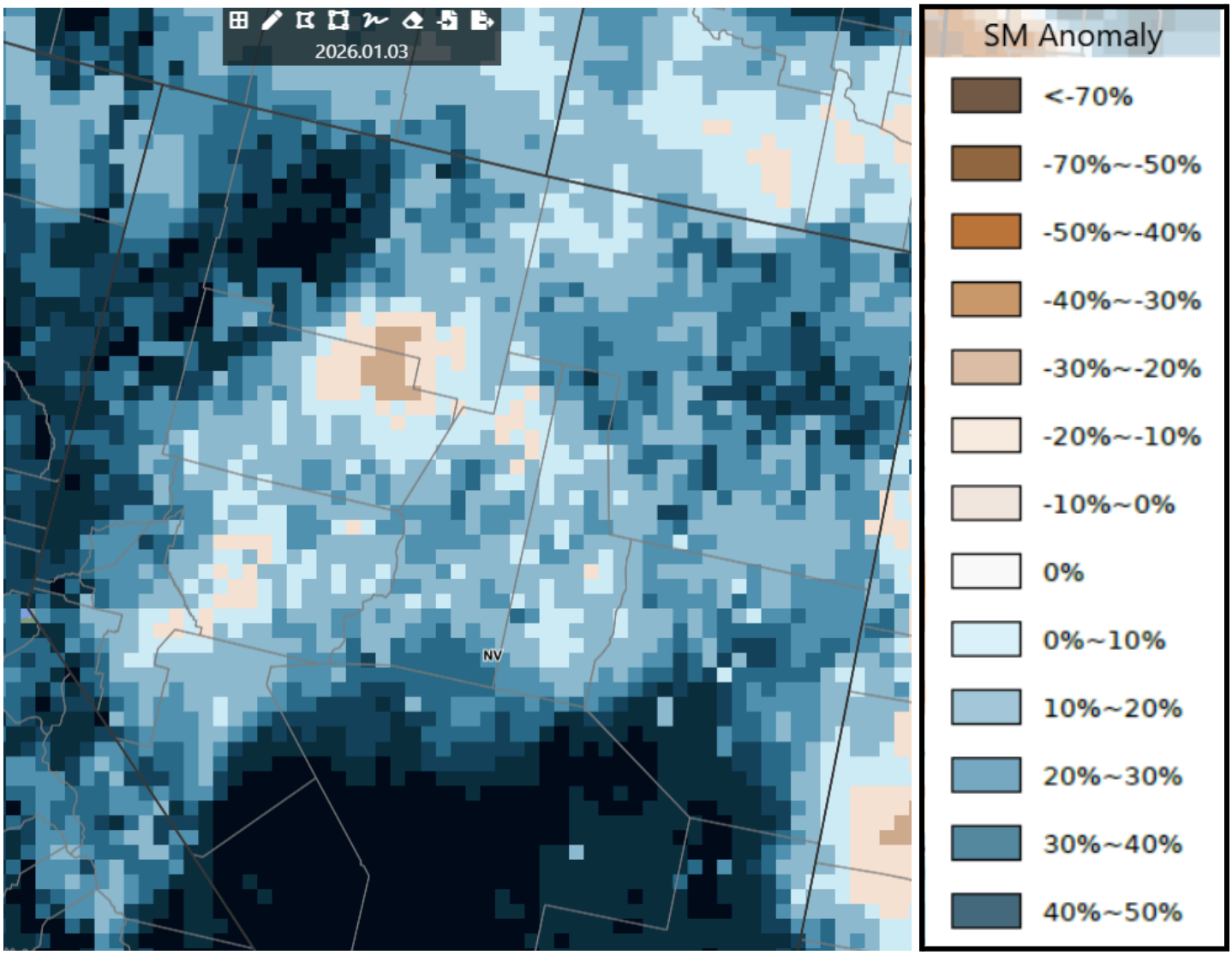


Figure 5. Crop-CASMA Soil Moisture Anomaly 01/03/26

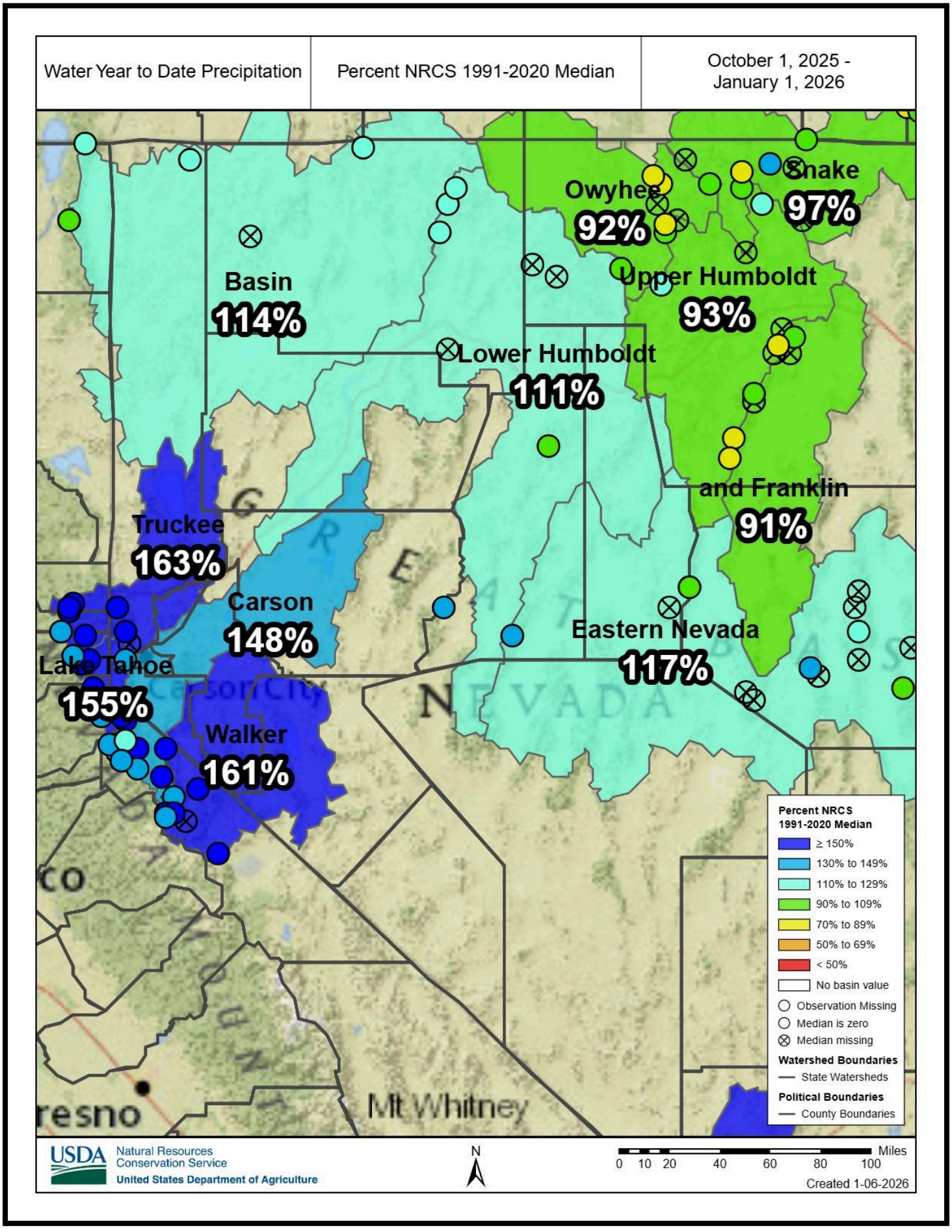


Figure 6. NRCS SNOTEL basin Water year precipitation as % of Median as of January 1st, 2026

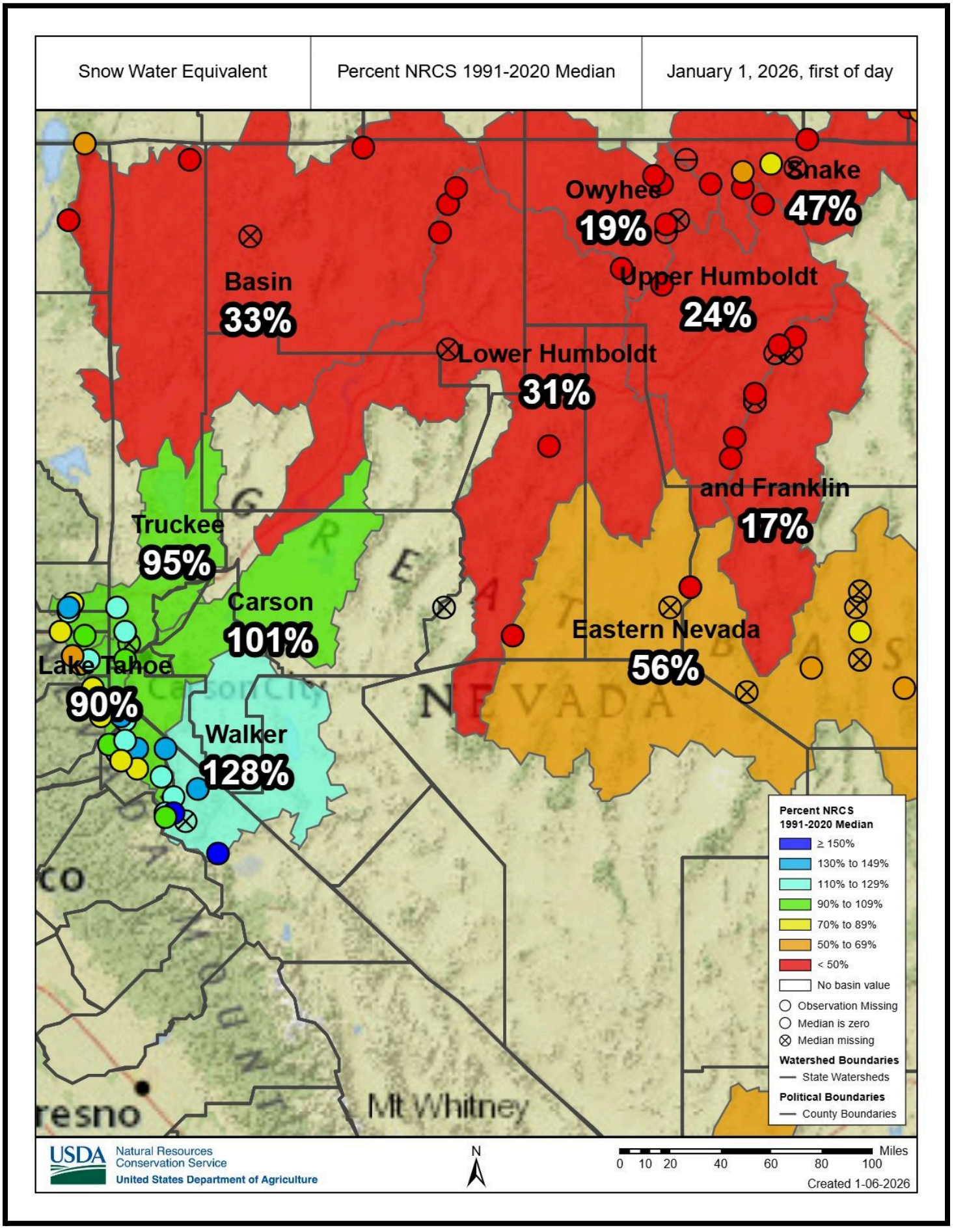


Figure 7. NRCS SNOTEL basin snow water equivalent (SWE) as % of median as of January 1st. 2026

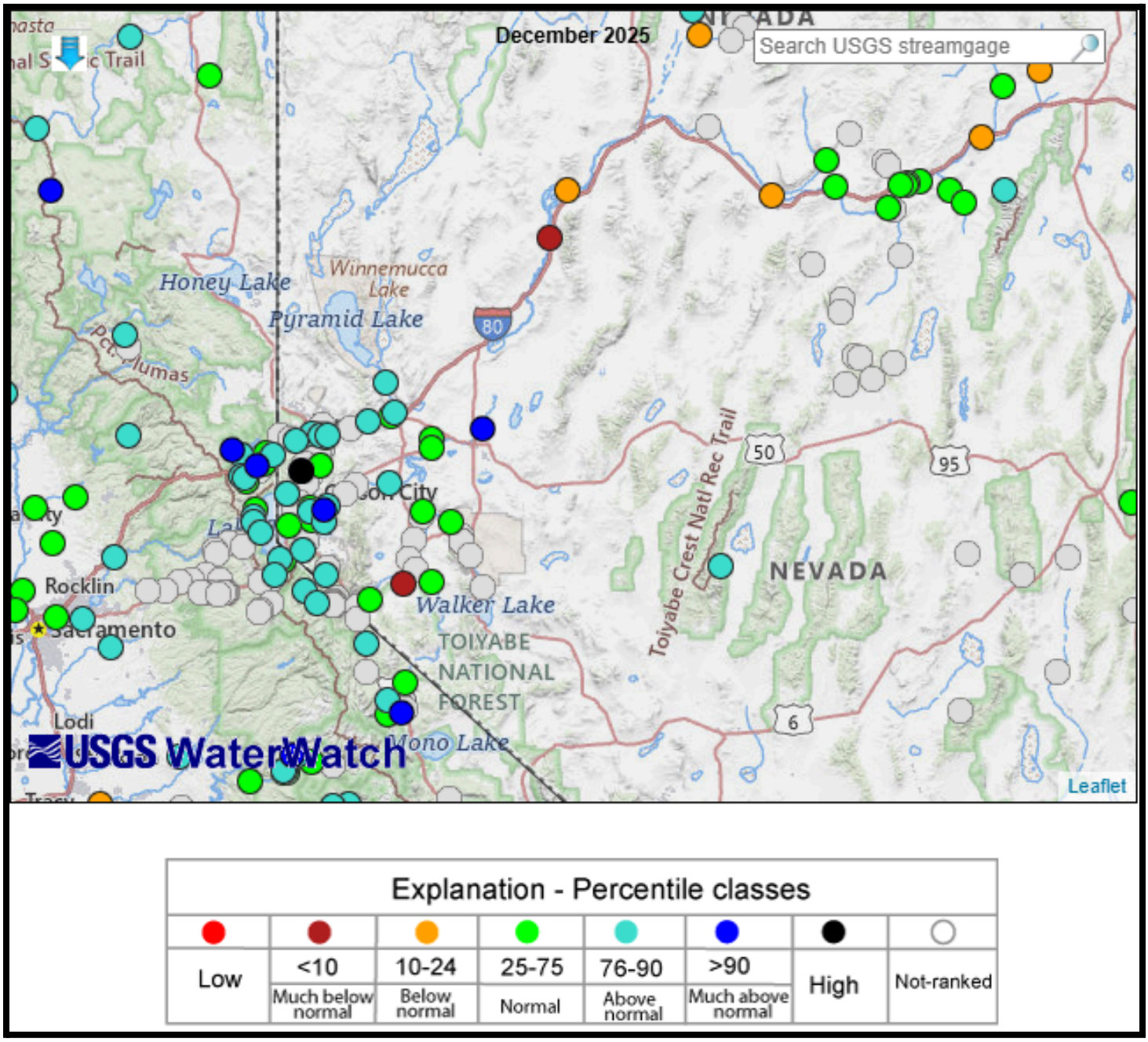


Figure 8: USGS Monthly streamflow for December.

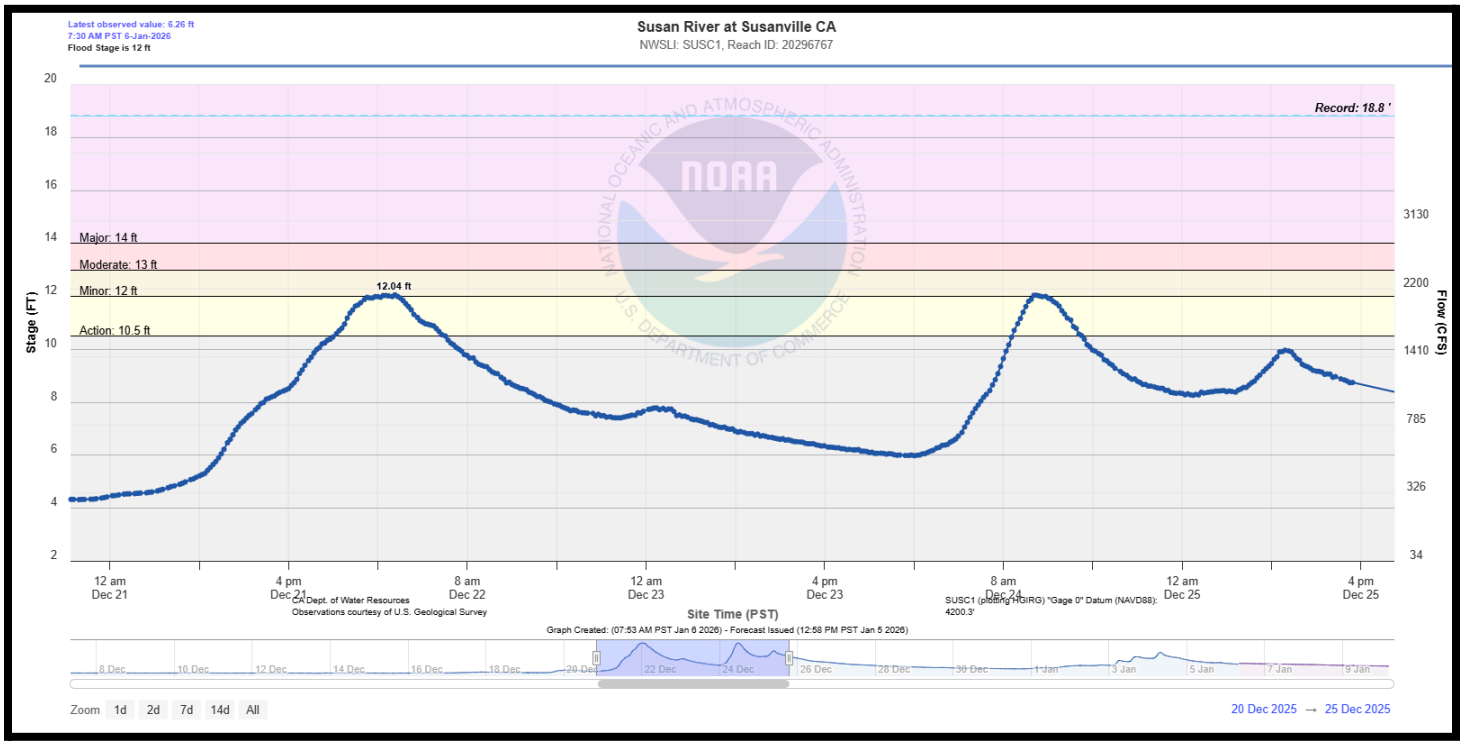
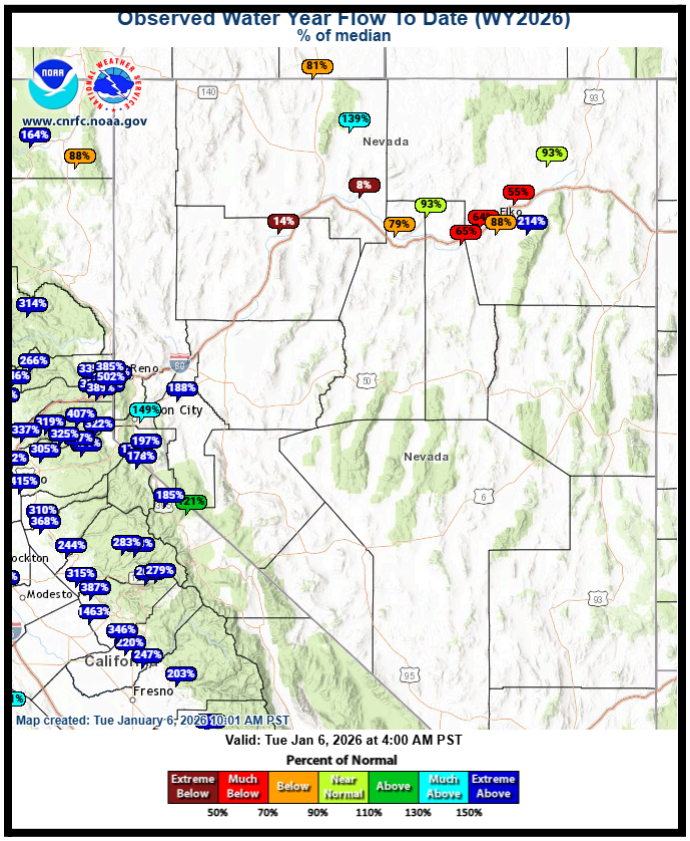


Figure 9. Susan River at Susanville hydrograph for minor flood in late December.



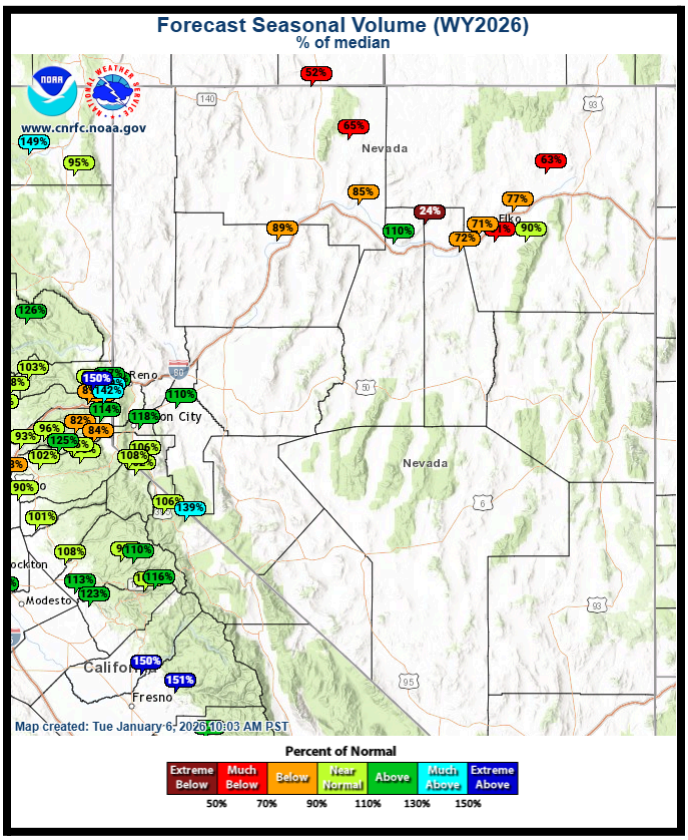


Figure 10. CNRFC Water year 2026 observed flow to date and right figure CNRFC April-July forecast volume both as % of median and as of January 6th.

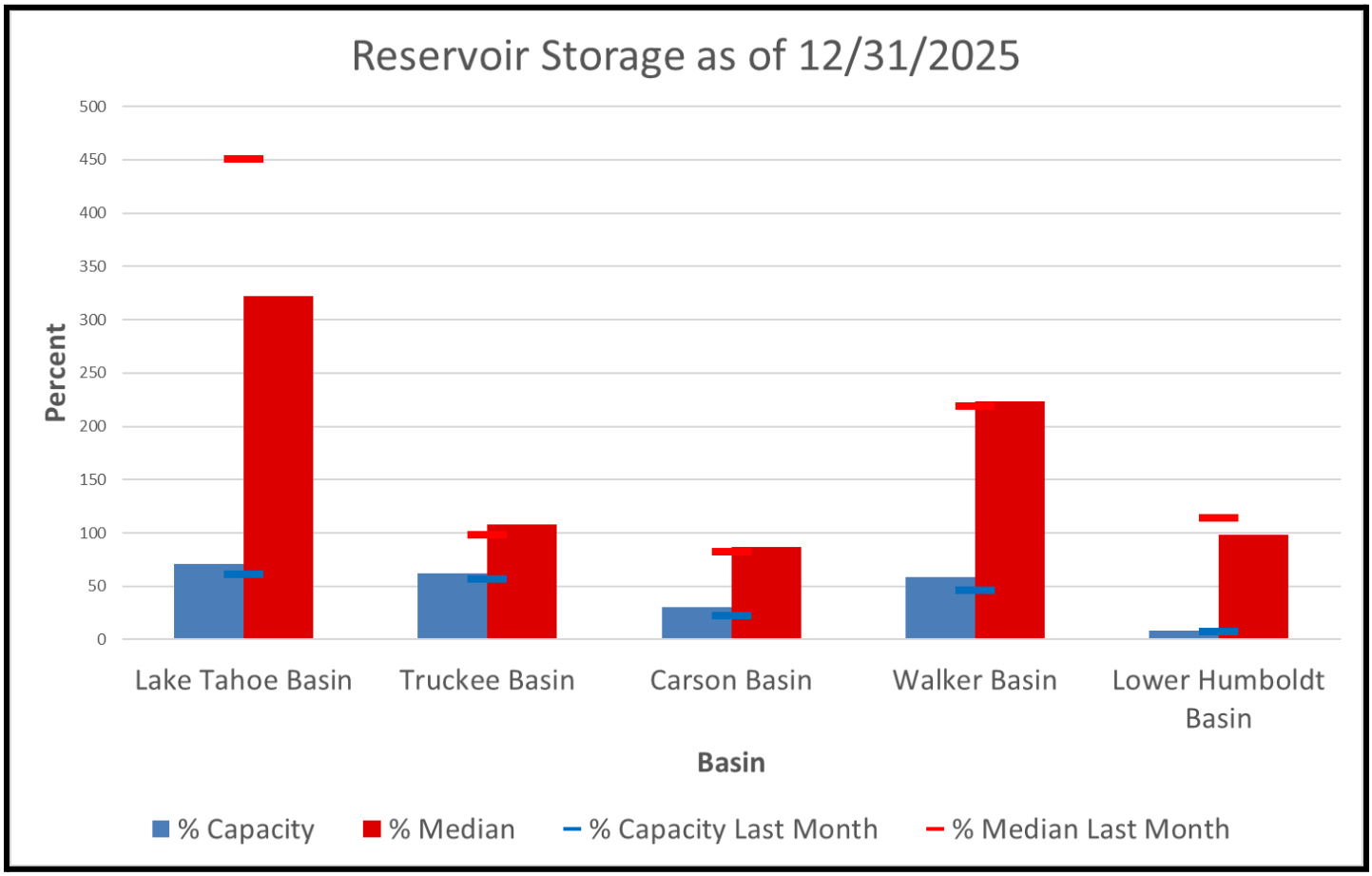
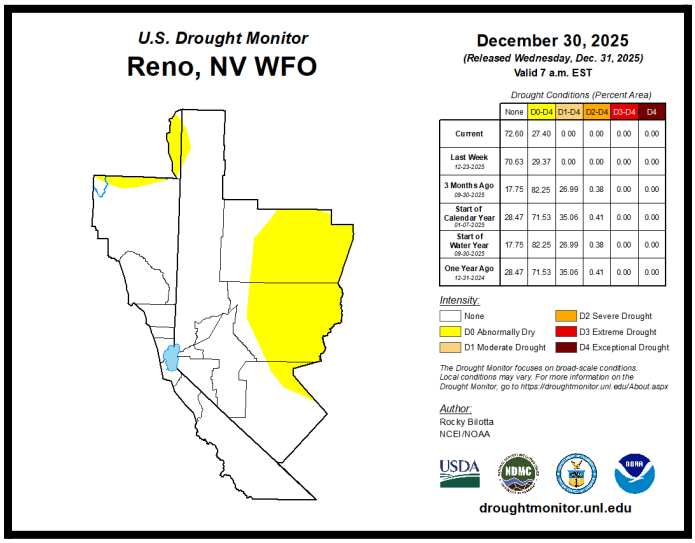


Figure 11. End of December reservoir storage relative to capacity and **median*** for this month and last month.



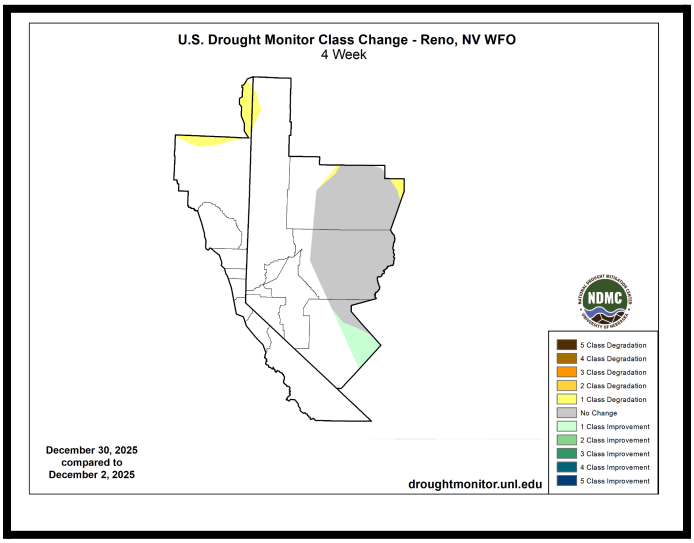


Figure 12: December 2nd Drought Monitor Status and water year change map. Check for updates at: Drought Monitor.

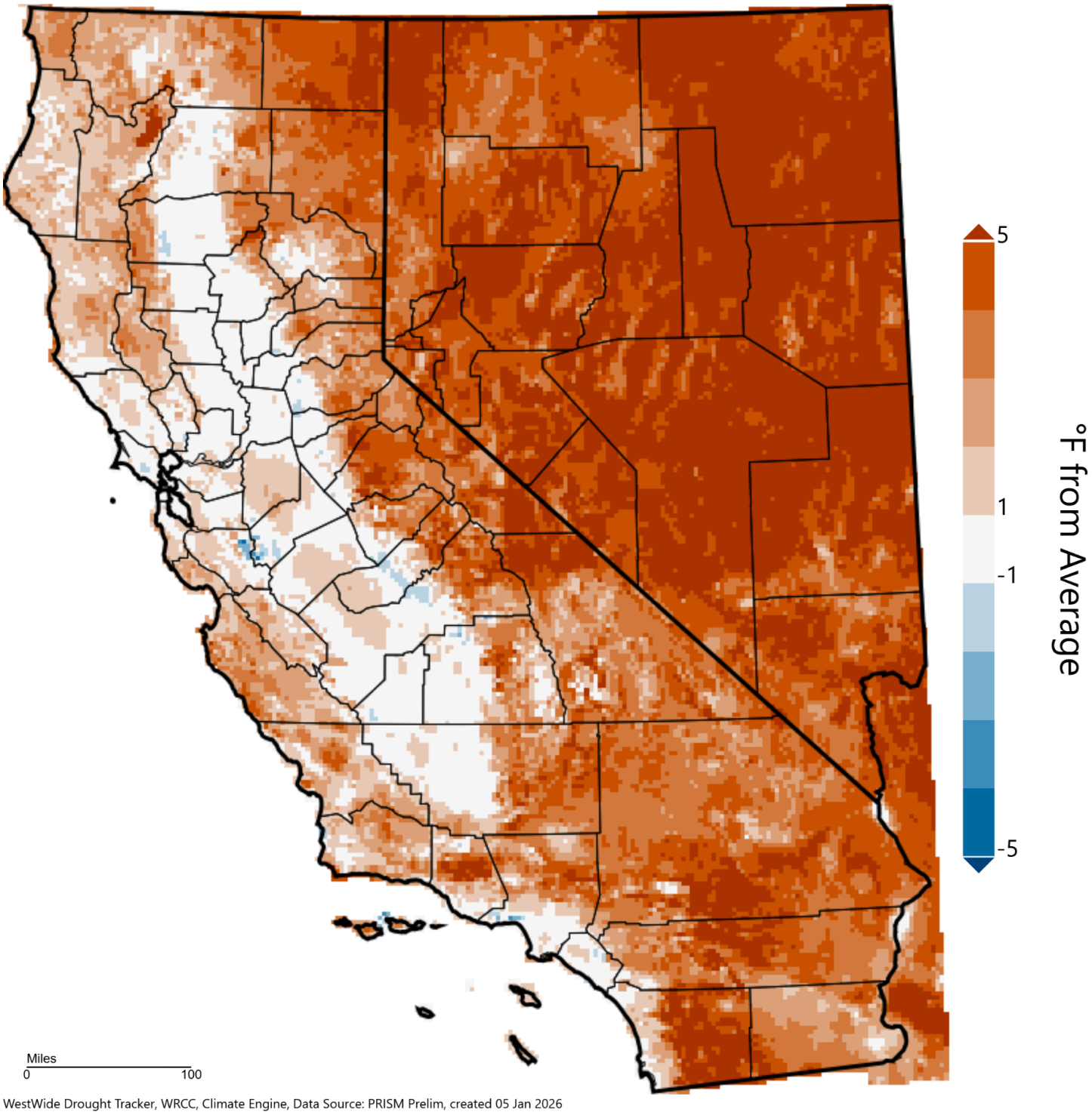


Figure 13. Water year to date mean temperature departure. Courtesy of West Wide Drought Tracker. (WWDT)

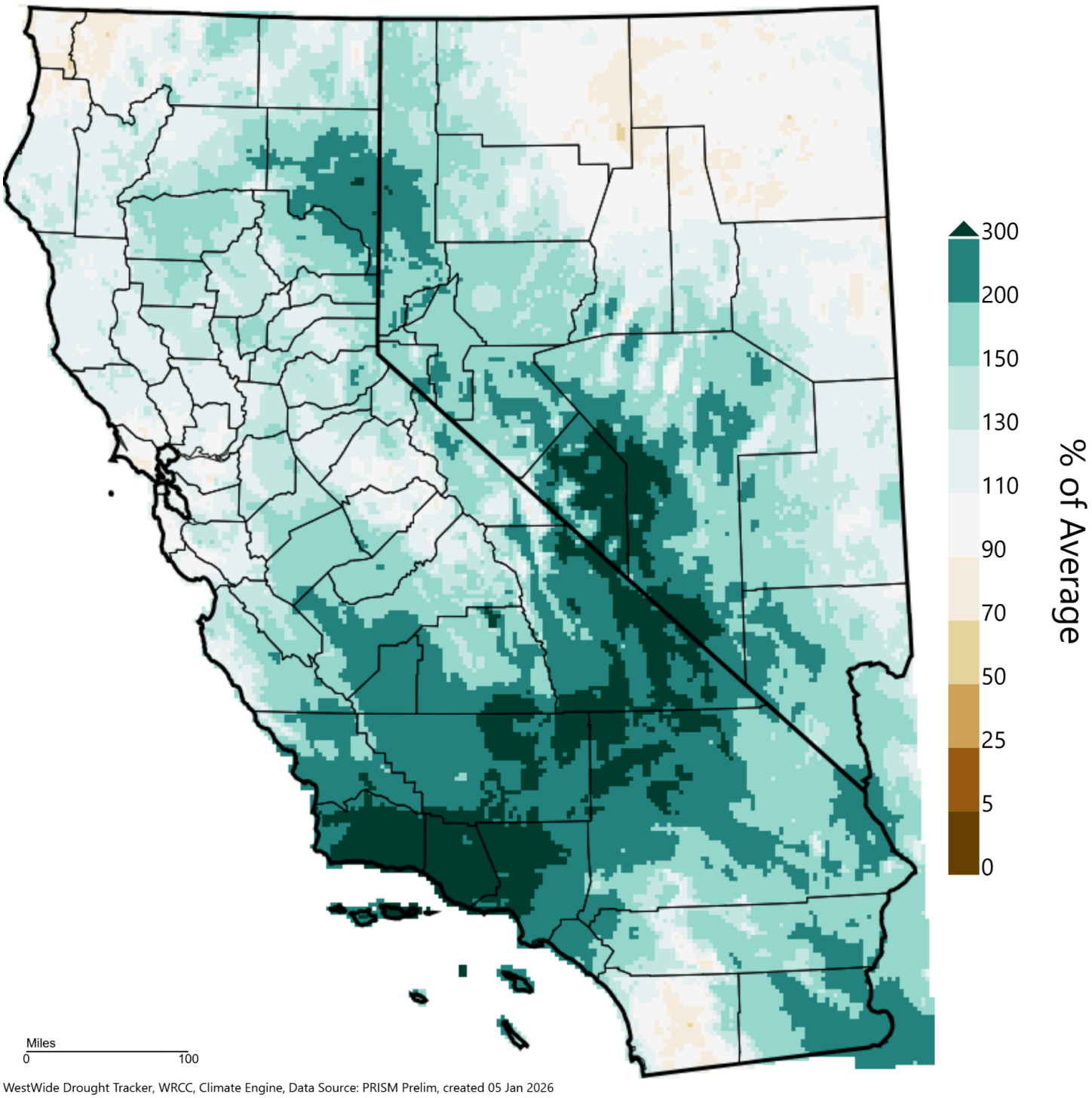


Figure 14: Water year to date precipitation. Courtesy of West Wide Drought Tracker. (WWDT)