Monthly Climate Report

NWS Reno NV

Issued: 4/8/2026

Weather Synopsis & Highlights:

Temperatures in March set historic records for warmth, with all areas 7-10 degrees above average and surpassing the departure range of Figure 1. Reno's average monthly temperature of 55.6 degrees obliterated the previous record warmest March (1934) by 3.2 degrees. Even when compared to April in Reno's climate history, only April 1992 was warmer by 0.2 degrees than March 2026. Precipitation was very scarce in March, with most of the region below 25% of average, and many areas receiving no precipitation all month, except for a few light showers on the first 2 days and final day of the month. The only areas reporting precipitation between 25-50% of average were far eastern Pershing & Churchill counties, northern Washoe County and the Surprise Valley, but average amounts for these areas are also less so it was still quite dry (Figure 2).

March 2026 began with light rain and high elevation snow showers across the eastern Sierra, the Tahoe basin and parts of western NV (Photo 1). A few lightning strikes also occurred in west central NV, far northwest NV near the OR border and just west of the Sierra crest. Rainfall was spotty with most areas receiving less than 0.10", except up to 0.25" for a few sites in the Sierra and west central NV. Wind gusts of 60-65 mph were reported in central and southern Mono County during the afternoon of the 1st.

After a short break in storm activity with near average temperatures on the 2nd and 3rd, a cold front pushed across the region on the 4th, bringing gusty to strong winds across parts of western NV. The peak gust in lower elevations was 66 mph at Lovelock airport, with other sites in far western and west central NV reporting peak gusts of 50-60 mph. Isolated showers with little or no measurable precipitation occurred with this front through the afternoon and evening.

Below average temperatures continued from the 5th through 7th as north to east winds prevailed across the region, with stronger ridge top gusts of 60-90 mph reported along the Sierra crest.

A prolonged warm and dry pattern then set up from the 8th through the 25th. Temperatures climbed above 70 degrees for the first time this year in Reno on the 8th, and as the high pressure strengthened further just past the month's midpoint, record highs of 80+ degrees reached many lower elevation sites including Reno from the 17th through 21st. A new record high for any March day in Reno's climate history was first established when reaching 86 degrees on the 18th, then peaking on the 20th at 88 degrees, surpassing the previous record of 83 degrees from 3/31/1966. Likewise, South Lake Tahoe established a new record high for any March day with 76 degrees on the 18th, surpassing their previous record of 71 degrees from 3/30/2015. Daily record highs were set or tied for 8 straight days in Reno (3/17-3/24) and 9 straight days in South Lake Tahoe (3/17-3/25).

A cold front brought brief cooling on the 26th, ending the streak of record highs. However, one more warmup returned for the final weekend of the month with daily record highs again for the 28th.

The Pacific storm track was finally able to return to the Sierra by the end of the month, bringing cooler temperatures and areas of rain with higher elevation Sierra snow. A few lightning strikes also occurred in west central NV. Liquid precipitation amounts on the 31st were generally between 0.50” and 1.0” from central Plumas County southward to the Tahoe Basin with a few sites receiving up to 1.5”, dropping off to between 0.25-0.50” along the Sierra crest in Alpine and Mono counties. In western NV, bands of lighter rain produced mainly between 0.05-0.30” along the I-80 corridor, with little or no measurable rain elsewhere. Snowfall amounts of 6-12 inches were reported above 7000 feet around the Tahoe basin (Photo 2), with lesser amounts southward along the Sierra crest in Mono County.

Hydrology:

No flooding occurred in March. Rapid early snowmelt initiated by the late February warm rain and wind event continued into March with sunny, dry and record warm conditions as described above. The snowpack, which was already well below normal entering March, saw the greatest March snow water equivalent decrease in the SNOTEL record at many locations (Figure 3). Historically, April 1st (Figure 4) has been used as a reference for near peak snow accumulation, but this year’s snowpack peaked in the third week of February with only the high and shady locations still holding snow on April 1st (Photo 3). Water year precipitation to date is near normal and a stark contrast to the meager snowpack (Figure 5). By April 1st the Tahoe, Truckee, Carson, and Walker SNOTEL had the least snow water equivalent since 2015 (Figure 6) and the Humboldt basin had already melted out several weeks earlier than the previous record low of 2015 (Figure 7). The Feather basin and Owens Basin have had similarly rapid meltouts (Figures 8 and 9 respectively).

At first glance mountain soil moisture gives a more positive impression, but these readings are reflecting recent early snowmelt and will likely drop below normal as more locations melt out and dry out over the next few weeks (Figure 10). A modest storm at the end of the month and into early April temporarily improved spatially modeled soil moisture especially in northeast CA and northwest NV (Figure 11).

With little snowpack remaining, most streams are well past their snowmelt peaks with only modest increases expected with any spring storms. Water year to date flows are mostly well above normal for streams draining the Sierra (Figure 12 left side) due to early snowmelt and more rain than snow over the winter. Since most of this streamflow occurred before April 1st, the April to July water supply outlook is well below normal throughout the area (Figure 12 right side). On a more positive note, reservoir storage is generally in excellent condition with the notable exception of Rye Patch on the lower Humboldt which is only about 9% of capacity (Figure 13).

Drought Update:

Early snowmelt will lead to a prolonged snow free and low flow season and will make 2026 one for the record books as a warm snow drought. Many ski areas had to shorten their season due to limited snow cover, and high flows will be short lived for river runners in the area. Limited precipitation, heat, and snowmelt led to the US Drought monitor expanding abnormally dry conditions through most of the NWS Reno service area and the addition of moderate drought in eastern Pershing county (Figure 14). The lack of snow is at least partially balanced by favorable precipitation, and in some areas streamflows. The drought monitor is intended to reflect current conditions and not future forecast conditions, but may see significant changes if warm and dry conditions continue through the spring and early summer. The very warm water year temperatures (Figure 15) are at least in part to blame for the limited snowpack. Area wide water year precipitation is displayed in Figure 16.

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:

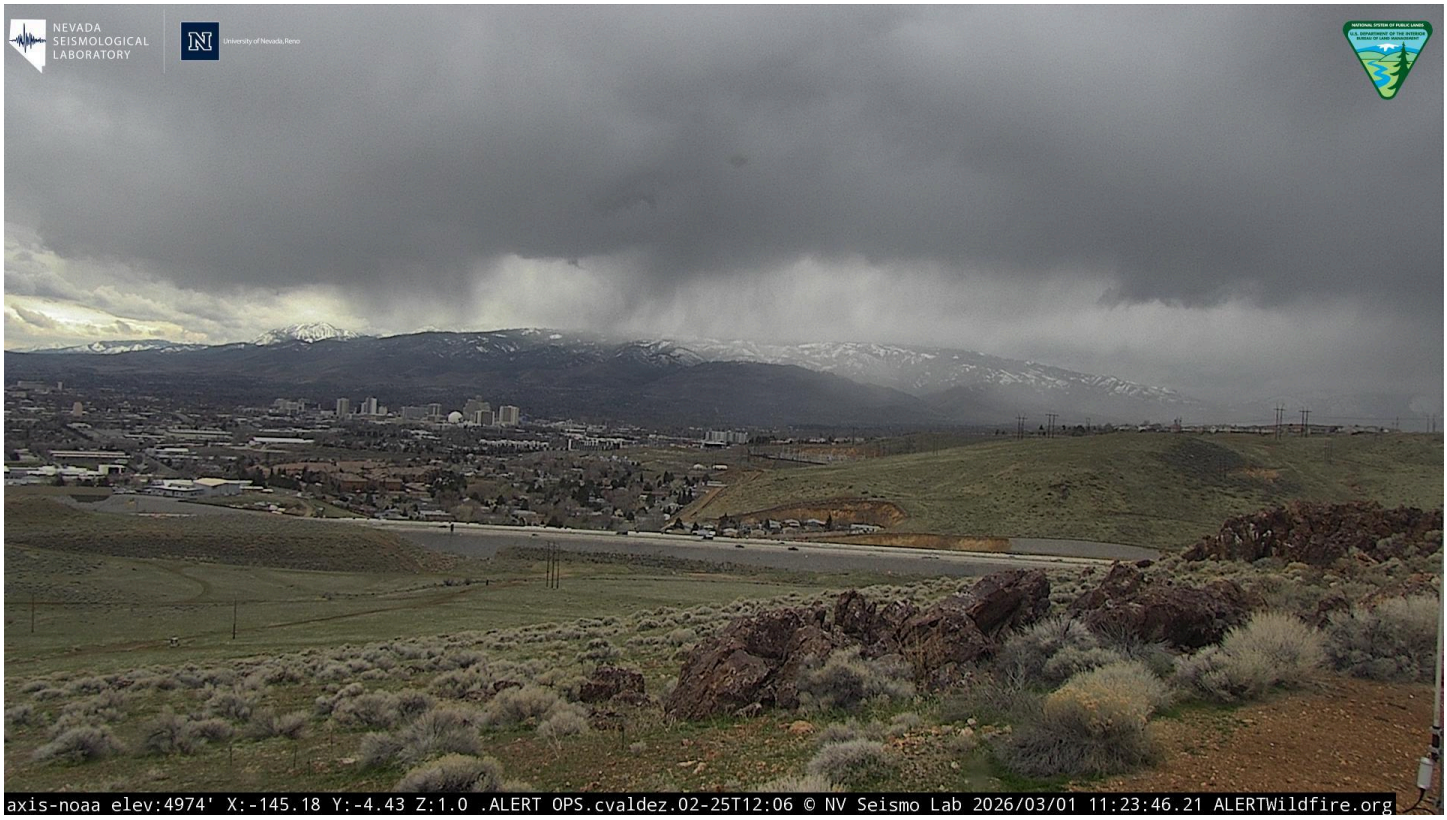


Photo 1: Light showers at the start of March with light accumulations across the region. Photo courtesy of University of Nevada Reno and the Nevada Seismological Laboratory.

Photo 2: 3/31/26, It took until the final day of the month before we saw significant fresh snow in the Sierra, which continued into April 1st (Caltrans web cameras).

Photo 3: 3/10/26, Overlooking Leavitt Lake near Sonora Pass showing mostly bare ground on south-facing slopes, even before the heat event later in the month.. Devon Eckberg, CA Department of Water Resources

Figures:

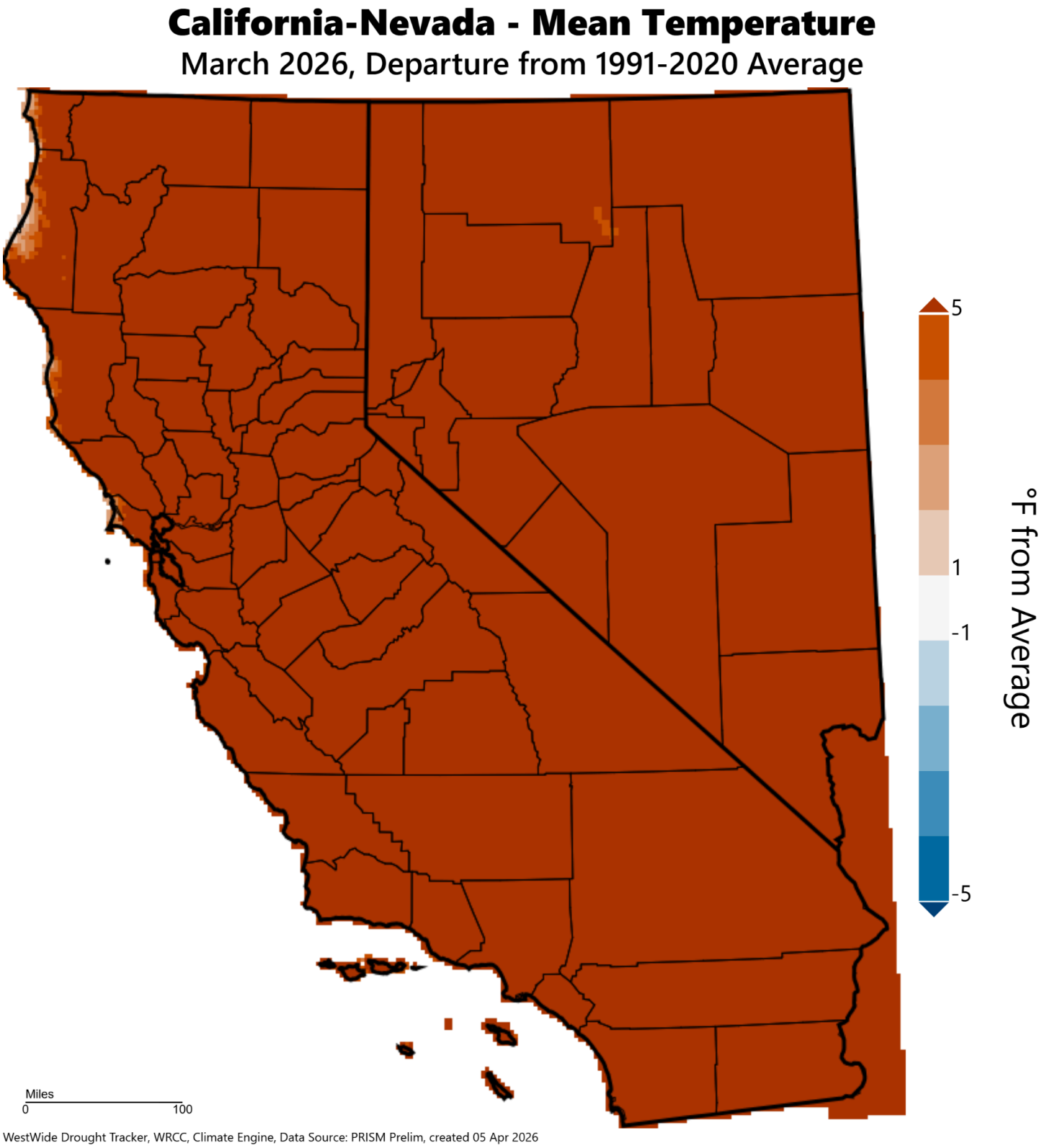


Figure 1: Departure from normal temperatures for March 2026.(WWDT)

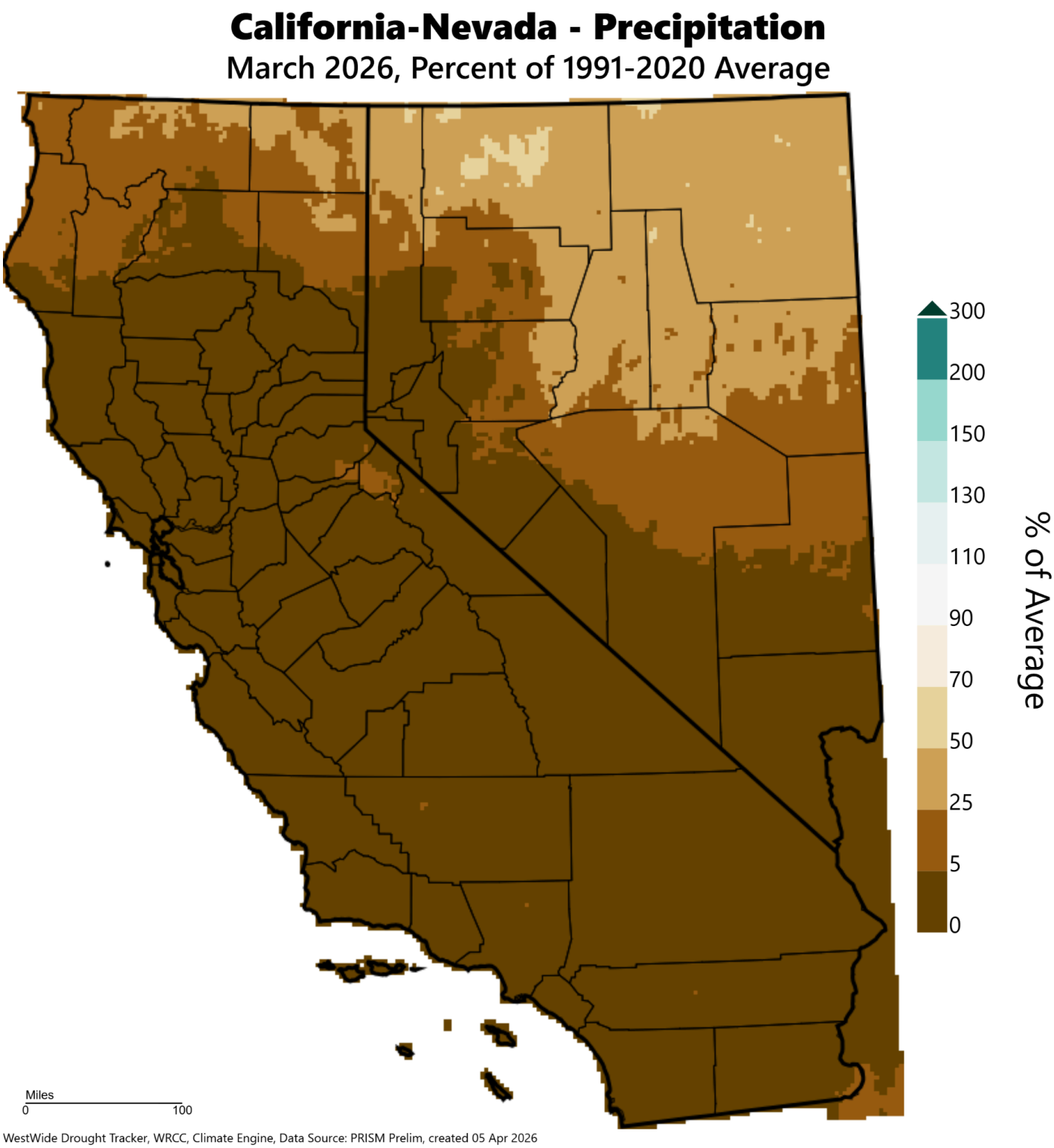


Figure 2: Percent of normal precipitation for March 2026. (WWDT)

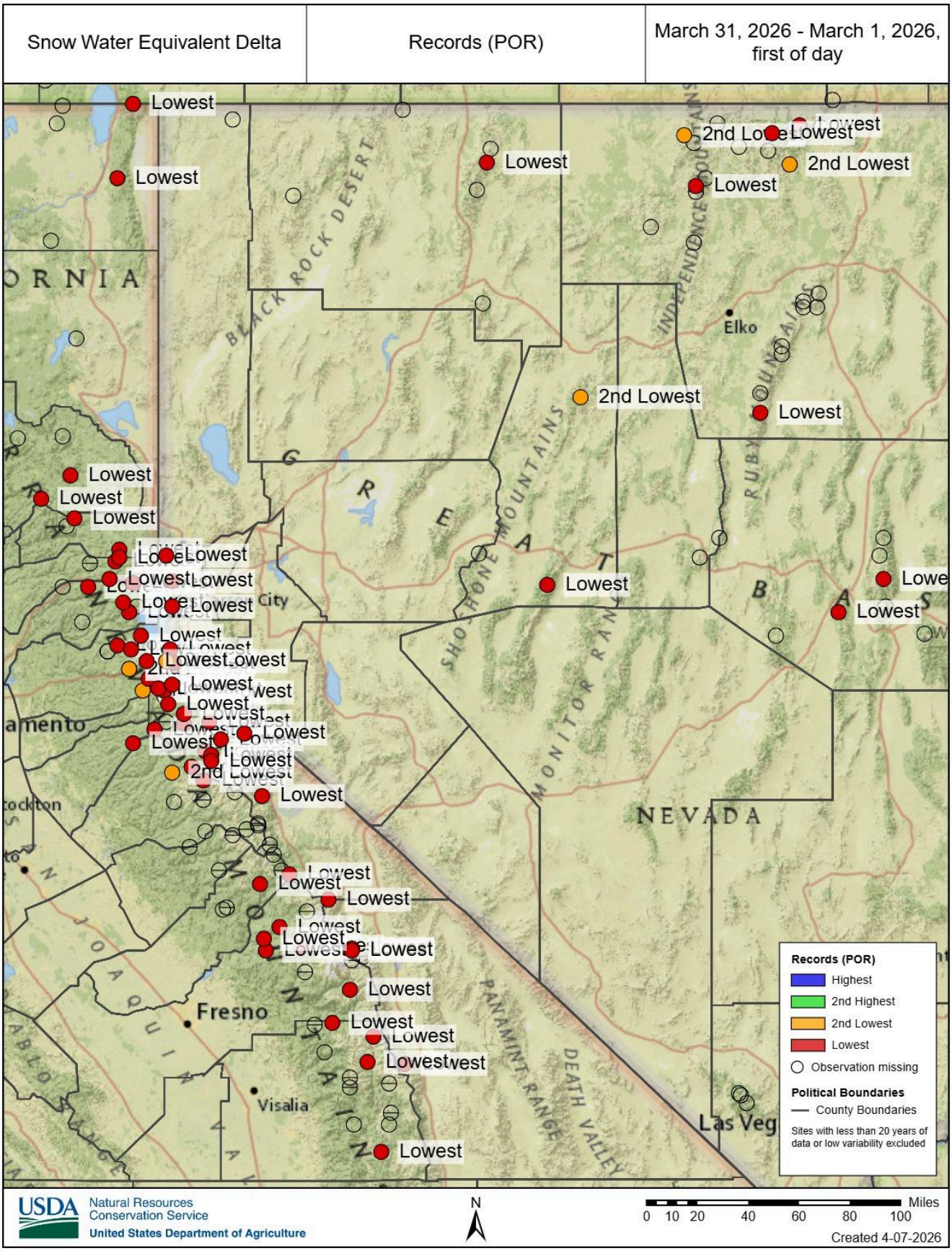


Figure 3. Record and near Record Monthly Snow Water Equivalent (SWE) losses for March at SNOTEL locations.

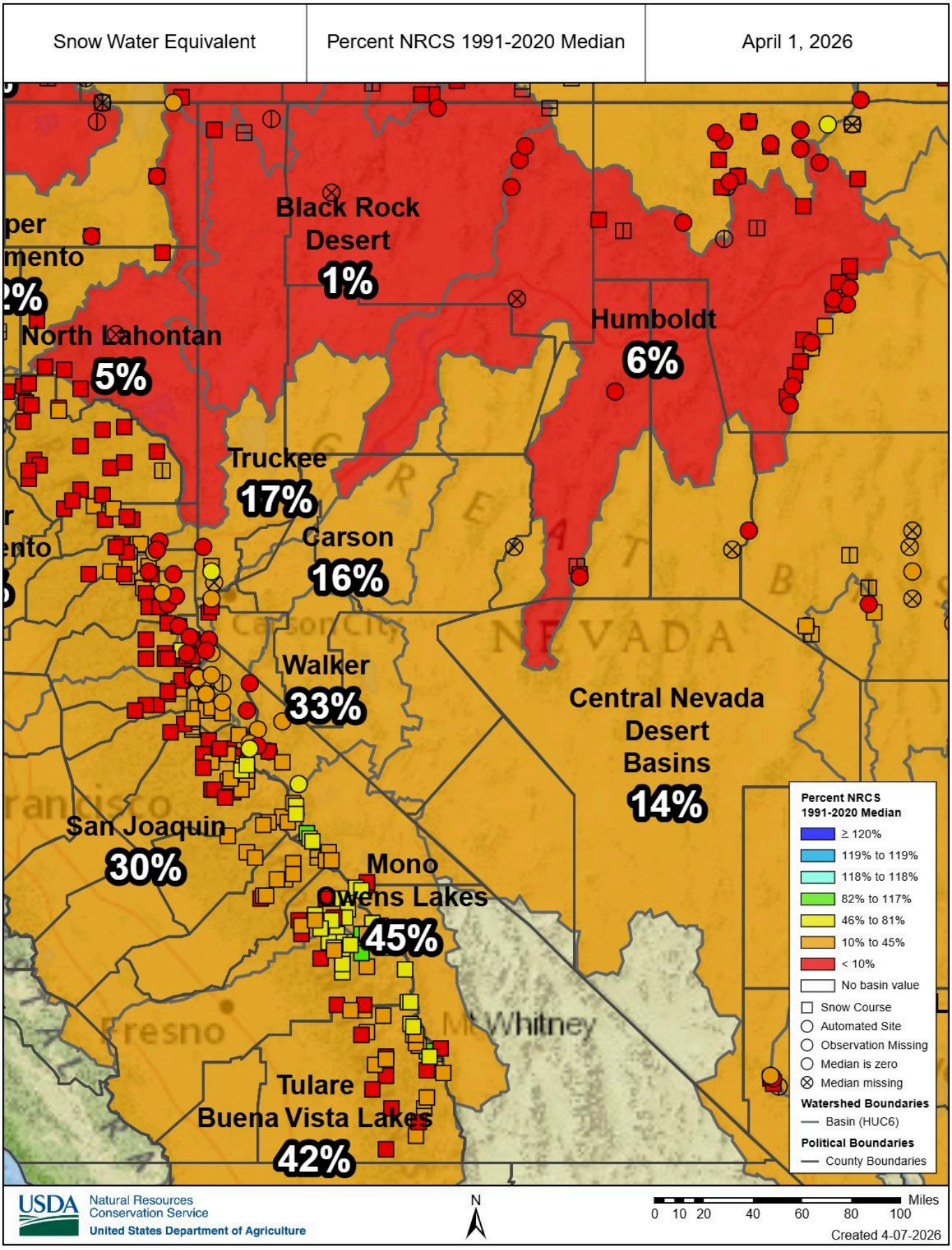


Figure 4:: April 1st SNOTEL and Snow Course as percent of median.

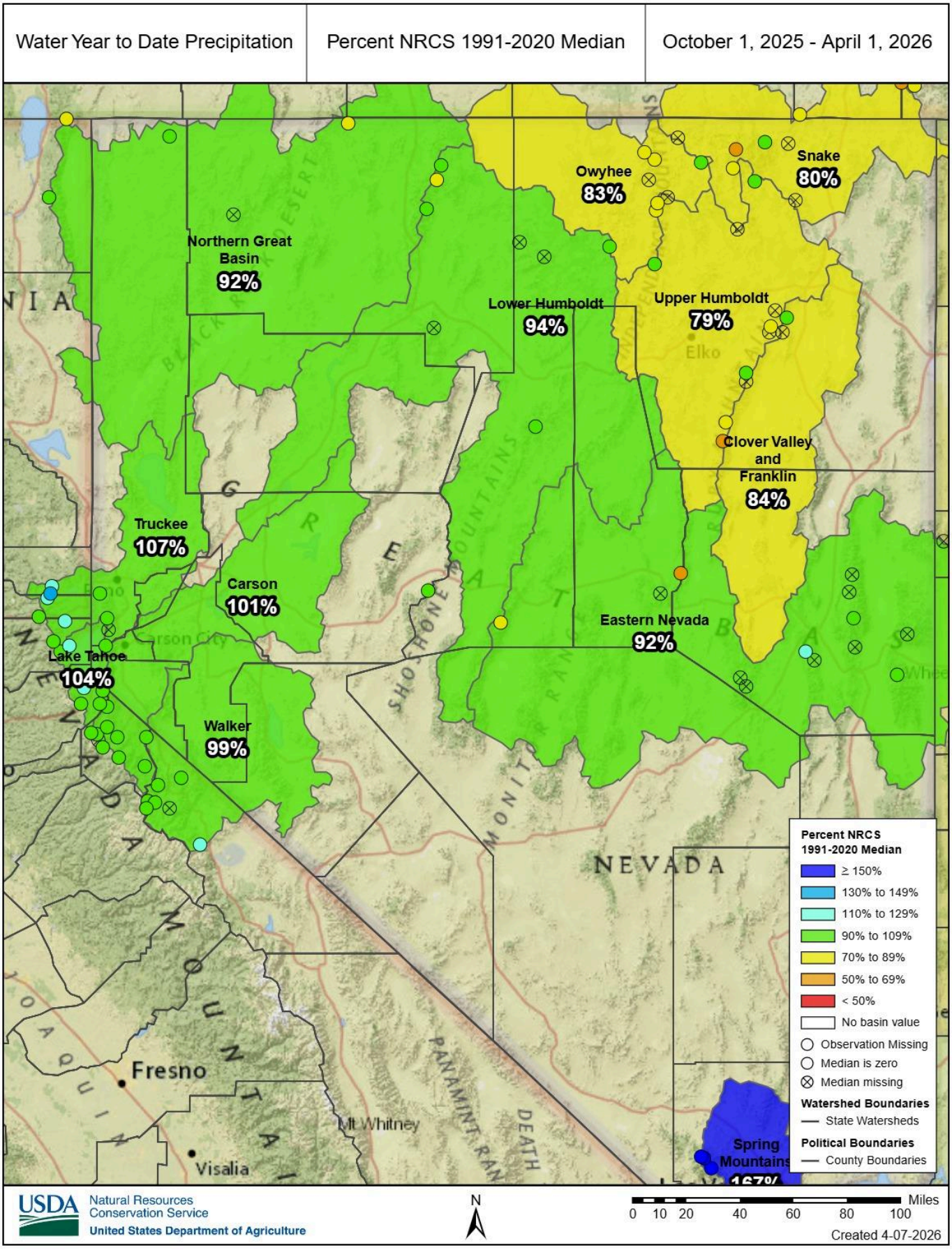


Figure 5. NRCS SNOTEL basin Water year precipitation as % of Median as of April 1st, 2026

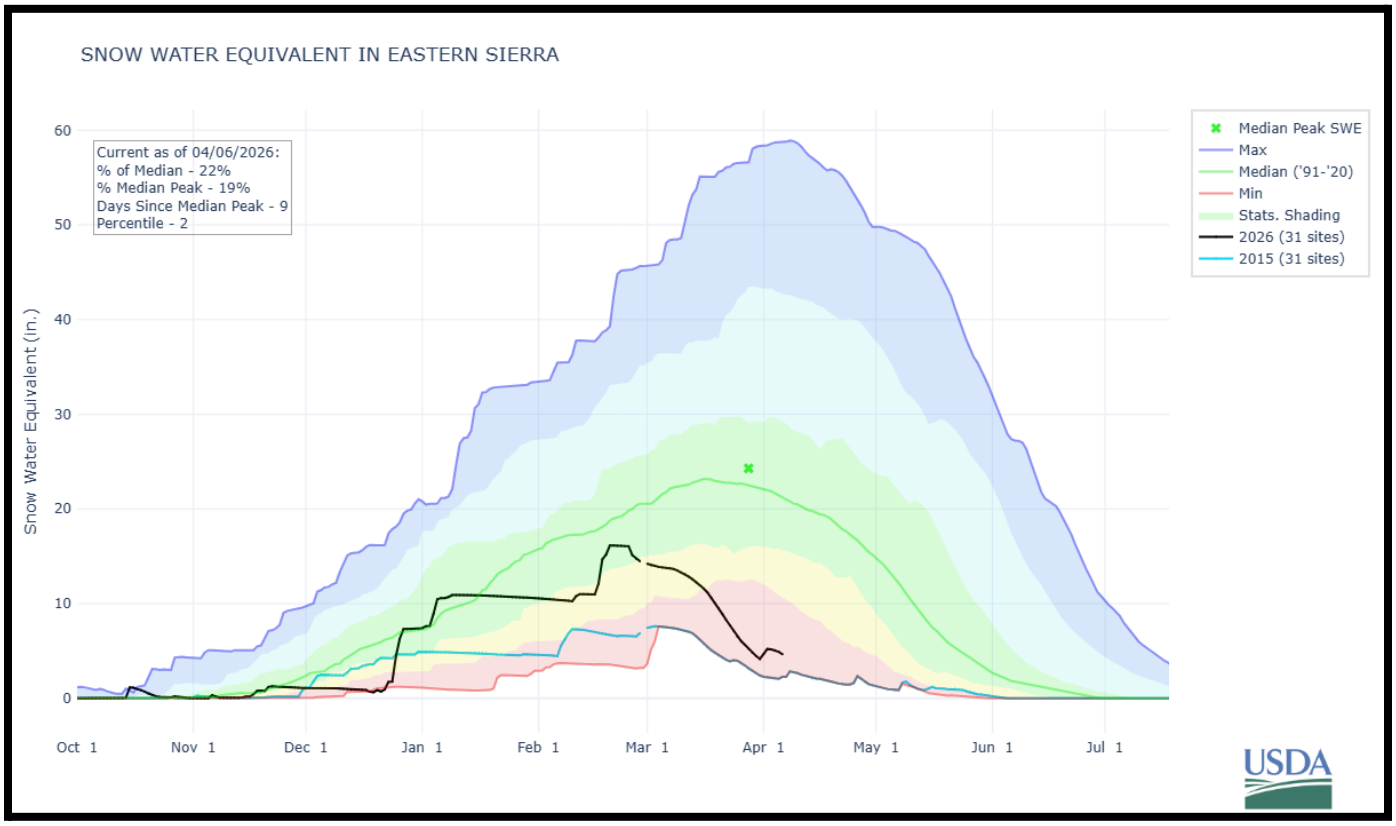


Figure 6. NRCS SNOTEL snow water equivalent (SWE) for the combined Tahoe, Truckee, Carson and Walker basins. This year in black with several other recent normal and below normal years for reference. Note this area has the lowest snowpack conditions as of April 1st since 2015!

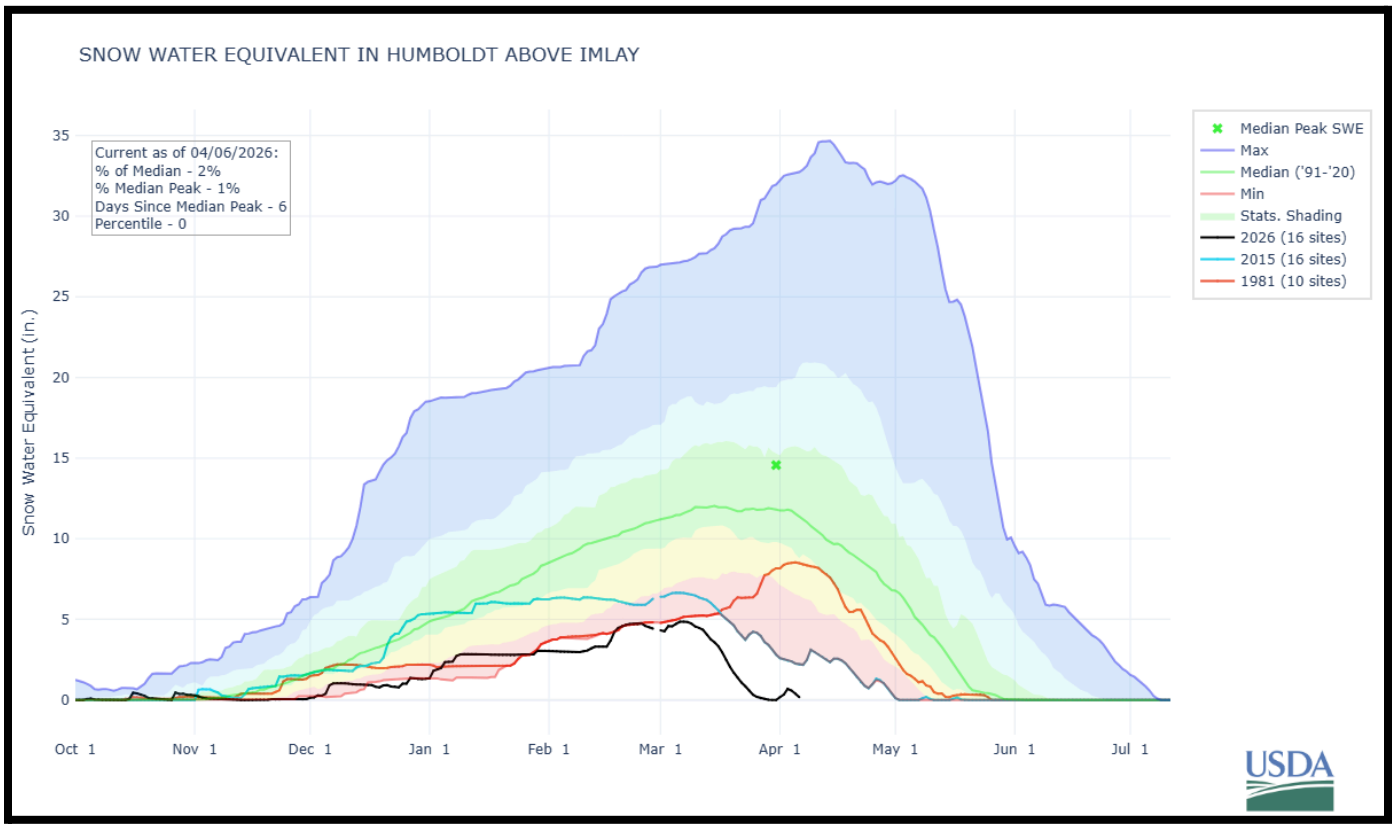


Figure 7. NRCS SNOTEL snow water equivalent (SWE) for the Humboldt with this year in black, and other very dry years for comparison. Snowpack melted out before April 1st, about a month earlier than the previous record early melt out of 2015!

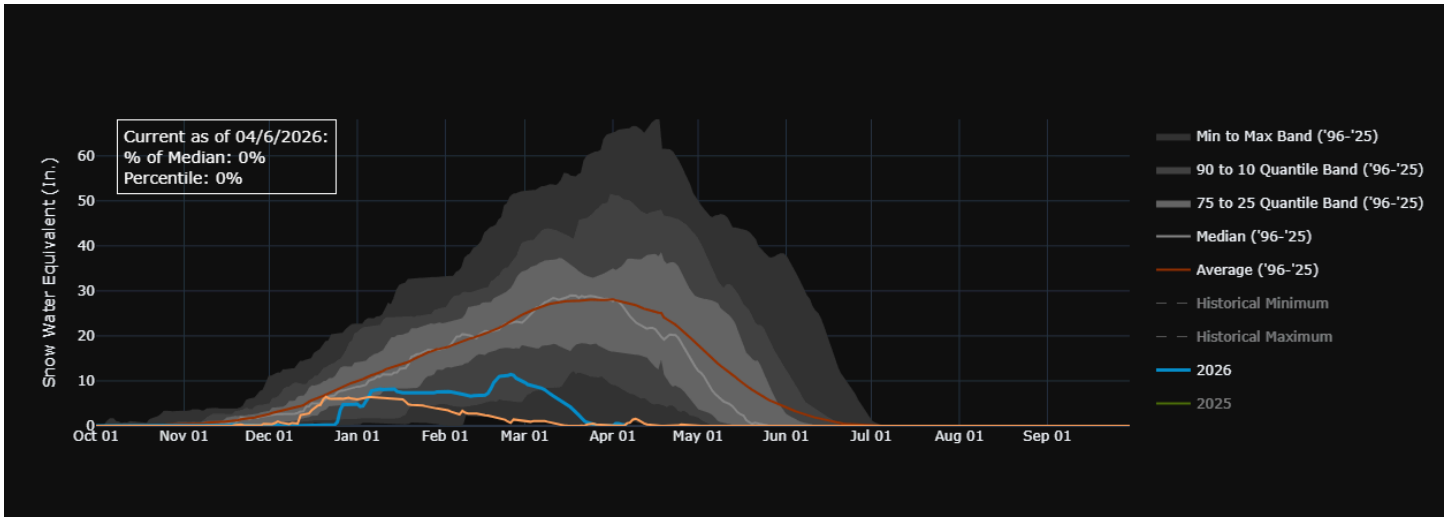


Figure 8. Feather Basin California Cooperative Snow Survey snow water equivalent (SWE). 2026 water year in blue and 2015 water year in orange.

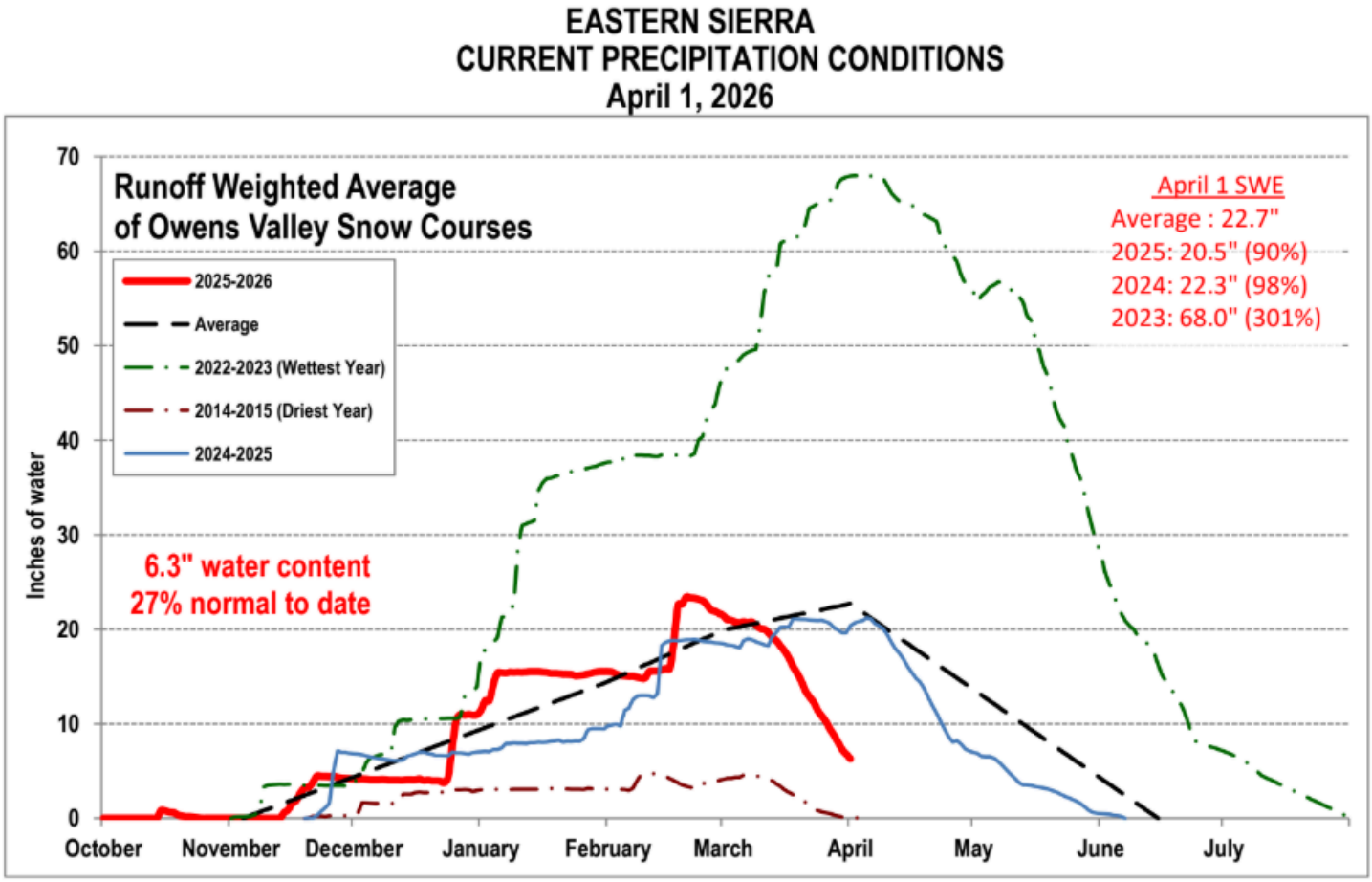
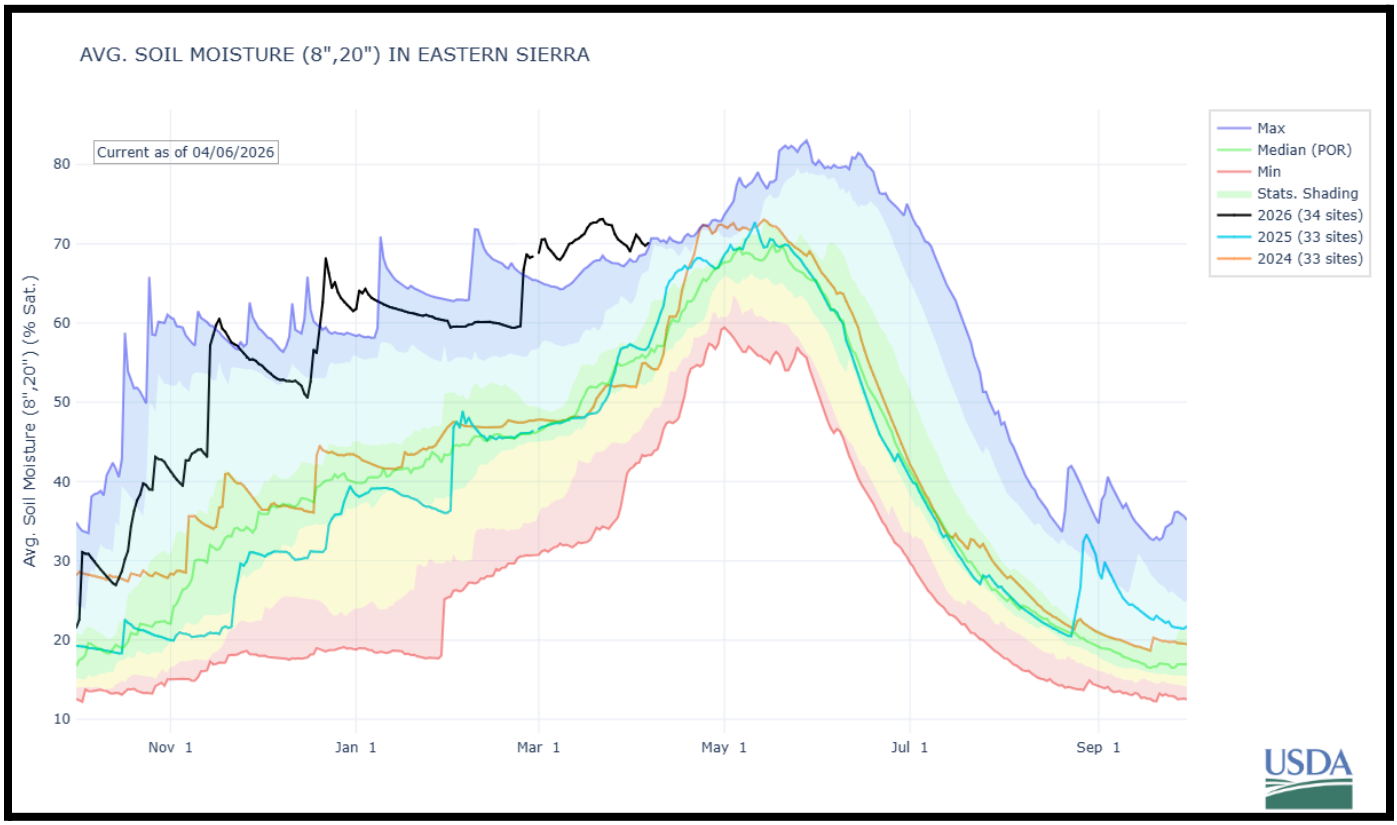


Figure 9. Snowpack conditions in Owens watershed as of April 1st. Figure courtesy of LADWP



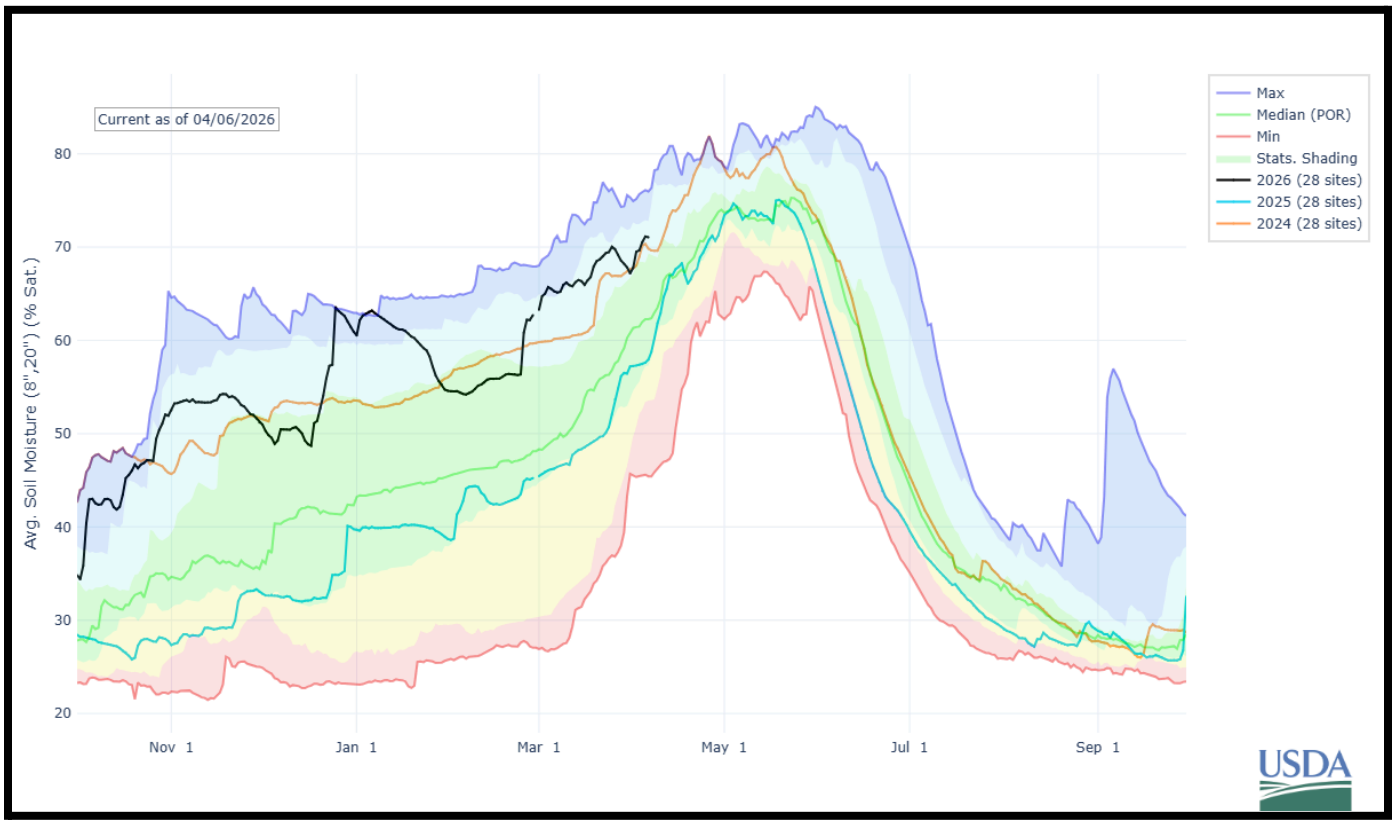


Figure 10. NRCS SNOTEL soil moisture for the combined Tahoe, Truckee, Carson and Walker basins (top), and Humboldt basin (bottom) indicated in black for the water year 2026. Water years 2025 and 2024 are plotted in blue and red respectively for additional perspective.

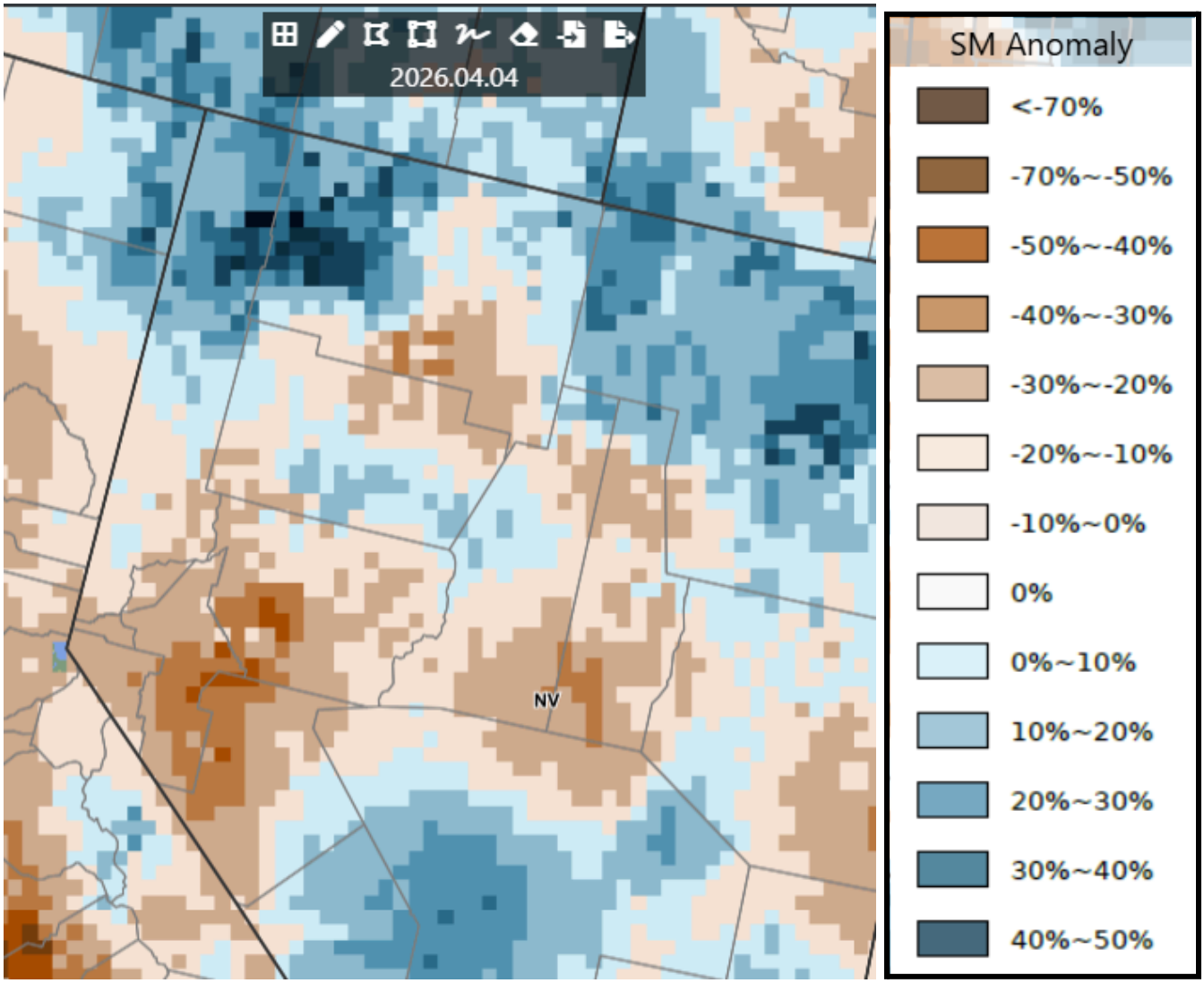
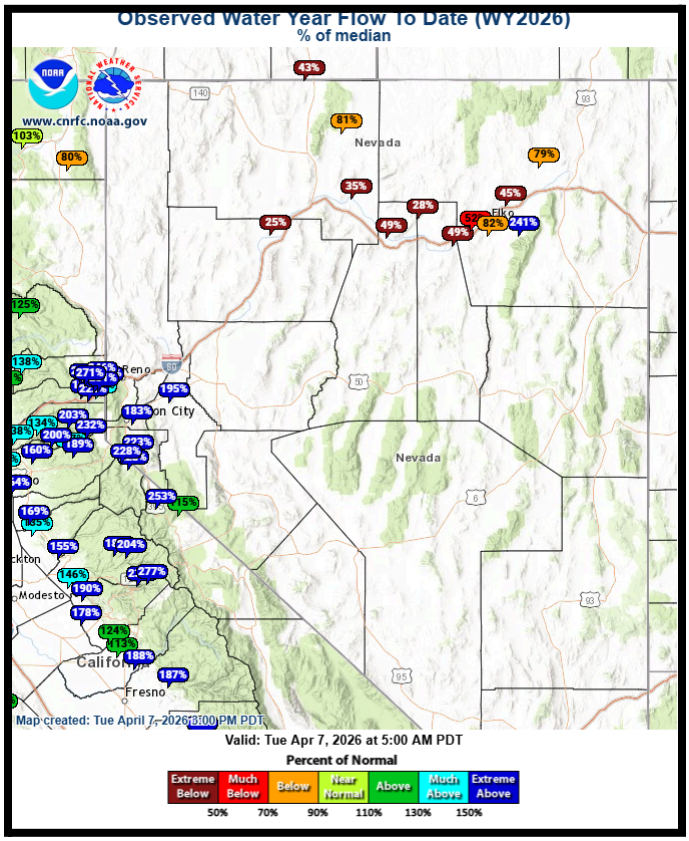


Figure 11. Crop-CASMA Soil Moisture Anomaly 04/04//2026



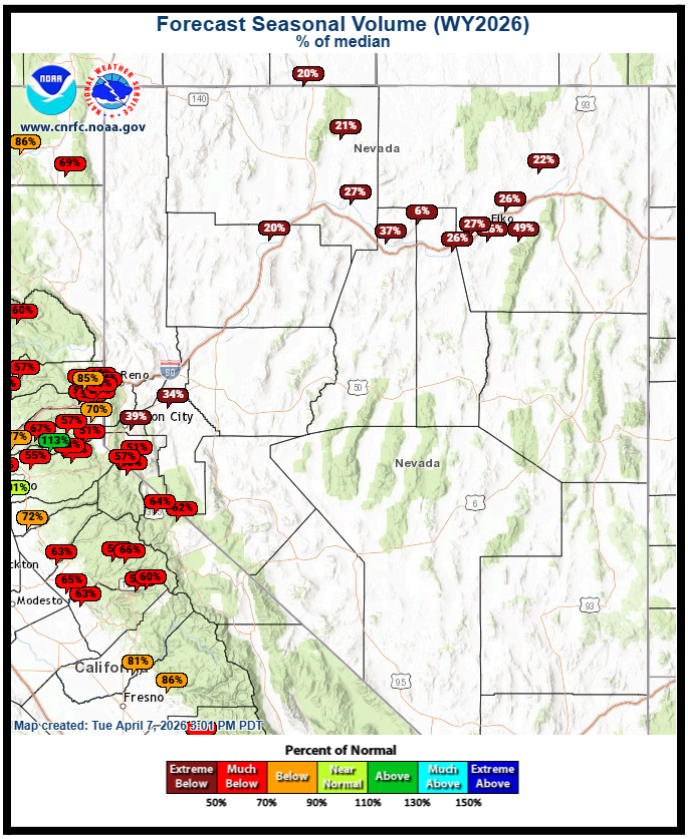


Figure 12. CNRFC Water year 2026 observed flow to date and right figure CNRFC April-July forecast volume both as % of median and as of April 7th.

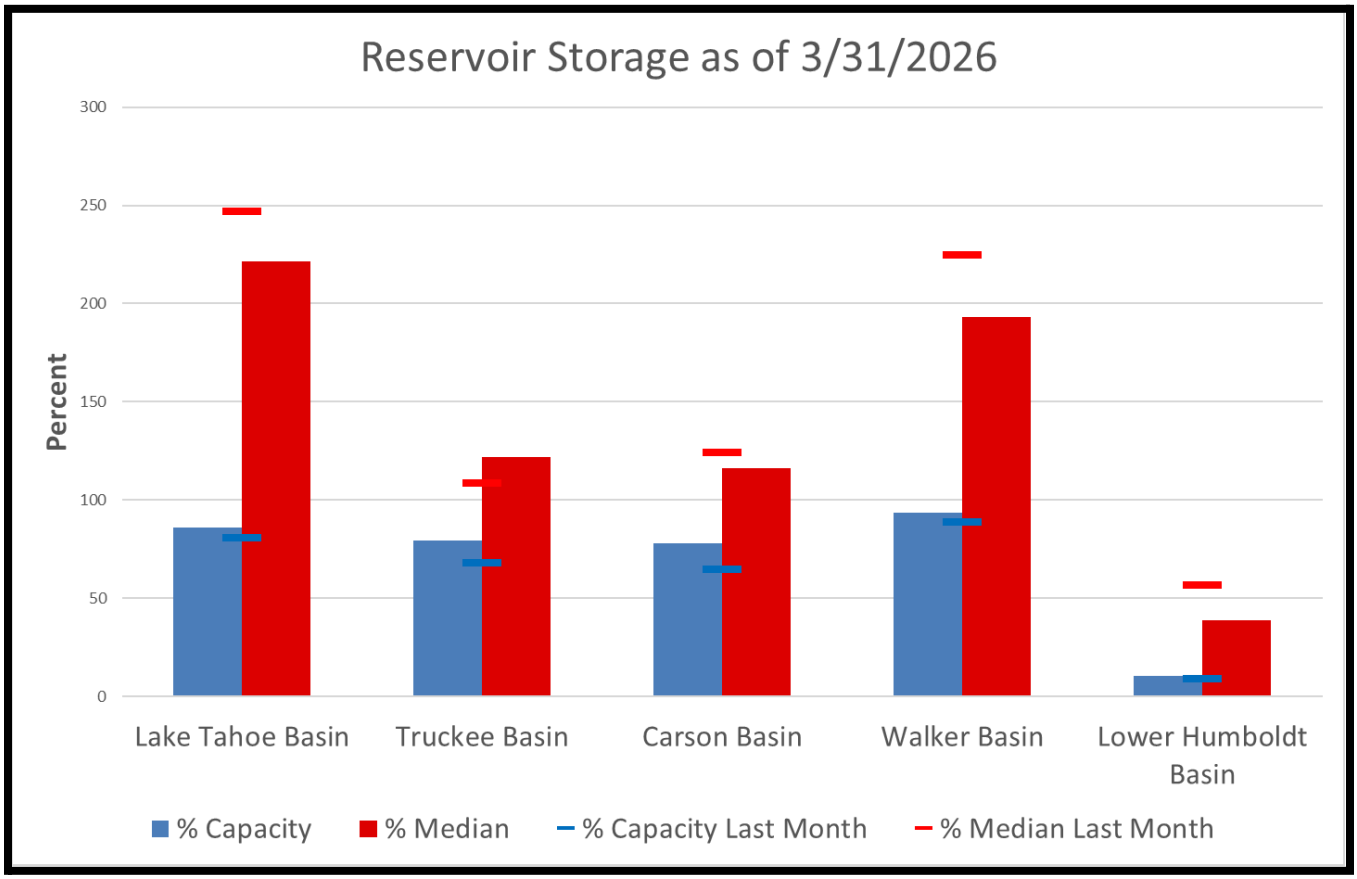
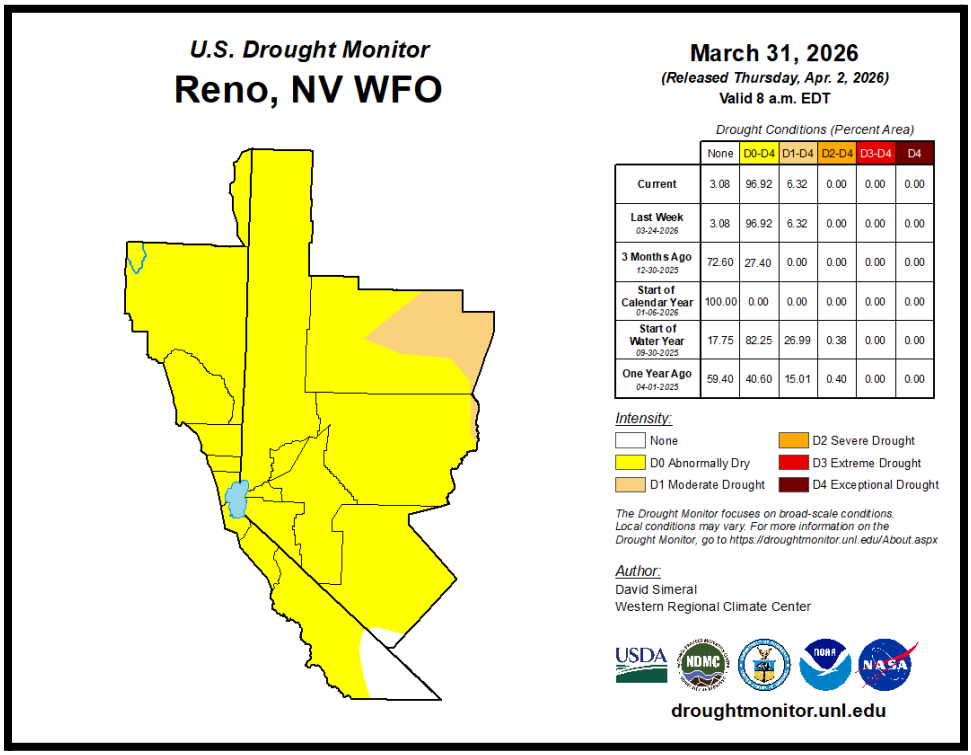


Figure 13. End of March reservoir storage relative to capacity and **median*** for this month and last month.



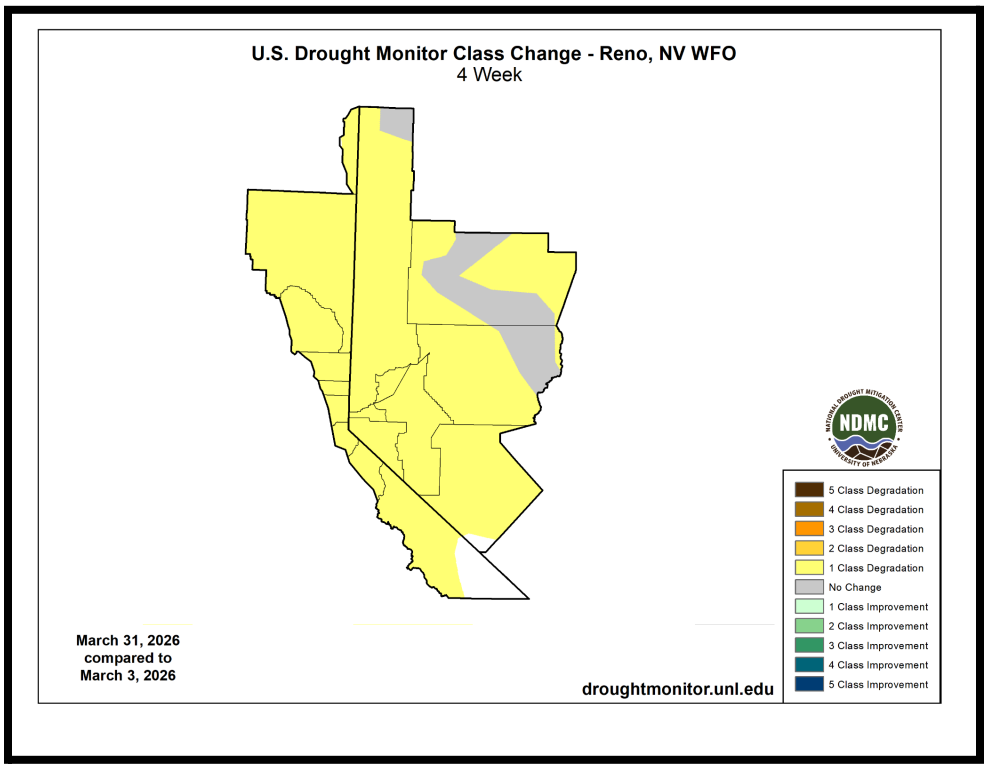


Figure 14. Drought Monitor Status on March 31st (top) and the 4 week change map (bottom). Check for updates at: [Drought Monitor]().

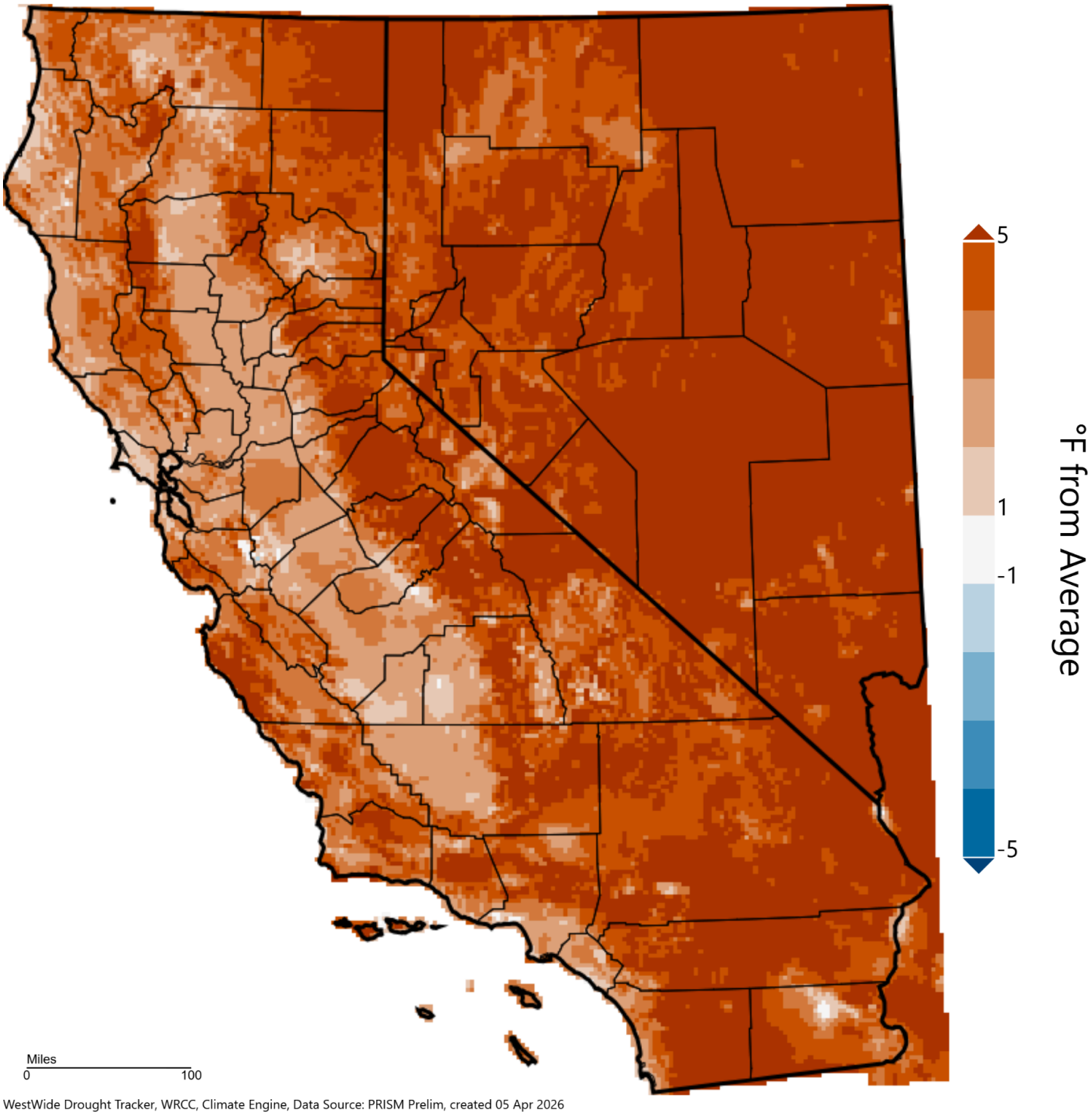


Figure 15. Water year to date mean temperature departure. Courtesy of West Wide Drought Tracker. (WWDT)

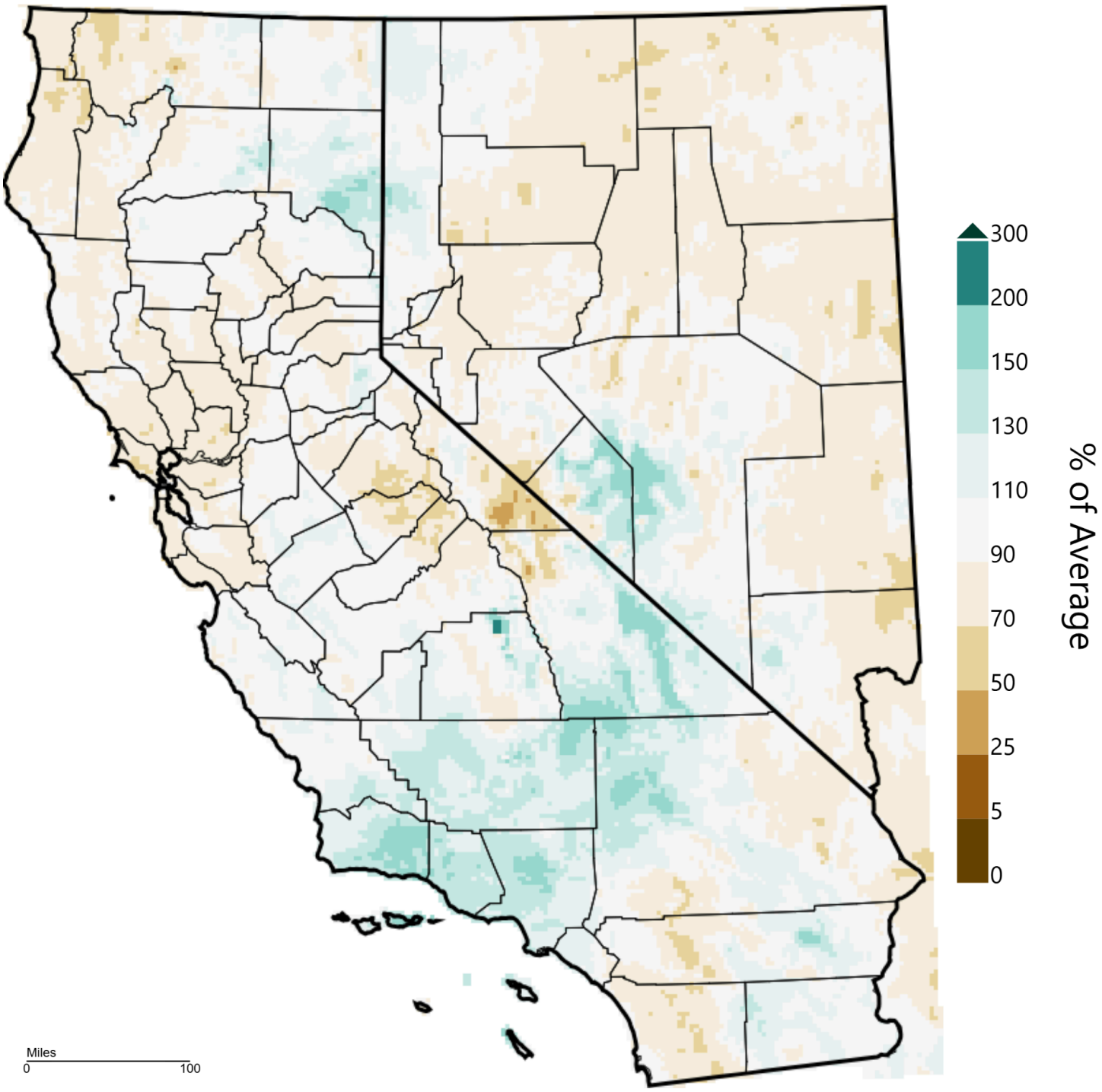


Figure 16. Water year to date precipitation. Courtesy of West Wide Drought Tracker. (WWDT)