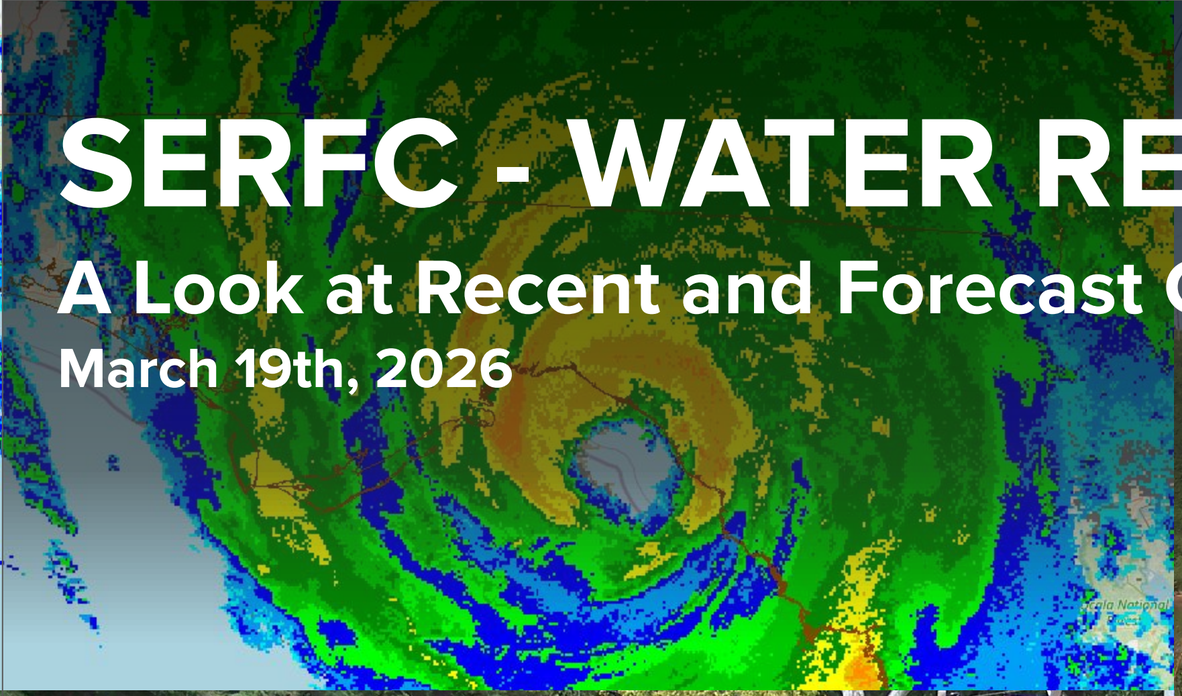
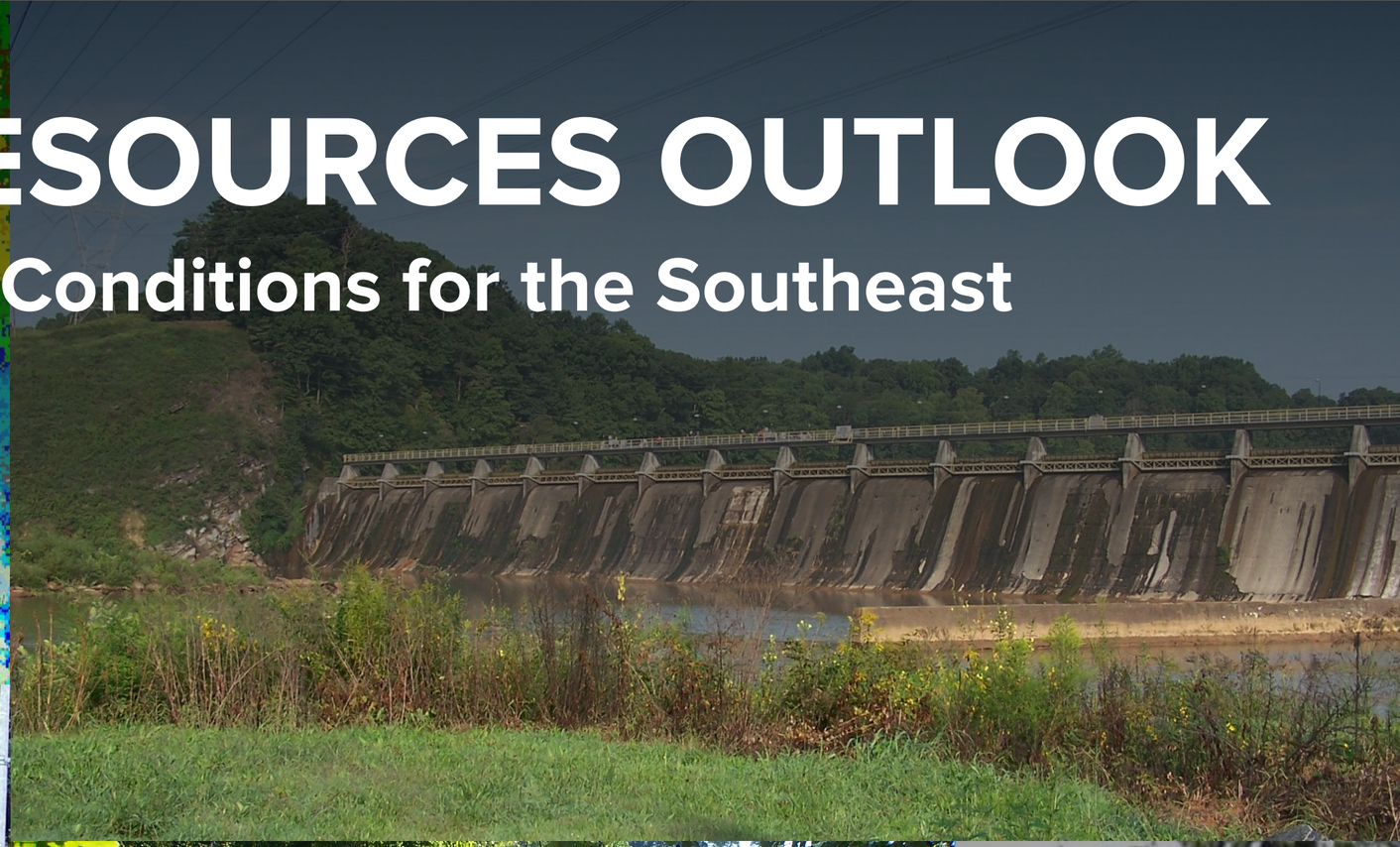
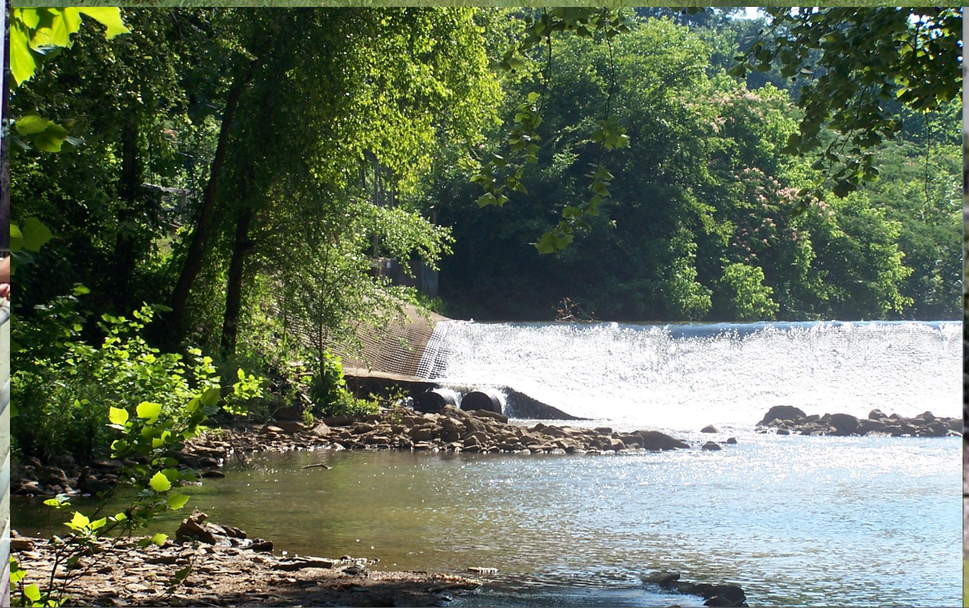
SERFC - WATER RESOURCES OUTLOOK

A Look at Recent and Forecast Conditions for the Southeast

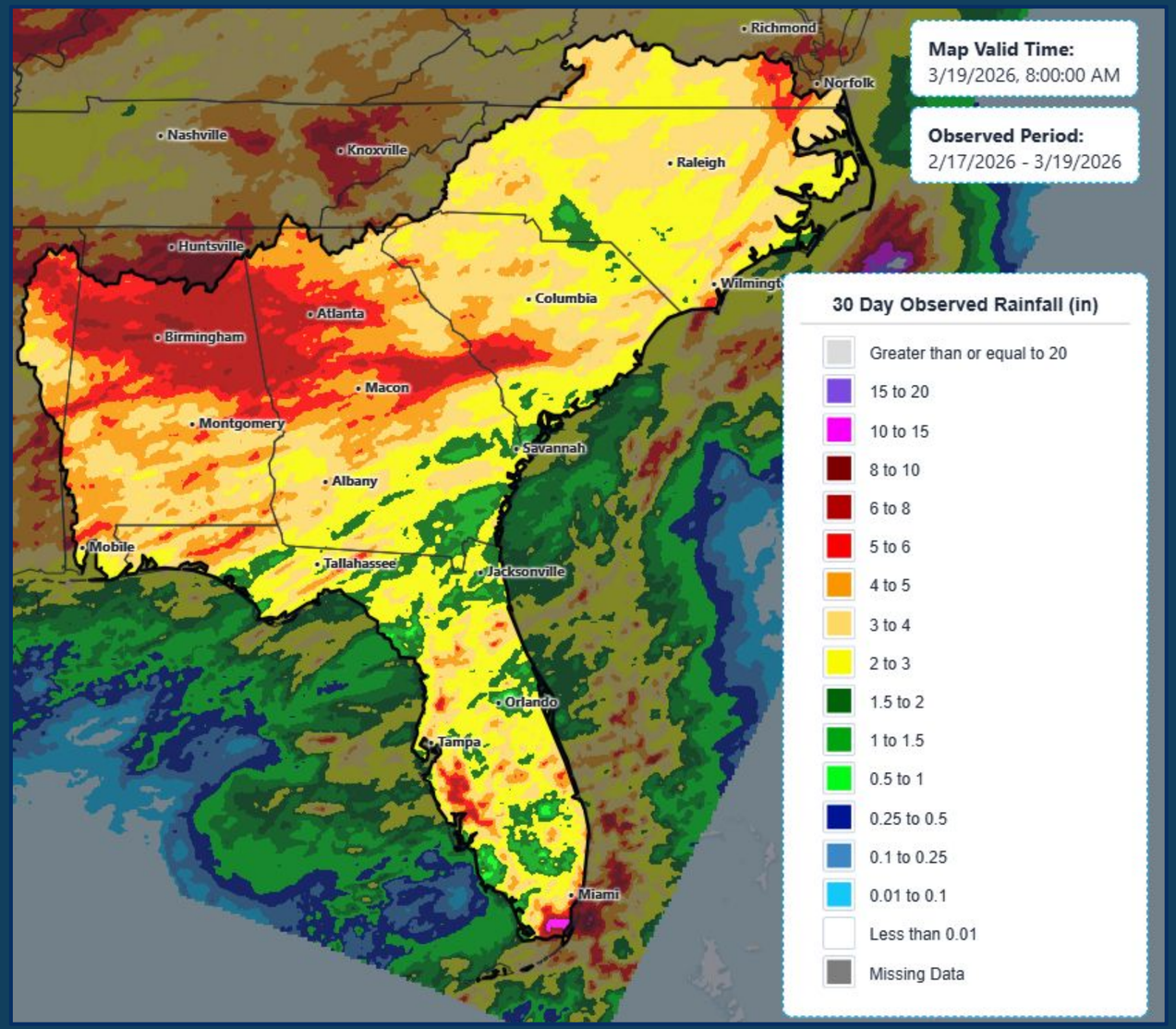
March 19th, 2026

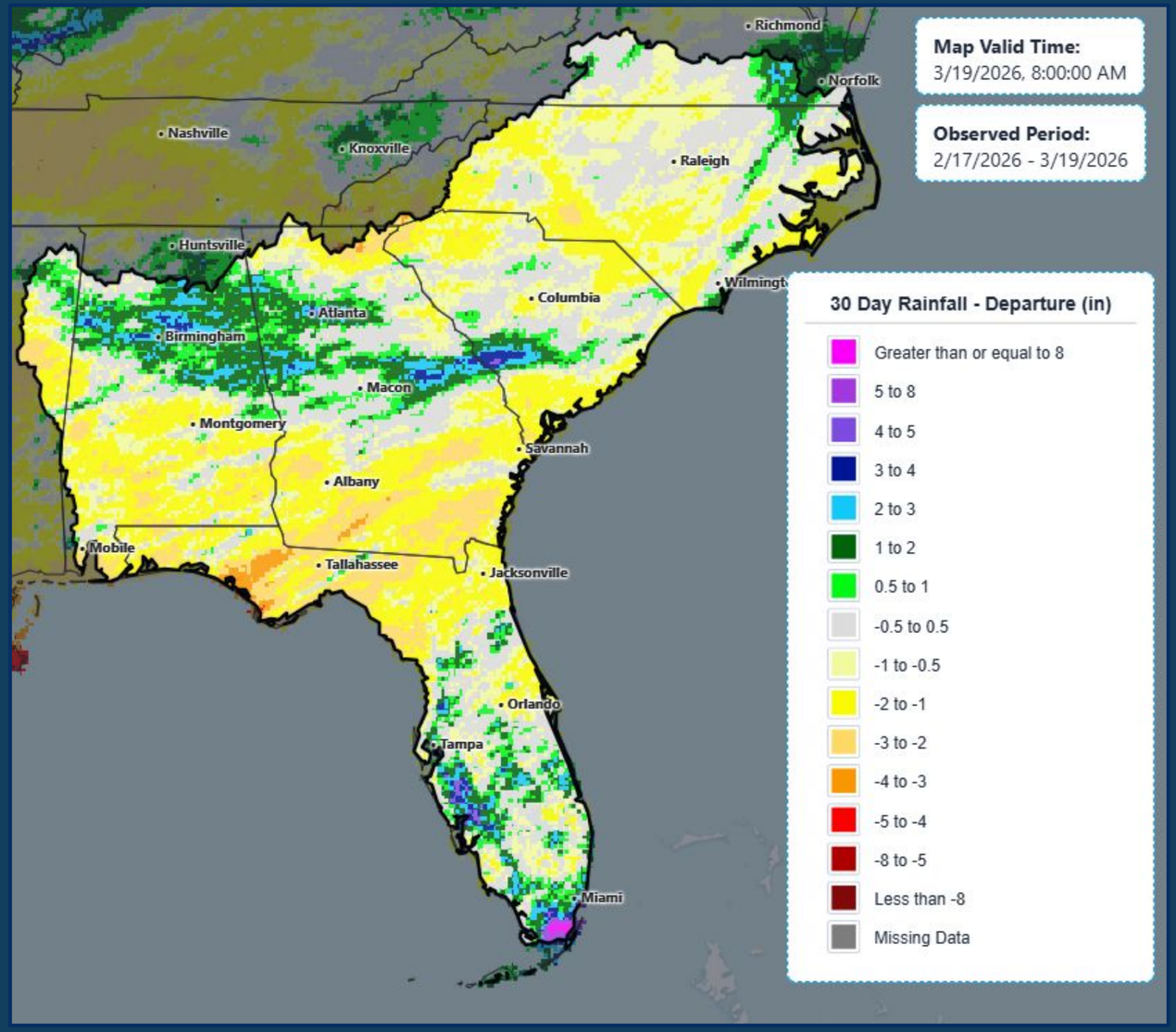






Current Conditions

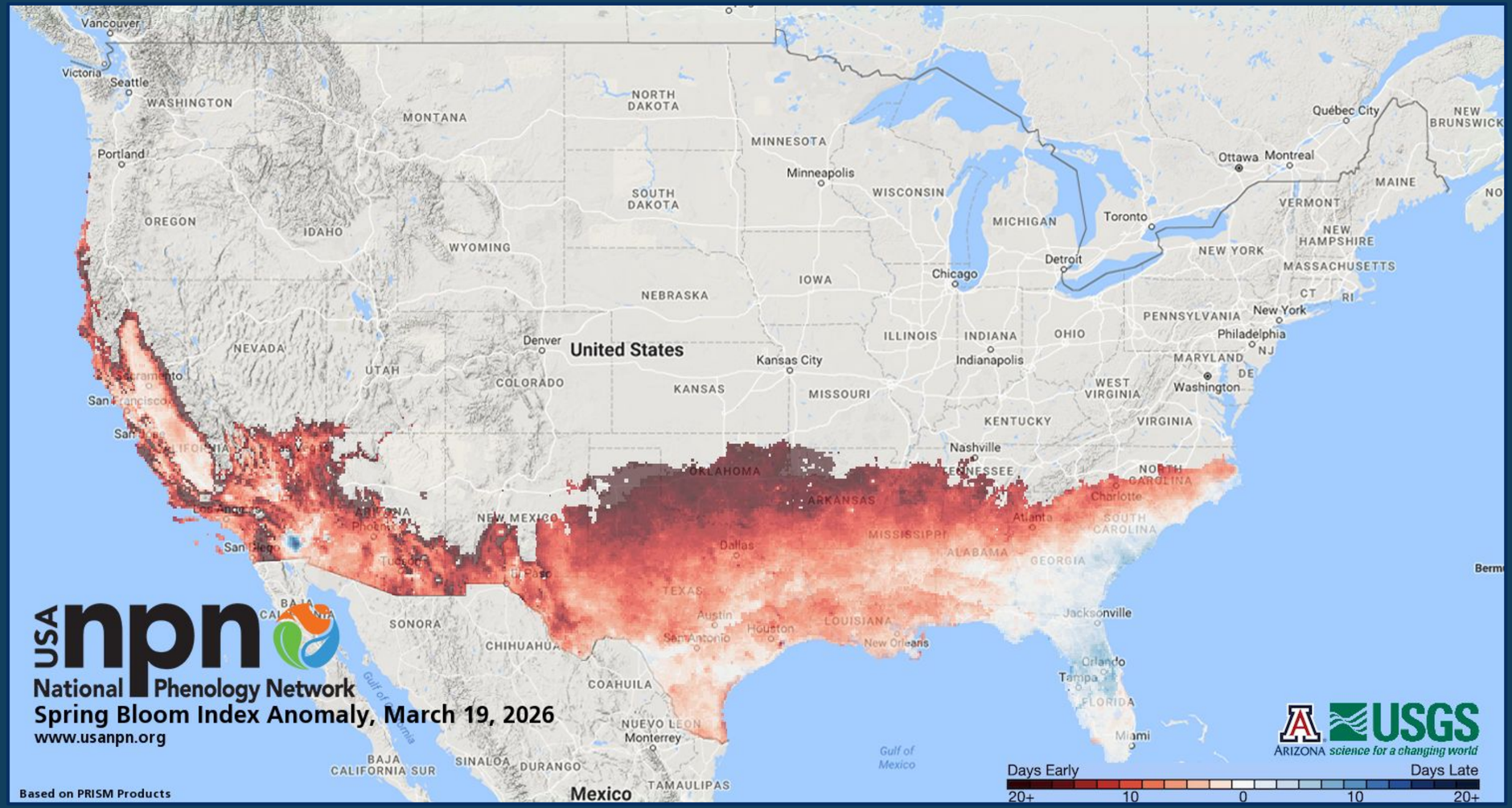




Recent Rainfall

Rounds of frontal rain brought significant enough totals to bump parts of northern Alabama, central Georgia, southern Florida, and southeastern South Carolina above normal in the past 30 days. While much of the Southeast is still presenting below normal 30-day rainfall departures, we saw some breaks in the dry trend from the past several months.

Spring First Bloom Index



Despite the brief low temperatures associated with recent cold fronts, signs of Spring have begun across most of the Southeast. The transition will continue to march northward over the next month, bringing with it a rise in evaporative demand and plant uptake.

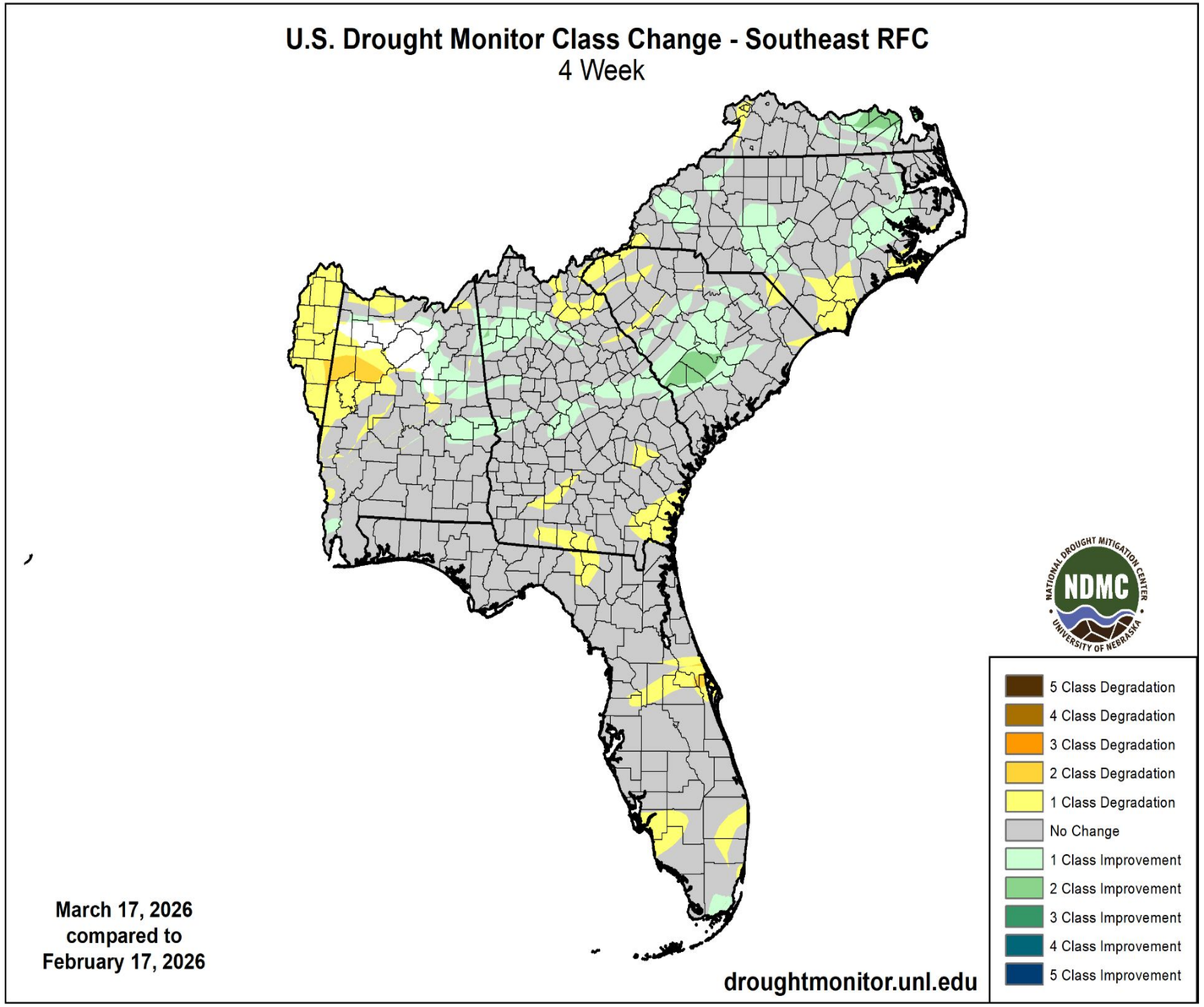
We would expect these changes to impede runoff efficiency in the warmer months ahead, adding further obstacles in areas seeking drought relief.

The First Bloom Index is based on the flowering of lilacs and honeysuckles. This Index is associated with blooming of early-spring shrubs and leaf out of deciduous trees.

USA National Phenology Network. 2026. Spring Bloom Index Anomaly as of March 19, 2026. https://usanpn.org/files/npn/maps/six-bloom-index-anomaly.png. USA-NPN, Tucson, Arizona, USA. Dataset Accessed March 19, 2026.

Drought Class Change and Conditions

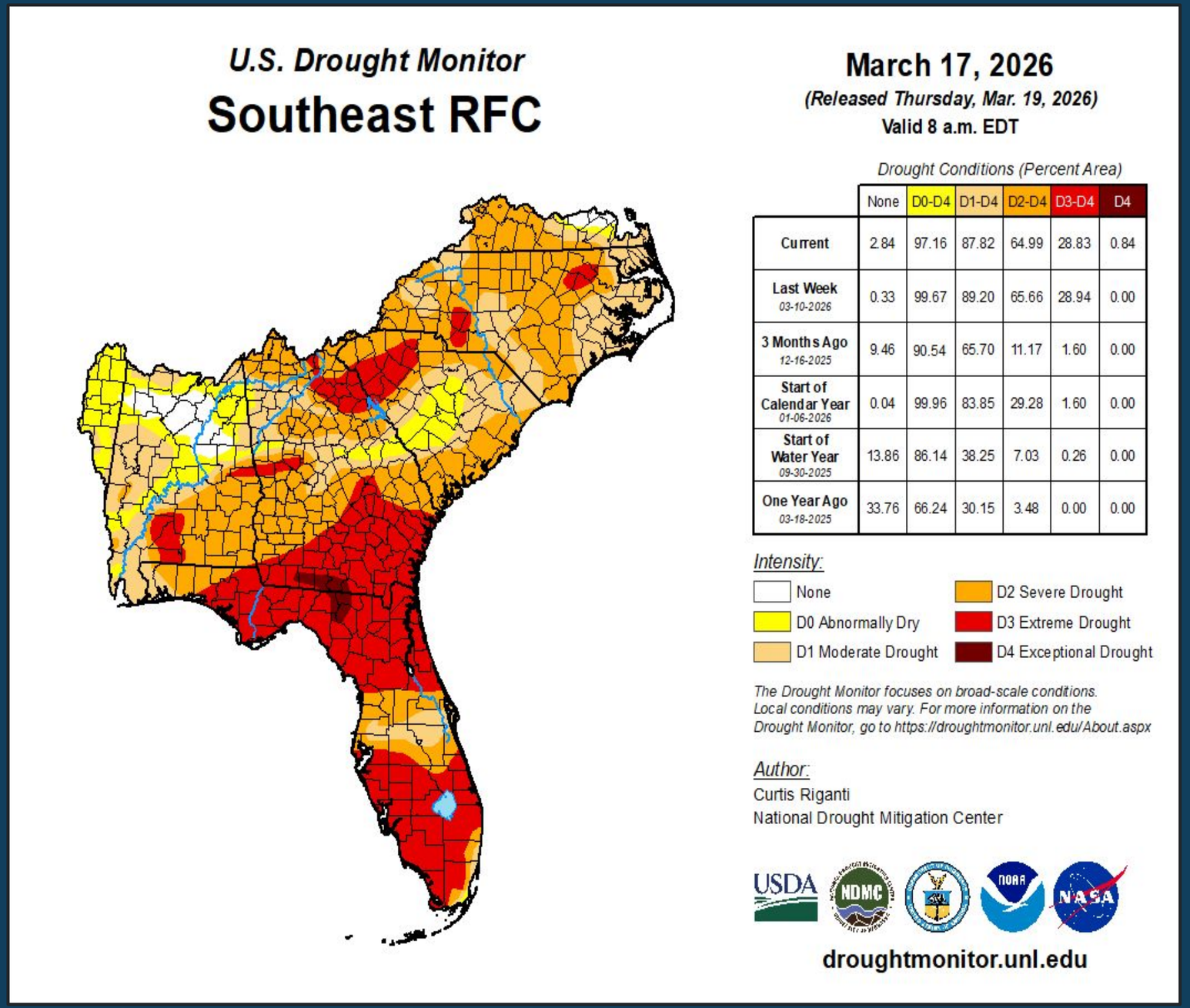
In the last 4 weeks, there have been scattered areas of improvement in drought class, particularly in South Carolina, North Carolina, central Georgia, and eastern Alabama. Although there was some welcome rainfall on the upper Tombigbee River, drought conditions worsened. For most of the Southeast, however, drought conditions remained the same.



For the latest map, visit https://droughtmonitor.unl.edu/CurrentMap.aspx

Drought Class Change and Conditions

Dry conditions persist throughout the Southeast, with little to no improvement in most of the area. A small area of northern Florida and southern Georgia reached D4 Exceptional Drought status, which accounts for less than 1% of Southeast RFC's area. Signs of above normal rainfall potential, and some relief to these dry conditions, are still several months away.



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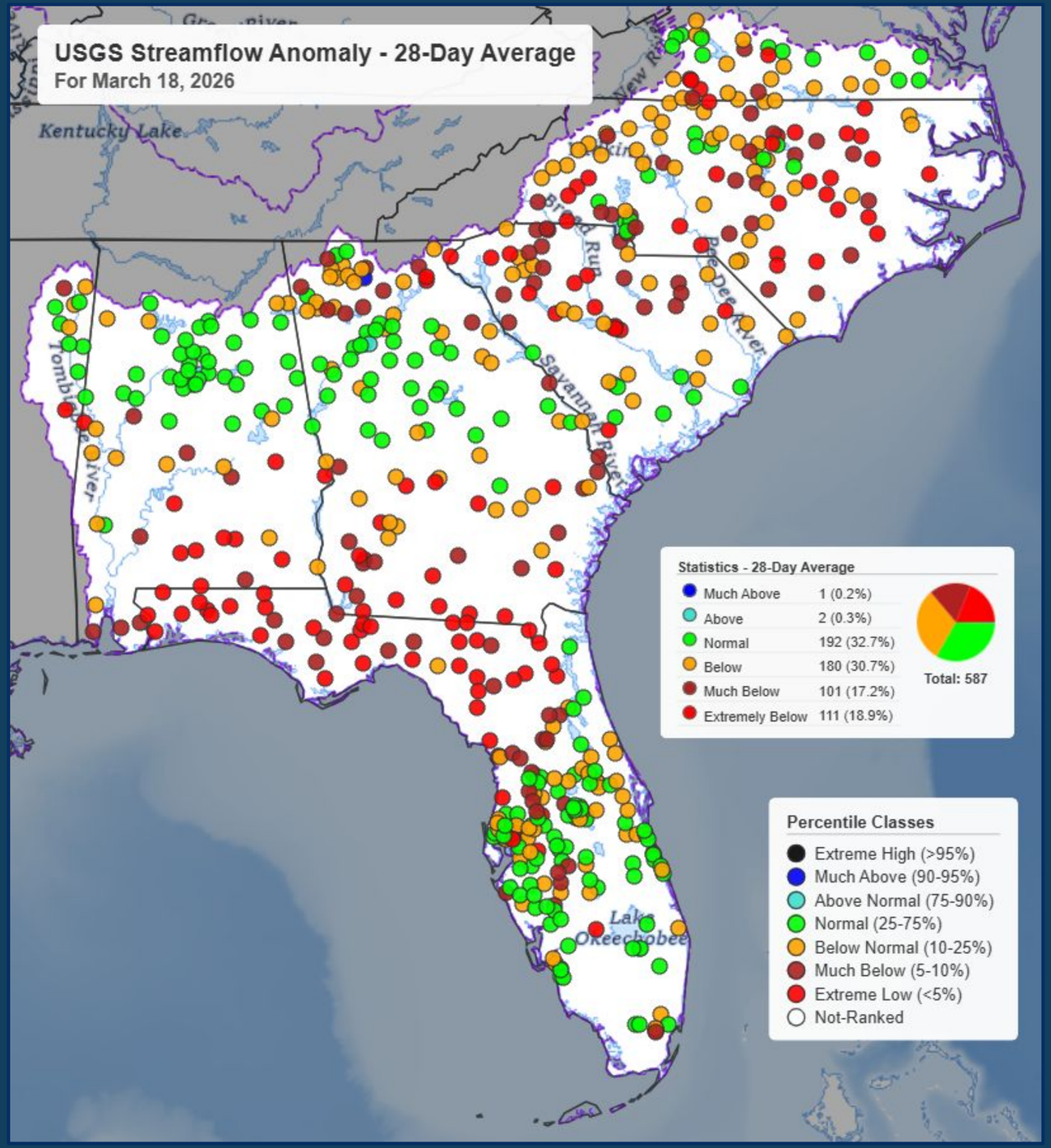
28-Day Streamflow Compared to Historical

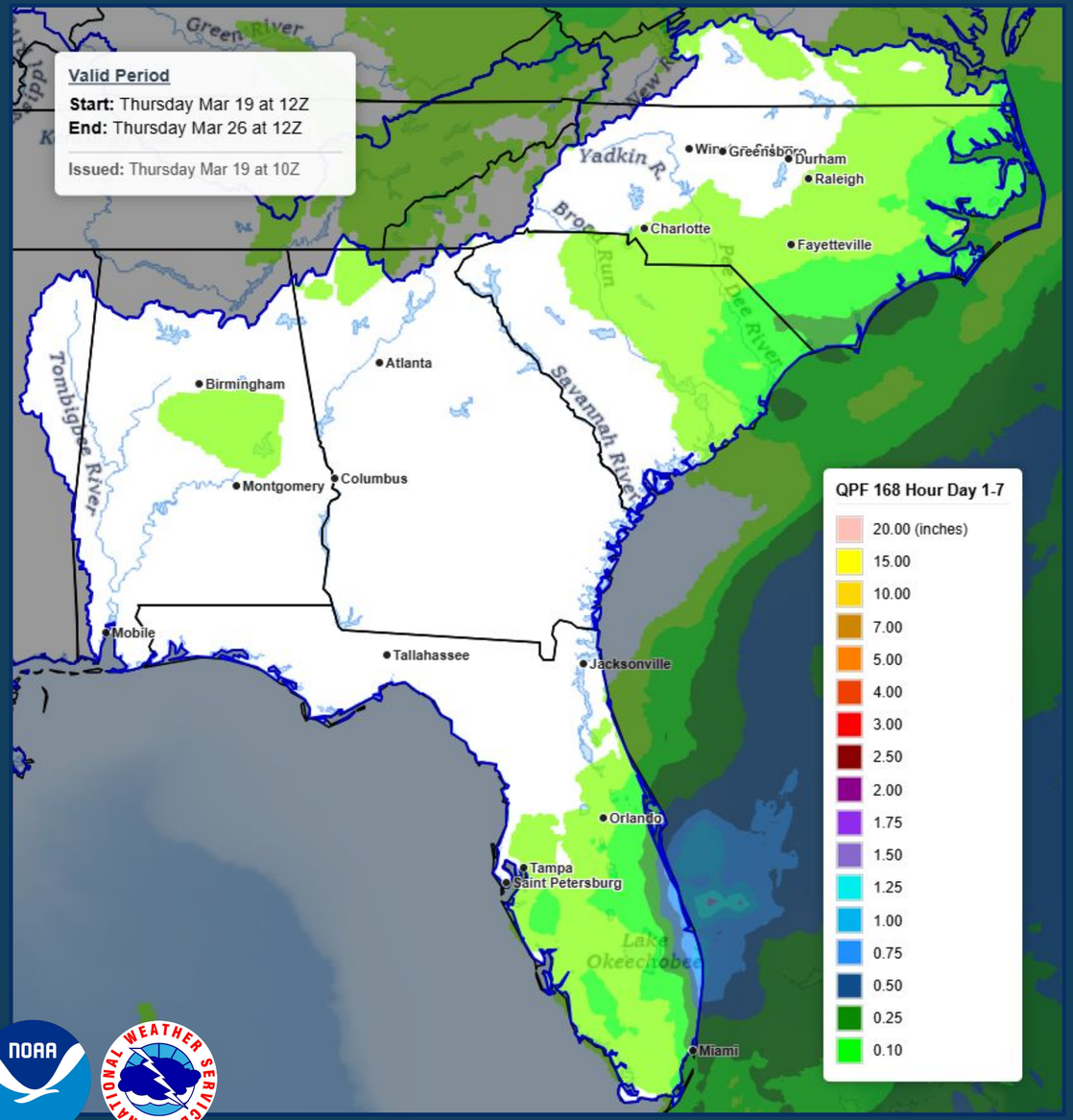
The current 28-day average streamflows continues to be mostly below normal (10th-25th percentile) to extremely low (<5th percentile) across the Southeast. The exceptions to this are in in the upper Tombigbee River, central Georgia, central Florida, and southern Virginia. Compared to last month, there has been some improvement in parts of Georgia and Florida where there was several inches of rain. However, there are more gages dropping below the 10th percentile in other areas of the Southeast.

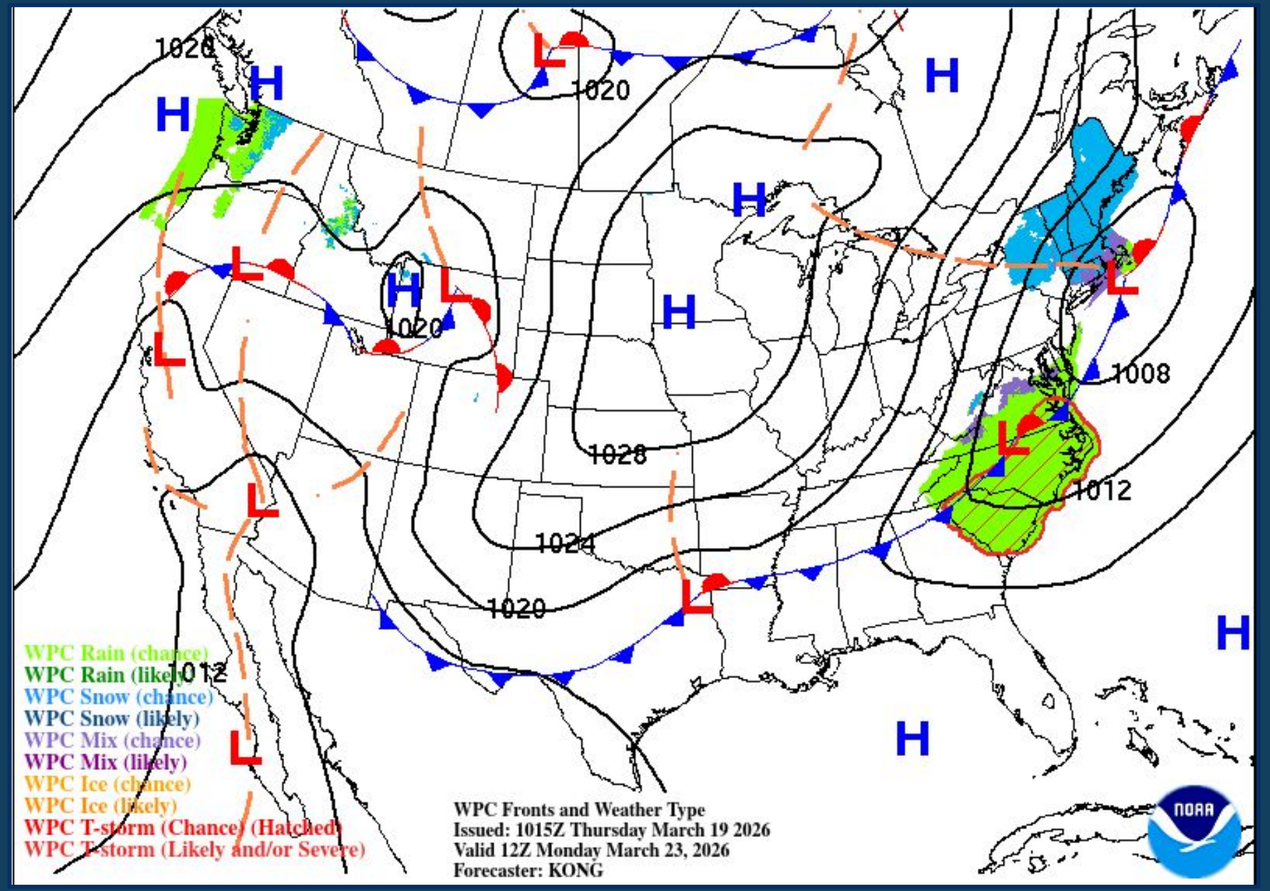
***Note:** Following the decommissioning of USGS WaterWatch, historical maps are no longer available. This image was generated using USGS streamflow data, and the streamflow anomaly data presented here are provisional.*



Meteorology

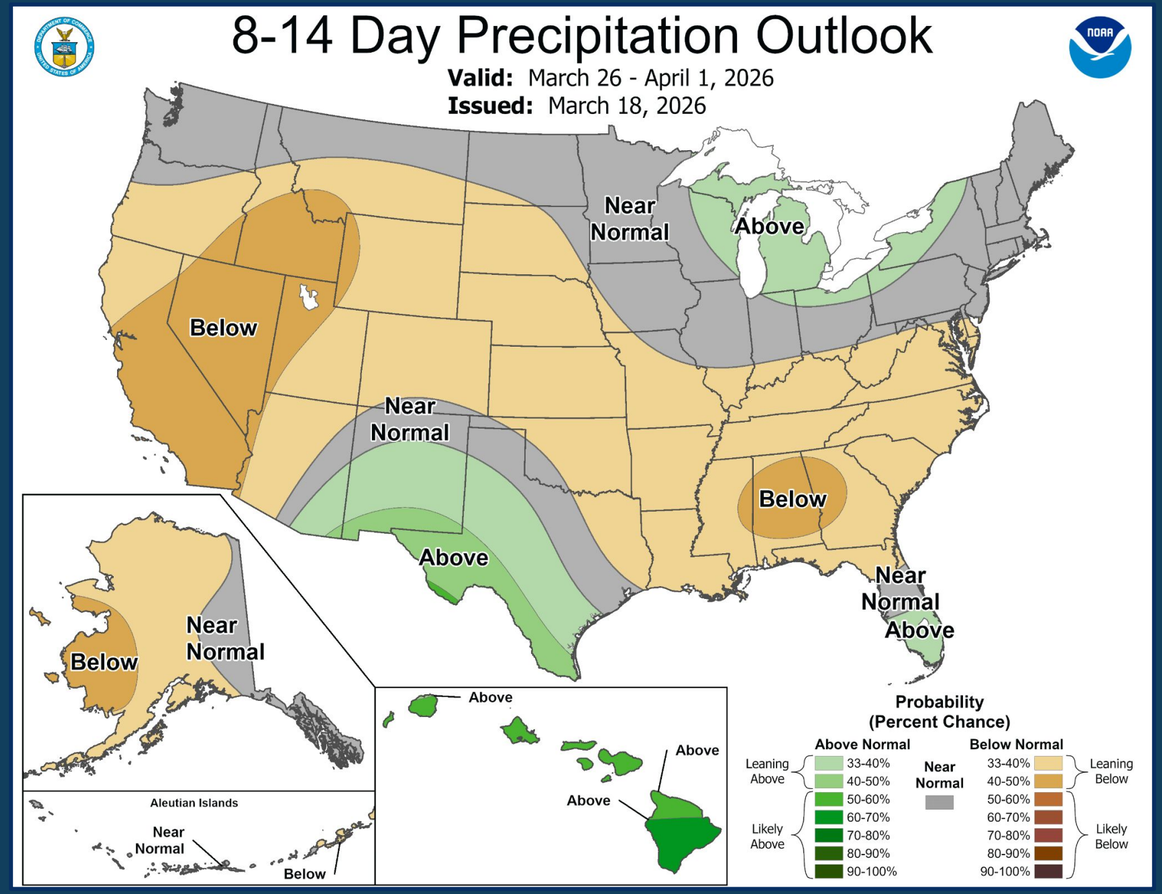
Near Term

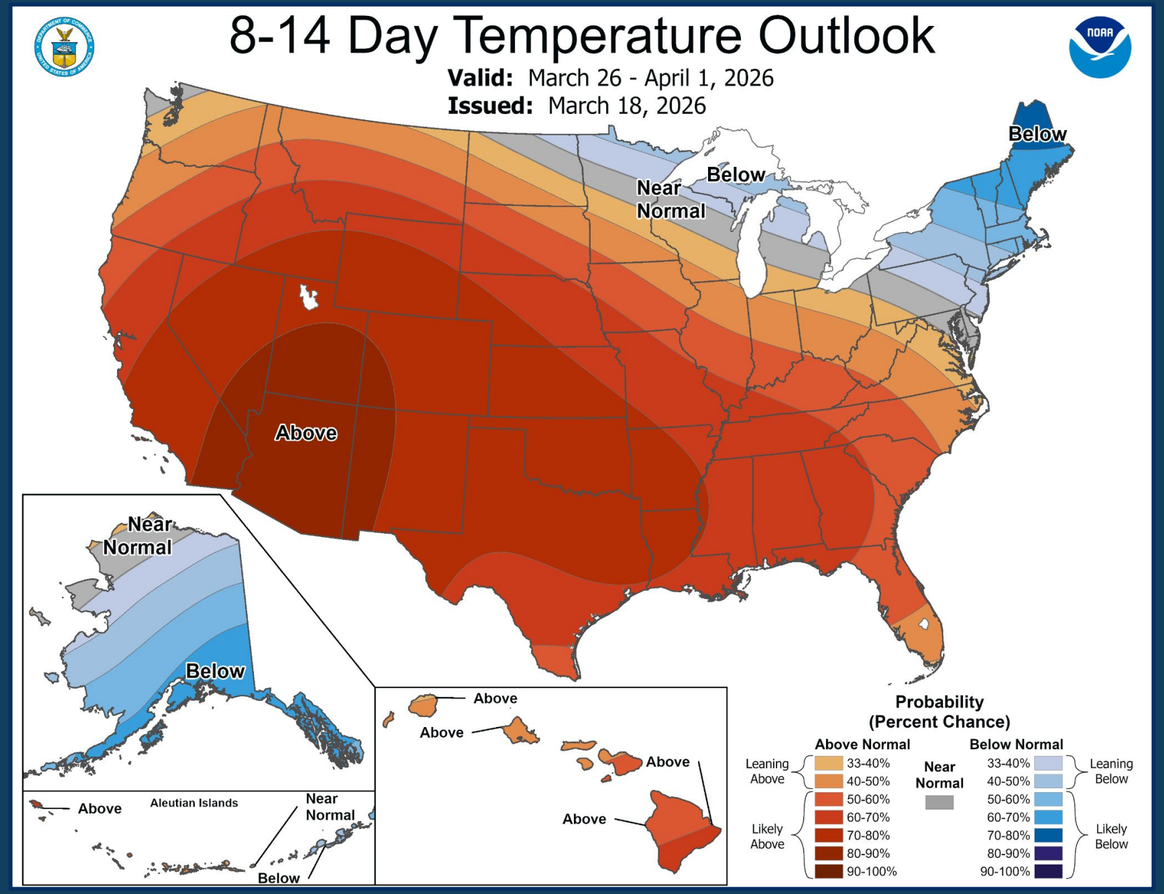




After a recent active period, the Southeast is entering a period of relative quiet in the near term, at least when it comes to rainfall. We start off with high pressure dominating through to the end of the weekend. To start the work, we see the main feature of note in the short term, a cold front, start pushing through the region. However, this front is not expected to bring a substantial amount of rainfall with it, as seen by the 7 day rainfall forecast in the left hand image.

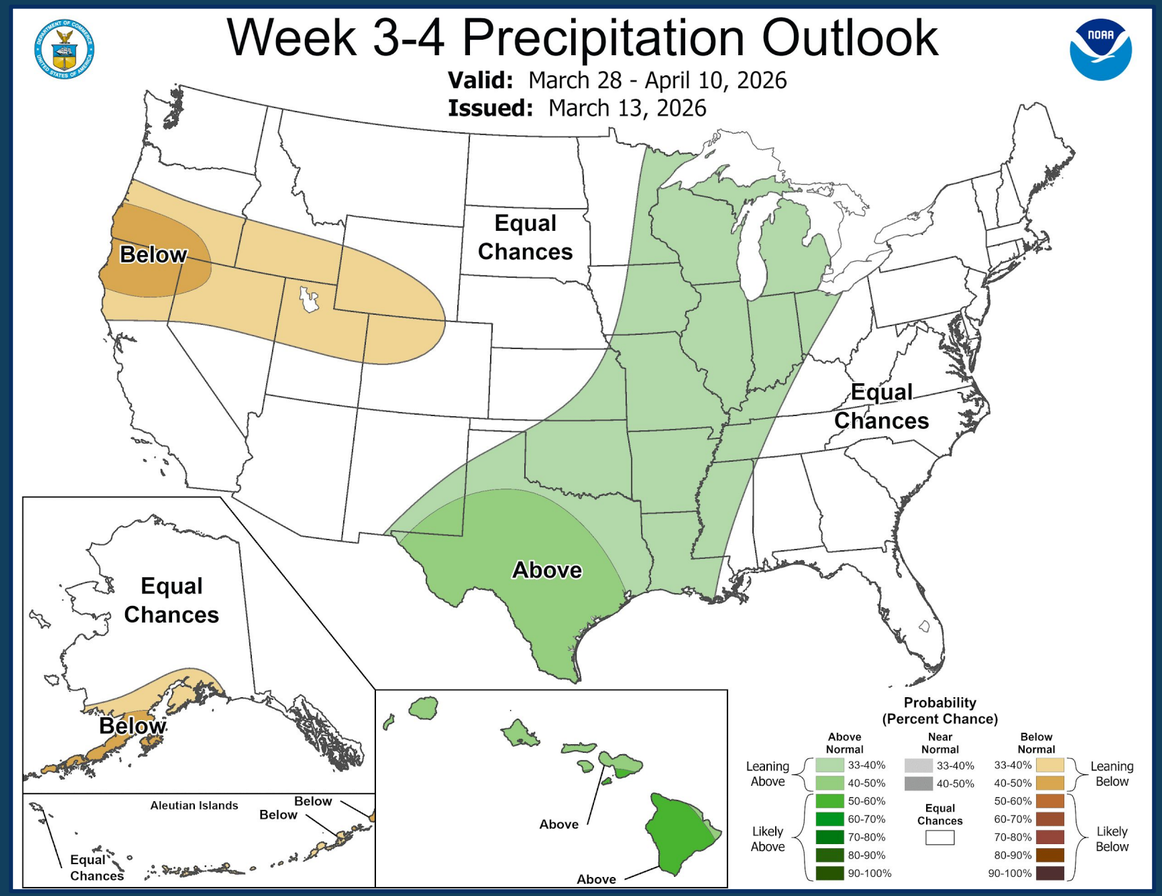
Medium Range

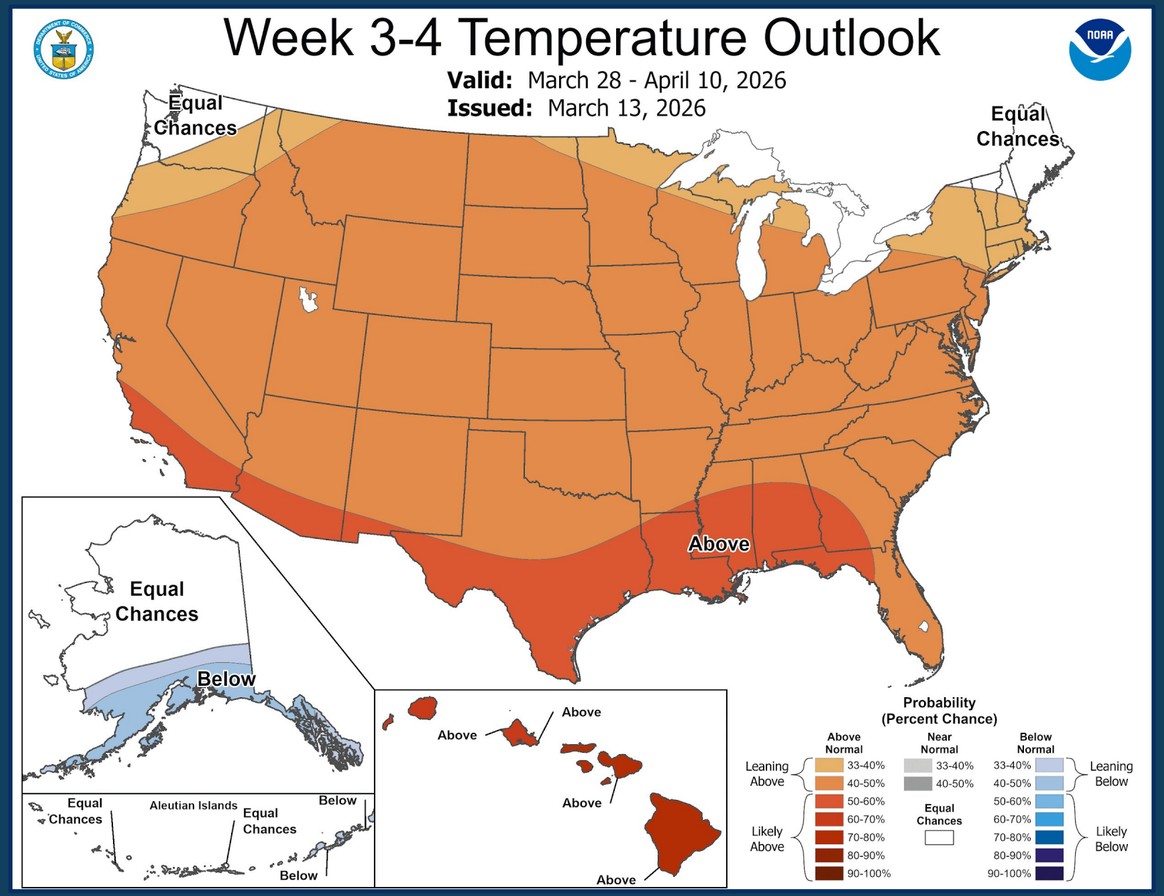




High pressure is expected to largely drive the 8-14 day period as well for the Southeast, keeping warmer and drier conditions around across much of the region. This has led the Climate Prediction Center to outlook much of the SERFC area as leaning below normal rainfall for the time period. However, there is an exception for the Florida Peninsula, where there are areas of both near normal, and leaning above normal. This is due to the potential for flow from the Gulf bringing more moisture to that area.

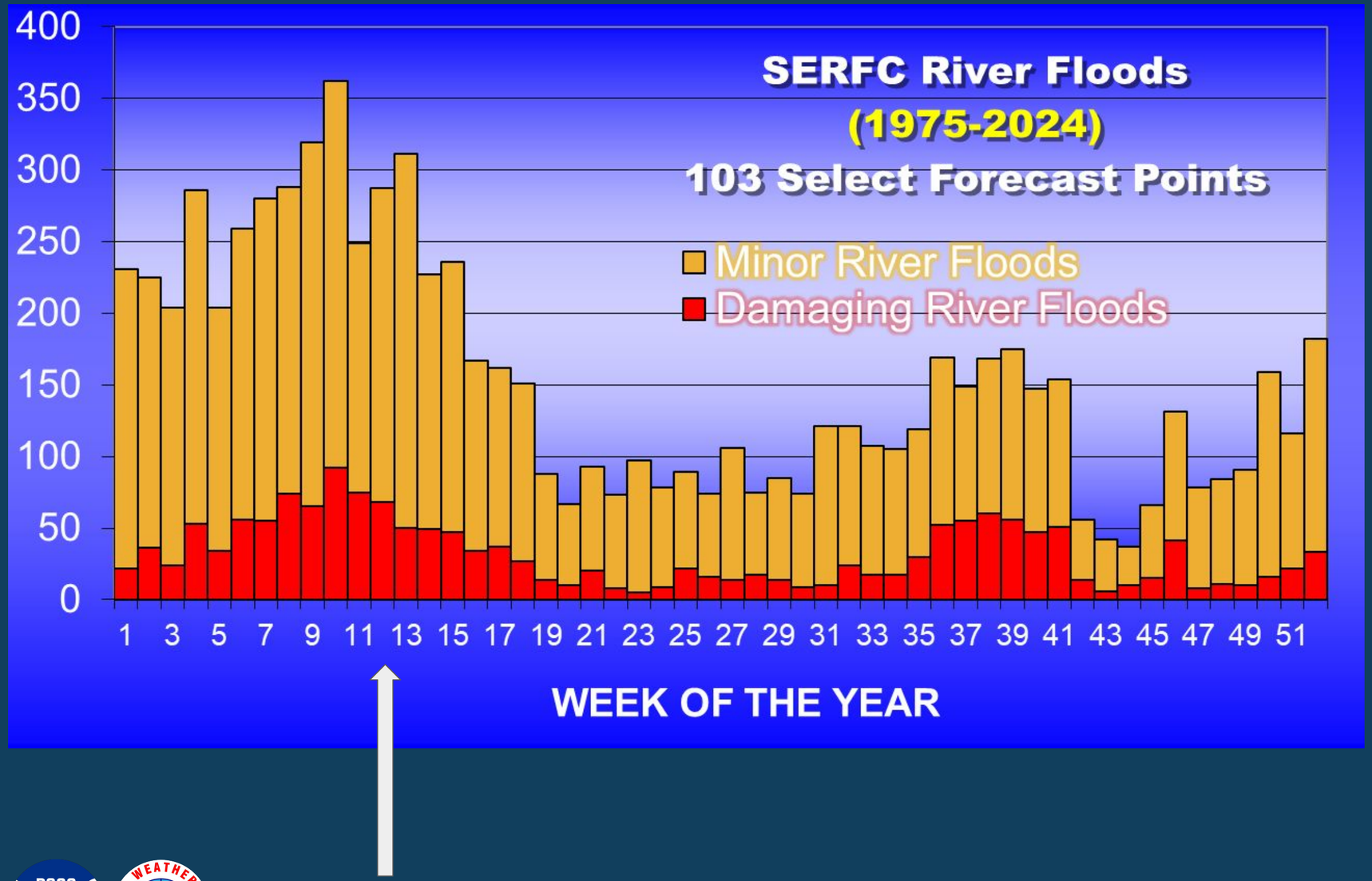
Medium Range





The Climate Prediction Center has nearly all of the Southeast in an area of “equal chances” for above normal, normal, or below normal rainfall in the week 3-4 period. The CPC mentioned that a lot of the signals they look for as often having an influence on the week 3-4 timeframe have been more subdued. However, They do see some support for troughing over Canada that would support more rain over parts of the central CONUS. The far western portions of the SERFC area (mainly the upper Tombigbee basins) could end up clipped by this rainfall and are included in the shaded area for above normal chances.

Long Term Outlook



Long Term Outlook

We are currently in week 12 of the year, which is typically just past the peak of the winter wet season. Historically, the number of minor and damaging (moderate to major) river floods is at its highest for the year. That has not been the case this year as dry conditions have persisted over the last few months. The expectation is that these conditions will continue through April in the Southeast, and, therefore, fewer flood numbers than normal.

ENSO Outlook

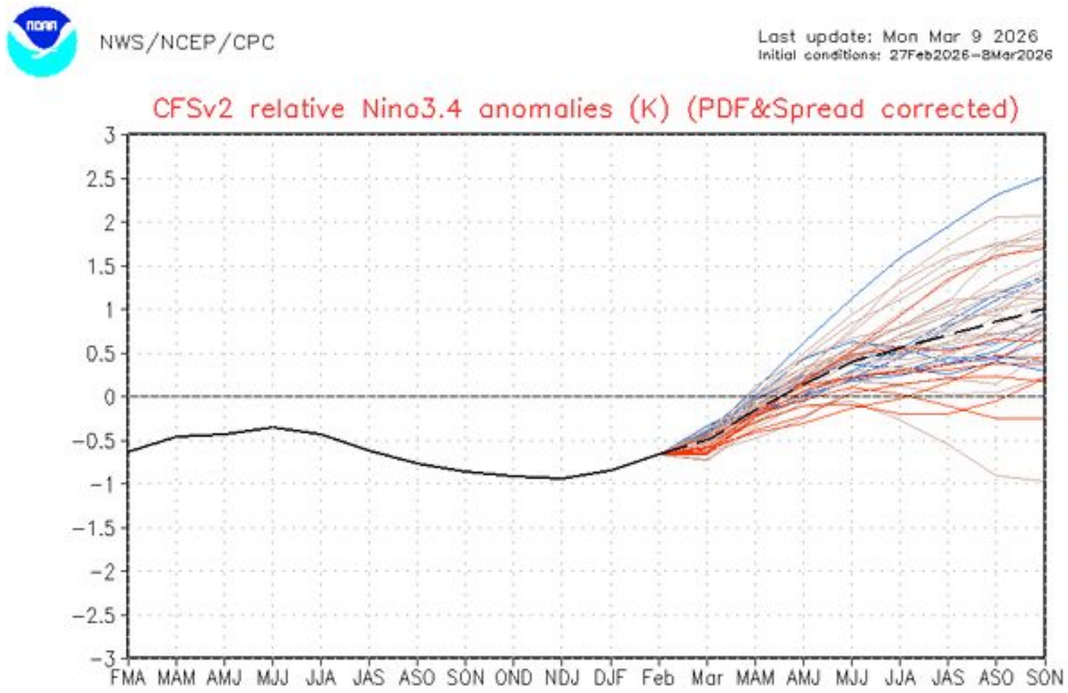


Figure 6. NCEP Climate Forecast System (CFSv2) prediction of relative sea surface temperature (SST) anomalies for the Niño 3.4 region (5°N-5°S, 120°W-170°W) minus tropical mean (20°N-20°S). Relative index is re-scaled to match variance of the traditional index. Figure updated 9 March 2026.

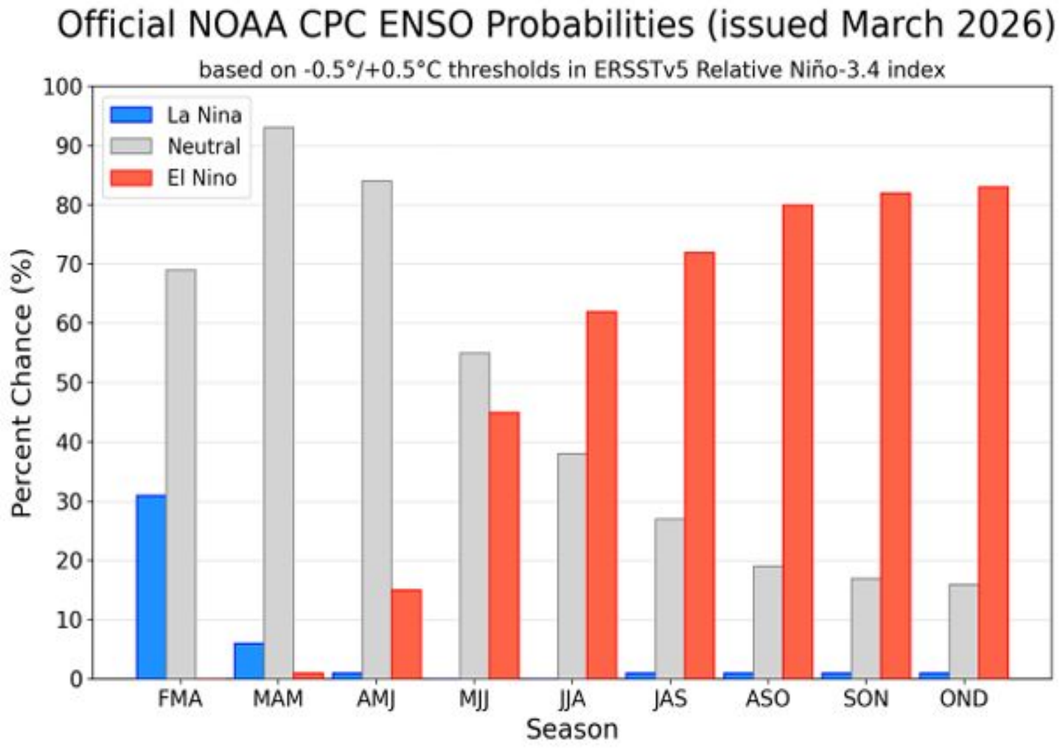
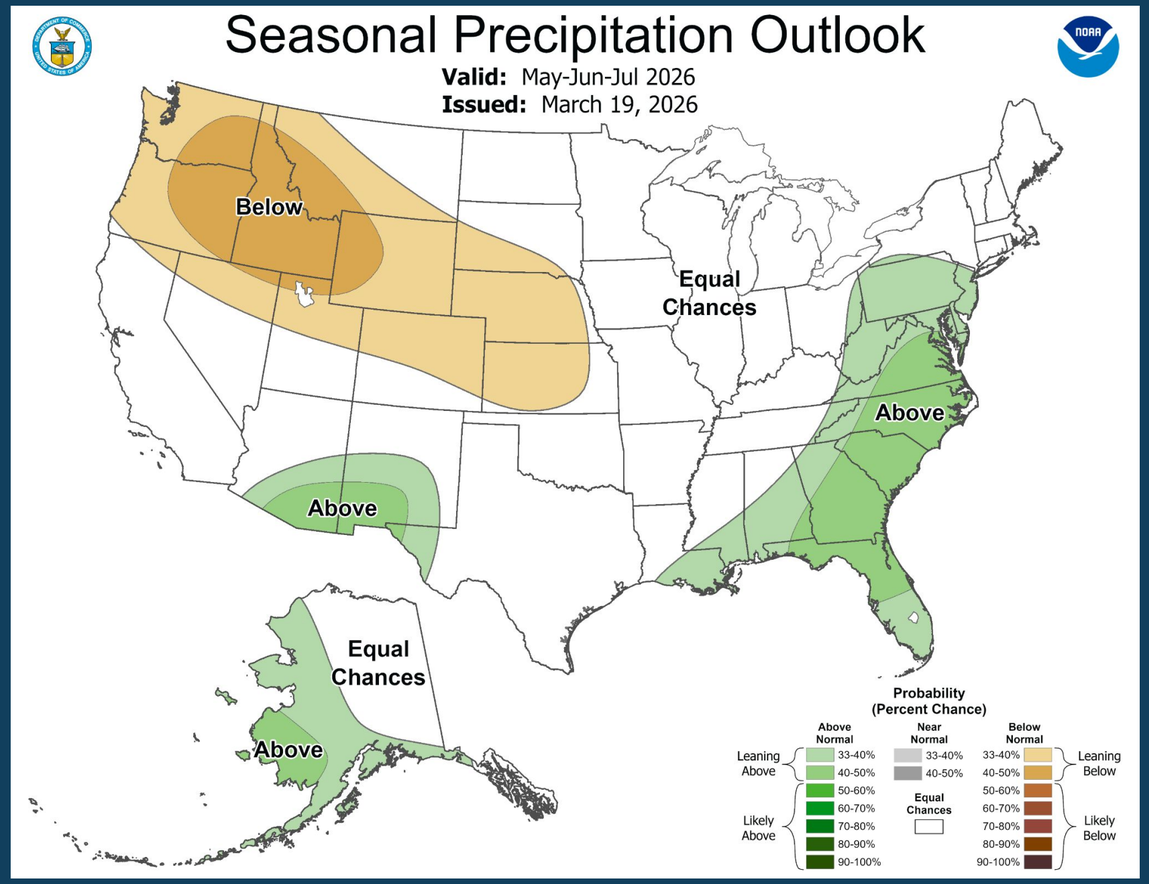


Figure 7. Official ENSO probabilities for the Niño 3.4 relative sea surface temperature index (5°N-5°S, 120°W-170°W minus tropical mean (20°N-20°S). Relative index is re-scaled to match variance of the traditional index). Figure updated 12 March 2026.

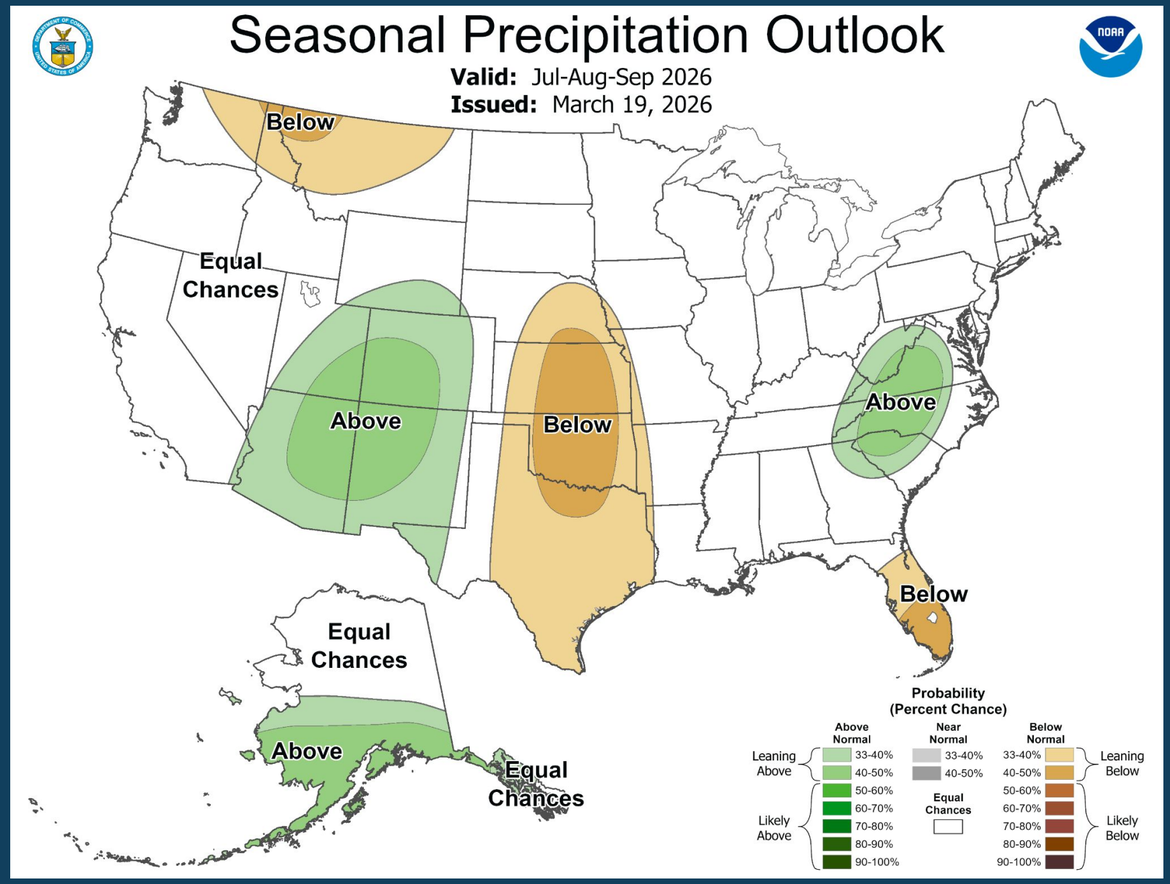
La Niña conditions continue, but a transition to ENSO-neutral conditions is expected in the next month. ENSO-neutral conditions are favored through May-July 2026 (55% chance). Going into the summer months, El Niño is likely to emerge (62% chance) in June-August 2026 and persist through at least the end of the year. Currently, we are in a La Niña Advisory / El Niño Watch.

Seasonal Average Rainfall and Forecasted Deviations

1.5 Month Outlook

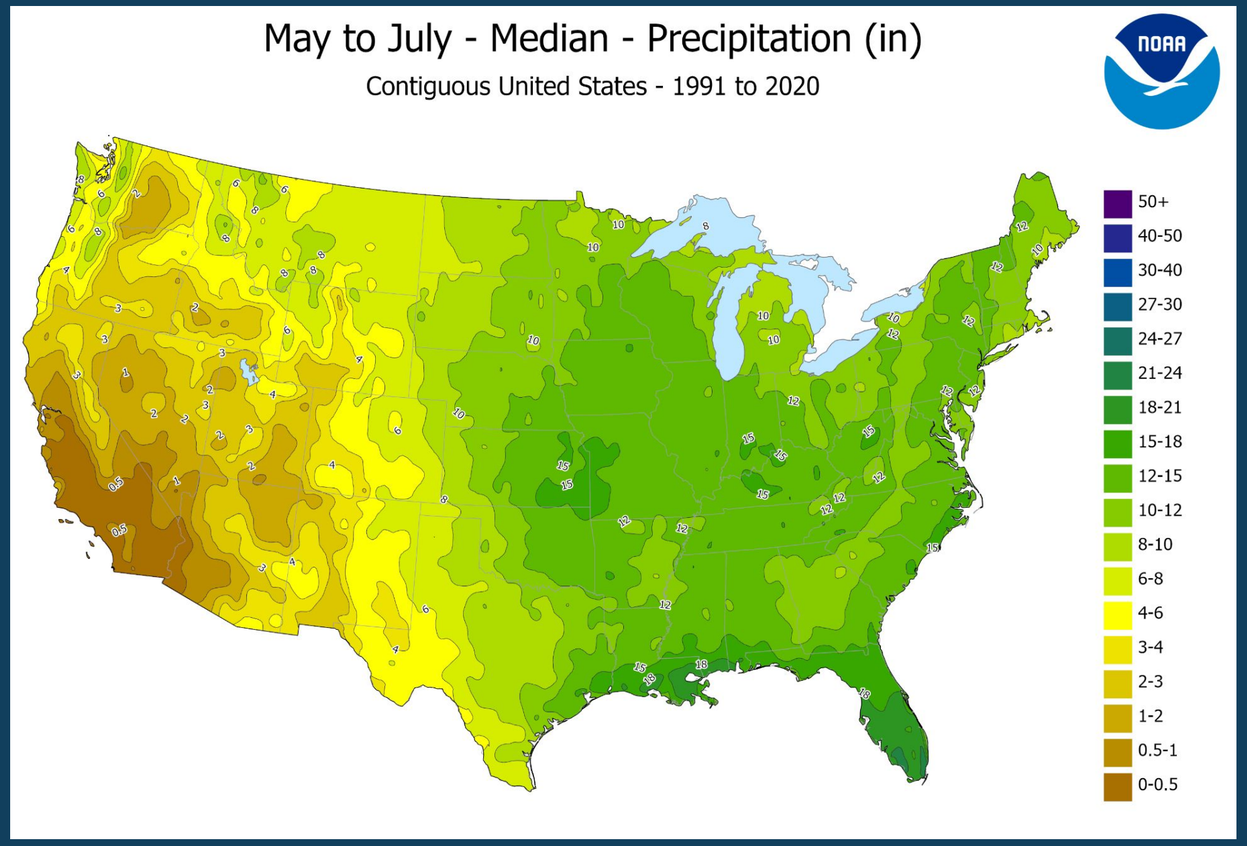


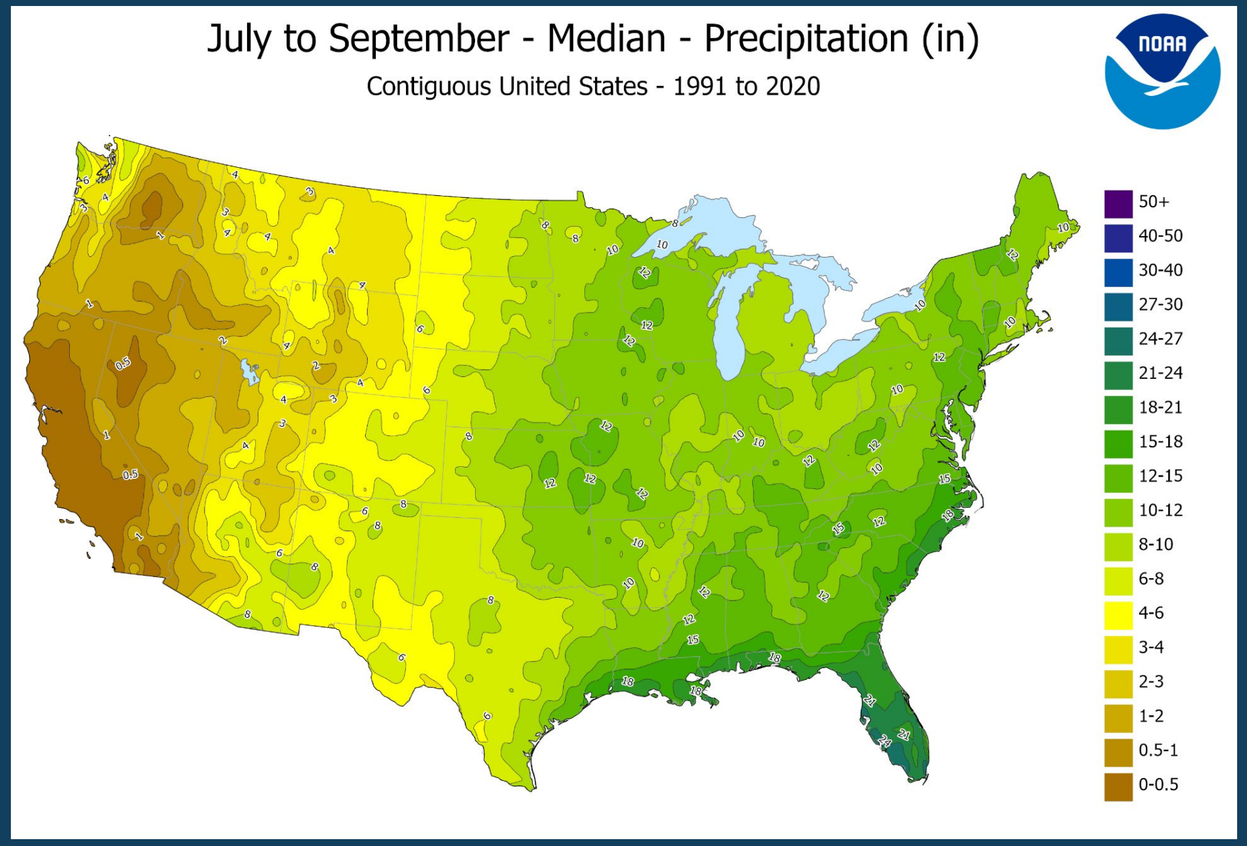
3.5 Month Outlook



As the transition from ENSO-Neutral to El Niño conditions begins, we are now seeing above normal precipitation chances for the Southeast from May to July. Looking further out to the summer (July to September), the area of above normal precipitation chances decreases to encompass Virginia and the Carolinas. Most of Florida also has below normal precipitation chances. Stronger El Niño conditions tend to reduce tropical activity due to more upper level shear.

Seasonal Rainfall Averages





Above are the normal rainfall amounts across the CONUS for time periods that correlate with the CPC outlooks on the previous slide

Synopsis

- There have been some breaks in long-standing dryness across the Southeast this month, especially in the northeast Alabama/northwest Georgia and central Georgia regions. This has led to drought improvement in some areas, while only preventing degradation in others. Much of the region has been warm and vegetation is starting to bloom, even blooming early in some areas. As we head further into the warmer months, increased evaporative demand and plant uptake could provide obstacles for drought improvement.

- Over the next two weeks, dry weather is expected as ridging becomes the dominant driver over the region. For the latter half of the period, signals are more subdued, but the region is outlooked with equal chances of above, normal, or below normal rainfall.

- Looking ahead to summer/early fall, we start to see a shift with more of the Southeast looking at chances for above normal rainfall. However, this will be subject to tropical activity, which can be influenced by the forecast transition to El Niño conditions.

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