Drought Information Statement for West Central and Southwest Florida

Valid May 8, 2026

Issued By: National Weather Service Tampa Bay, FL

Contact Information: sr-tbw.webmaster@noaa.gov

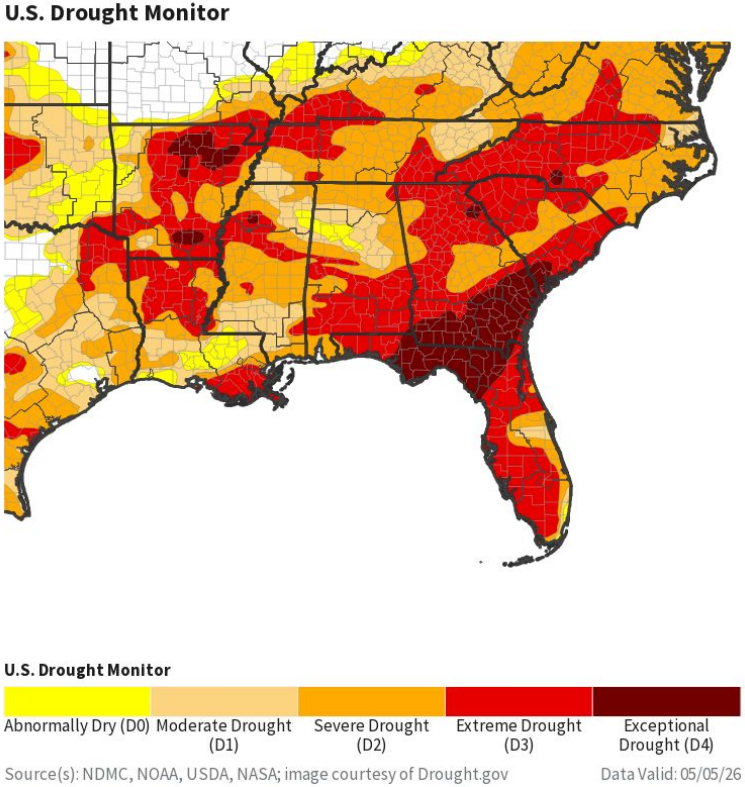
- This product will be updated May 15, 2026 or sooner if drought conditions change significantly.
- Please see all currently available products at https://drought.gov/drought-information-statements.
- Please visit https://www.weather.gov/tbw/DroughtInformationStatement for previous statements.
- Please visit https://www.drought.gov/drought-status-updates for regional drought status updates.

- Exceptional Drought across northern and western Levy County, with Moderate to Extreme Drought across the remainder of West Central and Southwest Florida.
- Drought characteristics are largely long term type impacts as rivers, streams experience little to now flow and ponds begin to dry up.

U.S. Drought Monitor

Link to the latest U.S. Drought Monitor for West Central and Southwest Florida

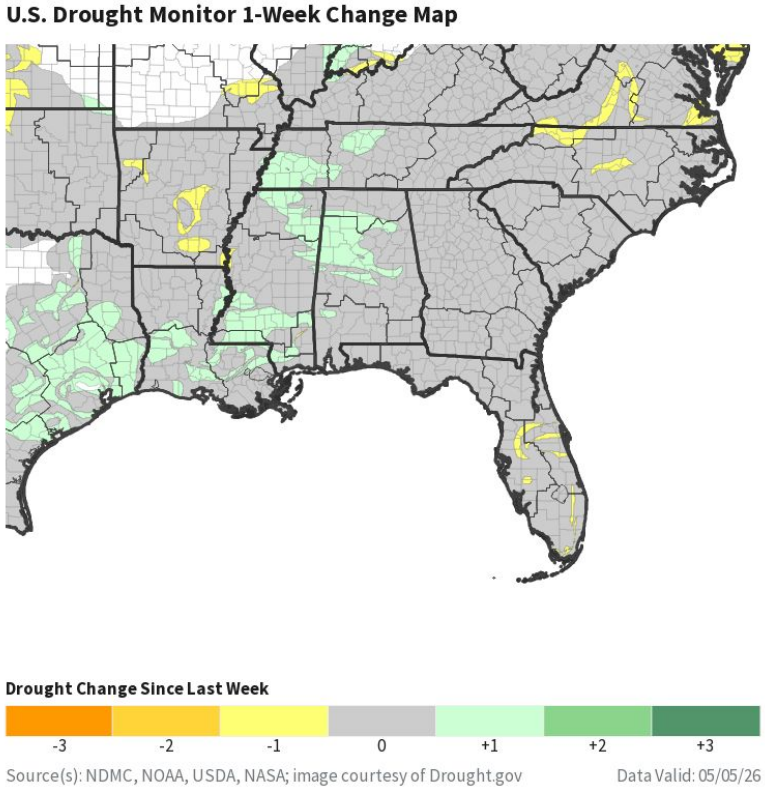
- The extended duration of limited rainfall has necessitated D4 Exceptional Drought across northern and western Levy County with the continuation of the D3 Extreme Drought across much of West Central and Southwest Florida.
- Drought intensity and Extent
  - **D4 (Exceptional Drought)**: Northern Levy County
  - **D3 (Extreme Drought)**: Rest of Levy, Citrus, N Sumter, Hernando, Pasco, Pinellas, Hillsborough, S Polk, Manatee, Sarasota, Hardee, Desoto, Highlands, Charlotte, and Lee Counties.
  - **D2 (Severe Drought)**: S Sumter and N Polk County.
  - **D1 (Moderate Drought)**: NE Polk County.



Recent Change in Drought Intensity

Link to the latest 4-week change map for West Central and Southwest Florida

- Despite some rain, this has not led to any meaningful improvements to the long-term deficit.
- The pace of water consumption by vegetation is higher this time of year, meaning that the rain that is falling is quickly being used up.
- **One Week Drought Monitor Class Change**
  - **Drought Degradation**: Sumter, Hernando, Pasco, Hillsborough, Hardee and Desoto Counties.
  - **No Change:** Across the remainder of West Central and Southwest Florida.

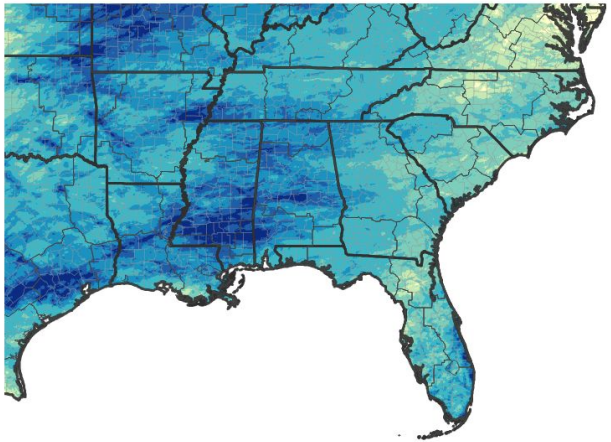


Precipitation

Last 30 Days

- Many areas south of I-4 have seen above normal rainfall over the last month.
- However, much of the Nature Coast south into the Tampa Bay area has seen more limited rainfall; thus most of this region is still running below normal.
- Keep in mind that “normal” rainfall in spring is easy to surpass, given that this is a typically dry time of year.
- When factoring in long term deficits, there continue to be greater impacts.

30-Day Precipitation Accumulations (Inches)



Inches of Precipitation

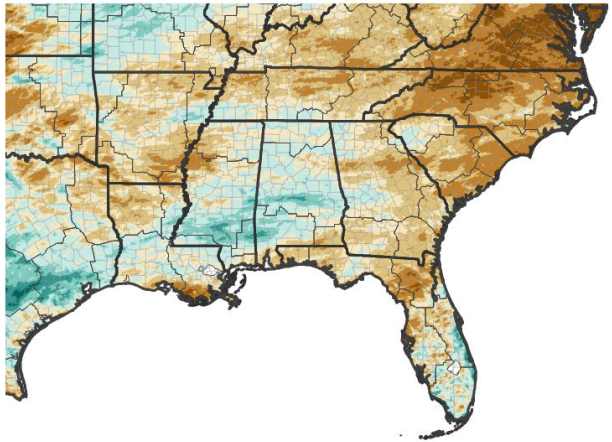
0 0.01 0.5 1 2

2 4 6 8

Source(s): National Weather Service Multi-Radar Multi-Sensor System; image courtesy of Drought.gov

Last Updated: 05/08/26

30-Day Percent of Normal Precipitation



Precipitation Shown as a Percentage of Normal Conditions

0% 25% 50% 75% 100%

100% 150% 200% 300%

Source(s): National Weather Service Multi-Radar Multi-Sensor System; image courtesy of Drought.gov

Last Updated: 05/08/26

Local Precipitation

Table of Accumulated Rainfall (inches) for some Official Locations - Since September 1, 2025

- Since September 1, 2025 rainfall has been well below normal across the area with numerous locations less than 50% of normal for this time period.

- Numerous locations are running in the Top 5 Driest on Record for the time period since September 1st.

Rainfall
Sep 1, 2025 - May 6, 2026

Site ID	Site Name	County	Rainfall (in.) Sep 1, 2025 - May 6, 2026	Normal Rainfall (in.) Sep 1-May 6	Departure from Normal	Percent of Normal	Ranking Sep 1-May 6	Records Began
BKV	Brooksville	Hernando	13.28	23.55	-10.27	56%	4th Driest	1892
FMY	Fort Myers - Page Field	Lee	15.10	24.93	-9.83	61%	14th Driest	1902
GIF	Winter Haven	Polk	15.17	22.49	-7.32	67%	10th Driest	1941
PGD	Punta Gorda	Charlotte	18.05	23.70	-5.65	76%	25th Driest	1914
PIE	St. Pete/Clearwater	Pinellas	12.92	23.86	-10.94	54%	3rd Driest	1998
RSW	Fort Myers - SW Int'l	Lee	17.48	23.09	-5.61	76%	8th Driest	1998
SPG	St. Petersburg	Pinellas	9.58	22.02	-12.44	44%	Driest	1914
SRQ	Sarasota-Bradenton Int'l	Manatee	13.58	23.29	-9.71	58%	8th Driest	1911
TPA	Tampa Int'l	Hillsborough	11.01	23.16	-12.15	48%	3rd Driest	1890
ACHF1	Archbold Bio Stn	Highlands	15.66	24.76	-9.10	63%	8th Driest	1969
CHIF1	Usher Tower	Levy	14.65	28.55	-13.90	51%	2nd Driest	1956
FTGF1	Fort Green 12 WSW	Manatee	11.73	24.68	-12.95	48%	2nd Driest	1948
INVF1	Inverness 3 SE	Citrus	14.80	25.08	-10.28	59%	4th Driest	1948
LLDF1	Lakeland Linder	Polk	12.23	26.91	-14.68	45%	4th Driest	1915
PLCF1	Plant City	Hillsborough	16.69	25.35	-8.66	66%	15th Driest	1892
TBW	Ruskin - NWS Tampa Bay	Hillsborough	9.33	26.16	-16.83	36%	Driest	1976
TRPF1	Tarpon Springs	Pinellas	10.27	26.54	-16.27	39%	3rd Driest	1892
VNCF1	Venice	Sarasota	9.71	24.92	-15.21	39%	Driest	1955

Rainfall
Sep 1, 2025 - Apr 30, 2026

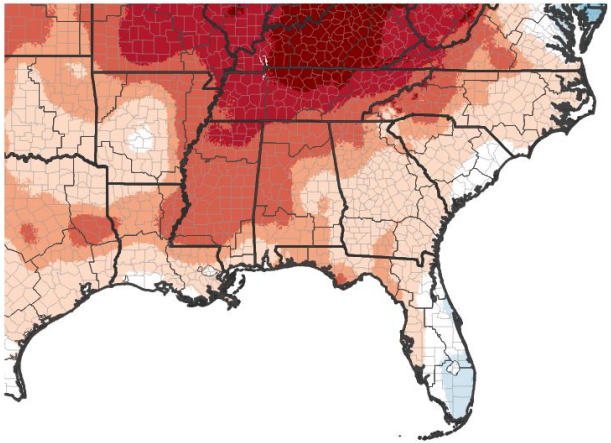
Site ID	Site Name	County	Rainfall (in.) Sep 1, 2025 - Apr 30	Normal Rainfall (in.) Sep 1-Apr 30	Departure from Normal	Percent of Normal	Ranking Sep 1-Apr 30	Records Began
BARF1	Bartow	Polk	15.50	24.31	-8.81	64%	13th Driest	1892
BRAF1	Bradenton 5 ESE	Manatee	9.82	24.78	-14.96	40%	Driest	1965
LWLF1	Mountain Lake	Polk	16.22	24.42	-8.20	66%	8th Driest	1935
STLF1	St. Leo	Pasco	17.17	25.76	-8.59	67%	14th Driest	1895
WAUF1	Wauchula	Hardee	13.43	23.88	-10.45	56%	7th Driest	1933

Temperature

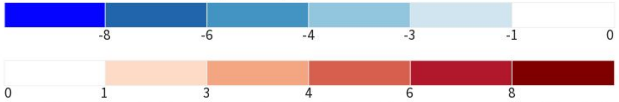
7-Day and 30-Day Temperature Anomalies

- Temperatures are now consistently warmer than they were earlier in the year.
- As the spring bloom continues, vegetation uses more water.
- This further contributes to a decline in water that is available.
- Near to slightly above normal temperatures are expected over the next few weeks, contributing to greater evaporation of water as well.

7-Day Temperature Anomaly



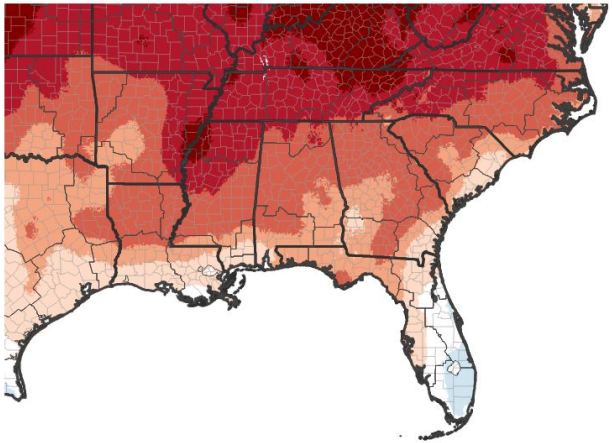
Departure from Normal Max Temperature (°F)



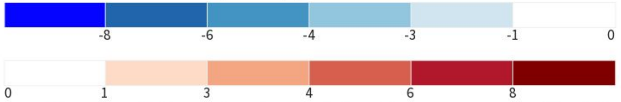
Source(s): NOAA's National Centers for Environmental Information; image courtesy of Drought.gov

Data Valid: 04/29/26

30-Day Temperature Anomaly



Departure from Normal Max Temperature (°F)



Source(s): NOAA's National Centers for Environmental Information; image courtesy of Drought.gov

Data Valid: 04/29/26

Summary of Impacts

Links: See/submit Condition Monitoring Observer Reports (CMOR) and view the Drought Impacts Reporter

Hydrologic Impacts

- The Southwest Florida Water Management District created this video highlighting impacts in the Withlacoochee River Basin. A River System Update was issued **May 1, 2026**.
- Streamflows remain exceptionally low for this time of year. In some areas, there is now no water flow at all. This is leading to algae blooms along portions of some area rivers. To report an algae bloom, go to ReportAlgalBloom.com or call the hotline at 1-855-305-3903.
- In the Green Swamp, there is essentially no water movement; and all the cypress swamps and wet prairies that seasonally flow to the Withlacoochee River are dried up.

Images of dry conditions around the region, courtesy of SWFWMD

Summary of Impacts

Links: See/submit Condition Monitoring Observer Reports (CMOR) and view the Drought Impacts Reporter

Hydrologic Impacts

- Areawide, surface/groundwater levels remain especially low, accentuating the long term nature of this drought.
- Many ponds and lakes are drying up across the region.

Imperial Marsh Preserve - November 2025

Photos courtesy of Michael Braun - WGCU

Imperial Marsh Preserve - March 7, 2026

Summary of Impacts

Links: See/submit Condition Monitoring Observer Reports (CMOR) and view the Drought Impacts Reporter

Agricultural Impacts

- Hernando, Polk, Hardee, and Sarasota County farmers have noted that the dryness is the worst seen in at least 15 to 20 years.
- Some crop plantings are being delayed by farmers.
- Many plants less drought-resistant are experiencing stress.
- Cisterns are being used in some areas to supplement the normal potable water supply.
- Supplemental feeding with hay and other feed is required to sustain livestock. Report impacts here.

Fire Hazard Impacts

- The Keetch-Byram Drought Index (KBDI) ranges from 500 to 700, indicating that soils are continuing to dry out.
- Brush fires continue to occur, with several large, highly visible fires and numerous other fires across the Florida and southern Georgia. Some wildfires have caused damage to structures, temporary road closures, and have grown to thousands of acres before containment.

Summary of Impacts

Links: See/submit Condition Monitoring Observer Reports (CMOR) and view the Drought Impacts Reporter

Mitigation Actions - Southwest Florida Water Management District

- Southwest Florida Water Management District has declared a Modified Phase III "Extreme" Water Shortage that began on April 3, 2026. Always refer to city or county regulations first.
- An emergency order was issued to Tampa Bay Water to lower the Middle Pool of the Tampa Bypass Canal from 12 feet to 10 feet to continue augmenting the City of Tampa's Hillsborough River Reservoir. The order expires July 1, 2026.
- An emergency order was issued to the Peace River Manasota Regional Water Supply Authority to modify its diversion schedule to allow increased withdrawals from the Peace River. The order expires May 31, 2026.
- An emergency order was issued to the City of Punta Gorda to temporarily withdraw up to an additional 2.2 million gallons per day from Shell Creek to provide to the Peace River Manasota Regional Water Supply Authority. The order expires July 1, 2026.

Summary of Impacts

Links: See/submit Condition Monitoring Observer Reports (CMOR) and view the Drought Impacts Reporter

Mitigation Actions - Other Partners

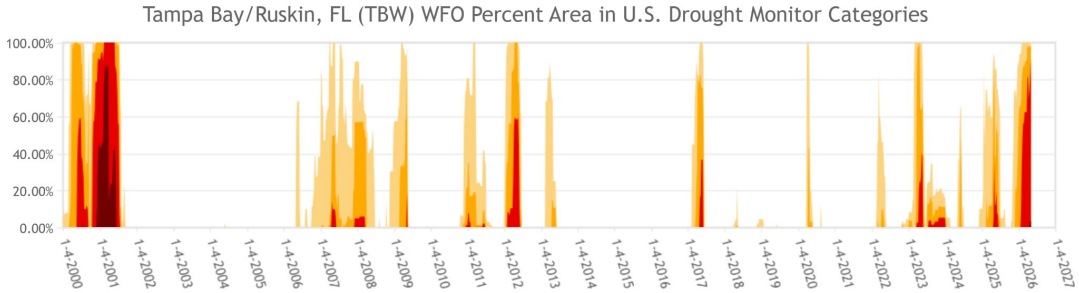
- Tampa Bay Water has issued a Stage 3 Extreme Regional Water Supply Shortage
- A State of Emergency has been issued for the area due to the impacts of Winter Weather, Drought, and the increased Wildfire Risks.
- A modified Phase II Water Shortage is in effect for a portion of Northeast Cape Coral in Lee County.
- Burn Bans are in effect for all counties in West Central and Southwest Florida except Manatee County. Please contact the county for specifics.

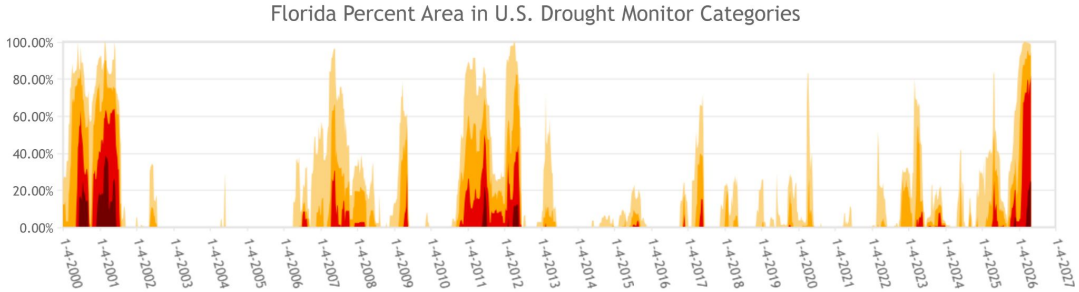
A Perspective on this Drought

Link to Drought Monitor Time Series

How does this drought compare to past long term droughts in the NWS Tampa Bay forecast area?

- There have been four long duration droughts since 2000 in West Central and Southwest Florida, including the current drought.
- While conditions are significant, they have not yet reached the intensity and duration experienced in the 2000/2001 drought.
- Exceptional Drought (D4) is present across parts of Levy County at this time, and the percentage of Extreme Drought (D3) coverage in the NWS Tampa Bay area is the highest since 2001.
- This is the most impactful drought within the NWS Tampa Bay area since 2012.
- This is the first time since the drought monitor began in 2000 that the **entire** State of Florida is D1 (Moderate drought) or worse.





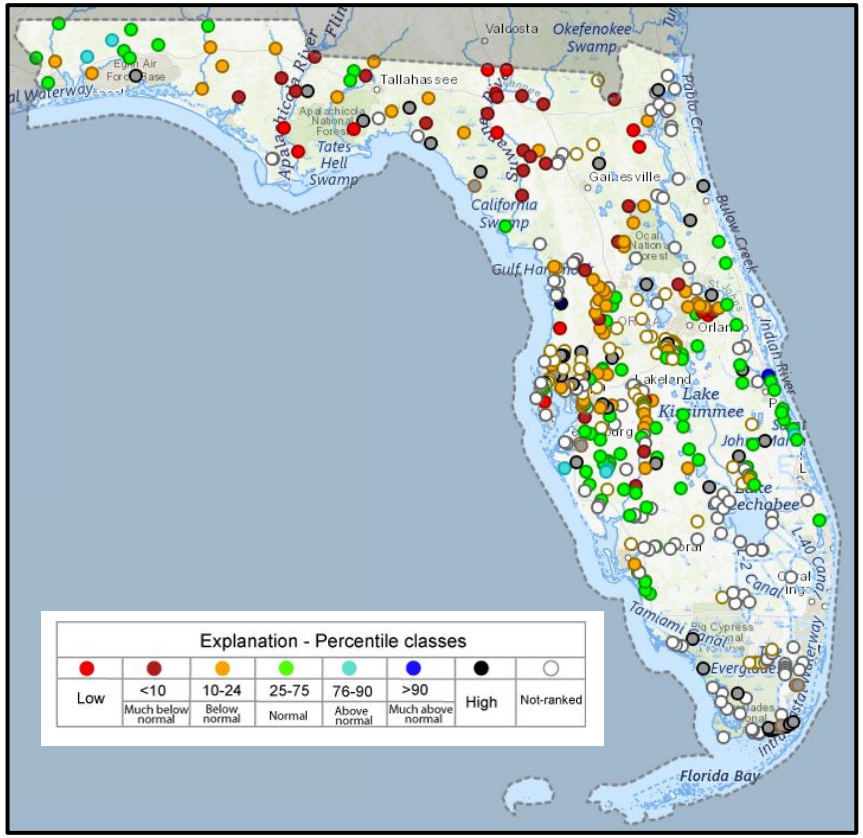
Graphs Courtesy of the U.S. Drought Monitor website
Time series depiction of D1, D2, D3, and D4 drought across the NWS Tampa Bay forecast area by percentage (top). State of Florida Time Series of D1, D2, D3, and D4 drought by percentage (bottom). Records go back to 2000.

D1 (Moderate Drought)
D2 (Severe Drought)
D3 (Extreme Drought)
D4 (Exceptional Drought)

Hydrologic Conditions and Impacts

USGS Streamflow Map for Florida

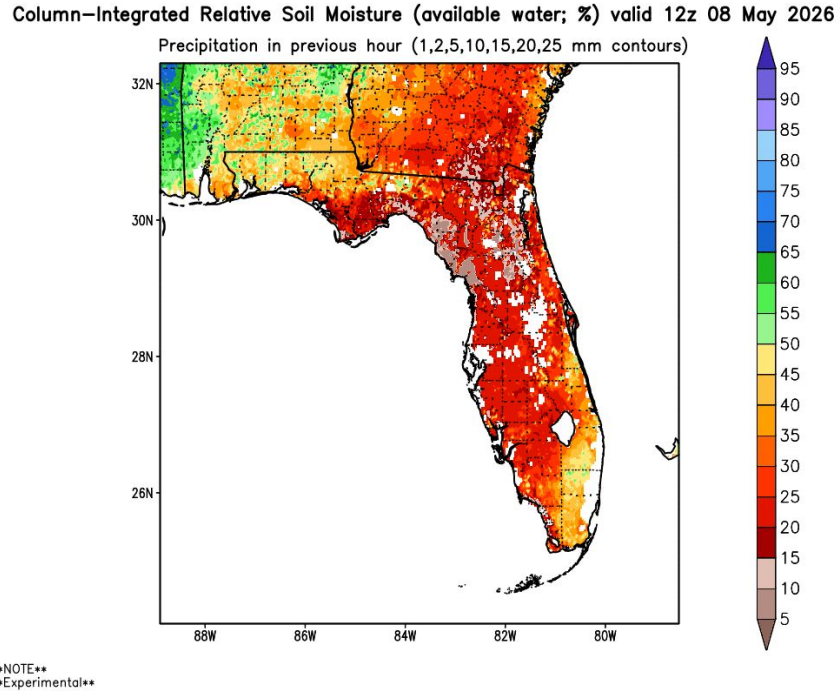
- With some rainfall over the last few weeks, streamflows returned to near normal in parts of Central and Southwest Florida, but are now beginning to fall below normal once again.
- With little rainfall across the Nature Coast, streamflows remain below normal in this region.
- Better chances of near to above normal rainfall are favored over the next couple of weeks, but streamflows are not likely to see much improvement.

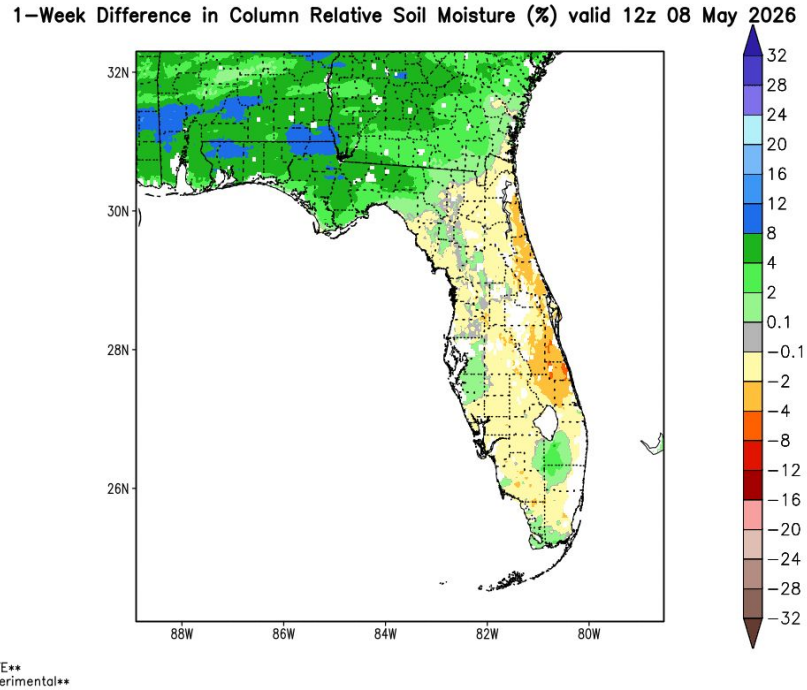


Agricultural Impacts

2025 Florida Crop Report

Deep layer soil moisture has increased some over the last week due rainfall over the weekend. With a boundary forecast to stall north of the region through the weekend, there could be some slight improvement across the Nature Coast.



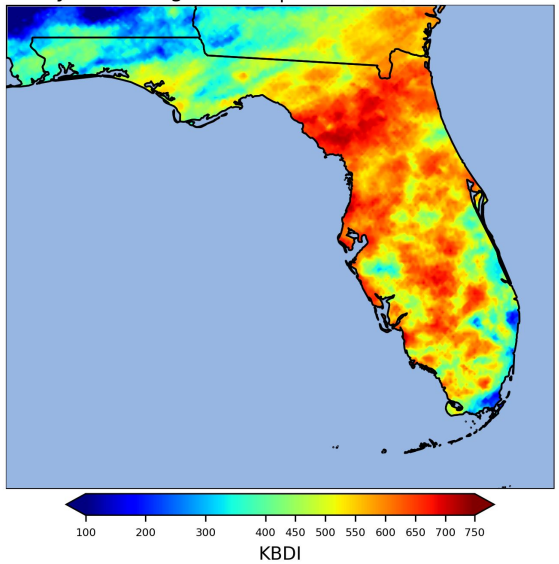


Fire Hazard Impacts

Link to [Wildfire Potential Outlooks from the National Interagency Coordination Center.]

- The Keetch-Byram Drought Index (KBDI) remains high with virtually no rainfall across the region this week.
- The KBDI will rise quickly when it does not rain for a few days, with antecedent conditions favoring the rapid absorption and consumption of the water that falls.
- Thus, brush fires have continued to occur with [Burn Bans] in effect for several counties.
- The Significant Wildland Fire Potential Outlook for May continues to call for above normal wildfire activity across the area.

Keetch-Byram Drought Index | Thu 05/07/26, 02:00 PM EDT

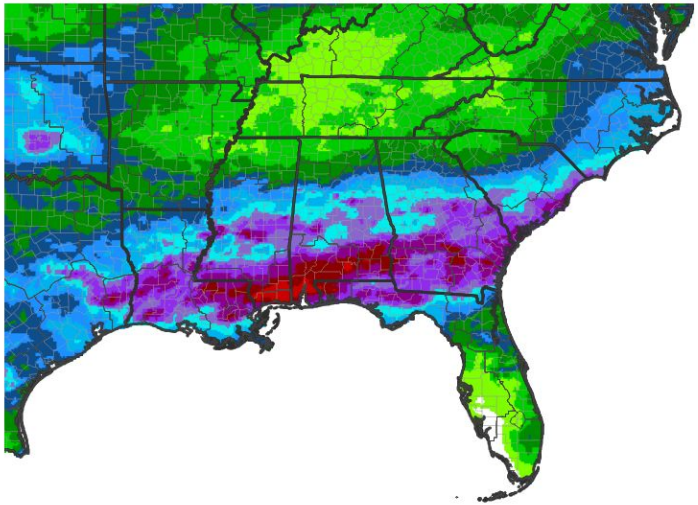


Precipitation Outlook

7-Day and 8-14 Day Precipitation Outlooks

- Showers and a few thunderstorms are expected this weekend, then warm and mainly dry weather will return next week.
- A consistent period of rain is needed to substantially alleviate the drought conditions.
- There are better chances for near to above normal rainfall during the second week of May.

7-Day Quantitative Precipitation Forecast for May 8, 2026–May 15, 2026



Predicted Inches of Precipitation

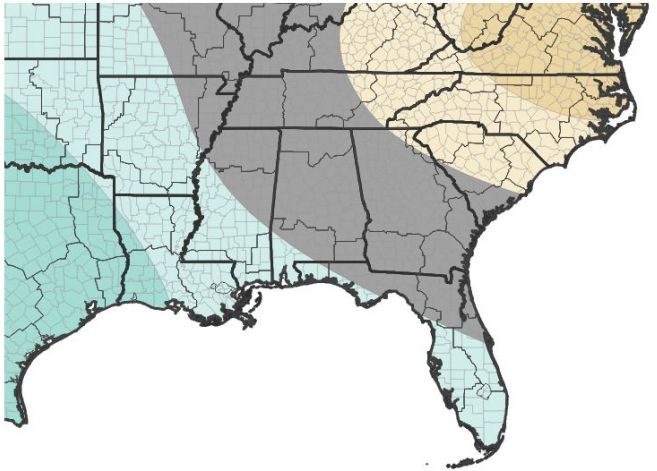
0 0.01 0.1 0.25 0.5 0.75 1 1.25 1.5 1.75

1.75 2 2.5 3 4 5 7 10 15 20

Source(s): National Weather Service Weather Prediction Center; image courtesy of Drought.gov

Last Updated: 05/08/26

8–14 Day Precipitation Outlook for May 15, 2026–May 21, 2026



Probability of Below-Normal Precipitation

33% 40% 50% 60% 70% 80% 90% 100%

Probability of Above-Normal Precipitation

33% 40% 50% 60% 70% 80% 90% 100%

Near-Normal Conditions

Source(s): Climate Prediction Center; image courtesy of Drought.gov

Last Updated: 05/07/26

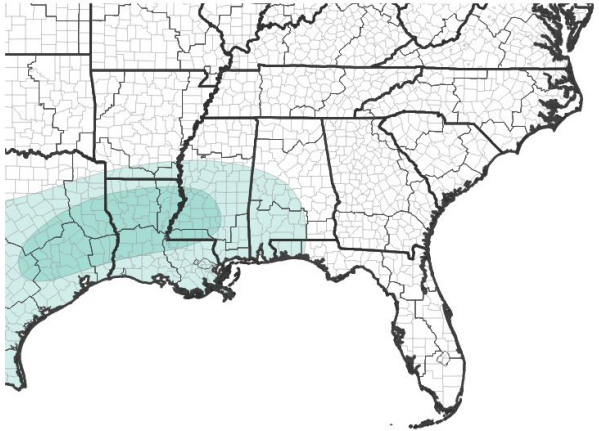
Long-Range Outlooks

The latest monthly and seasonal outlooks can be found on the CPC homepage

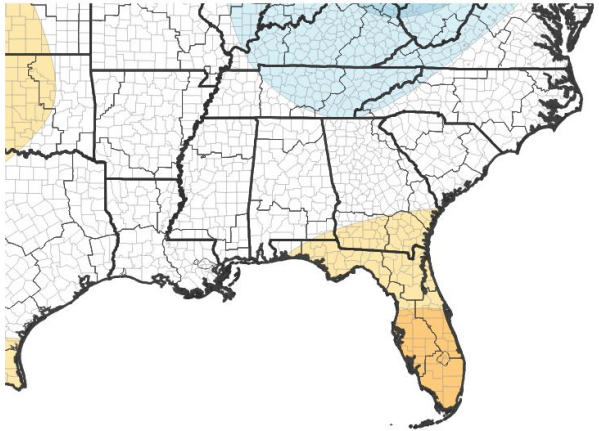
- The outlook for May suggests equal chances for above, below, and near normal rainfall, with a better chance of above normal temperatures.
- With such large deficits, the rain that has fallen will not provide significant relief. Thus, drought conditions are forecast to persist.

Normals	May	
	Temp	Rain
Brooksville	75.3°	3.35"
Tampa	79.5°	2.60"
Lakeland	78.2°	3.80"
Sarasota	77.8°	2.58"
Punta Gorda	77.9°	3.26"
Fort Myers	79.3°	3.46"

Monthly Precipitation Outlook for May 1, 2026–May 31, 2026



Monthly Temperature Outlook for May 1, 2026–May 31, 2026



Probability of Below-Normal Precipitation

33% 40% 50% 60% 70% 80% 90% 100%

Probability of Above-Normal Precipitation

33% 40% 50% 60% 70% 80% 90% 100%

Probability of Near-Normal Precipitation

33% 40% 50%

Source(s): Climate Prediction Center; image courtesy of Drought.gov Last Updated: 04/30/26

Probability of Below-Normal Temperatures

33% 40% 50% 60% 70% 80% 90% 100%

Probability of Above-Normal Temperatures

33% 40% 50% 60% 70% 80% 90% 100%

Probability of Near-Normal Temperatures

33% 40% 50%

Source(s): Climate Prediction Center; image courtesy of Drought.gov Last Updated: 04/30/26

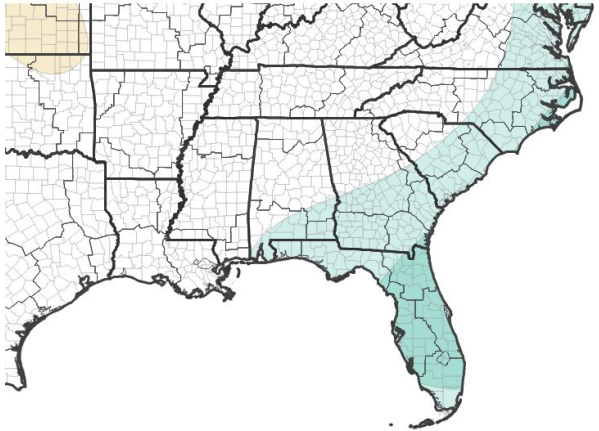
Long-Range Outlooks

The latest monthly and seasonal outlooks can be found on the CPC homepage

- With June and July in the long-term outlook, there is a signal for above normal precipitation, coinciding with the anticipation of the arrival of the rainy season.
- However, this does not typically set in until late May, early June.
- Overall, this favors persistent drought conditions for at least the next month or so.

Normals	May		June		July	
	Temp	Rain	Temp	Rain	Temp	Rain
Brooksville	75.3°	3.35"	80.1°	7.91"	81.3°	9.41"
Tampa	79.5°	2.60"	82.9°	7.37"	83.8°	7.75"
Lakeland	78.2°	3.80"	81.8°	8.69"	83.2°	8.85"
Sarasota	77.8°	2.58"	81.8°	7.05"	83.1°	7.39"
Punta Gorda	77.9°	3.26"	81.7°	9.24"	83.3°	8.06"
Fort Myers	79.3°	3.46"	82.3°	9.66"	83.2°	9.38"

Seasonal (3-Month) Precipitation Outlook for May 1, 2026–July 31, 2026



Probability of Below-Normal Precipitation

33% 40% 50% 60% 70% 80% 90% 100%

Probability of Above-Normal Precipitation

33% 40% 50% 60% 70% 80% 90% 100%

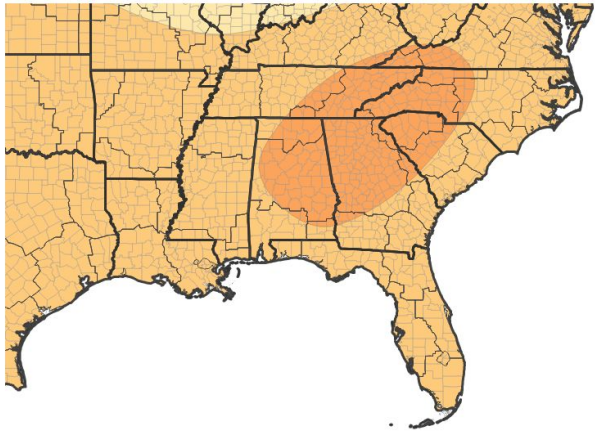
Probability of Near-Normal Precipitation

33% 40% 50%

Source(s): Climate Prediction Center; image courtesy of Drought.gov

Last Updated: 04/16/26

Seasonal (3-Month) Temperature Outlook for May 1, 2026–July 31, 2026



Probability of Below-Normal Temperatures

33% 40% 50% 60% 70% 80% 90% 100%

Probability of Above-Normal Temperatures

33% 40% 50% 60% 70% 80% 90% 100%

Probability of Near-Normal Temperatures

33% 40% 50%

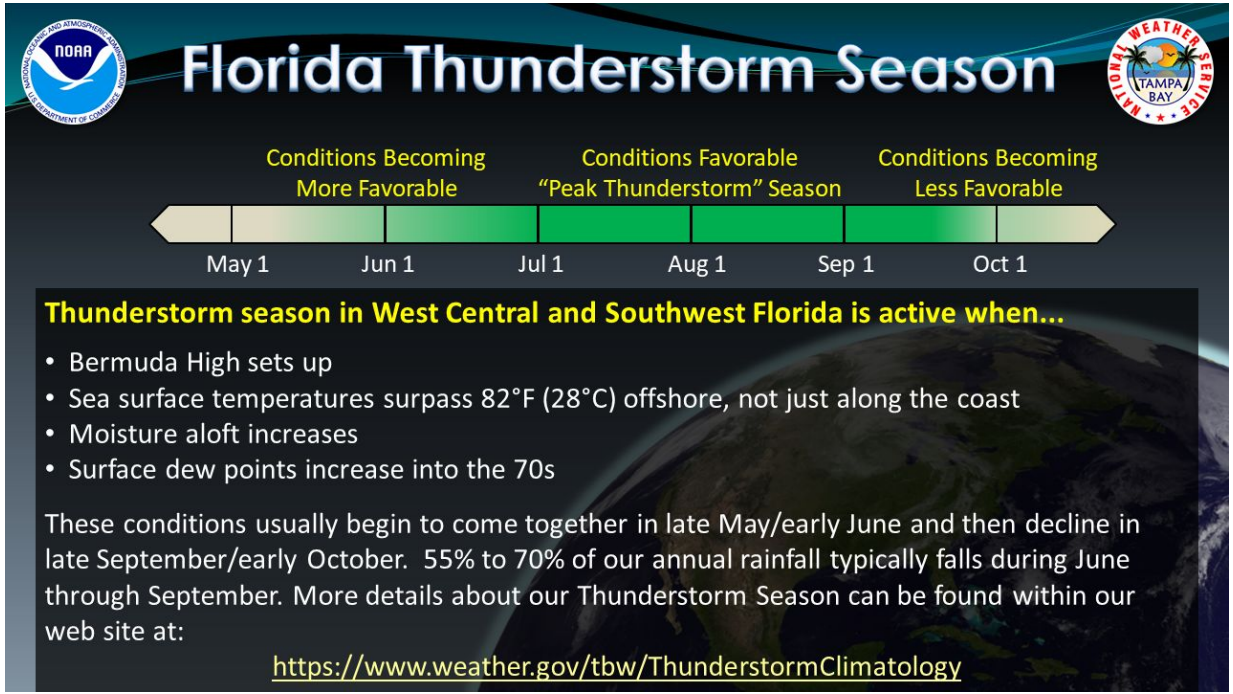
Source(s): Climate Prediction Center; image courtesy of Drought.gov

Last Updated: 04/16/26

When Does the Rainy Season Usually Start?

When Could There Be Some Drought Relief?

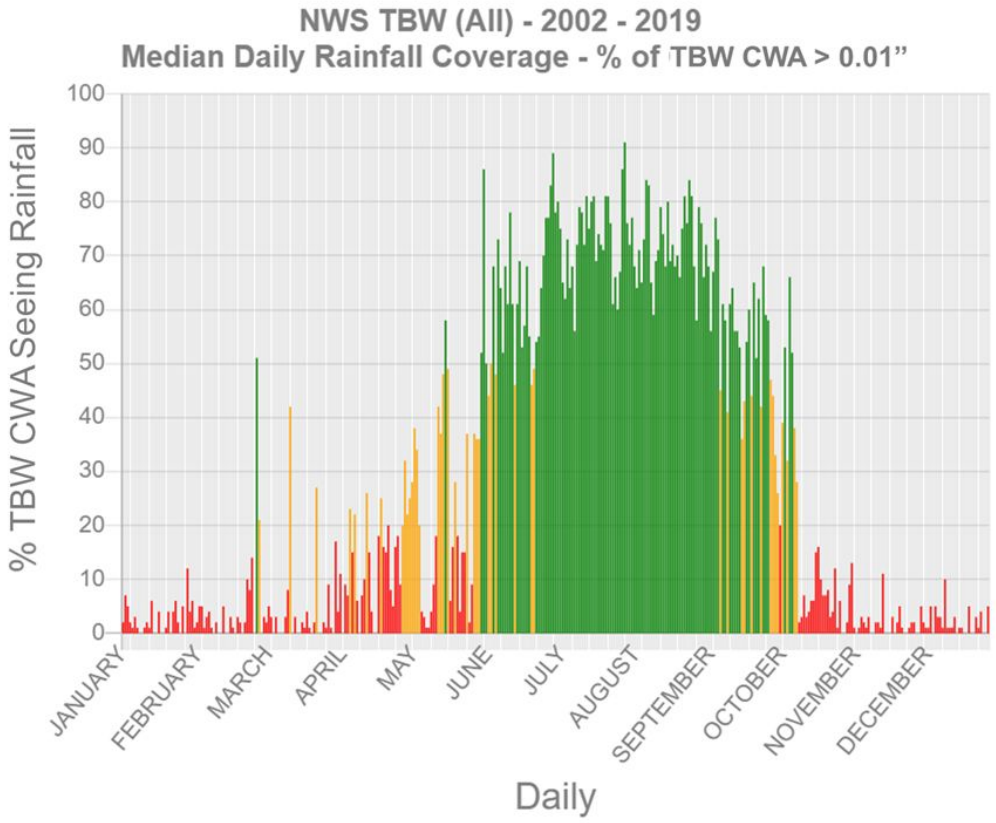
- Any consistent rainfall to provide some drought relief would likely not arrive until late May/early June.
- However, the beginning of the rainy season is usually a transition period rather than a single date.
- Therefore, drought conditions may persist into early summer until daily rains become more consistent.
- There will also be day-to-day variability in thunderstorm coverage that could impact how quickly areas recover.



When Does the Rainy Season Usually Start?

When Could There Be Some Drought Relief?

- The most consistent and widespread rainfall historically does not kick in until mid-June.
- However, there are often some days/weeks in May where greater thunderstorm coverage does occur.
- More details about our Rainy Season can be found here.



Drought Outlook

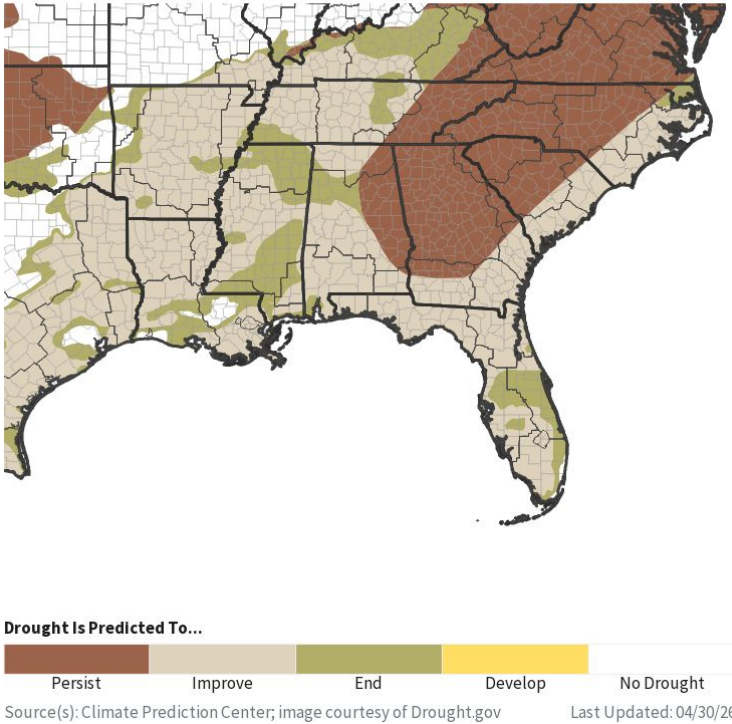
The latest monthly and seasonal outlooks can be found on the CPC homepage

- Given the prediction for above normal precipitation in the months ahead, drought is expected to improve across the region over the next three months - if not end altogether; but not likely until at least June when the rainy season arrives and daily rains become more consistent.

- Should rainfall over the next three months be below normal, drought conditions could still get worse before improving, especially with temperatures now looking to be consistently warm.

- The next month or so is likely to see the greatest impacts from the current drought conditions if this pattern persists.

Seasonal (3-Month) Drought Outlook for April 30, 2026–July 31, 2026



Links to the latest:
Climate Prediction Center Monthly Drought Outlook
Climate Prediction Center Seasonal Drought Outlook