



Drought Information Statement for West Central and Southwest Florida

Valid May 22, 2026

Issued By: National Weather Service Tampa Bay, FL

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

- This product will be updated May 29, 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.
 - Drought should begin gradually subsiding in coming weeks.



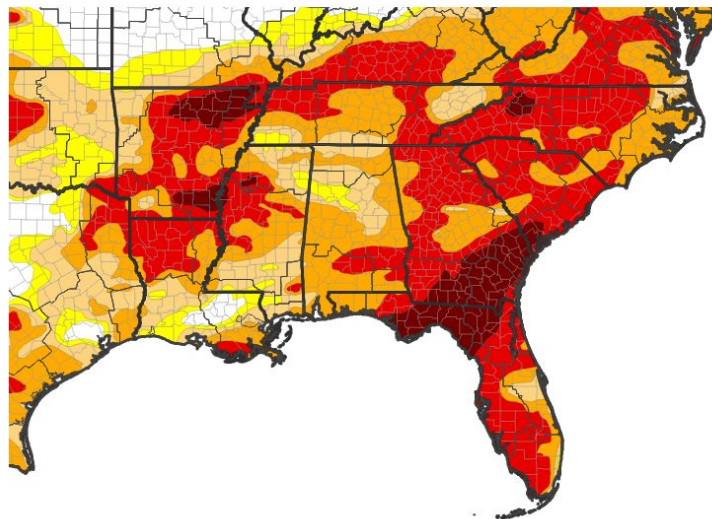


U.S. Drought Monitor

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.

U.S. Drought Monitor



U.S. Drought Monitor



Source(s): NDMC, NOAA, USDA, NASA; image courtesy of Drought.gov

Data Valid: 05/19/26



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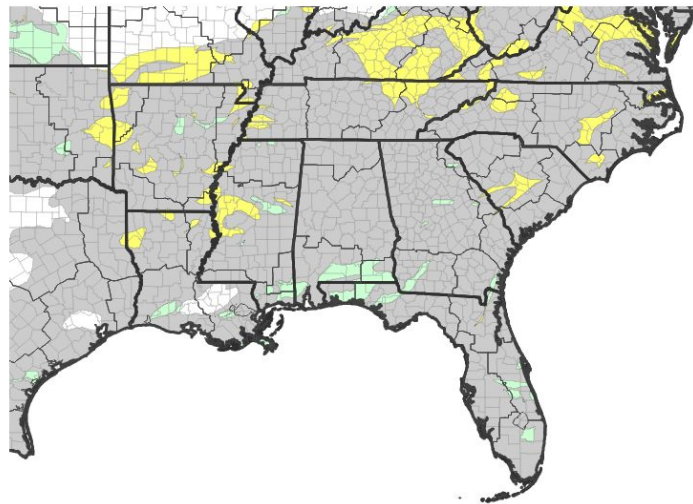


Recent Change in Drought Intensity

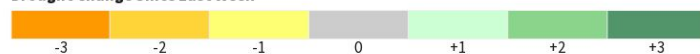
Link to the latest [4-week change map](#) for West Central and Southwest Florida

- Despite some rain, this has not led to any meaningful improvements to the long-term deficit as of yet.
- 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.
- As rain begins to more regularly fall, this should allow the system to begin recovering, and this will favor gradual improvement of drought conditions over time.
- **One Week Drought Monitor Class Change**
 - **Drought Improved:** Across parts of Ern Polk County.
 - **No Change:** Rest of West Central and Southwest Florida.

U.S. Drought Monitor 1-Week Change Map



Drought Change Since Last Week



Source(s): NDMC, NOAA, USDA, NASA; image courtesy of Drought.gov

Data Valid: 05/19/26



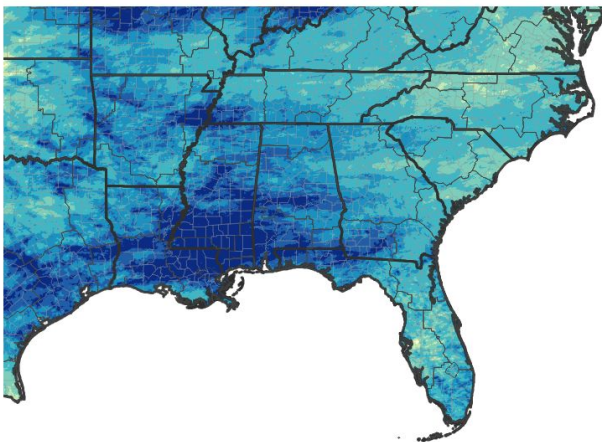


Precipitation

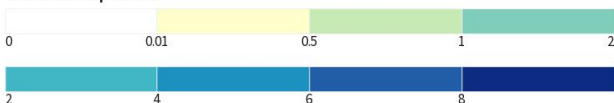
Last 30 Days

- While there has been some rainfall over the last 30 days, there was a fairly dry period once again that has led to generally below normal rainfall across the region.
- 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)



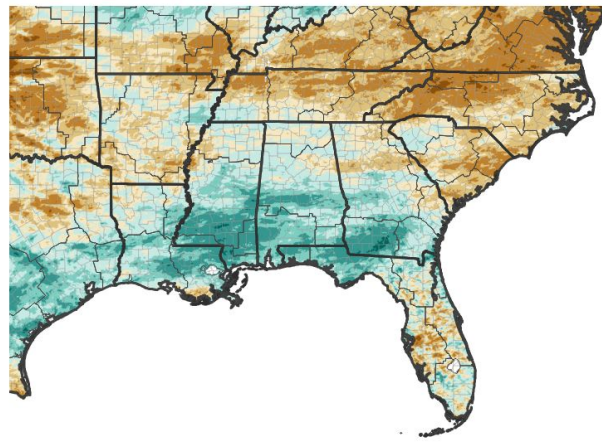
Inches of Precipitation



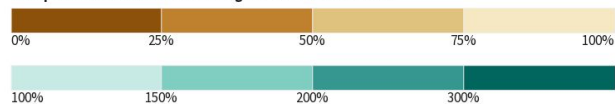
Source(s): National Weather Service Multi-Radar Multi-Sensor System;
image courtesy of Drought.gov

Last Updated: 05/21/26

30-Day Percent of Normal Precipitation



Precipitation Shown as a Percentage of Normal Conditions



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

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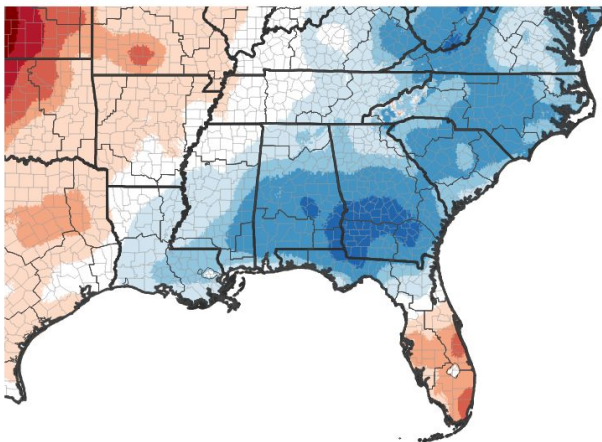


Temperature

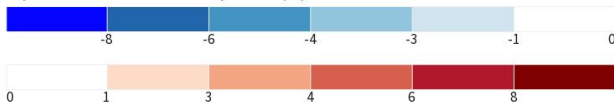
7-Day and 30-Day Temperature Anomalies

- 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



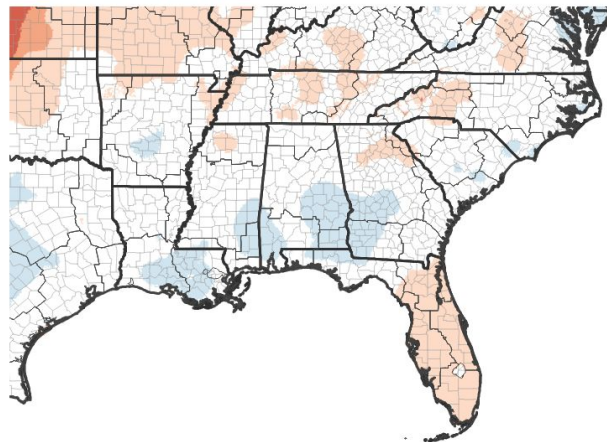
Departure from Normal Max Temperature (°F)



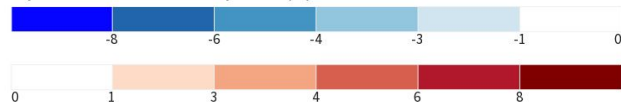
Source(s): NOAA's National Centers for Environmental Information; image courtesy of Drought.gov

Data Valid: 05/16/26

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: 05/16/26





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.

Image of low water on Lake Myakka in the Myakka River State Park: May 14, 2026
(Image: NWS and FDEP)





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 650, indicating that soils remain rather dry.
- 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.





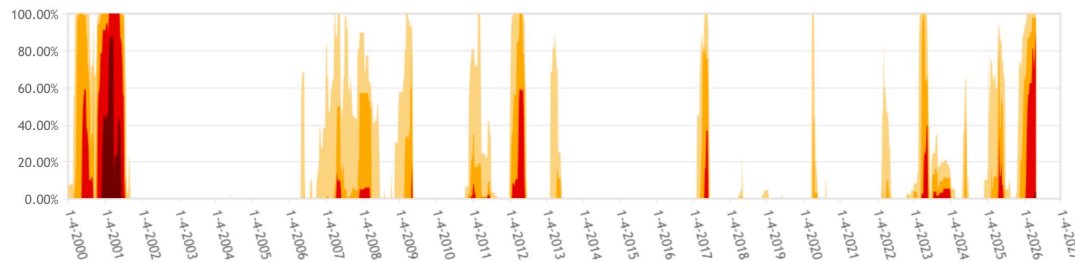
A Perspective on this Drought

Link to [Drought Monitor Time Series](#)

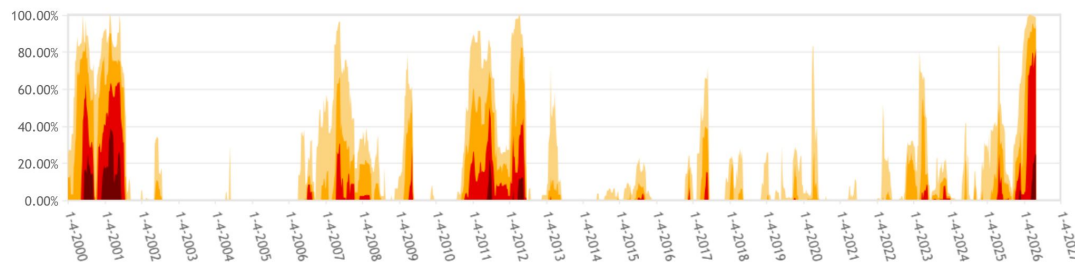
How does this drought compare to past long term droughts in the NWS Tampa Bay forecast area?

- 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.

Tampa Bay/Ruskin, FL (TBW) WFO Percent Area in U.S. Drought Monitor Categories



Florida Percent Area in U.S. Drought Monitor Categories



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)



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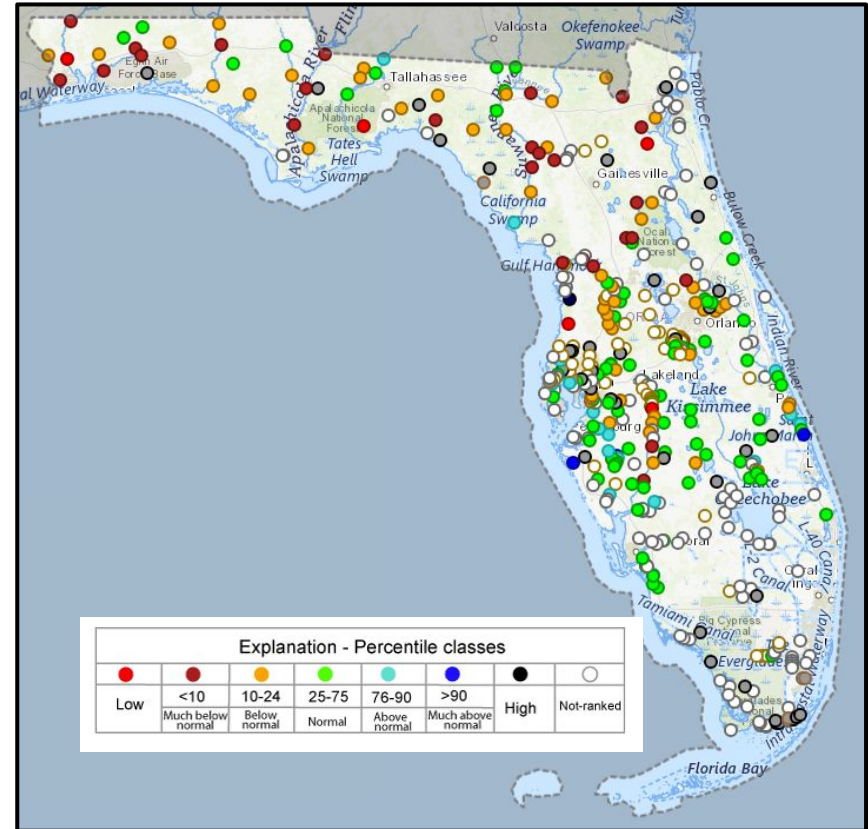
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Hydrologic Conditions and Impacts

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.
- Better chances of near to above normal rainfall are favored over the next couple of weeks.
- Streamflows should hold fairly steady, if not begin to further recover as rainfall becomes more consistent.



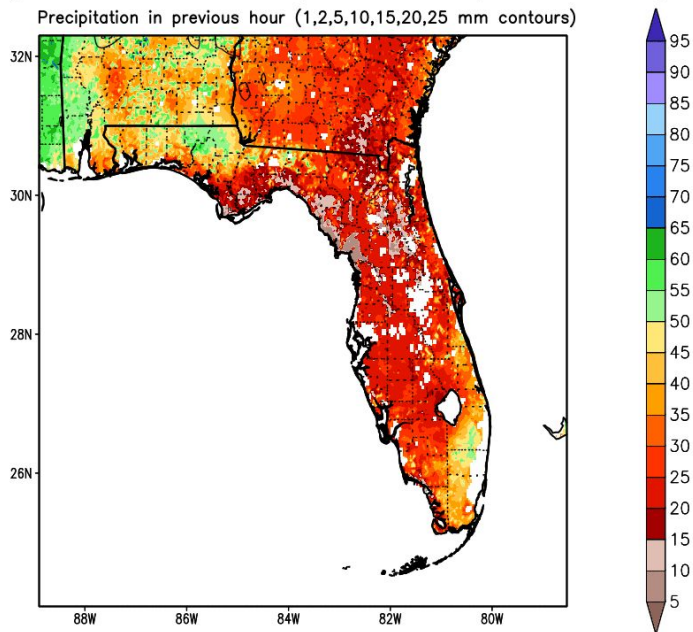


Agricultural Impacts

2025 Florida Crop Report

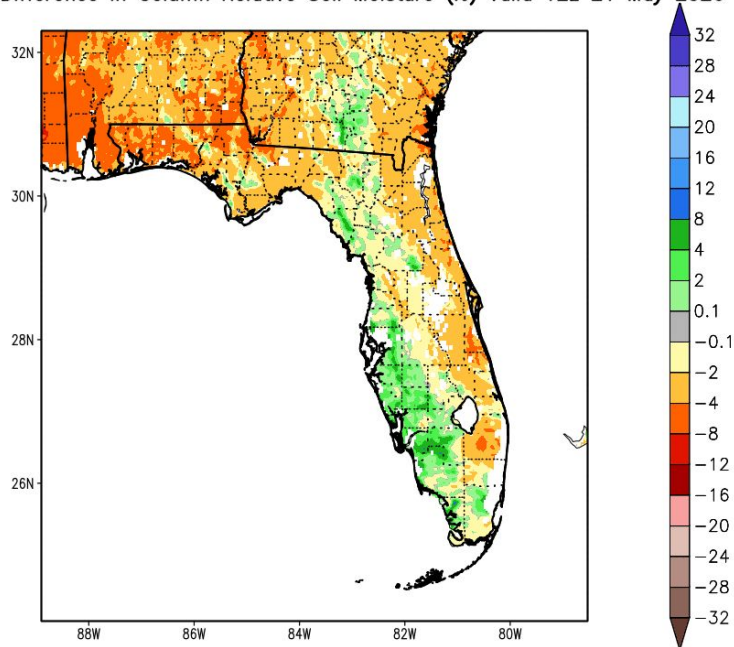
Deep layer soil moisture has increased some over the last week due rainfall over the last few days in many parts of West Central and Southwest Florida. Additional rainfall is expected, and this should allow for some more improvement in the coming weeks.

Column-Integrated Relative Soil Moisture (available water; %) valid 12z 21 May 2026



NOTE
Experimental

1-Week Difference in Column Relative Soil Moisture (%) valid 12z 21 May 2026



NOTE
Experimental



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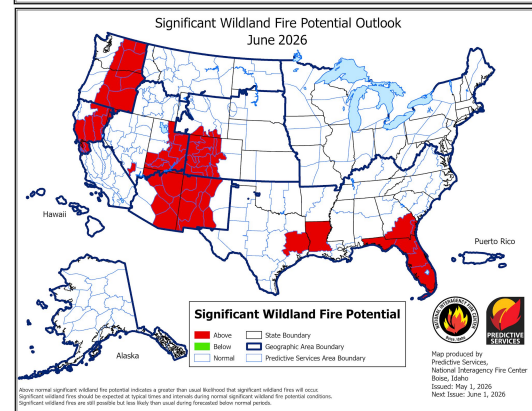
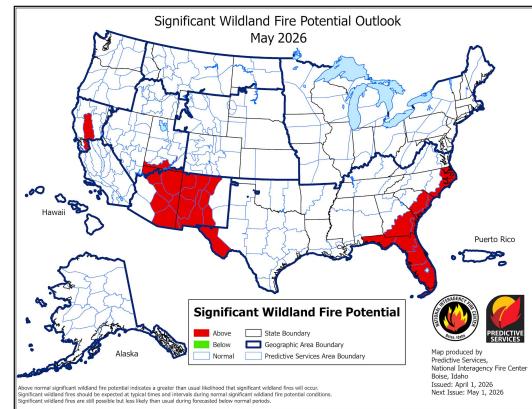
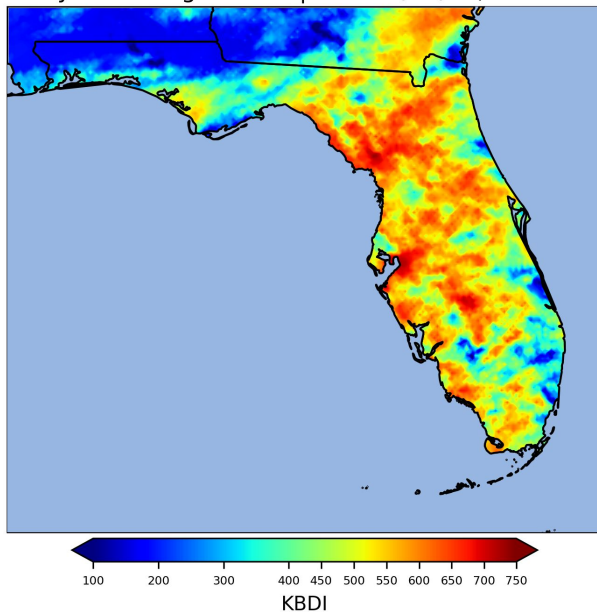


Fire Hazard Impacts

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

- The Keetch-Byram Drought Index (KBDI) remains high across much of the region; however, some spots have seen improvement with heavy rainfall 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 and June continues to call for above normal wildfire activity across the area.

Keetch-Byram Drought Index | Wed 05/20/26, 02:00 PM EDT



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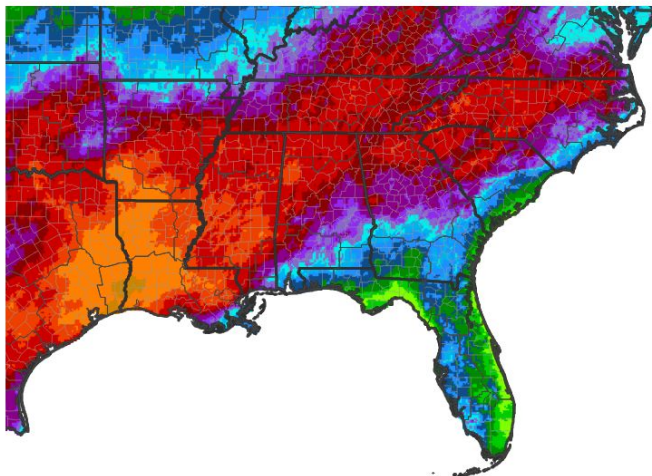


Precipitation Outlook

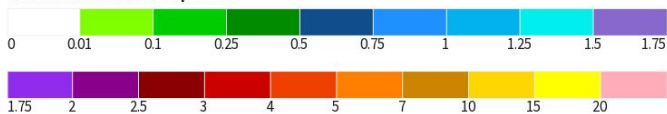
7-Day and 8-14 Day Precipitation Outlooks

- Showers and a few thunderstorms are expected this weekend and through much of 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 half of May, as shown in the outlooks to the right.

7-Day Quantitative Precipitation Forecast for May 21, 2026–May 28, 2026



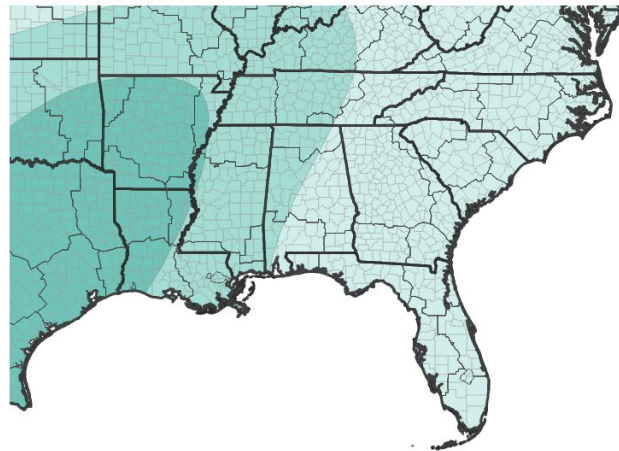
Predicted Inches of Precipitation



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

Last Updated: 05/21/26

8-14 Day Precipitation Outlook for May 20, 2026–May 26, 2026



Probability of Below-Normal Precipitation



Probability of Above-Normal Precipitation



■ Near-Normal Conditions

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

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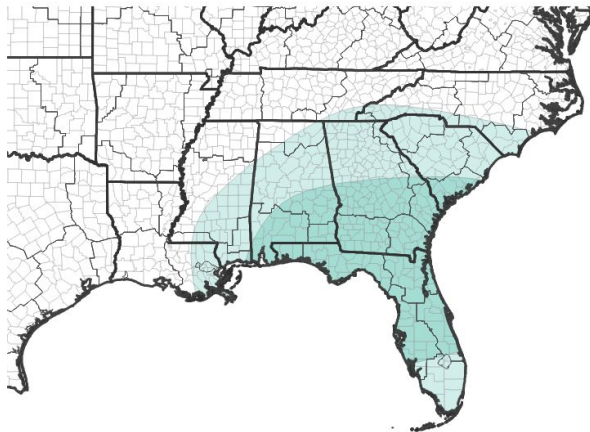


Long-Range Outlooks

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

- The outlook for June suggests a 33-50% chance for above normal rainfall, with a 50-60% chance of above normal temperatures.
- With the return of our typical rainy season the large rainfall deficits should gradually be eroded with drought conditions forecast to slowly improve.

Monthly Precipitation Outlook for June 1, 2026–June 30, 2026



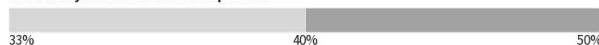
Probability of Below-Normal Precipitation



Probability of Above-Normal Precipitation



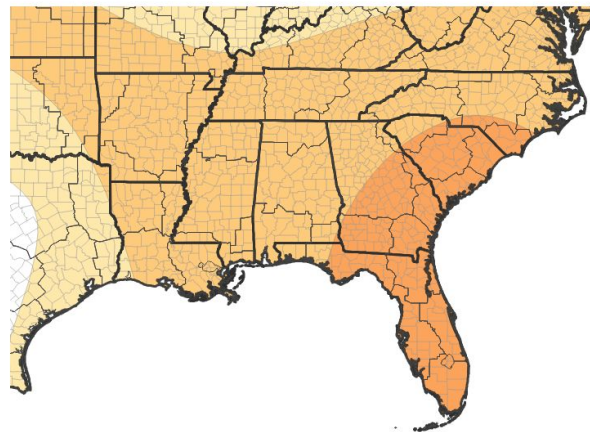
Probability of Near-Normal Precipitation



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

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Monthly Temperature Outlook for June 1, 2026–June 30, 2026



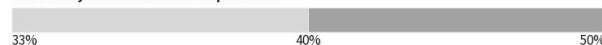
Probability of Below-Normal Temperatures



Probability of Above-Normal Temperatures



Probability of Near-Normal Temperatures



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

Last Updated: 05/21/26

Normals	June	
	Temp	Rain
Brooksville	80.1°	7.91"
Tampa	82.9°	7.37"
Lakeland	81.8°	8.69"
Sarasota	81.8°	7.05"
Punta Gorda	81.7°	9.24"
Fort Myers	82.3°	9.66"



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Long-Range Outlooks

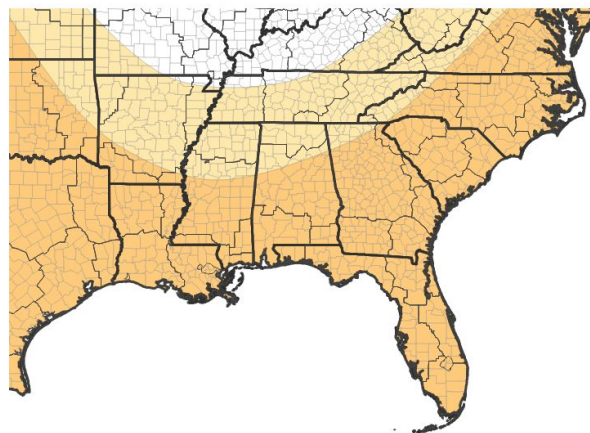
The latest monthly and seasonal outlooks can be found on the [CPC homepage](#)

- Precipitation is expected to be near normal for June through August as our rainy season persists.
- Gradual improvement to drought conditions should begin to take place over the coming weeks and months.

Seasonal (3-Month) Precipitation Outlook for June 1, 2026–August 31, 2026



Seasonal (3-Month) Temperature Outlook for June 1, 2026–August 31, 2026



Normals	June		July		August	
	Temp	Rain	Temp	Rain	Temp	Rain
Brooksville	80.1°	7.91"	81.3°	9.41"	81.5°	8.12"
Tampa	82.9°	7.37"	83.8°	7.75"	84.0°	9.03"
Lakeland	81.8°	8.69"	83.2°	8.85"	83.3°	9.08"
Sarasota	81.8°	7.05"	83.1°	7.39"	83.4°	9.11"
Punta Gorda	81.7°	9.24"	83.3°	8.06"	83.5°	9.11"
Fort Myers	82.3°	9.66"	83.2°	9.38"	83.4°	10.43"

Probability of Below-Normal Precipitation



Probability of Above-Normal Precipitation



Probability of Near-Normal Precipitation



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

Last Updated: 05/21/26

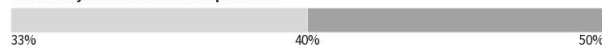
Probability of Below-Normal Temperatures



Probability of Above-Normal Temperatures



Probability of Near-Normal Temperatures



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

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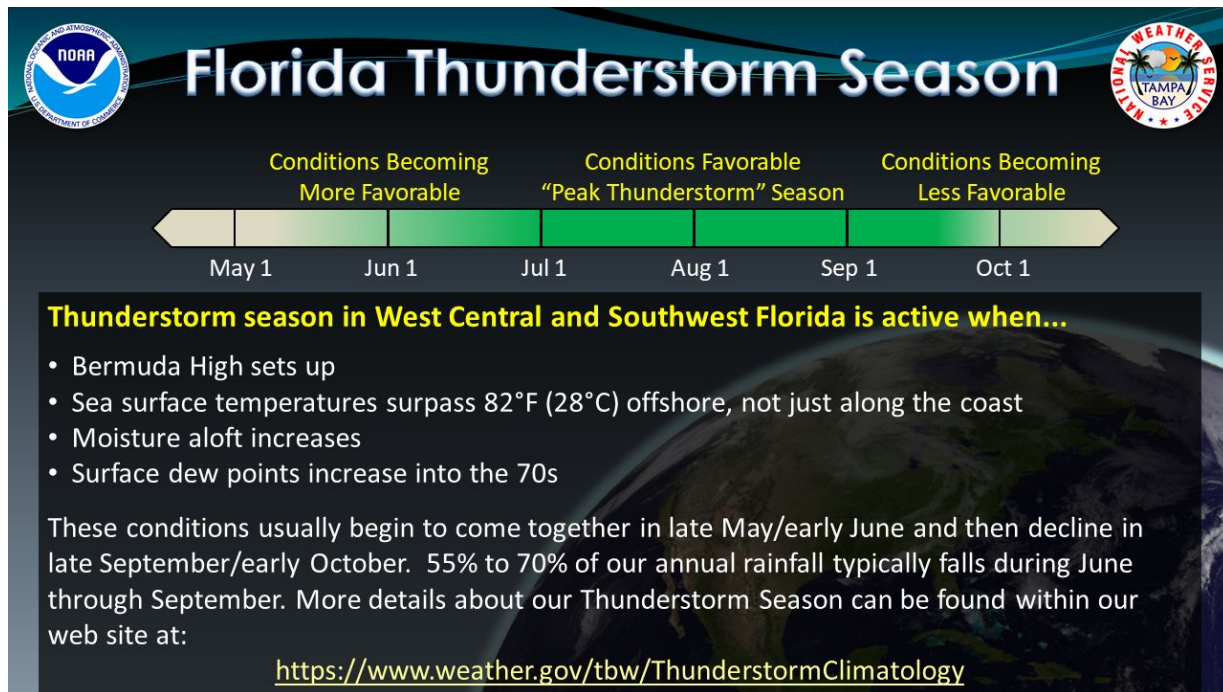
National Weather Service
Tampa Bay, FL



When Does the Rainy Season Usually Start?

When Could There Be Some Drought Relief?

- Rainfall will continue to provide some drought relief over the weekend and into next week.
- 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.

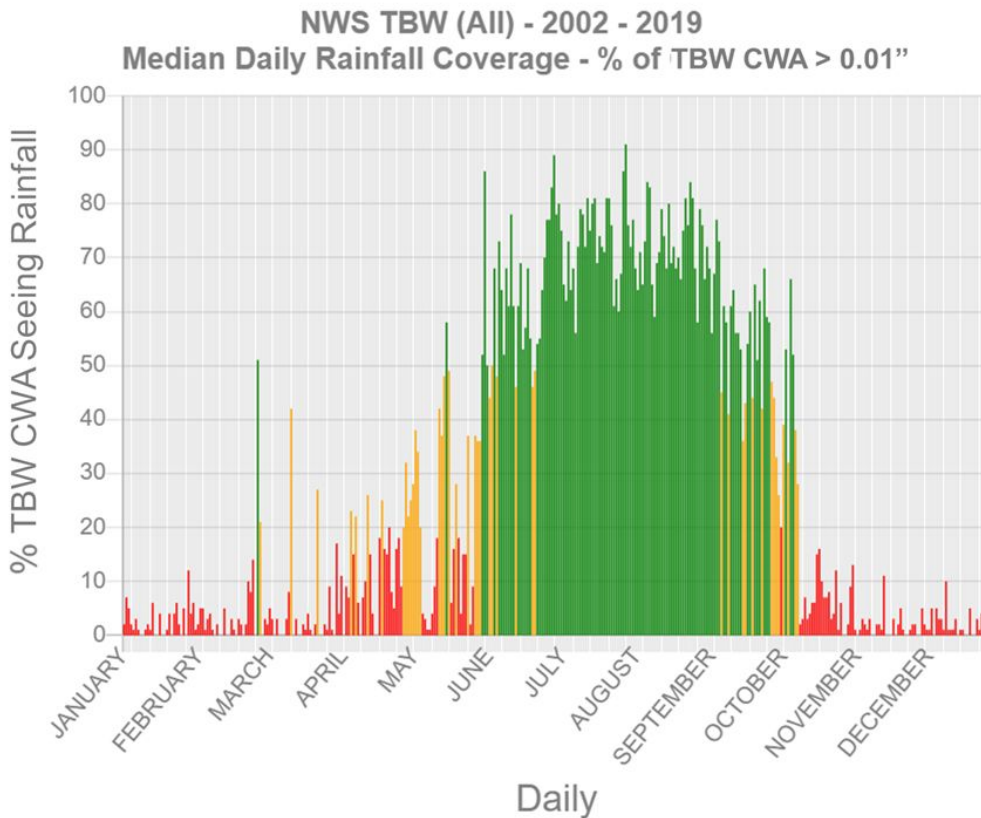




When Does the Rainy Season Usually Start?

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; this year looks no different.
- More details about our Rainy Season can be found [here](#).



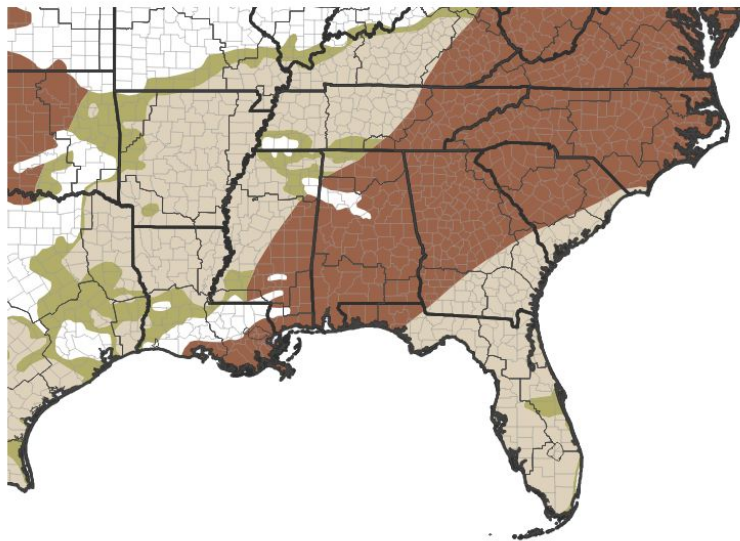


Drought Outlook

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

- Given the prediction for near to above normal rainfall in the months ahead, drought is expected to improve across the region over the next three months - if not end altogether.
- Should rainfall over the next three months be below normal, drought conditions could still get worse before improving, especially now that temperatures are consistently warm.
- The worst of drought conditions should be peaking now before gradually improving.

Seasonal (3-Month) Drought Outlook for May 21, 2026–August 31, 2026



Drought Is Predicted To...



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

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Links to the latest:

[Climate Prediction Center Monthly Drought Outlook](#)

[Climate Prediction Center Seasonal Drought Outlook](#)



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