



Drought Information Statement for West Central and Southwest Florida

Valid July 24, 2026

Issued By: National Weather Service Tampa Bay, FL

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

- This product will be updated July 31, 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.

- The Abnormally Dry to Extreme Drought conditions persist across West Central and Southwest Florida.
- There was some improvement across parts of Levy, Hernando, and Pinellas Counties with degradation over parts of inland central and southwest Florida.
- Long-term impacts continue with low river levels, dry soils, and elevated fire danger remaining despite some recent rain.



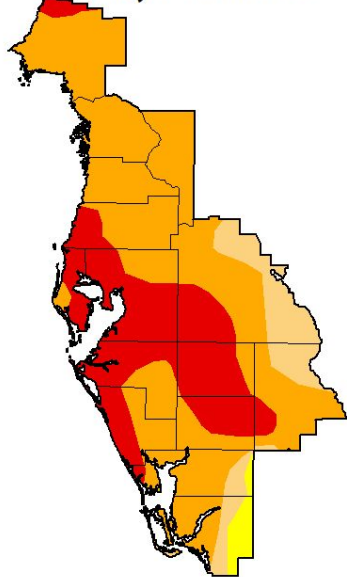


U.S. Drought Monitor

Link to the [latest U.S. Drought Monitor](#) for West Central and Southwest Florida

- The extended duration of limited rainfall has continued the need for D1 (Moderate Drought) to D3 (Extreme Drought) across most of West Central and Southwest Florida.
- Drought intensity and Extent
 - D3 (Extreme Drought):** Nrn Levy, Wrn Pasco, Pinellas, NW and Srn Hillsborough, SW Polk, Wrn & Nrn Manatee, Wrn Sarasota, Hardee, Cent and Ern Desoto, and NW Charlotte.
 - D2 (Severe Drought):** Rest of Levy, Citrus, Sumter, Hernando, Cent and Ern Pasco, NE Hillsborough, Cent Polk, Srn Manatee, Ern Sarasota, Wrn and Srn Highlands, Wrn Charlotte, and Wrn Lee County.
 - D1 (Moderate Drought):** Ern Polk, NE Highlands, Cent Charlotte, and Cent Lee County.
 - D0 (Abnormally Dry):** Ern Lee and Charlotte Counties

U.S. Drought Monitor Tampa Bay Area, FL WFO



July 21, 2026

(Released Thursday, Jul. 23, 2026)

Valid 8 a.m. EDT

Drought Conditions (Percent Area)

	None	D0-D4	D1-D4	D2-D4	D3-D4	D4
Current	0.00	100.00	97.79	87.33	28.66	0.00
Last Week 07-14-2026	0.00	100.00	97.49	86.32	26.80	0.00
3 Months Ago 04-21-2026	0.00	100.00	100.00	97.67	74.89	2.06
Start of Calendar Year 01-06-2026	0.00	100.00	89.37	62.16	0.00	0.00
Start of Water Year 09-30-2025	53.01	46.99	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
One Year Ago 07-22-2025	38.22	61.78	5.48	0.00	0.00	0.00

Intensity:

None	D2 Severe Drought
D0 Abnormally Dry	D3 Extreme Drought
D1 Moderate Drought	D4 Exceptional Drought

The Drought Monitor focuses on broad-scale conditions. Local conditions may vary. For more information on the Drought Monitor, go to <https://droughtmonitor.unl.edu/About.aspx>

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droughtmonitor.unl.edu



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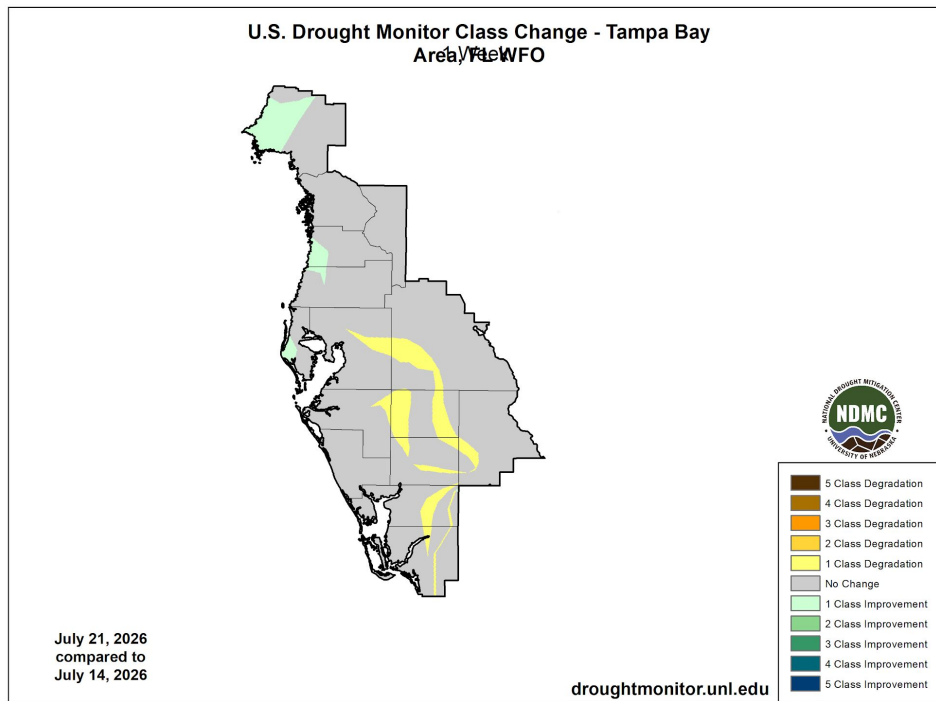
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Tampa Bay, FL



Recent Change in Drought Intensity

Link to the latest [1-week change map](#) for West Central and Southwest Florida

- There have been some improvements in the long-term deficits across parts of the region.
- However, 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.
- More rainfall is needed to allow the system to recover.
- **One Week Drought Monitor Class Change**
 - **Drought Improved:** Parts of Levy, Wron, Hernando, and Cent Pinellas.
 - **Drought Degradation:** Parts of Hillsborough, Polk, Hardee, Desoto, Charlotte and Lee Counties.
 - **No Change:** Remainder of West Central and Southwest Florida.



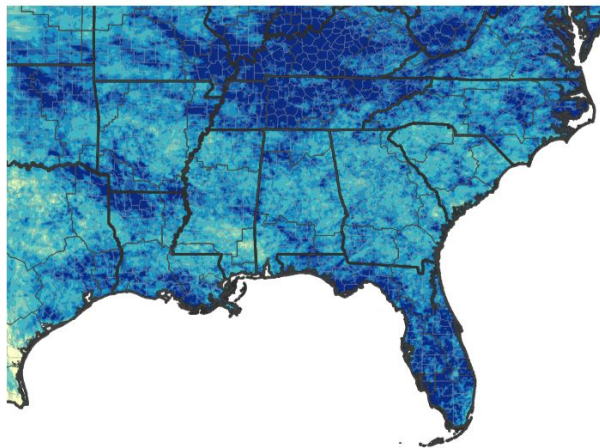


Precipitation

Last 30 Days

- While there has been some rainfall over the last few weeks, many areas continue to see below normal amounts.
- When factoring in long term deficits, the impact is even greater.

30-Day Precipitation Accumulations (Inches)



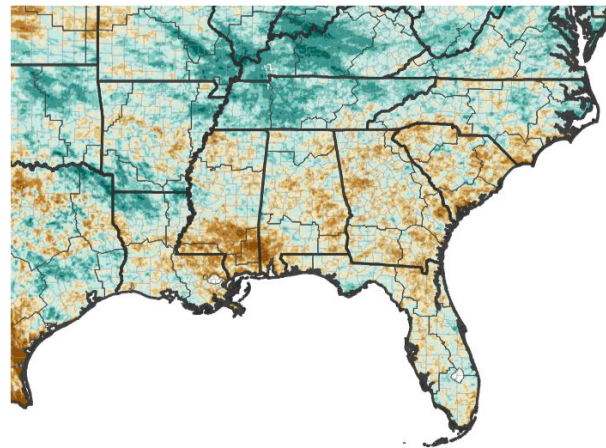
Inches of Precipitation



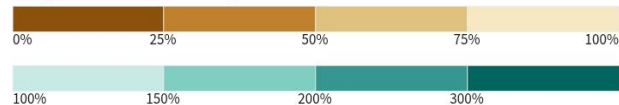
Source(s): National Weather Service Multi-Radar Multi-Sensor System;
image courtesy of Drought.gov

Last Updated: 07/23/26

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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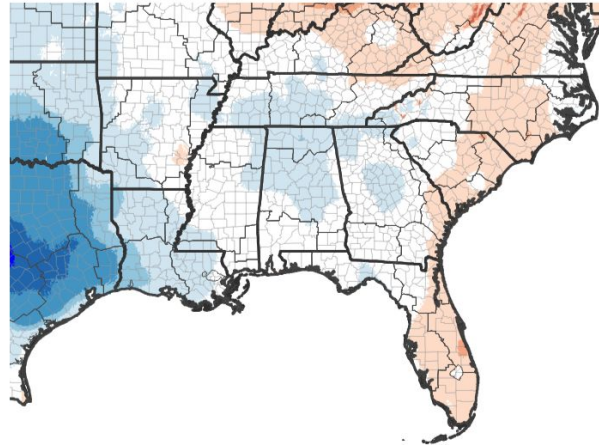


Temperature

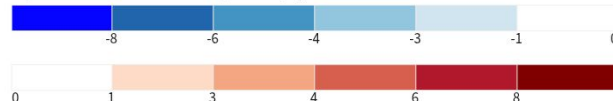
7-Day and 30-Day Temperature Anomalies

- Temperatures have remained near to slightly above normal over the last month.
- Vegetation uses more water this time of year.
- With depleted groundwater supplies, this means that rainfall is quickly being used by vegetation.
- Slightly above normal temperatures are expected over the next few weeks, contributing to greater evaporation of water as well.

7-Day Temperature Anomaly



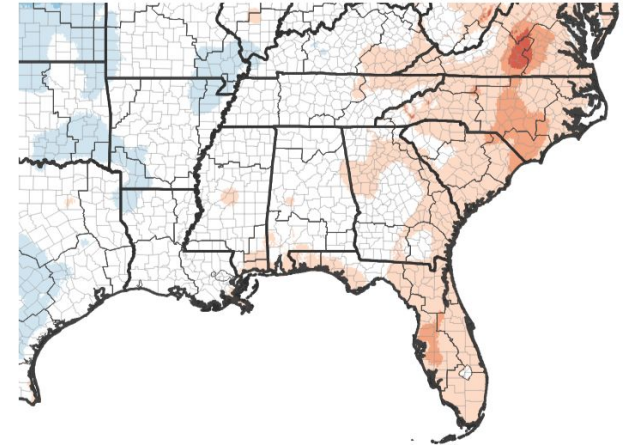
Departure from Normal Max Temperature (°F)



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

Data Valid: 07/19/26

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: 07/19/26





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 provided a [River System Update](#) on **July 7, 2026** for the Withlacoochee River.
- Streamflows remain exceptionally low in many spots for this time of year, and continue to decline. In some areas, there is still 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.
- There's no measurable flow exiting the Green Swamp, and the river is nearly stagnant all the way from there to Lake Panasoffkee.
- After some improvement, conditions are now back to where they were at the start of the rainy season.

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

- The C.W. Bill Young Regional Reservoir held 2.28 billion gallons at the end of June, about 14.7 percent of its 15.5-billion-gallon capacity.
- Areawide, surface/groundwater levels remain low, accentuating the long term nature of this drought.
- Many ponds and lakes dried up across the region.
- While not necessarily seeing further drastic decline, rainfall has not been enough yet to really replenish what has been lost.

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 was the worst seen in at least 15 to 20 years. Some improvement has been noted.
- Some crop plantings were delayed by farmers.
- Many plants less drought-resistant are beginning to recover from drought-induced stress as summer rains begin to occur.
- Cisterns had to be used in some areas to supplement the normal potable water supply.
- Some ponds had to be dug deeper to keep a water supply available for livestock.
- Supplemental feeding with hay and other feed has been required to sustain livestock. [Report impacts here.](#)

Fire Hazard Impacts

- The [Keetch-Byram Drought Index \(KBDI\)](#) remains over 600 in some areas, indicating that soils remain dry in the locations with these high values. However, soils are beginning to moisten in other areas that have seen decent rainfall lately.
- Brush fires continue to occur, with a few large, highly visible fires and numerous other fires across the Florida peninsula. 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 extended a [Modified Phase III “Extreme” Water Shortage](#) until October 1, 2026. Always refer to [city or county](#) regulations first.

Mitigation Actions - Other Partners

- 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](#) remain in effect for a few counties in West Central and Southwest Florida. Please contact the county for specifics.
- Several locks on the north shore of Lake Okeechobee are closed. More info [here](#).





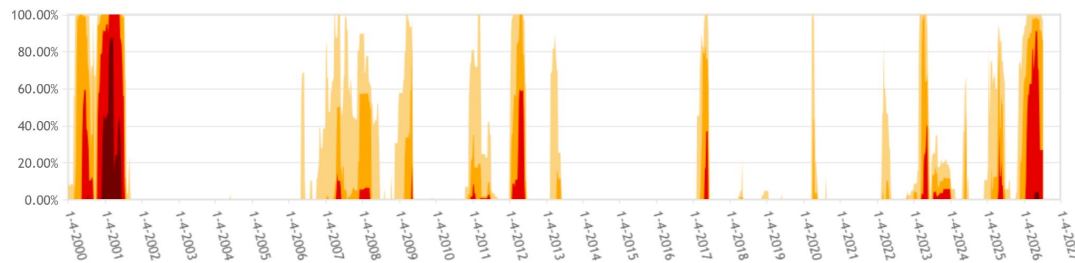
A Perspective on this Drought

Link to [Drought Monitor Time Series](#)

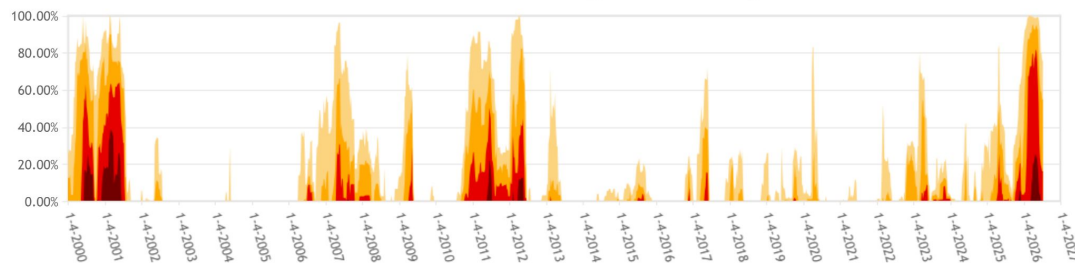
How does this drought compare to past long term droughts in the NWS Tampa Bay forecast area?

- 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 reached the intensity and duration experienced in the 2000/2001 drought.
- This is the most impactful drought within the NWS Tampa Bay area since 2012.
- This was the first time since the drought monitor began in 2000 that the **entire** State of Florida was 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)

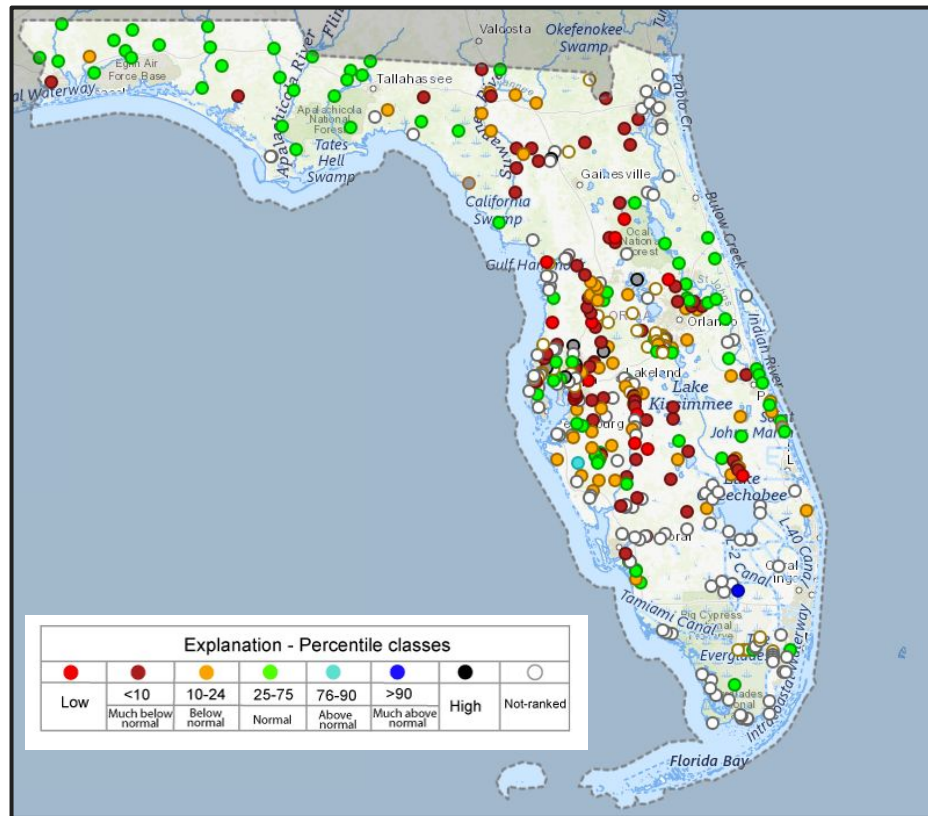




Hydrologic Conditions and Impacts

USGS Streamflow Map for Florida

- With a lack of rainfall in many areas, streamflows are remaining below normal across much of the region.
- Streamflows are likely to remain steady, possibly improve some if more consistent rainfall occurs over the next few weeks.



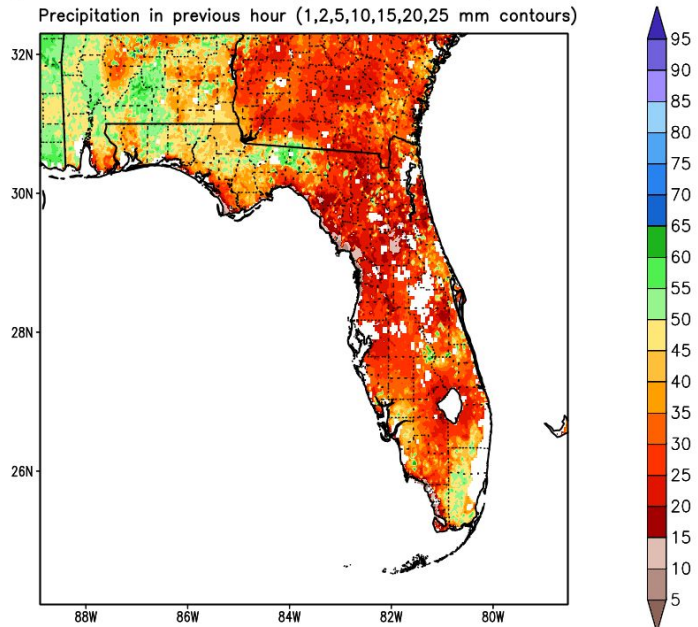


Agricultural Impacts

2025 Florida Crop Report

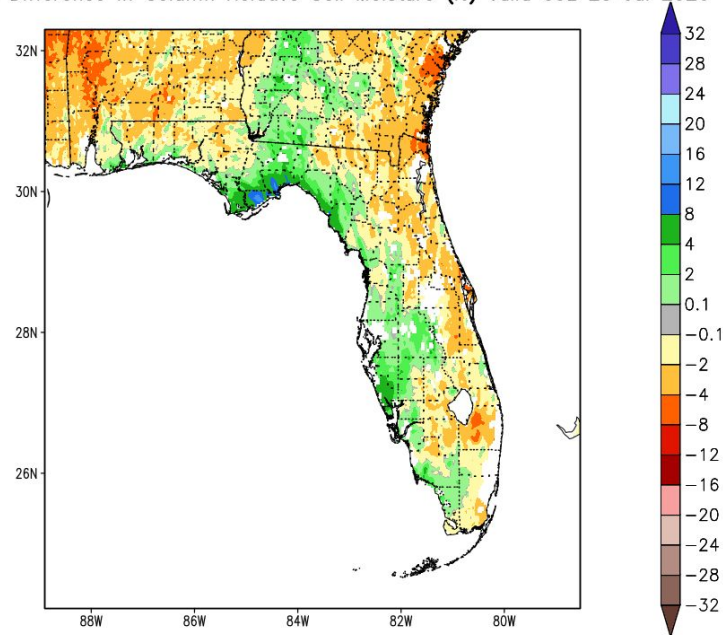
Showers and thunderstorms over the last week helped increase soil moisture some. However, water is being absorbed by vegetation, filtering into groundwater storage, and evaporating due to the warm weather.

Column—Integrated Relative Soil Moisture (available water; %) valid 09z 23 Jul 2026



NOTE
Experimental

1-Week Difference in Column Relative Soil Moisture (%) valid 09z 23 Jul 2026



NOTE
Experimental



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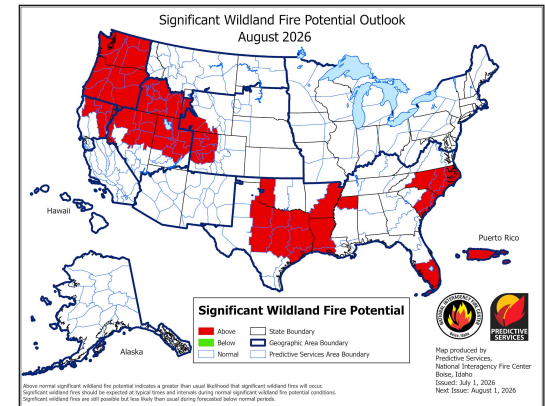
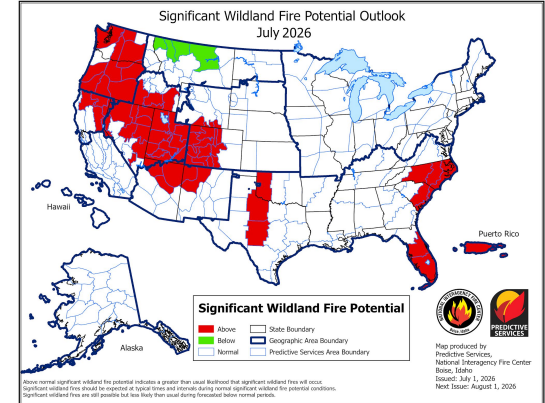
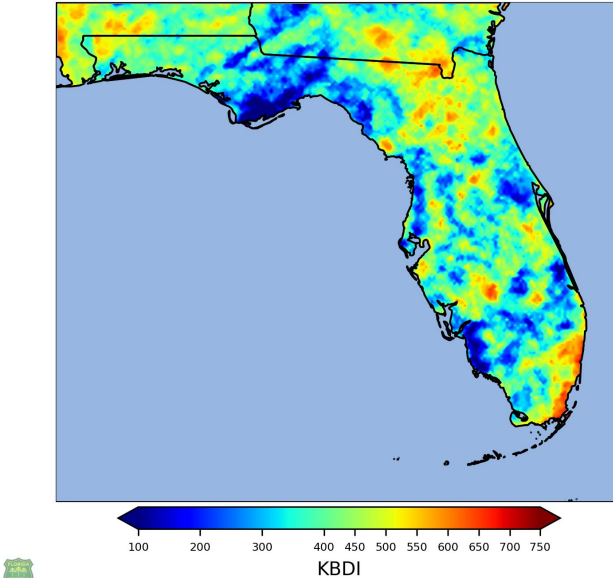


Fire Hazard Impacts

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

- The Keetch-Byram Drought Index (KBDI) has improved in areas that saw decent rainfall while it worsened in others that remained dry.
- 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.
- Brush fires have continued to occur with [Burn Bans](#) in effect for a few counties.
- The Significant Wildland Fire Potential Outlook for the rest of July and August supports above normal fire activity across much of the area as rainfall has remain rather limited.

Keetch-Byram Drought Index | Thu 07/23/26, 02:00 PM EDT



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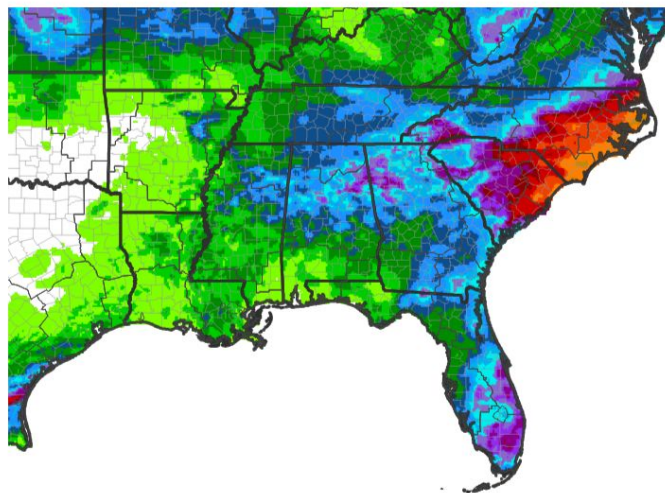


Precipitation Outlook

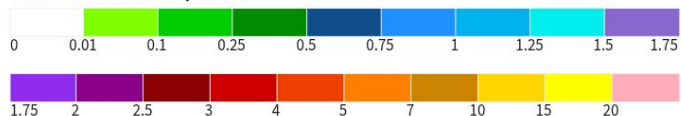
7-Day and 8-14 Day Precipitation Outlooks

- More scattered showers and thunderstorms are forecast over the next week, but a southwest to west flow is expected to return which favors heavier rainfall on the east coast of Florida.
- Near to above normal rainfall is expected in two weeks which could lead to some short-term improvement if this materializes.
- A consistent period of regular, near daily rainfall is needed to substantially alleviate the long-term drought conditions.

7-Day Quantitative Precipitation Forecast for July 23, 2026–July 30, 2026



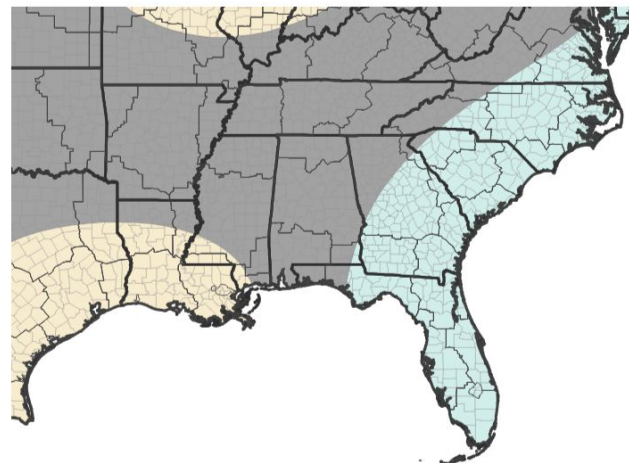
Predicted Inches of Precipitation



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

Last Updated: 07/23/26

8–14 Day Precipitation Outlook for July 30, 2026–August 5, 2026



Probability of Below-Normal Precipitation



Probability of Above-Normal Precipitation



■ Near-Normal Conditions

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

Last Updated: 07/22/26



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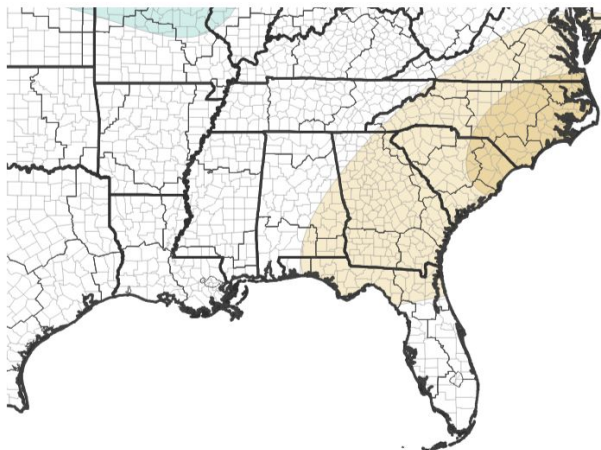


Long-Range Outlooks

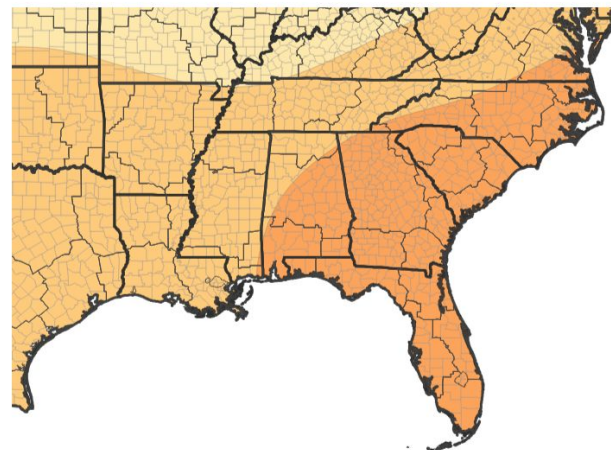
The latest monthly and seasonal outlooks can be found on the [CPC homepage](#)

- The outlook for August suggests equal chances of above, below, and near normal rainfall, with a 50-60% chance of above normal temperatures.
- This suggests that drought conditions may hold steady.

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



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



Normals	August	
	Temp	Rain
Brooksville	81.5°	8.12"
Tampa	84.0°	9.03"
Lakeland	83.3°	9.08"
Sarasota	83.4°	9.11"
Punta Gorda	83.5°	9.11"
Fort Myers	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: 07/16/26

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

Last Updated: 07/16/26



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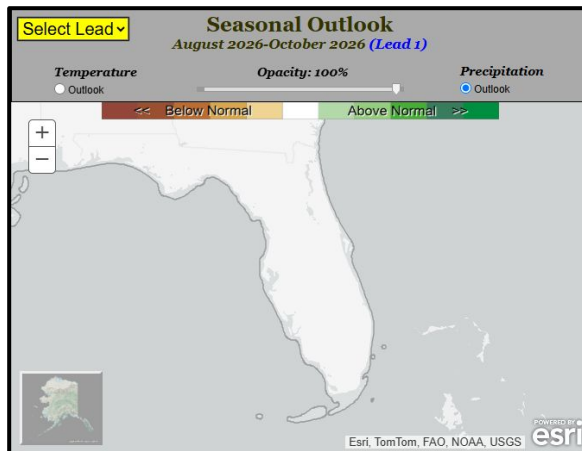


Long-Range Outlooks

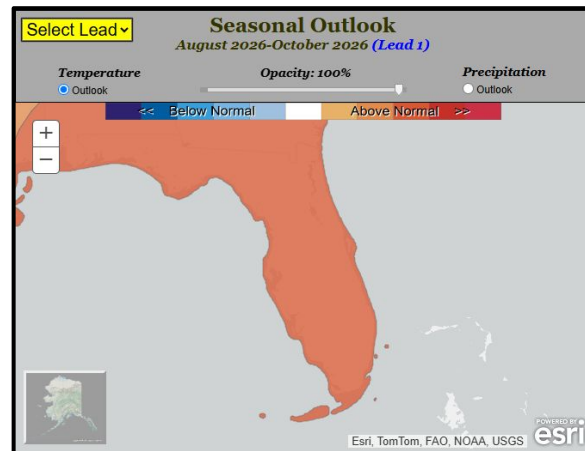
The latest monthly and seasonal outlooks can be found on the [CPC homepage](#)

- The outlook for August through October calls for equal chances of above, below, and near normal rainfall, with a 50-60% chance of above normal temperatures.

Precipitation



Temperature



Normals	August		September		October	
	Temp	Rain	Temp	Rain	Temp	Rain
Brooksville	81.5°	8.12"	79.8°	5.79"	73.1°	2.79"
Tampa	84.0°	9.03"	82.7°	6.09"	77.4°	2.34"
Lakeland	83.3°	9.08"	81.7°	7.62"	76.4°	3.04"
Sarasota	83.4°	9.11"	82.2°	6.00"	77.3°	2.76"
Punta Gorda	83.5°	9.11"	82.1°	6.87"	77.2°	3.02"
Fort Myers	83.4°	10.43"	82.2°	9.00"	78.0°	3.08"



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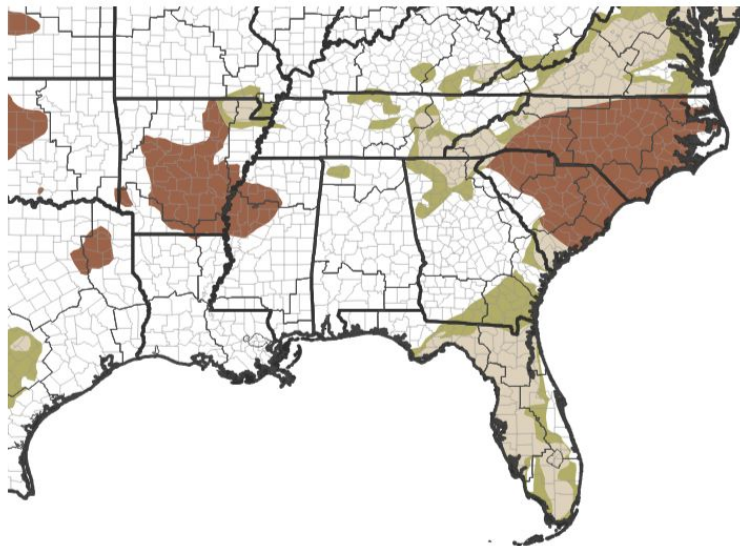


Drought Outlook

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

- Given the prediction for near 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 improvement may be delayed or persist, especially now that summer is in full swing.

Seasonal (3-Month) Drought Outlook for July 16, 2026–October 31, 2026



Drought Is Predicted To...



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

Last Updated: 07/16/26

Links to the latest:

[Climate Prediction Center Monthly Drought Outlook](#)

[Climate Prediction Center Seasonal Drought Outlook](#)



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