



Photo by B. Hatchett

Quarterly Report and Outlook

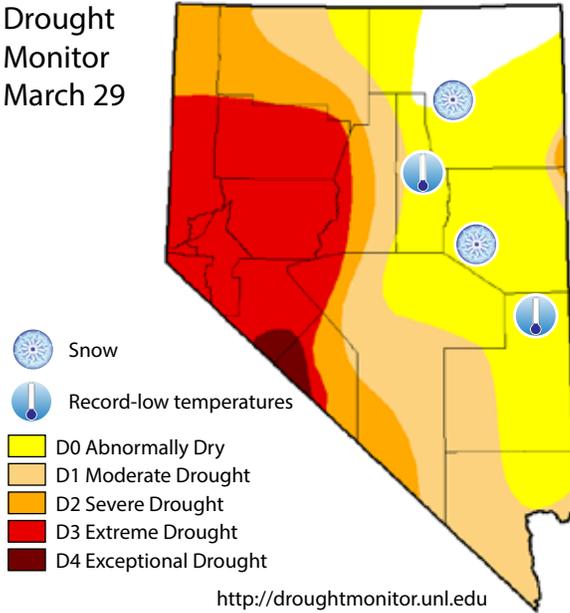
Informe Trimestral y Pronóstico en línea

www.unr.edu/climate/climate-summary

January - March 2016

Nevada: Winter in Review

Drought Monitor March 29

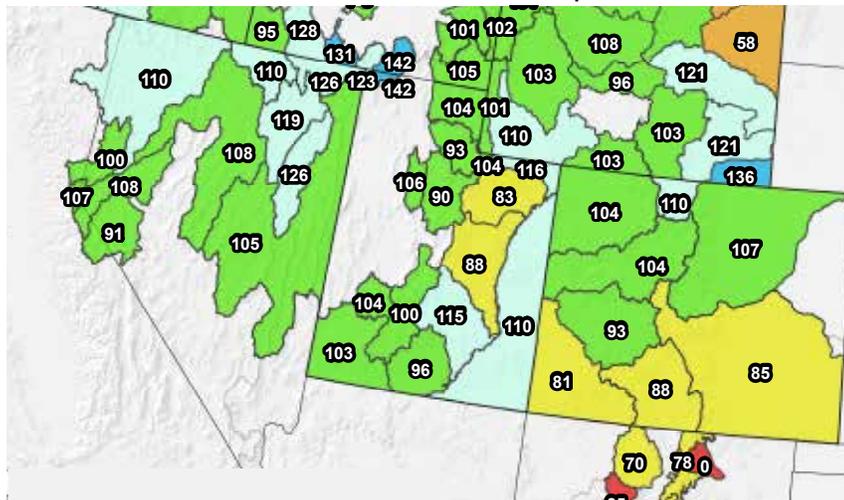


The beginning of spring is a good time to look back at the winter and think ahead to summer. For Las Vegas, who get most of their water from the Colorado River, and Renoites, who depend on snow in the Sierra Nevada, that means considering what's happened outside of the state. So instead of our usual Nevada-focused three-month seasonal recap, this report looks at conditions since the start of the water year on October 1 across the Great Basin and in the Upper Colorado.

After a warm winter with above average precipitation in much of Nevada, the Upper Colorado and the northern Sierra, drought is moderating. By late March, only 1% of the state remained in extreme drought, and nearly 6%, in the far northeast corner, is no longer experiencing drought.

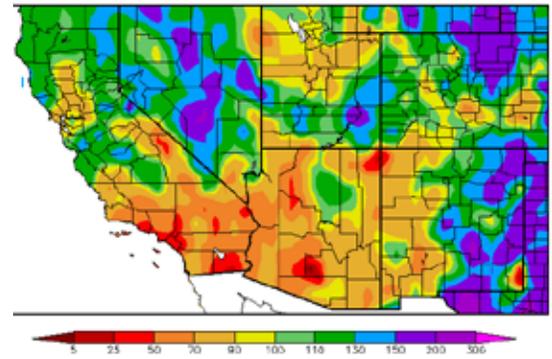
Parts of eastern Nevada experienced record cold and snow, with 83" of snow in Eureka since January and a nighttime low of -25°F at South Fork State Park on January 3.

March 31 Percent of Normal Snow Water Equivalent

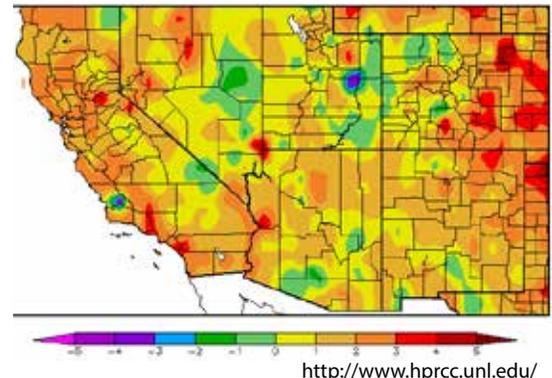


Thanks to the wet winter, most basins met the end of March with near-normal snowpacks. Some of the basins in the upper Colorado River drainage, however, did come in slightly below normal, with snowpacks about 80 to 90% of the 1981-2010 median. How can this be when precipitation was as much as one and a half times normal? Those warm temperatures, in some places nearly 3°F above normal, meant that some of what would have fallen as snow fell as rain. And some of the snow we did have melted during the winter instead of sticking around until spring.

October - March Precipitation Percent of Normal

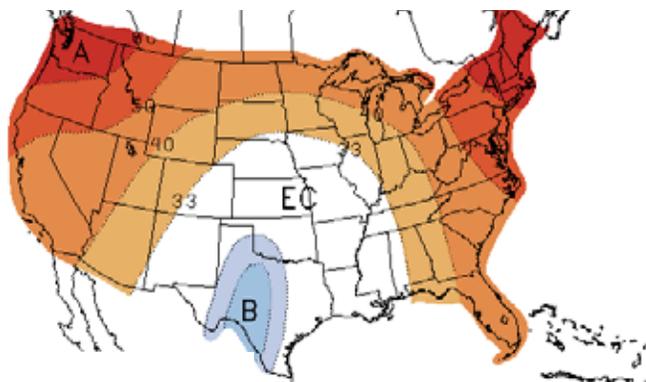


October - March Temperature Difference from Normal

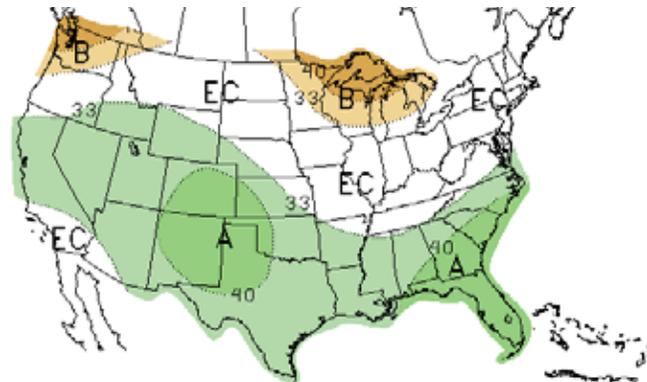


Three-month outlook

Temperature



Precipitation



Spring normally brings warmer temperatures to Nevada, but this year may be warmer than most. NOAA's Climate Prediction Center (CPC) is forecasting a 40-50% chance of a warmer than normal spring for all of Nevada, and indeed much of the West Coast. There is also a 33-40% chance of a wetter than normal spring. Of course, that means that there is a 60 to 77% chance that spring will bring normal or below normal precipitation. A wetter than normal spring would be welcome for many. In the last 10 years, Las Vegas has had no wetter than normal springs in the last years. Over that same time, Reno has had four wet springs and Elko five.

In depth

Calling all gardeners

Southern Nevadans may already have their gardens underway, but in northern Nevada, nurseries are just starting to fill up as people starting to think about new plants for the yard.

While the Cooperative Extension has great information on preparing and planting gardens in Southern Nevada (<http://tinyurl.com/plantsked>, <http://tinyurl.com/jnqxt6m>) and in the high desert (<http://tinyurl.com/hwzrtjf>, <http://tinyurl.com/hreozru>), many seed packets will direct you to plant according to your plant hardiness zone. The most common plant hardiness zone designation is produced by the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Agricultural Research Service, with assistance from the PRISM Climate Group at Oregon State University. These zones range from 1 (coldest) to 13 (warmest) and are based on the 30-year average minimum temperature during winter. In the most recent map, Nevada covered zones 4 through 10.

As you might expect, the coolest conditions occur in the mountains of northeastern Nevada, while the warmest zones are found along the Colorado River. The map is made at approximately half-mile resolution, so it can leave out important microclimates -- like the one that always lets your neighbor harvest tomatoes a week earlier than you. Want more information? Check out this link from the USDA <http://planthardiness.ars.usda.gov/PHZMWeb/Default.aspx>

