Drought Status Update
April 2011

Short-term Drought Status Update

Only one significant winter storm crossed Arizona in April, leaving the western and southern counties extremely dry this spring. Rangeland conditions are very poor, with even native desert vegetation under significant stress. Over the past month, drought conditions have expanded to include almost all of every county except Mohave and western La Paz.

The worst conditions (extreme drought – D3) include all of Cochise, Graham, Greenlee, Santa Cruz, and eastern Pima counties. Severe drought (D2) now covers the southern half of Navajo and Apache counties and the western halves of Gila, Pinal and Pima counties. The area of the state in severe or extreme drought increased during April from 34% to 47%.

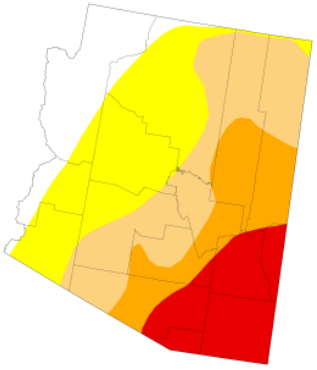
More than 27,000 acres has been burned by wildfires in 2011, mostly in the southern part of the state. The southeastern corner of Arizona is extremely vulnerable to wildfires, and no drought relief is expected until the monsoon activity begins. Arizona DroughtWatch observers have reported unusually low water levels in ponds and stock ponds, and little or no forage in Cochise County.

U.S. Drought Monitor
Arizona

May 3, 2011
Valid 7 a.m. EST

Drought Conditions (Percent Area)

	None	D0-D4	D1-D4	D2-D4	D3-D4	D4
Current	13.93	86.07	57.89	31.54	15.59	0.00
Last Week (04/26/2011 map)	13.93	86.07	57.89	22.16	11.73	0.00
3 Months Ago (02/01/2011 map)	30.61	69.39	32.00	12.50	0.00	0.00
Start of Calendar Year (12/28/2010 map)	31.40	68.60	32.45	0.00	0.00	0.00
Start of Water Year (09/28/2010 map)	40.00	60.00	18.58	3.23	0.00	0.00
One Year Ago (04/27/2010 map)	43.08	56.92	14.43	2.66	0.00	0.00



Intensity:
- D0 Abnormally Dry
- D1 Drought - Moderate
- D2 Drought - Severe
- D3 Drought - Extreme
- D4 Drought - Exceptional

The Drought Monitor focuses on broad-scale conditions. Local conditions may vary. See accompanying text summary for forecast statements.

http://drought.unl.edu/dm

Released Thursday, May 5, 2011
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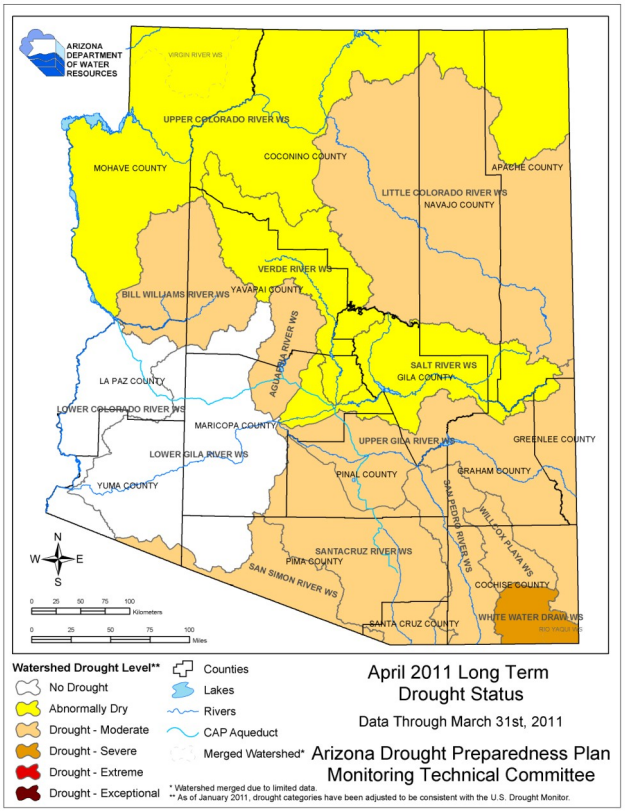

Long-term Drought Status Update

The long-term drought status is determined by evaluating precipitation data from the previous 24, 36 and 48 months, and streamflow. Of the previous four years, only 2010 was a wetter than average year. The cumulative lack of precipitation causes reductions in stream flow, soil moisture, and groundwater recharge. The reduced soil moisture and lowered water table affects forests by reducing the water available in the root zone.

Currently the pattern of the long-term drought is similar to the pattern of the short-term drought, with the driest conditions in the southeastern watersheds and the Colorado Plateau. Although last winter was quite wet, the southeastern watersheds were not able to recover from the previous dry years. Since the current La Niña is waning, there is no strong atmospheric signal to indicate whether this year's monsoon will be wetter or drier than average. However, until the monsoon begins, the long-term drought conditions are not likely to show any improvement.

Summaries produced by the State Drought Monitoring Technical Committee - May 10, 2011