

Short-term Drought Status Update

During the past month only two winter storms passed through Arizona, and they were fairly weak and brought relatively little precipitation. The first storm covered most of the state, but only the northern watersheds and the highest elevations received significant precipitation, including 12" of snow on the north rim of the Grand Canyon. Rainfall from the second storm ranged from a trace to less than 1/2", and missed the southern watersheds.

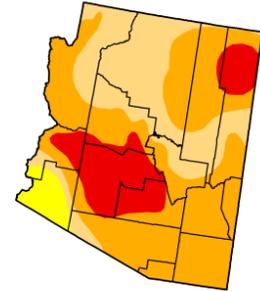
Since April is a transition month from winter to spring, the dryness was not unusual, and most of the state had no change in drought status. However, the southeast and northeast corners did see worsening drought conditions. Severe drought (D2) expanded to fill Cochise County, and in northern Apache County severe drought (D2) expanded and extreme drought (D3) was introduced. We do not expect any improvement in the short-term drought until the monsoon.

U.S. Drought Monitor

May 1, 2012
Valid 7 a.m. EST

Arizona

	Drought Conditions (Percent Area)					
	None	D0-D1	D1-D2	D2-D3	D3-D4	D4
Current	0.00	100.00	96.10	67.19	16.29	0.00
Last Week (04/24/2012 map)	0.00	100.00	95.98	67.19	16.29	0.00
3 Months Ago (01/31/2012 map)	6.39	93.61	73.48	36.56	2.78	0.00
Start of Calendar Year (12/27/2011 map)	16.70	83.30	60.34	36.56	2.78	0.00
Start of Water Year (05/27/2011 map)	0.02	99.98	69.76	42.81	15.34	1.67
One Year Ago (04/26/2011 map)	13.93	86.07	57.89	22.16	11.73	0.00



Intensity:
 Yellow: D0 Abnormally Dry
 Light Orange: D1 Drought - Moderate
 Orange: D2 Drought - Severe
 Red: D3 Drought - Extreme
 Dark Red: D4 Drought - Exceptional

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



<http://droughtmonitor.unl.edu>

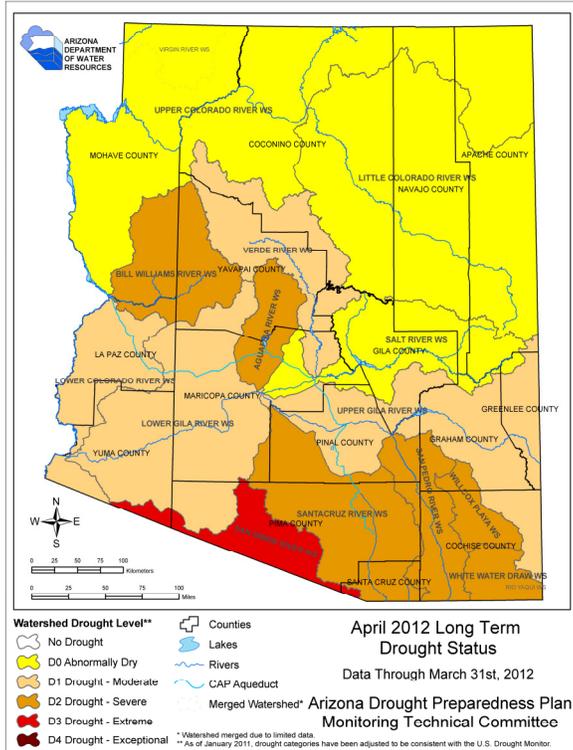
Released Thursday, May 3, 2012
Matthew Rosencrans, Climate Prediction Center/NCEP/NOAA

Long-term Drought Status Update

The long-term summary is based on the past two-, three-, and four-year precipitation for the same three-month period. Since the months of January through March in 2012 were extremely dry, all but five watersheds have dropped at least one drought category.

Although many winter storms affected the west, few of them tracked far enough south to reach Arizona, and those that did were cold and relatively dry. This effectively restricted the precipitation to the northern watersheds and the higher elevations.

All Arizona watersheds are now in some level of drought, with six watersheds in severe drought (D2) and one in extreme drought (D3). The long-term situation is unlikely to change until after the monsoon has concluded, since April through June are generally dry months, particularly in the southern watersheds.



The dryness in both the short-term and the long-term has increased our vulnerability to wildfires statewide, so caution is urged as we move into the camping and outdoor recreation season.