

Drought Status Update

November 2011

The continued dryness in south central Arizona through November has led to worsening drought conditions in Pinal County, northern Pima County and the eastern two-thirds of Maricopa County since the end of October. These areas have dropped from moderate drought to severe drought. Southern Gila and Yavapai counties have also dropped—from abnormally dry to moderate drought. The rest of the state has remained unchanged.

Though shower activity over the past two weeks has brought temporary relief to some areas, it is too late in the season to help range conditions impacted by the spotty rainfall and hot conditions of this past summer. Precipitation has also been generally light and has done little as of yet to help range-land water resources such as stock tanks and ponds, especially across southeastern Arizona.

If the next several storm systems bring enough rainfall to increase soil moisture, more of the spring snowpack melt will run off into streams and reservoirs. The fall precipitation will also help boost the production of winter annual plants and possibly result in a showy spring wildflower season, if conditions don't dry out too much over the next several months.

With the second consecutive year of La Niña, the good news is that this La Niña is not as strong as last year, and it appears that the upper Colorado River may receive normal or near normal precipitation. However, last winter also began with significant precipitation in November and December, but the activity ended abruptly in January. Fortunately for the Colorado River, the upper basin precipitation continued despite wintertime dryness in Arizona.

Summary produced by the State Drought Monitoring Technical Committee - December 2, 2011.

