

Arizona Department of Water Resources

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NEWS
RELEASE



Janet Napolitano,
Governor
Herb Guenther,
Director
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Drought outlook: Progress, but much more precipitation needed

Drought-watchers report Arizona's monsoon season was generous, though abbreviated, and it wasn't enough to bring the state out of its decade-long drought.

A parade of winter soakers out of the Pacific might do the trick, but forecasters cannot promise the next several months will be anything other than dry and sunny.

In issuing their annual update, the State Drought Monitoring Technical Committee reported that 2008 precipitation brought short-term relief, at best, from drought conditions in some areas of Arizona.

The Governor's Drought Task Force Interagency Coordinating Group (ICG) recommended to Gov. Janet Napolitano that both drought declarations on the books should remain in force.

Although above-average precipitation in the White Mountains, Salt River, Phoenix area, and the south central deserts filled the state's reservoirs this year, precipitation was near or below average over a large portion of the state.

Along the Colorado River, the reservoir system is at 56% of capacity, up from 53% at this time a year ago. Lake Powell is 58% full, while Lake Mead – where Arizona, Nevada and California draw their allocations – is at 47% of capacity.

"We're doing better, slightly better," said ADWR Director Herb Guenther. "For the winter, though, I don't like what I see from the Pacific. There is no likelihood at this time that there will be productive storms blowing our way.

"There is a long history of precipitation shortfalls in Arizona, sometimes lasting decades," Guenther added. "Our recommendation is for people to hone their water-saving habits, since practicing conservation is always a wise course."

The monsoon precipitation ended early this year. Over the past 12 months, precipitation was well above average in the southern half of Arizona, and slightly below average in northern Arizona. This leaves the six watersheds in northern Arizona abnormally dry and the nine southern watersheds with no drought for the short term.

In the long term, precipitation is near or below average for the past 48 months, with the exception of the lower Gila watershed, which is above average.

For additional information:

Check the ADWR website Drought section - www.azwater.gov/dwr/drought/droughtHome.html

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