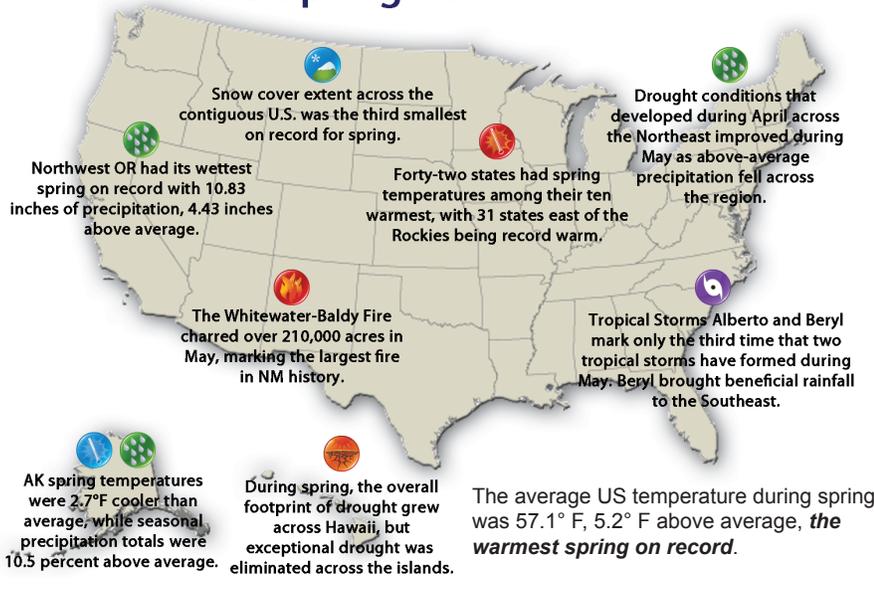


Quarterly Climate Impacts and Outlook

Western Region Spring 2012

National - Significant Events for March - May 2012

Significant Events for May and Spring 2012



Highlights for the West

Mountain snowpack in the Northwest continued to increase due to below-average temperatures and above-average precipitation.

Sub-par mountain snowpack in the Southwest rapidly disappeared in response to exceptional warmth and lack of moisture.

Critical fire conditions (low relative humidity, high wind, drought conditions) persisted across much of the Southwest, allowing wildfires to develop and spread rapidly.

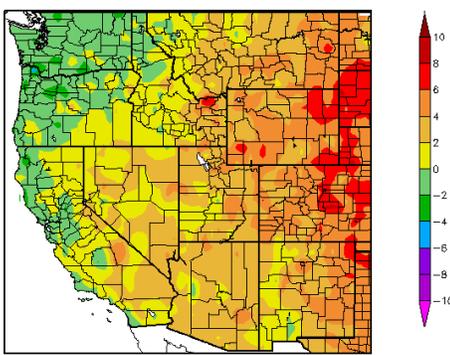
Southwest winds in excess of 50 mph drove a dust storm into the Four Corners region which combined with wildfire smoke to reduce regional visibility and air quality.

Equatorial Pacific sea surface conditions have transitioned from La Niña to ENSO-neutral conditions. These conditions are expected to continue through the summer.

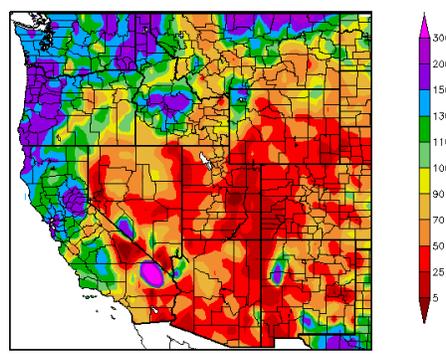
Regional - Climate Overview for March - May 2012

Temperature and Precipitation Anomalies

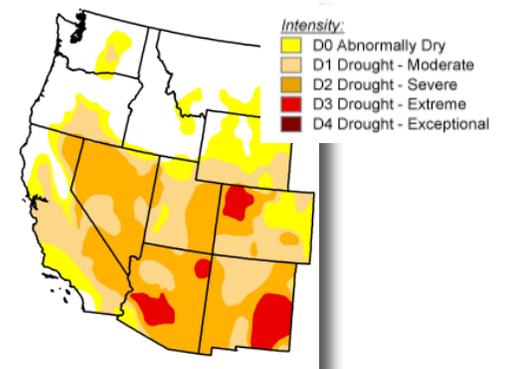
Drought in the West



Departure from Normal Temperature (F)
3/1/2012 - 5/31/2012



Percent of Normal Precipitation (%)
3/1/2012 - 5/31/2012



US Drought Monitor
6/5/2012

The temperature anomalies shown in the left panel indicate that most of the interior West had above-normal temperatures (warm colors), with slightly cooler-than-normal temperatures in the Northwest and the northern and central California coastal region.

The Pacific Northwest and much of California had well above-normal precipitation, while most of the interior West received much less precipitation than normal. Oregon had the wettest spring in the last 118 years and Washington had the third wettest. (Provisional temperature and precipitation data courtesy of the High Plains Regional Climate Center, www.hprcc.unl.edu.)

The US Drought Monitor shows abnormally dry to extreme drought conditions in many parts of the West. (The Drought Monitor is a collaborative product from the USDA, NOAA and National Drought Mitigation Center, www.droughtmonitor.unl.edu/monitor.html.)

Regional Impacts - for March - May 2012

Climate and Weather

Continued warm and dry conditions across much of the southwest US resulted in a drastic reduction of the expected summer runoff in the Intermountain West. The most recent median forecast for Colorado River April-July inflow to Lake Powell is 28% of the historical mean, which would be the 4th lowest in the last 108 years.

Drought, Flooding, and Water Resources Impacts

Despite low snowpack and dry conditions across the Southwest, the impact on water supply has been mitigated for many sectors due to carryover of full reservoirs resulting from high inflows for the 2010-11 water year. The impacts on sectors and regions dependent on rainfall for water supply are now emerging.

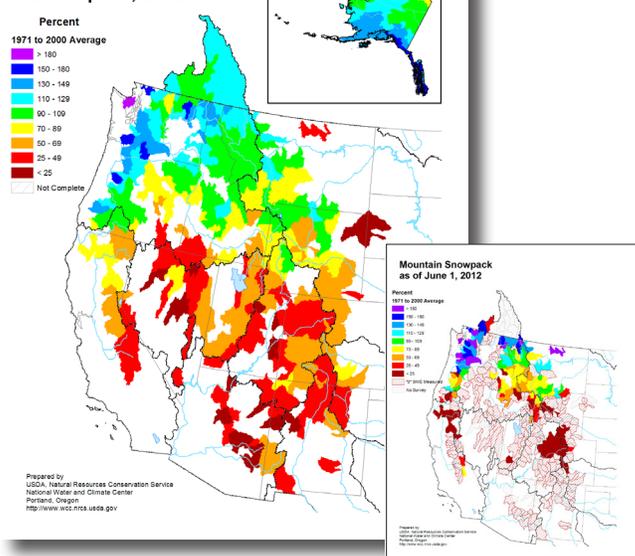
Urban, Municipal, Industrial

Air quality warnings were issued due to wildfire smoke and dust storms (Colorado, New Mexico, Nevada and Arizona).

Recreation

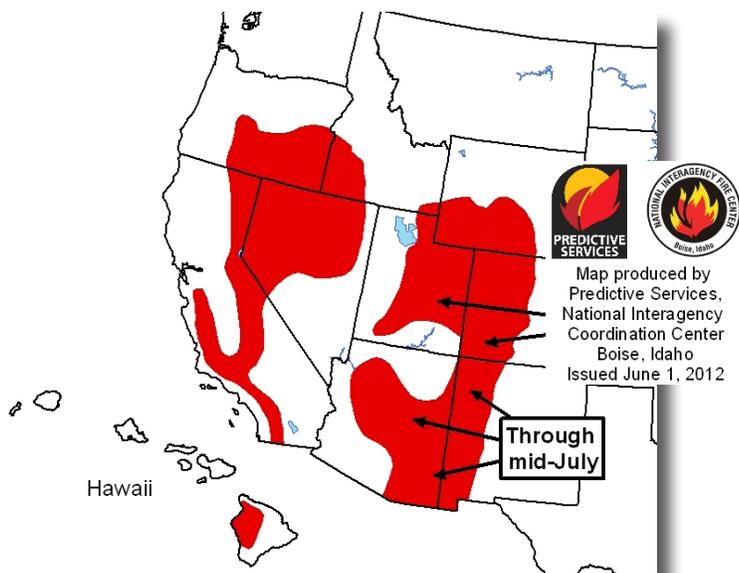
Mild temperatures, strong winds and intermittent snowfall resulted in dangerous avalanche conditions for backcountry recreation in many mountainous areas (Wyoming, California and Colorado).

Mountain Snowpack as of April 1, 2012



As of April 1, 2012, mountain snowpack in much of the southern part of the West was below 50% of normal. In some parts of the Northwest, mountain snowpack values continued to increase through June 1 (inset). Maps from the USDA/NRCS National Water and Climate Center (www.wcc.nrcs.usda.gov/snowcourse/).

Regional Outlook - for Summer 2012



Seasonal Significant Fire Potential (July - September)

Areas of above-average significant fire potential for the 2012 fire season. Areas shown in red will likely require mobilization of external resources. (Graphic from the National Interagency Fire Center, www.nifc.gov/.)

NOAA Seasonal Climate Outlook

The summer 2012 temperature outlook indicates enhanced odds for above-normal temperatures for most of the southwest US. The precipitation outlook for summer 2012 shows enhanced odds for below-median total seasonal precipitation for parts of the northwest US. There is a 50% chance that El Niño conditions will develop during the second half of 2012 (Climate Prediction Center, www.cpc.ncep.noaa.gov/).

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Western Region Partners

Western Regional Climate Center

www.wrcc.dri.edu/

National Integrated Drought Information System (NIDIS)

www.drought.gov

Western Governors' Association

www.westgov.org/

National Interagency Fire Center

www.nifc.gov/

USDA/NRCS National Water and Climate Center

www.wcc.nrcs.usda.gov/

DOI WaterSMART

www.usbr.gov/WaterSMART/

NOAA/ESRL Physical Sciences Division

www.esrl.noaa.gov/psd

NOAA's Western Regional Collaboration Team

www.regions.noaa.gov/western/western_region_team.html

Western Water Assessment

www.colorado.edu/

Climate Assessment for the Southwest

www.climas.arizona.edu/

California Nevada Applications Program

meteora.ucsd.edu/cap/

Climate Impacts Research Consortium

pnwclimate.org/resources

Colorado Basin River Forecast Center

www.cbrfc.noaa.gov/

California Nevada River Forecast Center

www.cnrfc.noaa.gov/

NOAA Fisheries Service

www.nmfs.noaa.gov/

NWS Western Region's Climate Service

<http://www.nws.noaa.gov/om/csd/index.php?section=programs#western>

State Climatologists

www.stateclimate.org/