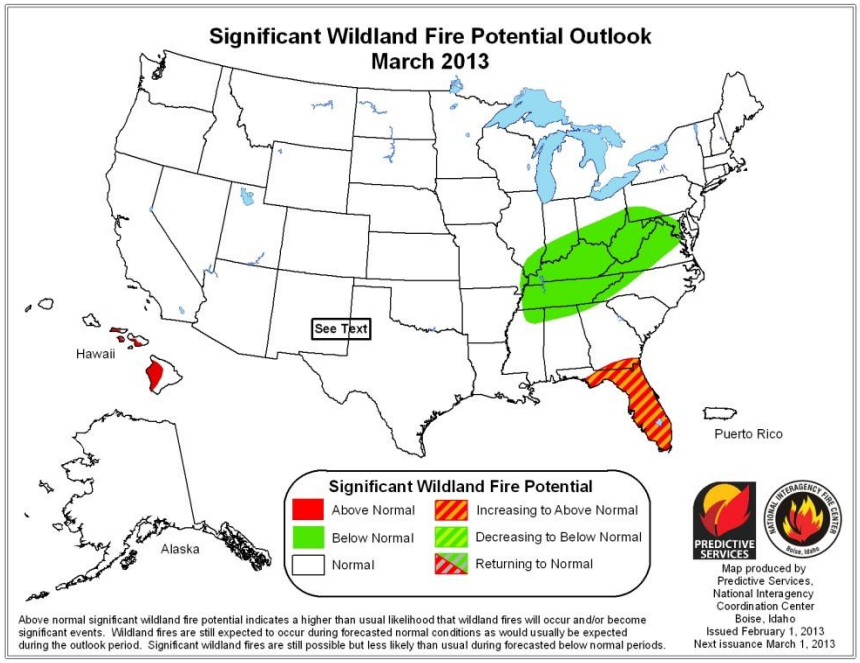
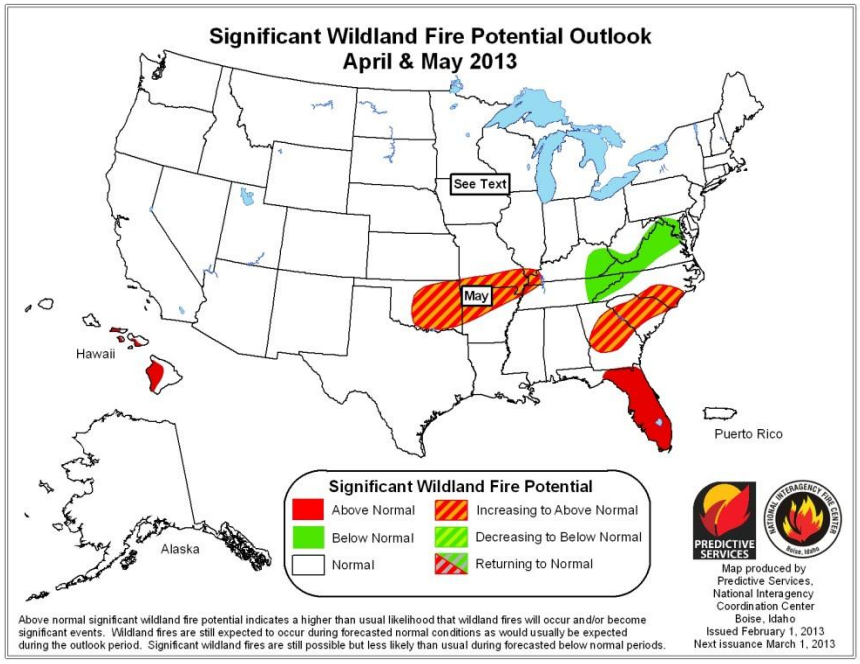
Western Great Basin Monthly and Seasonal Outlook

Issued: February 2, 2013 Valid for: February-May 2013

WGB Monthly and Seasonal Outlook: NORMAL across WGB





Weather Conditions Over the Last 30 Days

The maximum temperature over the last 30 days, ending January 28, 2013, was generally 5-15 degrees below normal across the northern half of Nevada with some areas seeing temperatures 15-20 degrees below normal. Over the southern half of the WGB temperatures only dropped from just above normal to a few degrees below normal (see **Figure 2**).

Precipitation over the last 30 days decreased significantly with most of WGB <25-70% of normal, with the exception of a small area of eastern Nevada seeing near to above normal precipitation (see **Figure 3**).

The water year precipitation (since October 1, 2012) is shown in **Figure 4**. Precipitation is still 25-90% of normal over most of the WGB. Only the Sierra and small parts of southern and eastern Nevada have experienced above normal precipitation for the water year. Southern Nevada received precipitation in October while western Nevada and the Sierra saw significant precipitation from late November through December.

The current snowpack can be viewed in **Figure 5**. Despite dry conditions in January, early season cold and wet systems that moved through Nevada the 3rd-4th week in October, higher elevation snowfall in late November in the Sierra, and a series of wet storms that moved through the Sierra into the northern half of Nevada in December, snow was brought to the WGB. Due to very cold January temperatures, the snowpack only gradually decreased through the month to near normal over the Sierra and into western/northwest Nevada and still remains below normal over northeast Nevada.

Weather models indicate a return to wetter weather by the middle to end of the first full week in February with another shift to drier weather the following week through at least the second or third week in February. Some snow will be added to the snowpack, with snow accumulation even down to valley floors from February 7-9th.

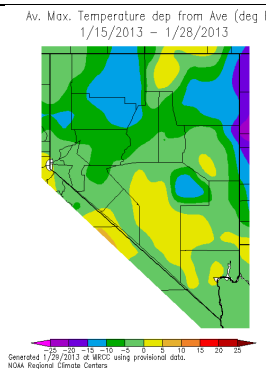


Figure 2: 30-Day Avg. Max Temps Departure from Avg. (deg F)

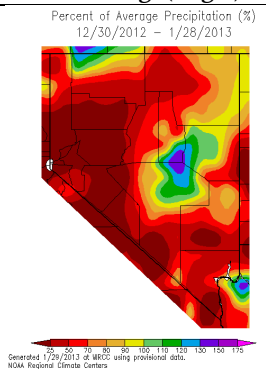


Figure 3: 30-Day Percent of Avg. Precipitation

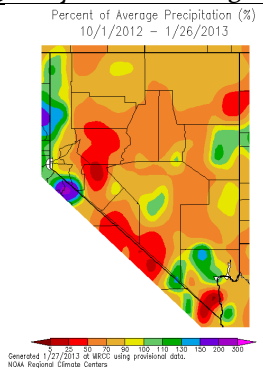


Figure 4: Percent of Avg. Precipitation since Oct 1, 2012

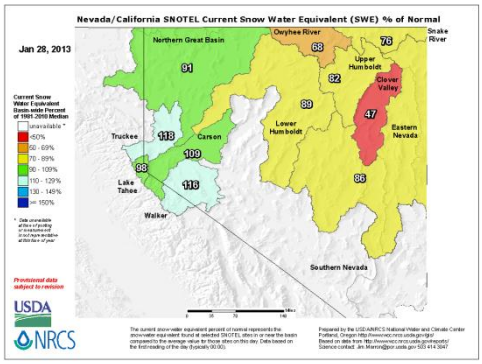


Figure 5: Snowpack as of January 4, 2013

Climate Factors and Long Range Outlooks

The El Nino Southern Oscillation (ENSO) is currently in a state of neutral (with sea surface temperatures now dropping to just below normal), and will likely remain in a neutral state through the spring. This typically means a more normal-type winter, with some periods of above normal precipitation and some periods of drier weather, ending in possibly a near to below normal season with respect to precipitation. The Climate Prediction Center has forecast near to above normal temperatures for WGB the March-April-May timeframe (see **Figure 6**); along with some chances for below normal precipitation across much of the state (see **Fig 7**).

This expected temperature/precipitation pattern correlates well with an ENSO neutral state.

The U.S. Drought Monitor (**Figure 8**) shows severe to extreme drought covering most of the northern half of Nevada with moderate drought and pockets of severe drought over the southern half of the state. Some improvement in the drought has occurred due to wet weather over far southern Nevada from July through October, which are now classified as abnormally dry, but dry weather recently may allow drought to re-develop (**see Figure 9**). Only slight drought improvements have been noted over the rest of the WGB due to late fall/early winter precipitation. However, drier conditions in the spring could lead to reintensification of drought in some areas.

Western Great Basin Outlook

Typically there are no significant fires from February through May. Periods of cool and occasionally wet weather is expected to keep fire potential near normal through March and April. If drier and warmer weather develops for a longer period of time later in the winter or early spring, higher fire potential may return to parts of WGB, especially during windy conditions.

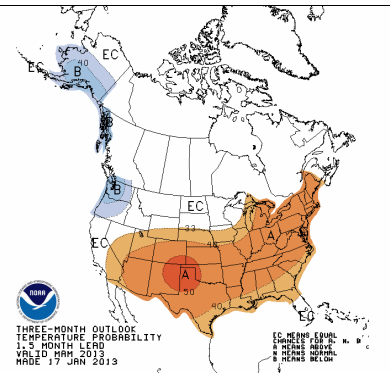


Figure 6: 3-Month Temperature Outlook - MAM

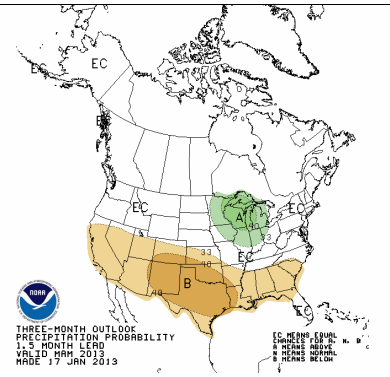
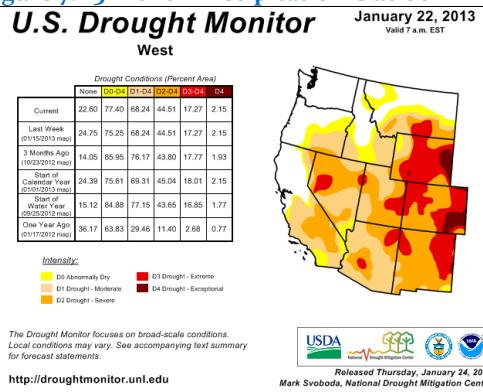


Figure 7: 3-Month Precipitation Outlook – MAM



	None	D0-D4	D1-D4	D2-D4	D3-D4	D4
Current	22.60	77.40	68.24	44.51	17.27	2.15
Last Week (01/15/2013 map)	24.75	75.25	68.24	44.51	17.27	2.15
3 Months Ago (10/23/2012 map)	14.05	85.95	76.17	43.80	17.77	1.93
Start of Calendar Year (01/01/2013 map)	24.39	75.61	69.31	45.04	18.01	2.15
Start of Water Year (09/25/2012 map)	15.12	84.88	77.15	43.65	16.85	1.77
One Year Ago (01/17/2012 map)	36.17	63.83	29.46	11.40	2.68	0.77

Figure 8: Nevada Drought Monitor

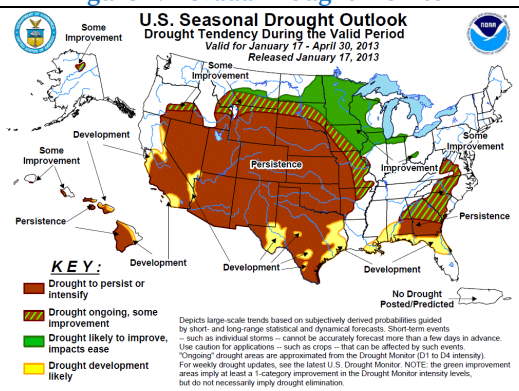


Figure 9: U.S. Seasonal Drought Outlook