

Southwest Area Monthly Outlook

March 2026

WEATHER FACTORS AND OUTLOOK:

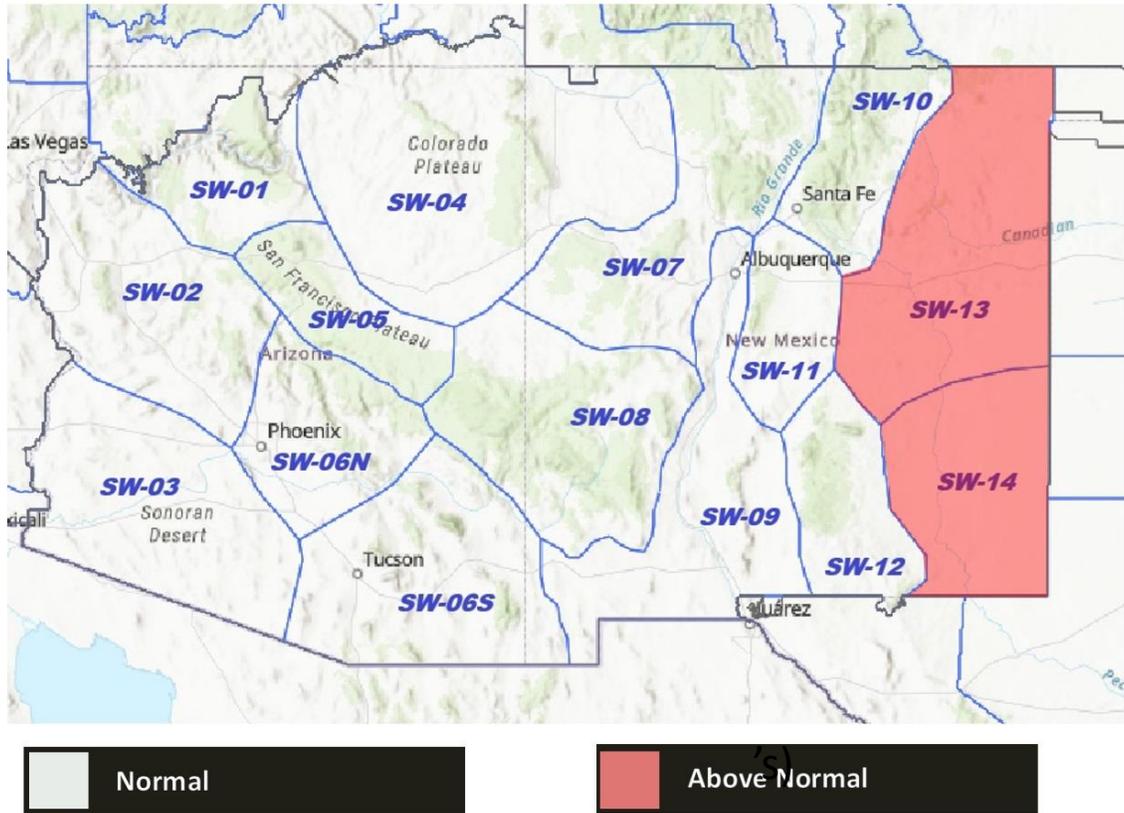
Drought Conditions: As of March 1st, the U.S. Drought Monitor indicated widespread areas of moderate to severe drought across more than 2/3 of the region, with the exception of some of the higher terrain across central Arizona. Some pockets of extreme drought were showing up across parts of far western New Mexico. The Monthly Drought Outlook predicts that drought will persist and worsen across all areas where drought presently exists with new areas of drought possible. Snowpack in the higher elevations is critically low, mostly 10-30% of normal in most higher elevations.

Precipitation Anomalies and Outlook: Precipitation in February was below to well below normal across most areas, with the driest being in eastern and southern areas, where only 10% or less of normal rainfall occurred. The latest climate outlook forecasts near to below normal precipitation for nearly all areas in March.

Temperature Anomalies and Outlook: Temperatures during February were about 2 to 4 deg above normal for most areas. The latest climate outlook above or much above normal temperatures areawide in March.

Significant Fire Potential	<p style="text-align: center;">Above Normal eastern New Mexico, normal elsewhere.</p> <p>A few large fires (> 100 acres) already occurred in February across eastern New Mexico, where there is above normal fine fuel loading and carry-over fuels from last year. During this dormant season for brush, where live fuel moisture remains below 100%, the brush component will be significant, until green-up occurs, usually end of March or April, depending on precipitation. With all this, any significant wind event with minimum humidity below 20% will have the potential to cause large fires.</p>
Prescribed Fire Implications	<p>Despite the early season periods of moisture and cool conditions, prescribed burners should keep a close eye on increasing fire danger readings in the unseasonably warmer and drier weather that is expected for most areas in March. Low snowpack and widespread PJ mortality exist in many mid-higher elevations and will need to be factored into any large-scale burn plans.</p>
Miscellaneous	None.

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*Significant Fire Potential Outlook & Predictive Services Areas (PSA's)

*Significant Fire Potential: The likelihood a fire situation will require mobilization of additional resources from outside the area in which the fire situation originates.



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