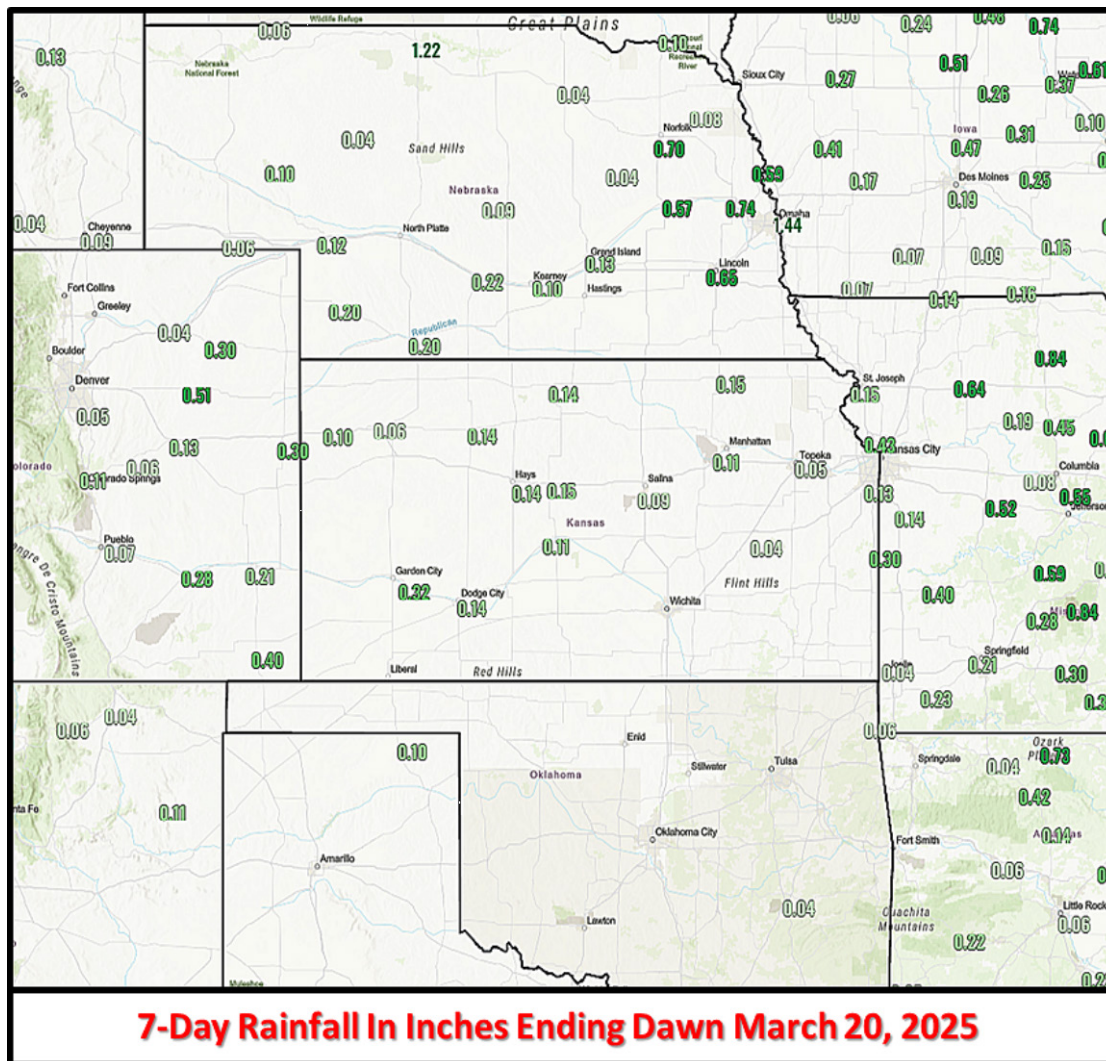


Impressive Central U.S. Storm Brings Little Moisture Change

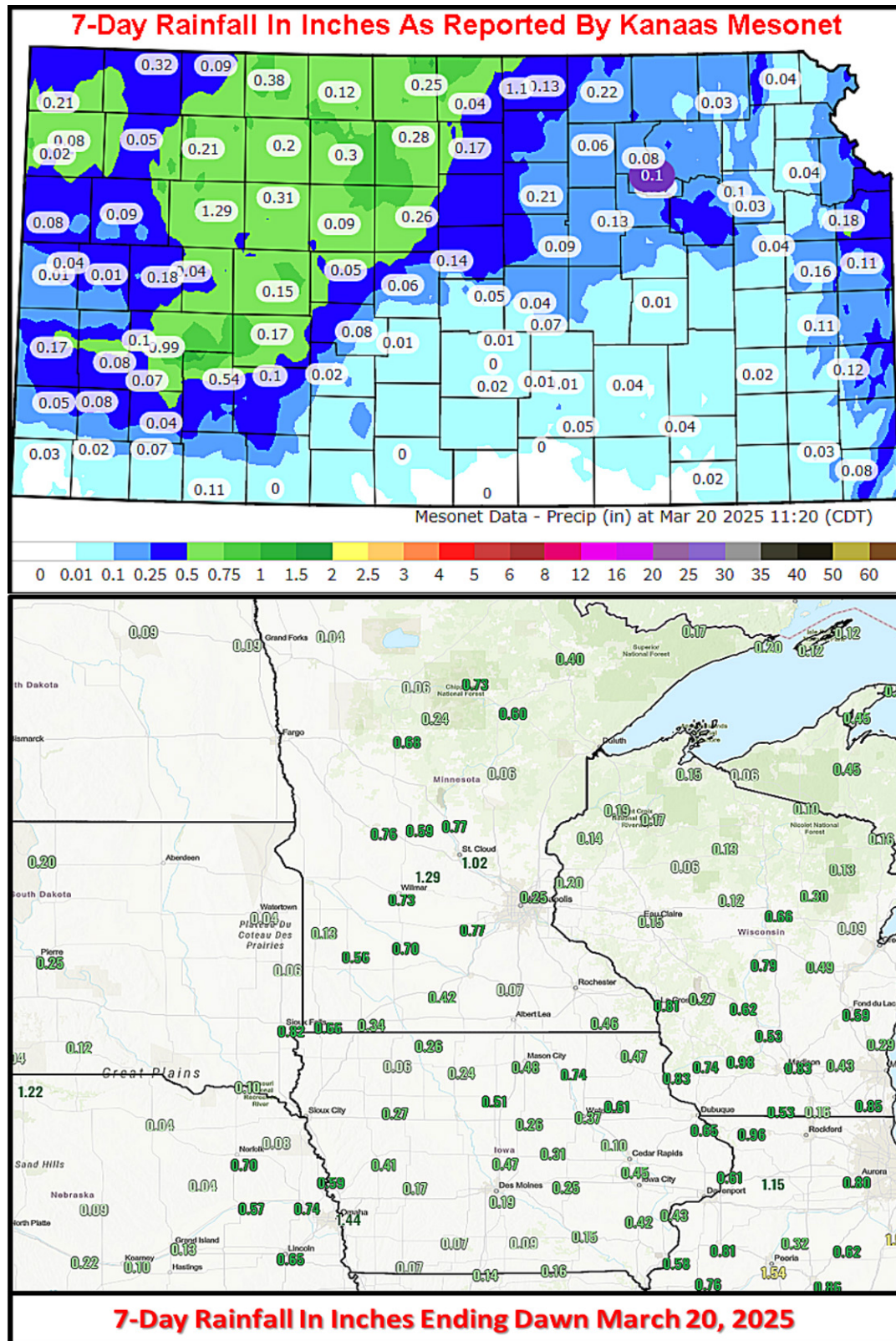
By Brad Luchen and Drew Lerner

Kansas City, March 20 (World Weather Inc.) – The first official day of spring has arrived following another very impressive central U.S. storm system. *This week's storm produced an impressive wind blowing dust from New Mexico to the Midwest and inducing a blizzard from Kansas to Wisconsin; however the system failed to bring much moisture change to the heart of hard red winter wheat country and the moisture boost to the upper Midwest was a little lackluster. There is potential for additional lighter than usual precipitation in the upper Midwest later this month into early April while the central and southwestern Plains continue quite dry.*



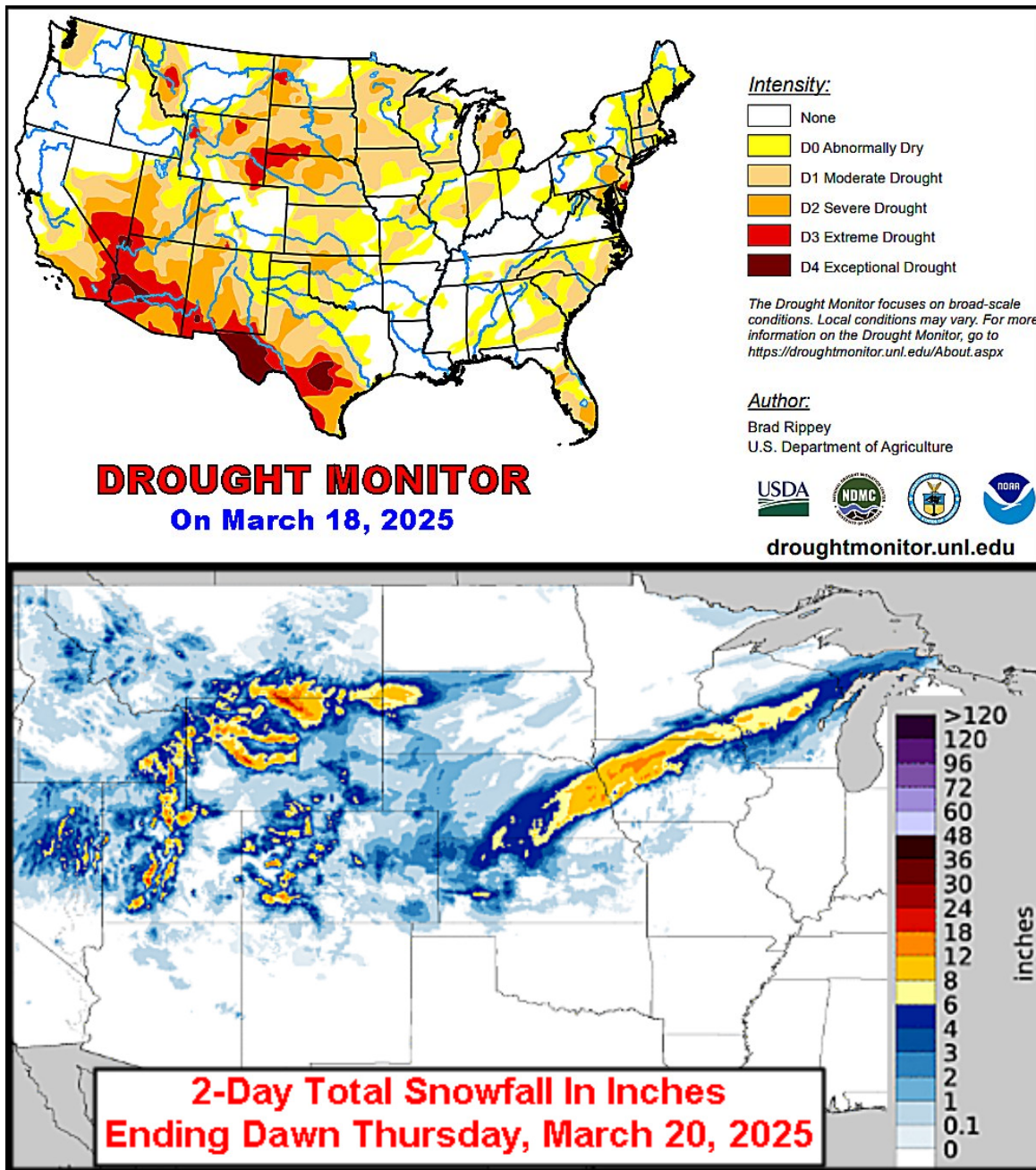
Despite the blizzard that just moved through the central Plains and into a part of the western Great Lakes region Wednesday, precipitation in the central United States has continued to be lighter than usual. No serious relief to long term dryness in the soil has occurred and much of this week's moisture will be lost to evaporation as warming returns later this month.

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Similarly, in the upper Midwest, long term moisture deficits remain in place across portions of Minnesota, Iowa, Wisconsin and the Dakotas and most of the precipitation in the past seven days failed to bring much relief outside of a few locations.

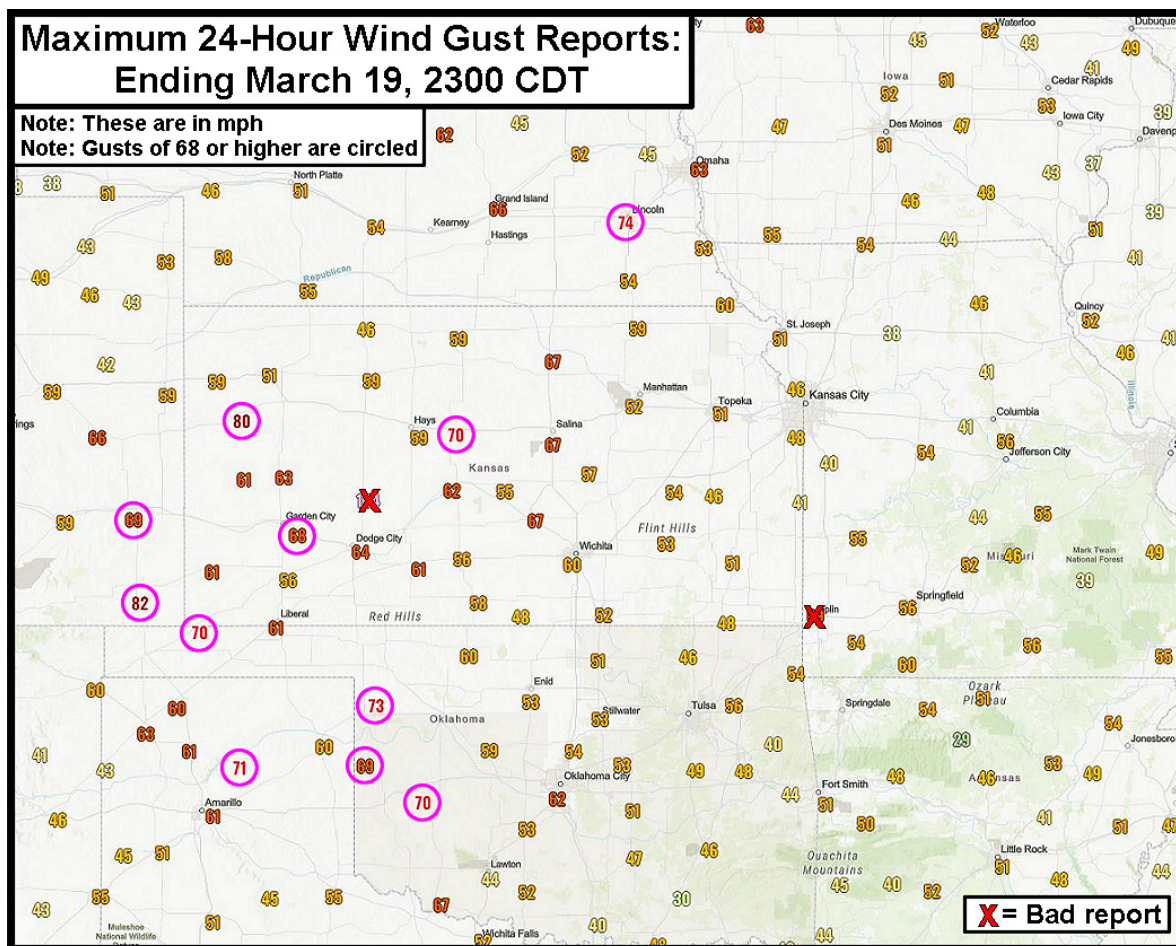


Every bit of moisture that fell across the central United States in the past seven days was welcome and will benefit topsoil moisture for a short period of time. Winter crops will benefit from the moisture as they break dormancy and begin to green up and resume development. However, the precipitation reported recently was not greater than usual in very many locations and moisture deficits were not seriously nudged and that leaves the Great Plains and a part of the western Corn and Soybean Belt with a moisture deficit that

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may worsen as additional warming occurs in future weeks. A significant amount of rain and/or snow will be needed in the balance of March and April to knock down the drought and dryness and that is not very likely since a change in the weather pattern is unlikely over the next six weeks.

There is plenty of evidence that drought exists in the central United States besides seeing it on the drought monitor. The past two large storm systems to impact the central states managed to stir up some impressive wind. The wind events of March 14-15 and that of Tuesday and Wednesday of this week managed to generate some of the greatest dust storms seen in recent years. The event March 14-15 allowed dust to accumulate on the ground and against windward facing building walls as far removed the southwestern Plains as Missouri, parts of Iowa and Illinois. Visibilities were cut to near zero in some places in the southwestern Plains while a notable haze occurred across the central Plains and Midwest because of dust in the air.



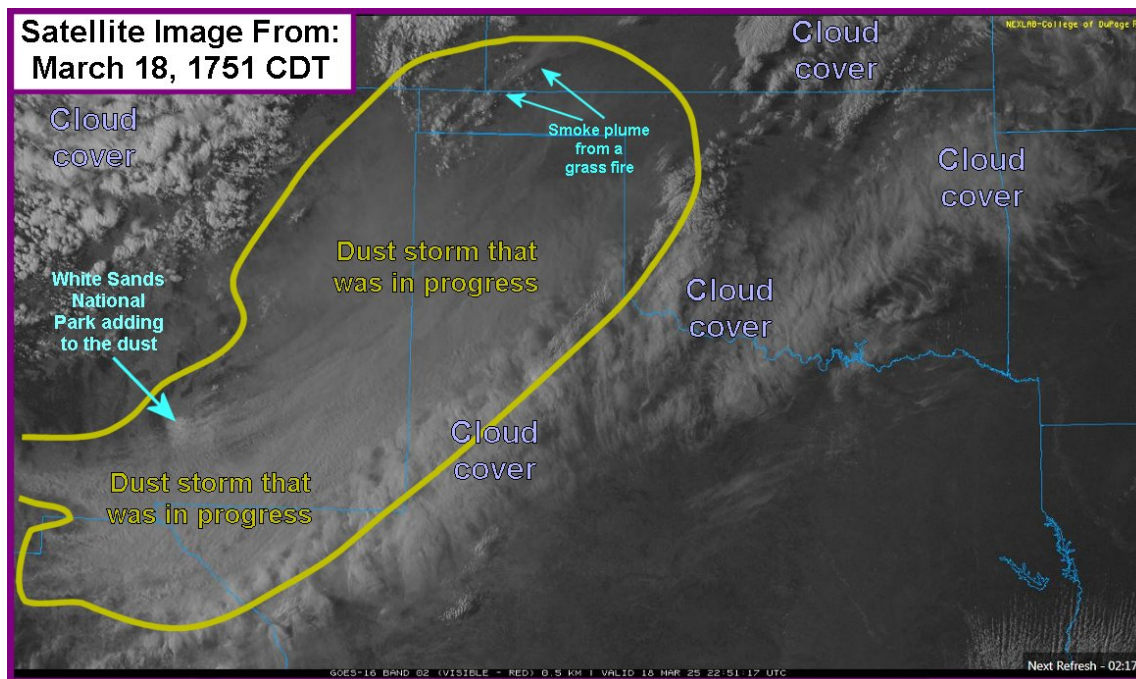
Sustained wind speeds of 35 to 45 mph were common across the central and southwestern Plains during the height of both wind events with gusts during mid-week this week reaching 60-82 mph across the high Plains. Such wind speeds with very low humidity both this week and last week resulted in fast drying rates. Moisture in the soil dissipated very quickly as the dry wind whipped across the region. Not only was there blowing dust,

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but blizzard conditions occurred from Kansas and Nebraska to southern Wisconsin resulting in road closures, power outages and some structure damage.

Excessive wind can also damage wheat and other vegetation and some of that may have occurred, although assessments of the damage are not completed. More damage has likely occurred this year from bitter cold temperatures with no snow cover, heaving topsoil, drought and widely swinging temperatures in recent weeks than by the wind alone. However, all of these conditions are not biding well for future wheat development. A continuation below normal precipitation is expected through April and the odds are also great that additional wild temperature swings will take place and additional excessive wind.

Winter crops need cool and wet conditions in the next few weeks to recover from the damage incurred so far this year and there is little to no chance of such conditions evolving. The drying trend may also slow spring planting in late March and April and could negatively impact unirrigated crops; including canola and wheat in the southern Plains. Grazing grass for livestock may not develop very well either and that could lead to greater post winter hay and grain consumption to feed cattle in the region.



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