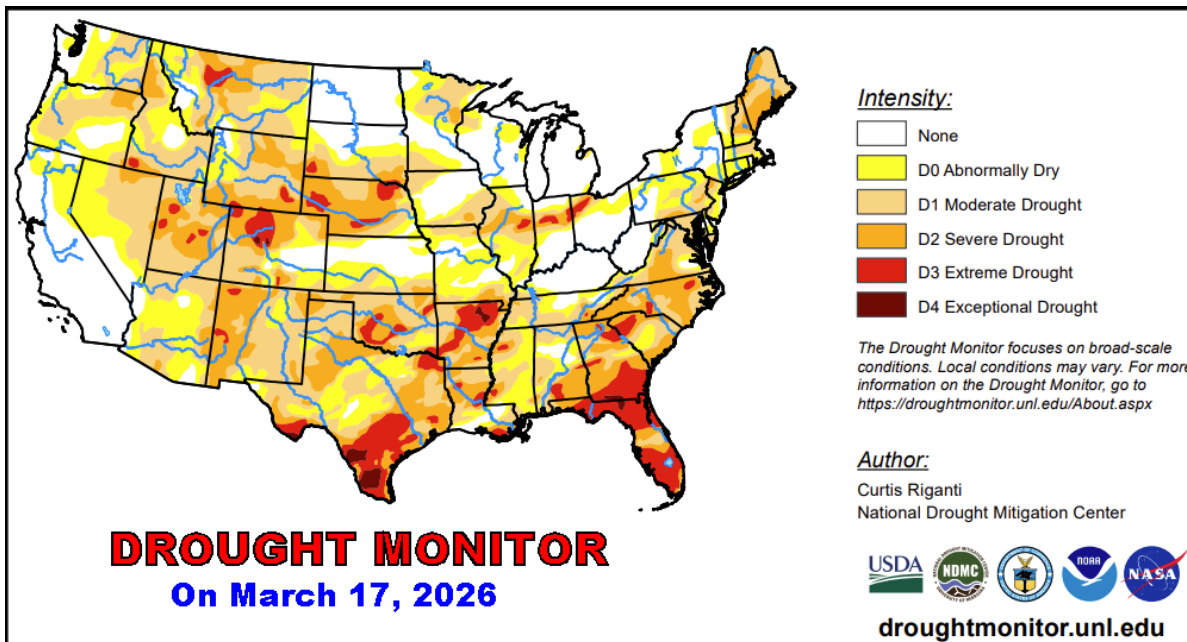


# Drought Worry Rising Over Western North America

By Drew Lerner

Kansas City, March 20 (World Weather Inc.) – *This week's unusual heat wave in western North America has peaked interest in the weather outlook for this spring. Worry has begun to rise over the longer-range forecast because of the degree of dryness present from southwestern Canada's Prairies through much of the western United States. Drought is also prevailing in portions of the U.S. Midwest, Delta and southeastern states. The outlook for spring continues to be a little disconcerting and a closer watch on the atmosphere is warranted over the next few weeks.*



Drought has been present in many areas in North America since the latter part of last summer and most have just accepted that as a winter phenomenon. However, *now that warming is becoming more noticeable folks are waking up to the fact that drought has not been eased in western North America and it has actually expanded a bit in recent weeks.*

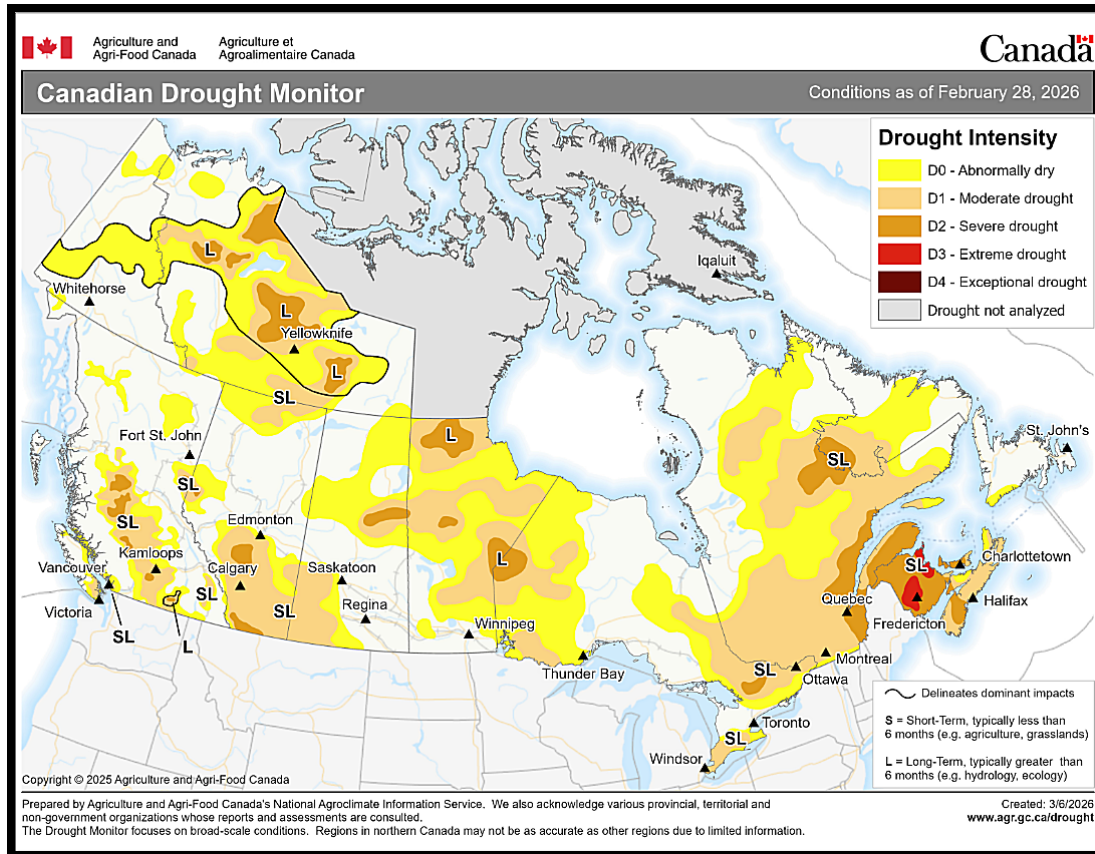
The latest drought monitor for the United States continues to highlight dryness from Texas through portions of the Delta and from Florida and the southeastern part of Alabama to the middle and some northern Atlantic Coast States. There is also drought lingering in the heart of the Midwest, although it has shrunk a bit in recent weeks. In the meantime, drought has been expanding in parts of Nebraska, South Dakota and in areas both west and north into the northwestern Plains and Pacific Northwest. Many of these areas had some flavor of dryness in the late summer, autumn and winter which has tended to reduce the significance of its presence today; however, it is getting hotter. Drought has also expanded again in southwestern Canada's Prairies.

Temperatures today and those expected into Saturday will be in the 80s and 90s Fahrenheit in the central and southern Great Plains with extreme highs rising over 100 in the southwestern Plains. Temperatures have already risen into the 90s and over 100 in the

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southwestern desert region and will briefly expand into the southwestern Plains Friday and Saturday before temporarily abating.

The heat and dryness do not stop at the Canada or Mexico borders which further raises concern about the future of weather in western North America. Canada has drought in much of its southwestern Prairies as well as in much of Quebec and portions of Manitoba and Ontario. Mexico's dryness is mostly confined to the northeast, but with seasonal heat increasing and little to no rain expected, drought is sure to expand in coming weeks.



*The most disturbing part of today's dryness is the ten-day weather outlook showing very little potential for significant rain into the first days of April throughout much of the western and some central U.S. locations as well as in the southwestern Canada Prairies.* Another ten days of dryness would not be a huge issue if the temperatures were not advertised to be above and well above normal. The environment will exacerbate the situation melting mountain snowpack rapidly and warming the low-lying areas faster than usual. The pattern must break in April and May to prevent a more serious threat to agriculture from evolving a little later in the growing season.

The spring outlook from World Weather Inc. highlighted the potential for dryness in the Plains, Rocky Mountains and western states as well as a part of the western Corn and Soybean Belt and it would appear that the forecast is right in line with a few analog years that perpetuated dryness and drought into the heart of spring.

*Most of the dry pattern has come from a long-term repeating atmospheric weather pattern that has been enhanced by La Nina. The last few weeks actually allowed La Nina to briefly intensify further limiting rainfall in portions of western North America.* La Nina

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is now expected to steadily decline and as it does there will be some softening in the hot, dry, pattern in the western parts of North America. **The pattern will not completely turn around because the only change is coming from the dismissal of La Nina not the end of the dominating lunar cycle. Because of this there will be some potential for a little more rain in western North America during April, but a “fix-all” in the pattern is not very likely and dryness is probable in many of the areas mentioned above until the summer begins.**

**Dryness will not be as persistent and absolute as it has been recently; though, warmer than usual temperatures and below normal precipitation will continue making it hard for moisture deficits to be fully eliminated.** The largest fear is that with so much of western North America already hot and dry there will be potential for this year’s late spring and early summer high-pressure ridge to be stronger and more stationary than it might have otherwise been. This raises the potential for more intensive dryness during the spring making it more difficult for summer rainfall to restore soil moisture to normal. Hence a very close watch on the distribution of rain is warranted over the next several weeks

Central and eastern U.S. Midwest crop areas and some of those in the interior southeastern states will get timely rainfall to support spring planting and early crop development. A few notable storm systems will also bring relief to dryness in the central and western Corn and Soybean Belt, but **dryness in the Rocky Mountains, high Plains and southwestern parts of the Canada’s Prairies will be very difficult to break prior to summer.**

Winter crops from southwestern Canada through the high Plains region of the United States may not yield as well as they should and some spring planting delays and uneven early season crop development should be expected. Water supply in the Rocky Mountains will be sufficient for spring and early summer, but could be in a steady decline during the latter part of the year leading to lower than usual water supply as the winter of 2026-27 arrives. This year’s fire danger may be high until monsoonal rain evolves in July and August.

Summer weather is still expected to improve across many areas in North America, but the biggest threat to summer may be spring weather since it is often difficult to make up moisture deficits from a dry spring during the hottest time of the year when evaporation rates between rain events are highest.

In the meantime, **most U.S. Midwestern states should see timely rain with the eastern Midwest likely to see the most frequent and abundant precipitation.**

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