



Drought

What is a drought?

A drought is when there is a lack of precipitation over an extended period of time, usually a season or more, resulting in a water shortage for some activity, group, or environmental sector. Its impacts result from the interplay between the natural event (less precipitation than expected) and the demand people place on water supply, and human activities can exacerbate the impacts of drought.



What causes a drought?

Drought has many causes. It can be caused by not receiving rain or snow over a period of time. If you live in a place where most of the water you use comes from a river, a drought in your area can be caused by places upstream from you not receiving enough moisture. There would be less water in the river for you and other people who live along the river to use. People can also play a big role in drought. If we use too much water during times of normal rainfall, we might not have enough water when a drought happens.



Can scientists predict if a drought is going to happen?

No! Studies conducted over the past century have shown that meteorological drought is never the result of a single cause. It is the result of many causes including, global weather patterns, high pressure, the tropical outlook and other global-scale variables.

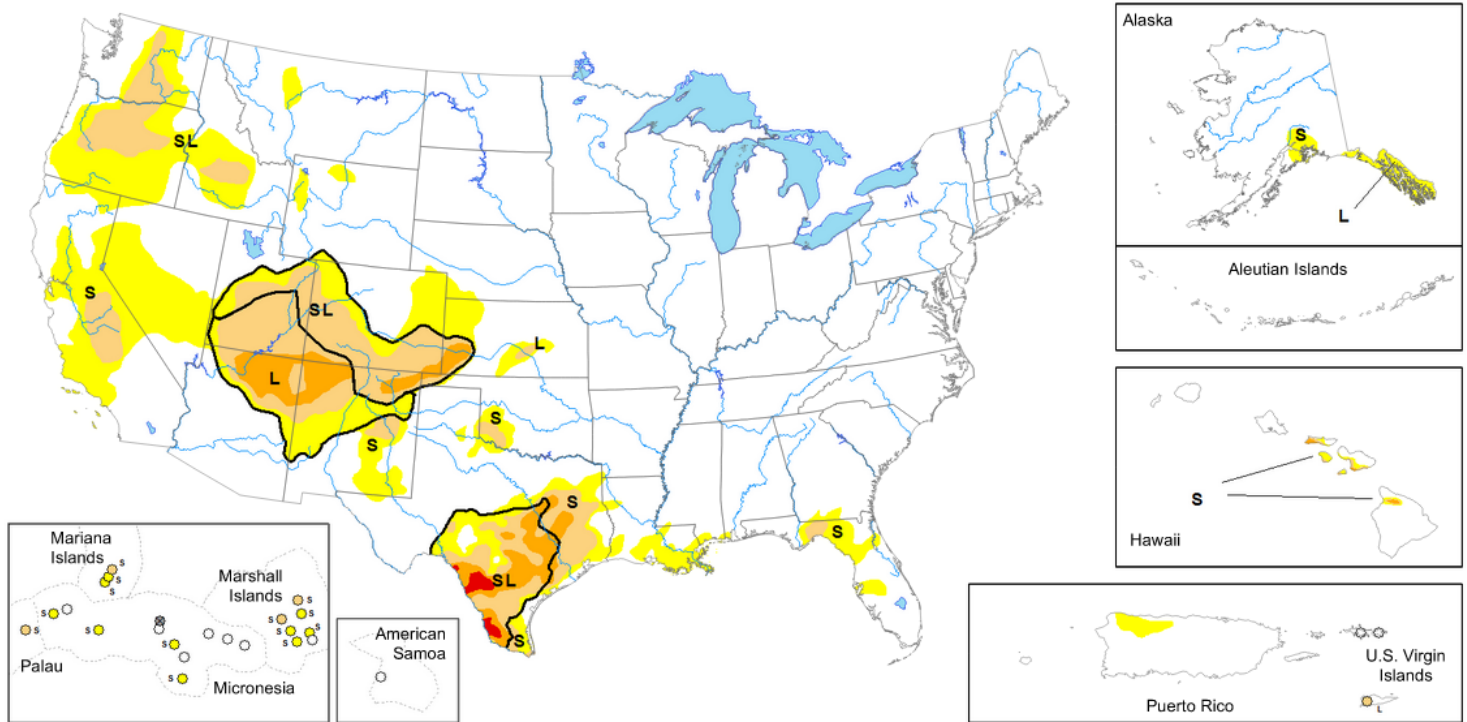


Are there places in the United States that experience drought?

Yes! The Western United States is experiencing an exceptional and extreme drought at this time. To see the map, [Click Here](#) to see the current U.S. Drought Monitor.

Map released: February 13, 2020

Data valid: February 11, 2020



What was the Dust Bowl?

Of all the droughts that have occurred in the United States, the drought events of the 1930s are widely considered to be the “drought of record” for the nation. The 1930s drought is often referred to as if it were one episode, but it was actually several distinct events occurring in such rapid succession that affected regions were not able to recover adequately before another drought began. The term *Dust Bowl* was coined in 1935 to describe the drought-affected south central United States in the aftermath of horrific dust storms. Although it technically refers to the western third of Kansas, southeastern Colorado, the Oklahoma Panhandle, the northern two-thirds of the Texas Panhandle, and northeastern New Mexico, the Dust Bowl has come to symbolize the hardships of the entire nation during the 1930s.

How bad was the drought in the Dust Bowl years?

In the 1930s, drought covered virtually the entire Plains for almost a decade. The drought's direct effect is most often remembered as agricultural. Many crops were damaged by deficient rainfall, high temperatures, and high winds, as well as insect infestations and dust storms that accompanied these conditions. The resulting agricultural depression contributed to the Great Depression's bank closures, business losses, increased unemployment, and other physical and emotional hardships. Although records focus on other problems, the lack of precipitation would also have affected wildlife and plant life, and would have created water shortages for domestic needs.



How does a drought affect our lives?

Drought affects our lives in many different ways because water is such an important part of so many of our activities. We need water to live, and animals and plants do too. We need water to grow the food we eat. We also use water for many different things in our lives, like washing dishes, cooking, bathing, and swimming or river rafting. Water is also used to help make the electricity we use to run the lights in our houses and the video games you may like to play. When we don't have enough water for these activities because of a drought, many people and many different things will be affected in many different ways.



How can we help if we're in a drought?

One of the easiest steps we can take to help mitigate the impacts of drought is conserving water. If we use water wisely at all times, more water will be available to us and to plants and wildlife when a drought happens. We can lose a lot of water doing simple everyday tasks. Did you know that turning off the water while you brush your teeth can save more than 100 gallons of water a month? If you have a leaky faucet, the drips can add up to 300 gallons of wasted water a month.

