

2026 Texas Dormant Fire Season Considerations

Released December 19th, 2025



- The intent of the 2025-2026 Texas Dormant Fire Season considerations is to provide general awareness of broad environmental conditions and the potential impact toward wildfire activity across Texas from late December 2025 through the spring of 2026.
- The bi-weekly [Texas Fire Potential Update](#) provides up-to-date situational awareness of wildfire potential and fire environment conditions for the state of Texas. **Firefighters and emergency management officials are encouraged to subscribe to the Texas Fire Potential Update listserve by sending an email to tx-fire-potential+subscribe@lists.tamu.edu.**
- Texas A&M Predictive Services Fire Environment Products are updated daily and available at the [Texas Interagency Coordination Center website](#)
- **Factors that drive the dormant wildfire season in Texas**
 - Grass fuel loading produced during the previous growing season
 - Current and forecast drought conditions
 - Temperature and precipitation trends
 - Widespread, freeze cured grasses and timing of spring green up of grasses.
 - Frequency of cold front passages and magnitude of windspeed in the pre- and post-frontal environment
 - The peak period for dormant fire season activity is mid-February through early April.

2026 Texas Dormant Fire Season Considerations

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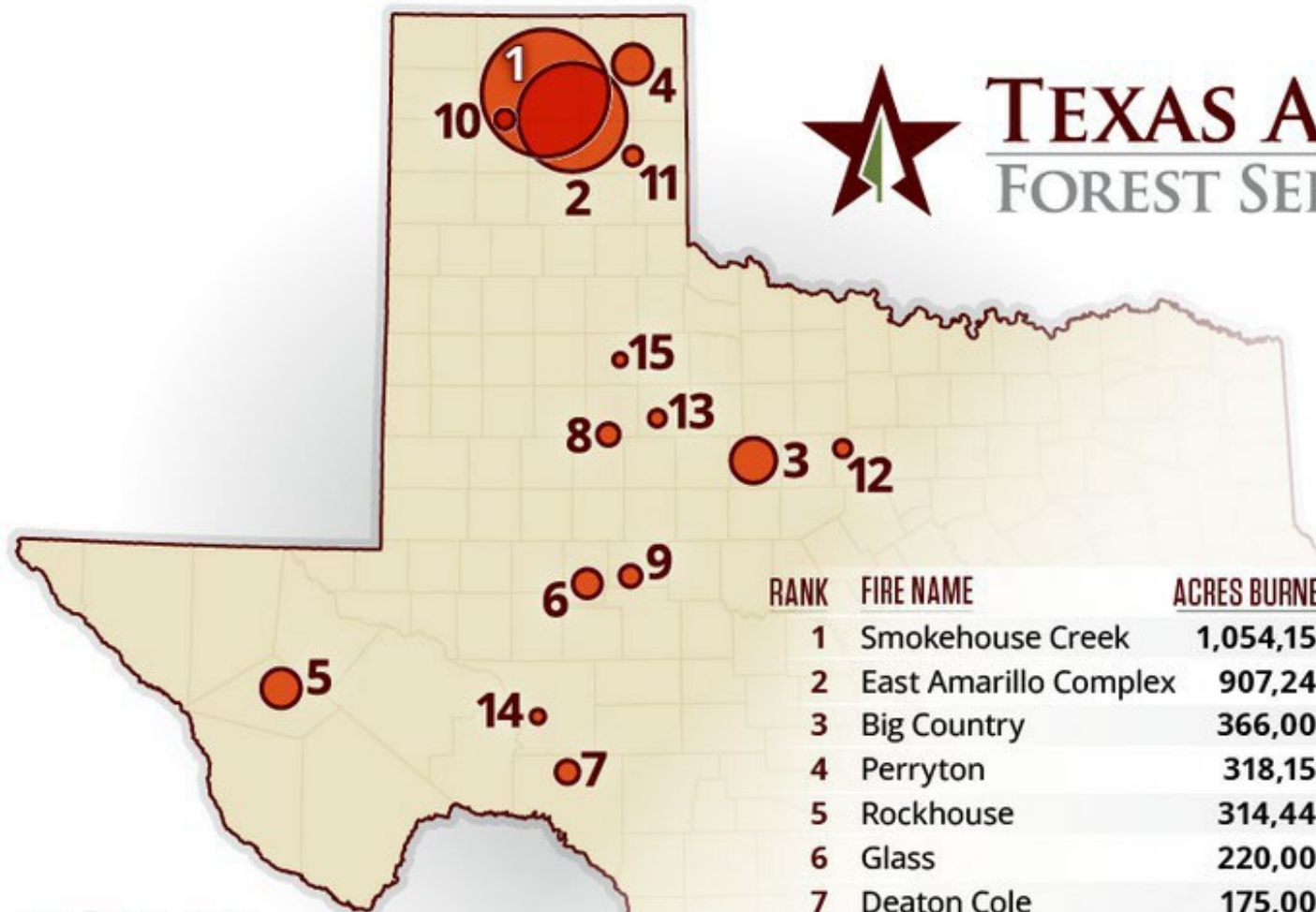
- A wide range of grass loading is present along and west of interstate-35. **Above normal grass loading** in the High Plains, Rolling Plains, and parts of the Southern Plains will require dry fuel and critical to extreme fire weather to produce fires with high resistance to control that exceed the capacity of local firefighting resources.
- **Above normal and exceptional grass loading** in Western/Eastern Hill Country into the Cross Timbers. This type of grass loading will only require dry fuel and elevated to critical fire weather to produce fires that exceed local fire response capacity.
- **Normal to above normal grass loading** in South Texas and the Lower Gulf Coast has yet to be [freeze cured](#) as of December 19th and will help limit wildfire potential until a hard freeze occurs. A fire environment consisting of dry to critically dry fuel, freeze cured grasses, and post-frontal elevated to critical fire weather is typically the requirement for large fires with high resistance to control in South Texas and the Lower Gulf Coast.
- A weak La Niña climate cycle is forecast for the dormant fire season. Increased frequency of fire effective weather in Texas is typically associated during La Niña, including increased risk for high impact, Southern Plains Wildfire Outbreaks.
- East and Central Texas typically observe a secondary peak of wildfire occurrence during the dormant season. Increased initial attack fire activity often coincides after short-term drying of surface fuel and increased wind surrounding dry cold front passages. Underlying drought or high impact fire weather is needed to produce large fire with high resistance control in timber fuel during the dormant season.



The majority Texas's largest wildfires occurred in freeze cured (dormant) grasses in the western half of Texas between mid-February and mid-April when exposed to high impact fire weather.



TEXAS A&M
FOREST SERVICE



TOP 15 LARGEST TEXAS WILDFIRES ON RECORD AS OF 3/25/2024

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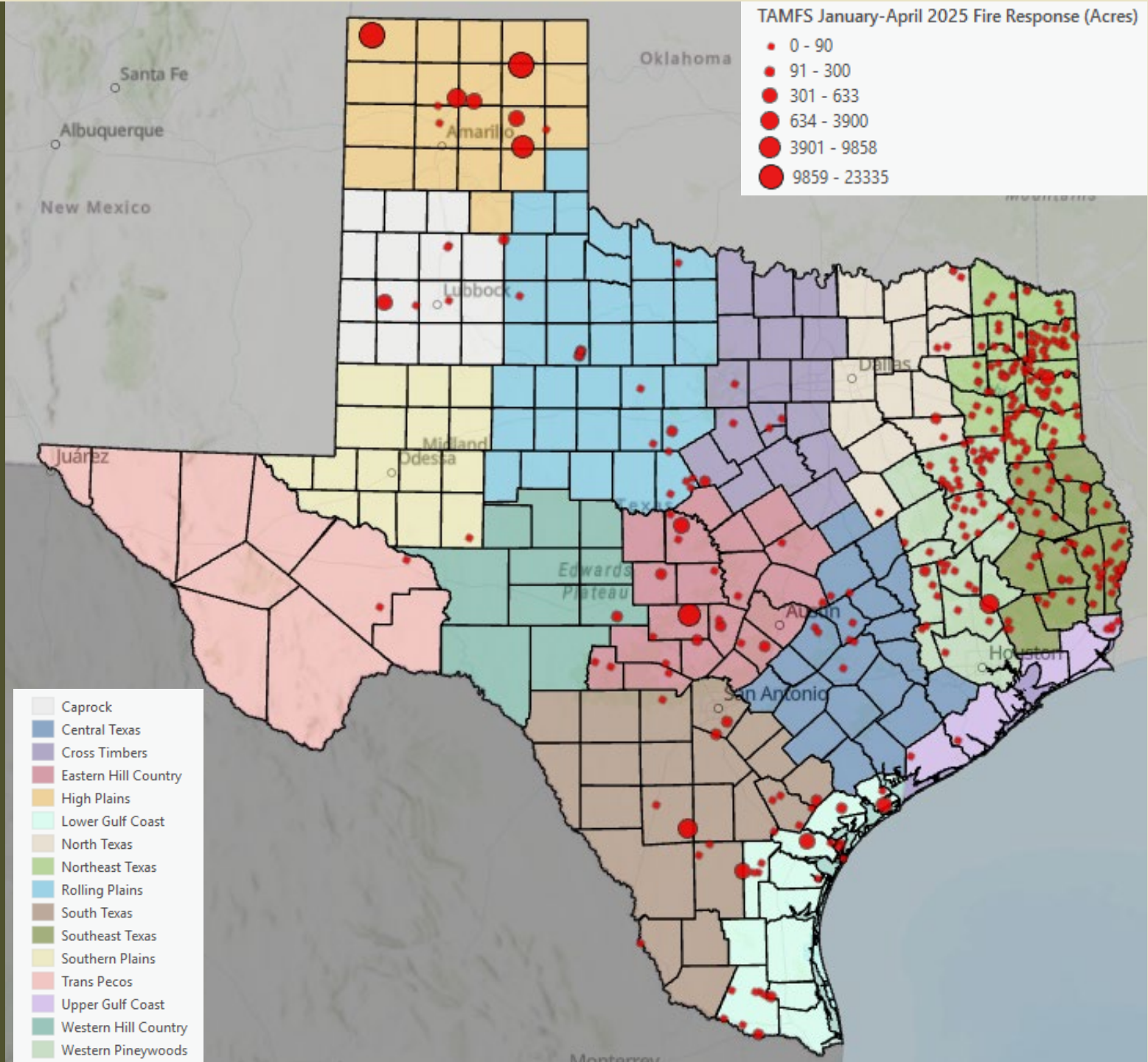
RANK	FIRE NAME	ACRES BURNED	DATE
1	Smokehouse Creek	1,054,153	2/26/2024
2	East Amarillo Complex	907,245	3/12/2006
3	Big Country	366,000	3/10/1988
4	Perryton	318,156	3/6/2017
5	Rockhouse	314,444	4/9/2011
6	Glass	220,000	2/25/2008
7	Deaton Cole	175,000	4/25/2011
8	Cooper Mtn. Ranch	162,625	4/11/2011
9	Wildcat	158,308	4/10/2011
10	Windy Deuce	143,302	2/26/2024
11	Lefors East	135,000	3/6/2017
12	PK Complex	126,734	4/9/2011
13	Swenson	122,500	4/6/2011
14	Huckabee	98,168	4/30/2008
15	Dickens Complex	89,200	5/6/2011



Texas A&M Forest Service Wildfire Response by Predictive Service Area January 1st -May 1st, 2025

The distribution of fire occurrence from the 2025 dormant fire season and fire size is consistent with the distribution of fire activity and fire size often observed during the Texas dormant fire season based on fuel types. Grass and grass/brush fuel along and west of interstate-35 and into South Texas/Lower Gulf Coast will support larger, wind driven fires. East Texas supported a higher volume of small wildfires in timber fuel with the exception a several large fires March 19th from a high wind event.

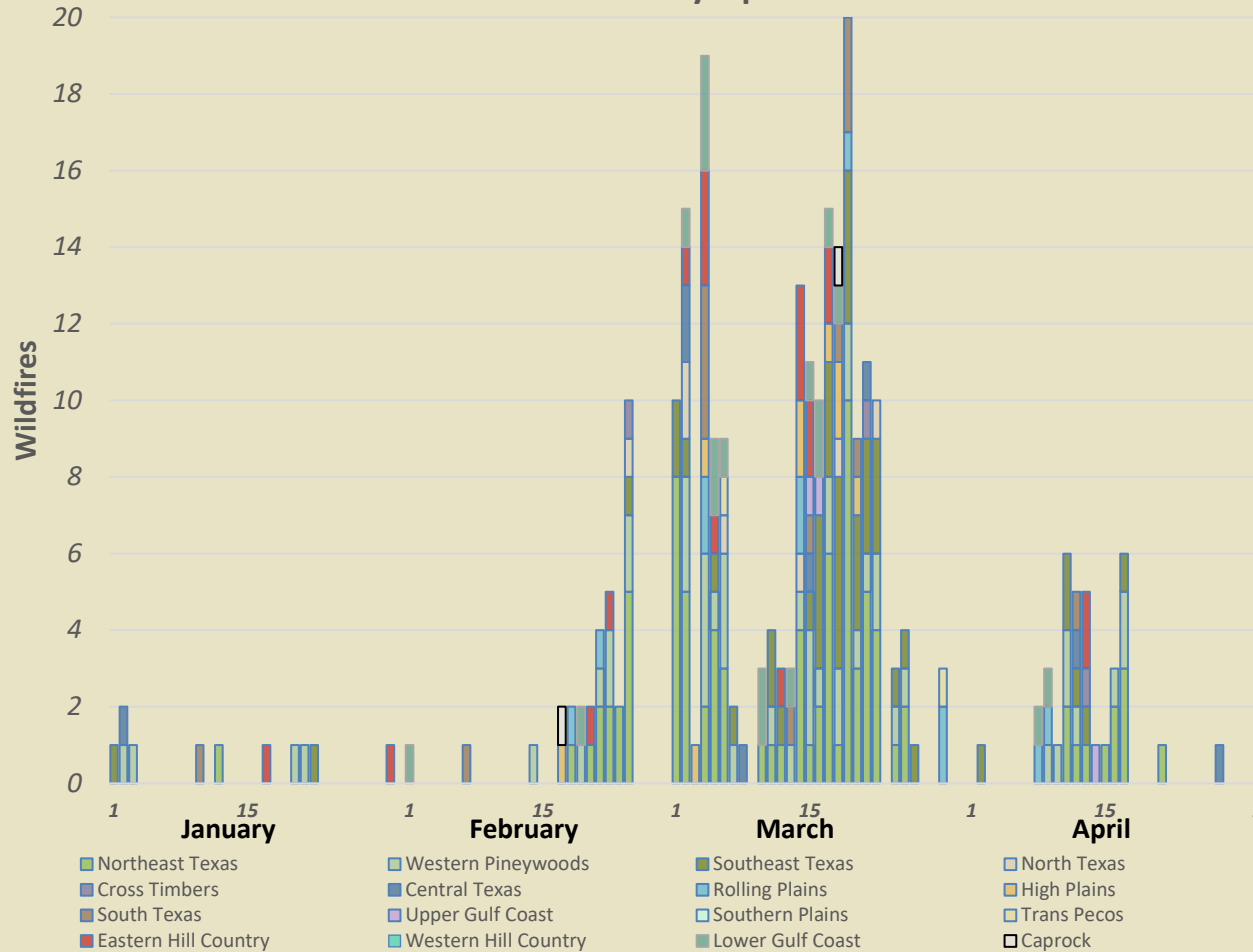
State response in the Trans Pecos, Southern Plains, and Western Hill Country was limited in the 2025 due to below normal grass loading and lower potential for human caused fires due to lower population density.



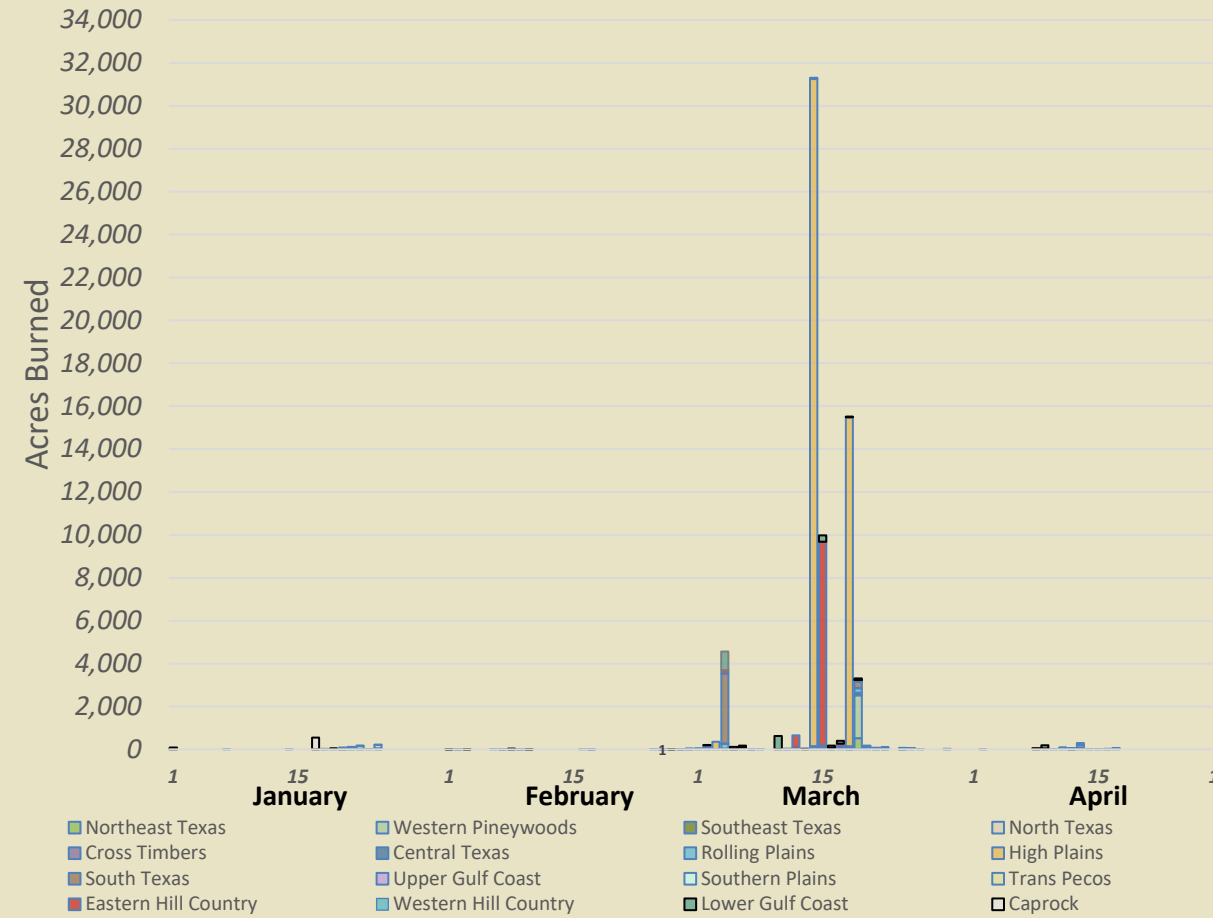
The 2025 Texas dormant fire season experienced a high volume of wildfire response focused from late February through late March with several high impact fire weather events. A prolonged period of accelerated drying in surface fuel occurred mid-March, resulting in a high rate of daily fire activity nearly statewide. High impact or extreme fire weather events were observed March 4th, 14th/15th and 18th/19th when most acres were burned across the state. Several periods of critical fire weather were observed in early April, however early green up of grasses provided a heat sink reduce to the risk for an increased volume of wildfire response and occurrence of additional large, high impact fires.



Texas A&M Forest Service Daily Wildfire Response by Predictive Service Area January-April 2025



Texas A&M Forest Service Daily Wildfire Response Acres Burned by Predictive Service Area January-April 2025

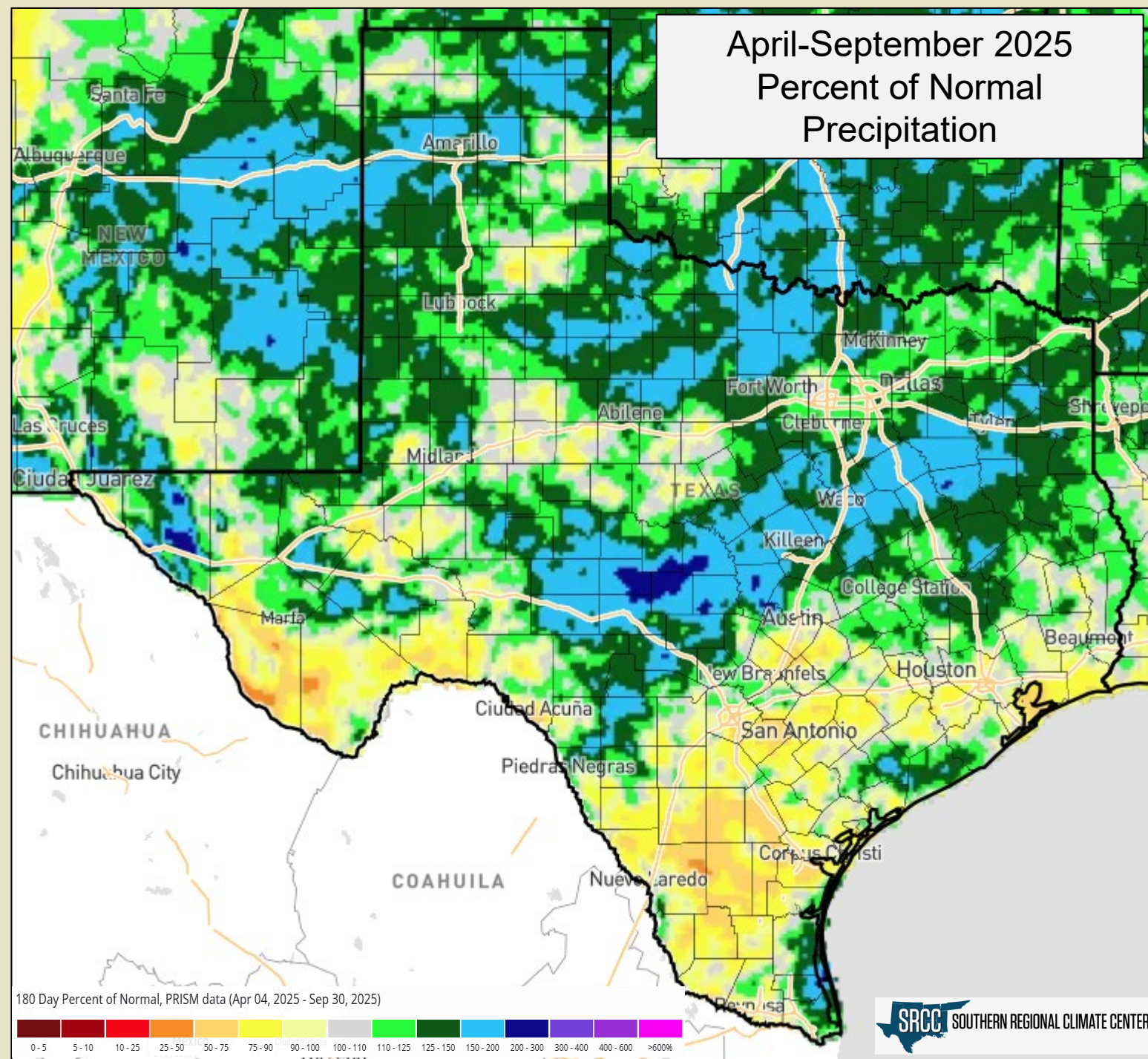




Growing season rainfall surpluses or deficits between April and September is part of the equation for herbaceous grass production that can serve to promote or limit wildfire activity the following winter for the western and south Texas.

Though grasses do support wildfire occurrence in Central and East Texas, fire activity of is often focused on underlying drought in timber litter fuel.

Surplus rainfall was observed for a broad area of Texas for 2025 growing season.





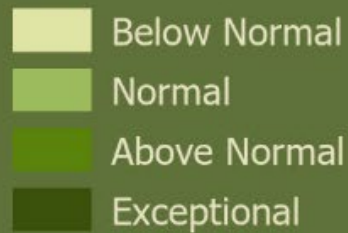
2025-2026 Herbaceous Fuel Loading Assessment

The herbaceous fuel loading assessment is based on growing season rainfall, 200 field observations, rangeland analysis platform production explorer outputs, and grazing impacts.

Through freeze cured grasses support wildfire activity in Central and East Texas, dryness in timber litter fuel is needed to produce fires with increased resistance to control.

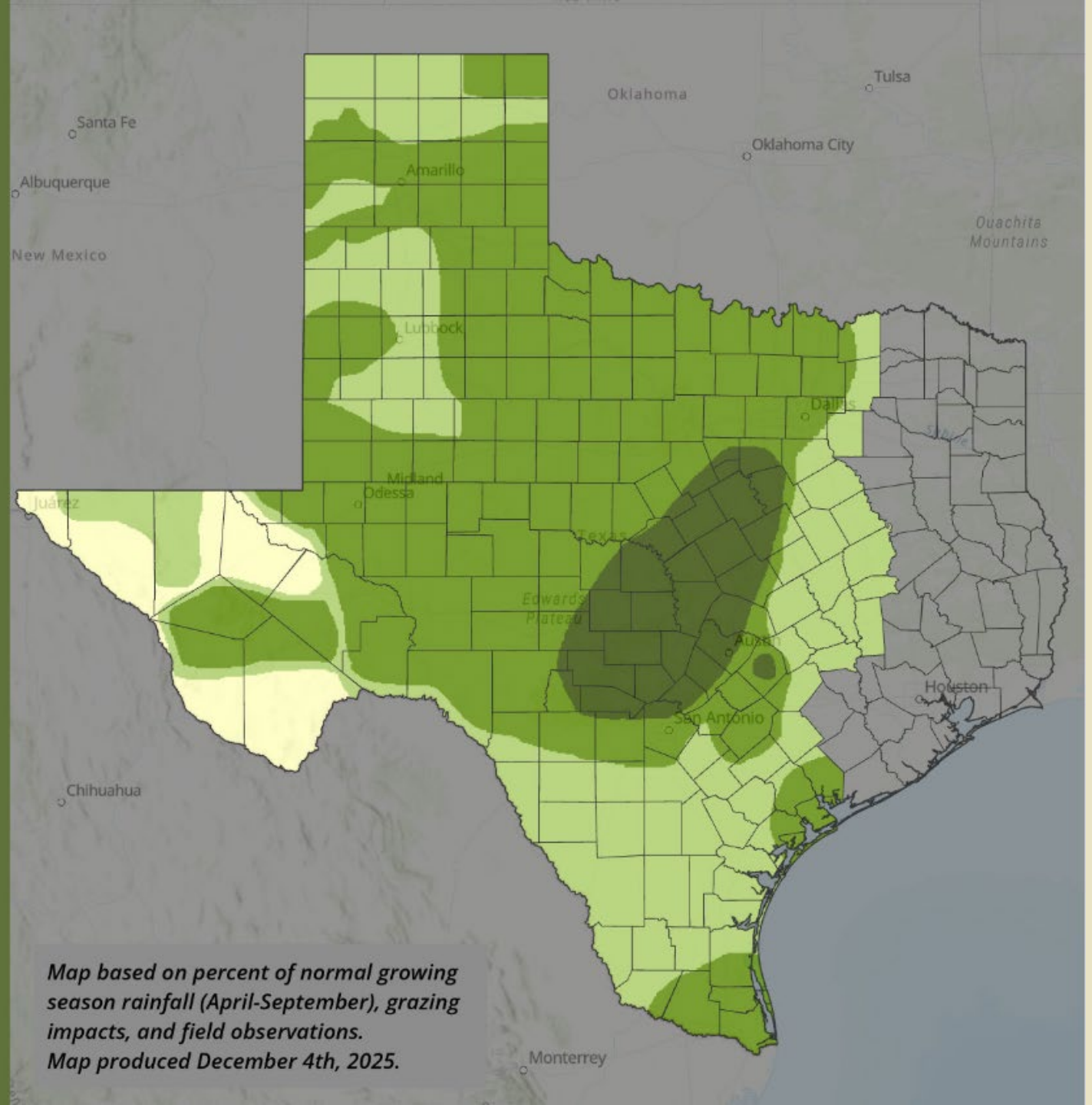


2025-2026 Dormant Fire Season Herbaceous Fuel Loading



Above normal grass loading often requires lower thresholds of dryness and fire weather to produce increased wildfire activity.

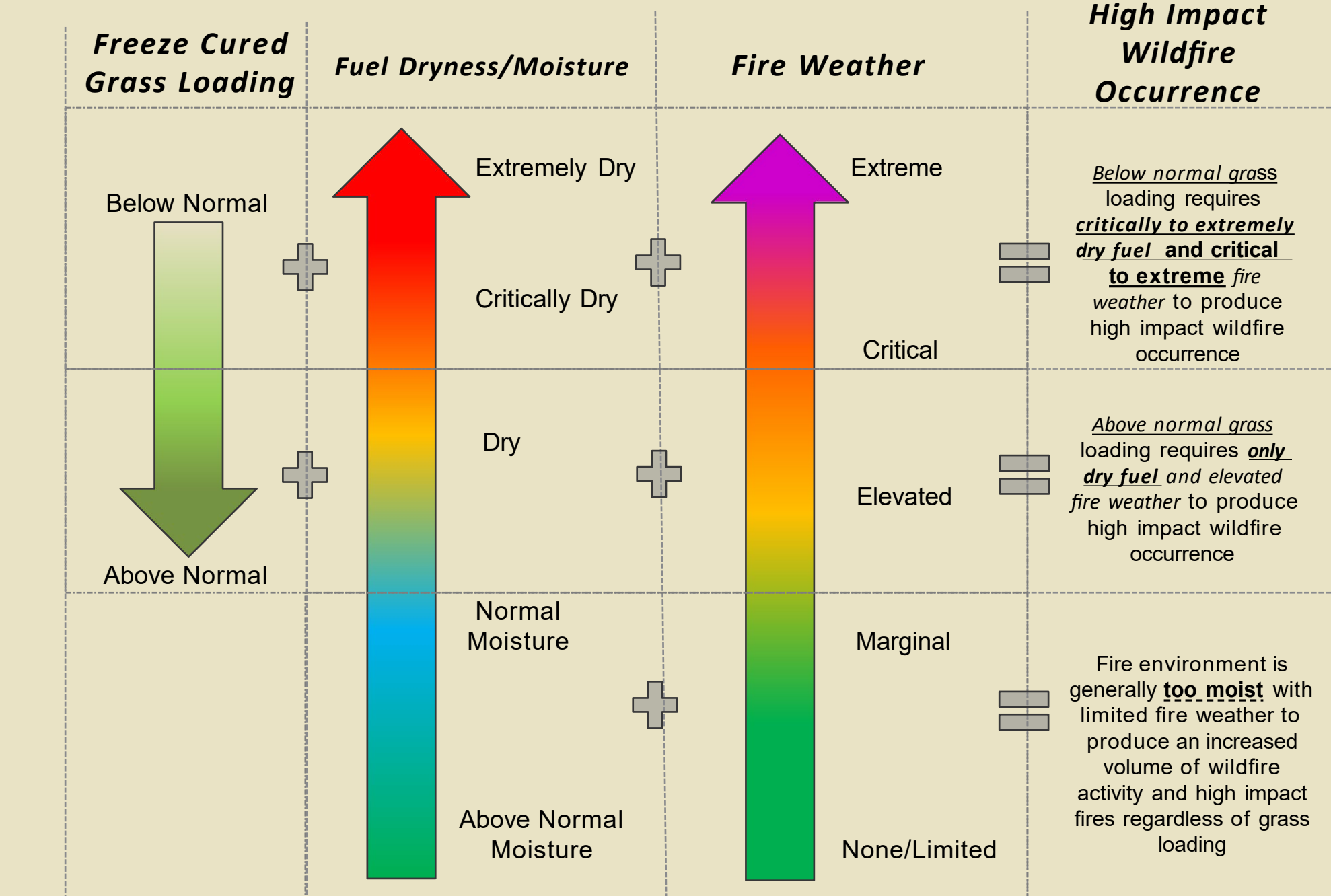
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PREDICTIVESERVICES



*Map based on percent of normal growing season rainfall (April-September), grazing impacts, and field observations.
Map produced December 4th, 2025.*



Freeze cured grass loading impacts the fire environment requirements to produce high impact wildfire occurrence across the West Texas Plains and South Texas during the winter and early spring months.



Extreme fire weather can overpower the fire environment to produce high impact wildfire occurrence, even when freeze cured grasses fuel moisture is near to above normal.



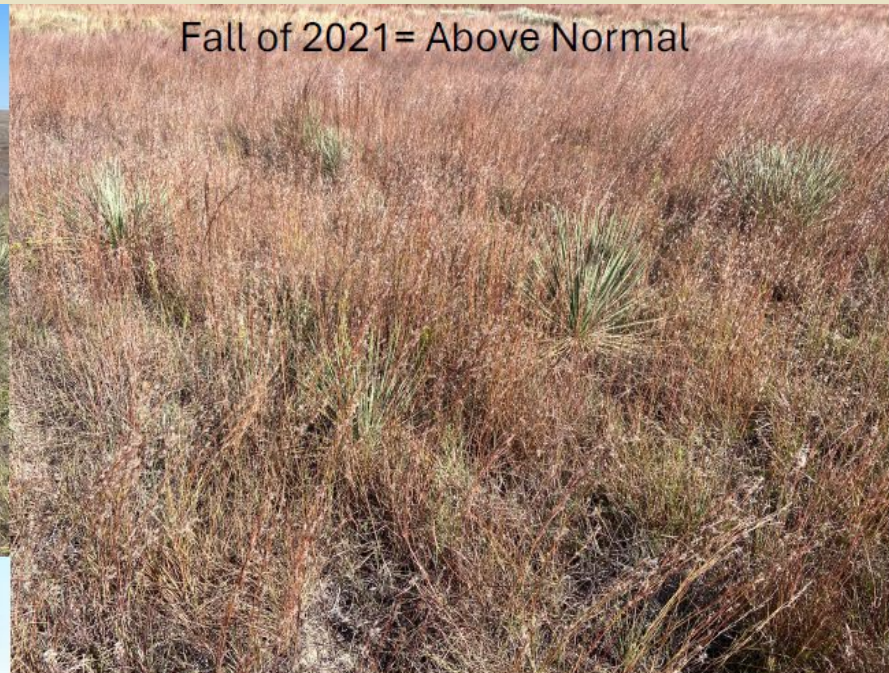
Characterization of grass loading reference.

Height, density, and
continuity off grass
loading is considered.

Fall of 2024= Below Normal Loading



Fall of 2021= Above Normal



Fall of 2024=Normal Loading



Fall of 2023 = Exceptional Loading

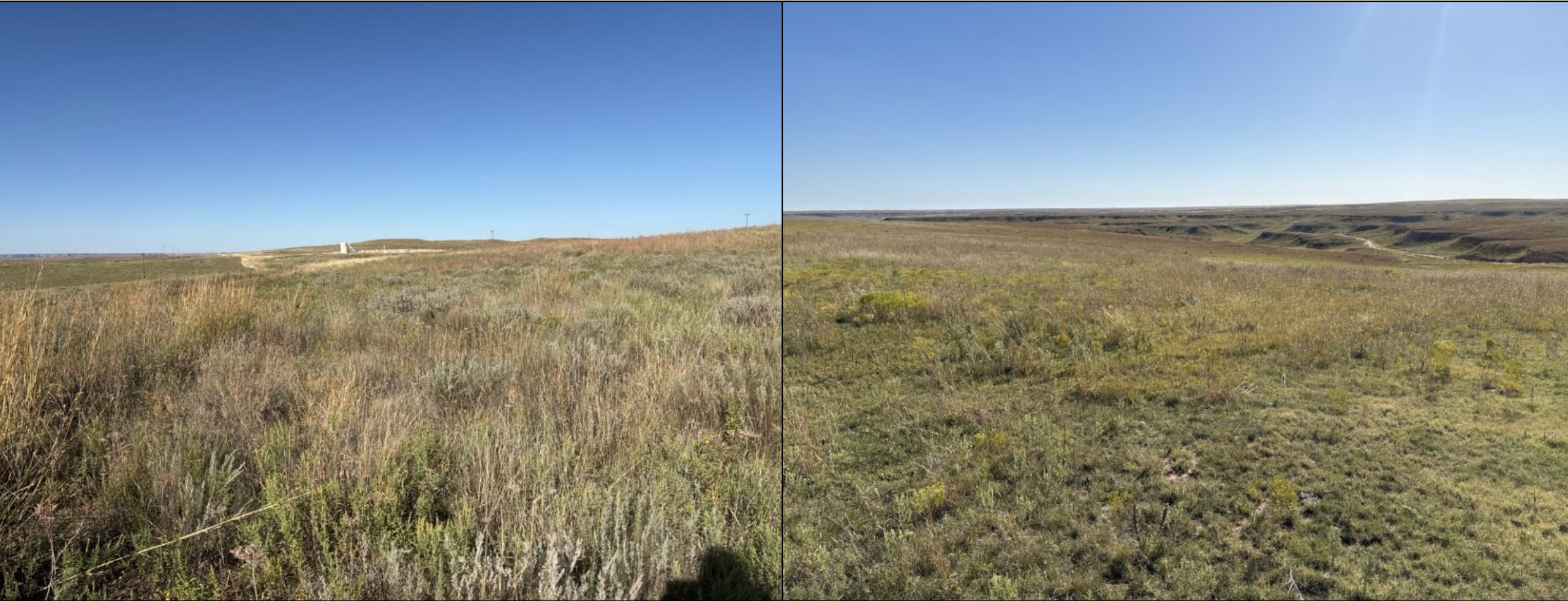


Roberts County (High Plains)



Normal grass loading is generally present in the footprint of the 2024 Smokehouse Creek Fire as the landscape continues to recover.

October 22nd, 2025



Hemphill County (High Plains)



Normal grass loading is generally present in the footprint of the 2024 Smokehouse Creek Fire as the landscape continues to recover.

November 14th, 2024



October 22nd, 2025



Gray County (High Plains)



Normal grass loading is generally present in the footprint of the 2024 Smokehouse Creek Fire as the landscape continues to recover.

October 21st, 2025



October 21st, 2025



Hutchinson County (High Plains)



Above Normal to locally exceptional grass loading is generally present the outside of the footprint of the 2024 Smokehouse Creek and Windy Deuce Fires.

October 22nd, 2025



October 22nd, 2025



Mason County (Eastern Hill Country)

Exceptional grass loading is present across much of the Eastern Hill Country due to July 2025 high impact rainfall event.



April 22nd, 2025



October 21st, 2025



Kerr County (Eastern Hill Country)



Exceptional grass loading is present across much of the Eastern Hill Country due to July 2025 high impact rainfall event.

October, 2024



October 22nd , 2025



Real County (Eastern Hill Country)



Exceptional grass loading is present across much of the Eastern Hill Country due to July 2025 high impact rainfall event and from carry over above normal grass loading from 2024.

October, 2024



October 22nd , 2025



Edwards County (Western Hill Country)

Exceptional grass loading is present across much of the Eastern Hill Country due to July 2025 high impact rainfall event.



March 25th, 2025



November 6th, 2025



Clay County (Cross Timbers)



Above Normal to Exceptional grass loading is present across much of the Cross Timbers.

January 6th, 2025



October 2nd, 2025



Palo Pinto County (Cross Timbers)



Above Normal to Exceptional grass loading is present across much of the Cross Timbers.

April 9th, 2025



November 5th, 2025



Wise County (CrossTimbers)

Above Normal to Exceptional grass loading is present across much of the Cross Timbers.



April 9th, 2025



November 5th, 2025



Bosque County (Cross Timbers)

Above Normal to Exceptional grass loading is present across much of the Cross Timbers.



June 13th, 2025



November 4th, 2025



Coleman County (Rolling Plains)

Above Normal grass loading is common across the Rolling Plains.



April 9th, 2025



October 2nd, 2025



Throckmorton County (Rolling Plains)

Above Normal grass loading is common across the Rolling Plains.



March 5th, 2025



October 20th, 2025



Stonewall County (Rolling Plains)

Above Normal grass loading is common across the Rolling Plains.



March 25th, 2025



October 20th, 2025



Glasscock County/Midland County (Southern Plains)

Above Normal grass loading is common across the Southern Plains.



October 27th, 2025



October 27th, 2025



Odessa County (Southern Plains)

Above Normal grass loading is common across the Southern Plains.



October 28th, 2025



October 28th, 2025



Terry County/Yoakum (Caprock)

Above Normal grass loading is common across the Caprock.



October 21st, 2025



October 21st, 2025



Cochran/Bailey (Caprock)

Above Normal grass loading is common across the Caprock.



October 21st, 2025



October 21st, 2025



Refugio County /Brooks County (Lower Gulf Coast)

Normal to Above Normal grass loading is common across the Lower Gulf Coast.



October 21st, 2025



October 21st, 2025



Starr County /Jim Hogg County (South Texas)

Normal to above Normal grass loading is common across far South Texas.



October 21st, 2025



October 21st , 2025



Atascosa County (South Texas)



Near Normal grass loading is common across the South Texas. Observations show [Desert Termites](#) have reduced the amount of loading in parts of South Texas.

October 21st, 2025



October 21st, 2025



La Salle County/Zavala County (South Texas)

Near Normal grass loading is common across the South Texas.



October 21st, 2025



October 21st, 2025



Jeff Davis County (Trans Pecos)

Above Normal grass loading is common in the Davis and Glass Mountains.



July 2025



November 2025



Jeff Davis County (Trans Pecos)



Above Normal grass loading is common in the Davis and Glass Mountains.

July 2025



November 2025



Brewster County (Trans Pecos)

Above Normal grass loading is common in the Davis and Glass Mountains.



July 2025



November 2025



Hudspeth County and El Paso County (Trans Pecos)



Below Normal grass loading is common in the Trans Pecos flats between the Davis and Gaudalupe Mountains and around the Franklin Mountains.

October 2025



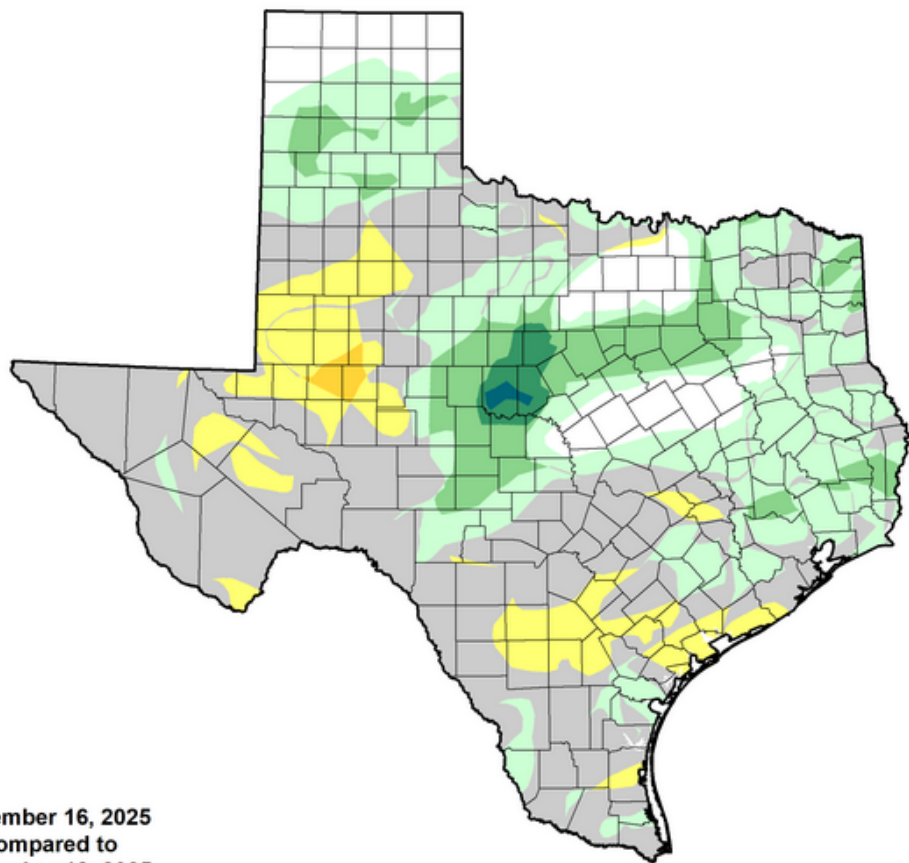
October 2025



The U.S Drought Monitor since mid-November 2025 has shown some slight improvements across parts of the Hill County, lower Rolling Plains, Cross Timbers, and North Texas. Severe and Extreme drought is becoming amplified in parts of Central and South Texas. Remanent dryness remains across parts of East Texas though some improvement was observed in late November.

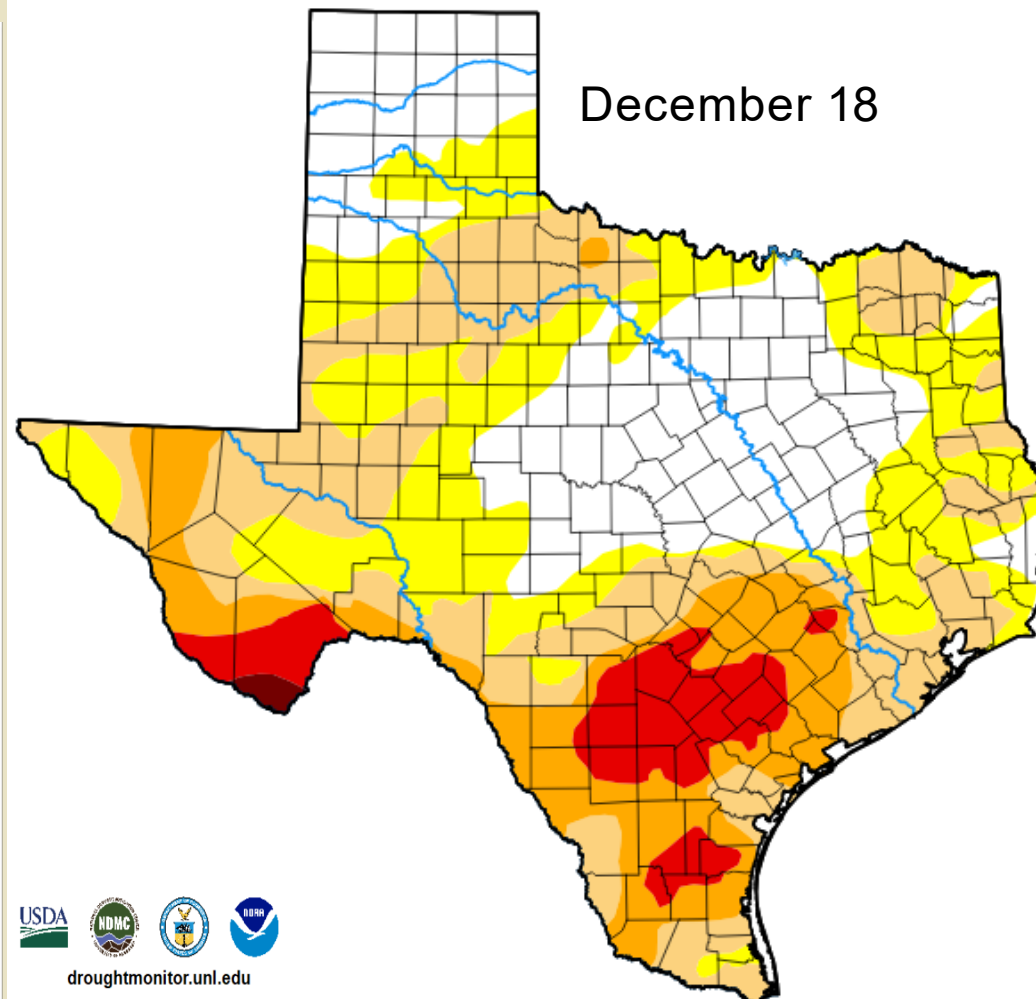
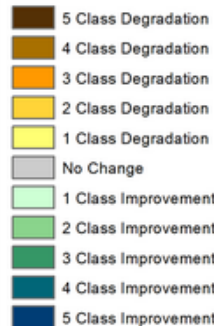


U.S. Drought Monitor Class Change - Texas
4 Week



December 16, 2025
compared to
November 18, 2025

droughtmonitor.unl.edu

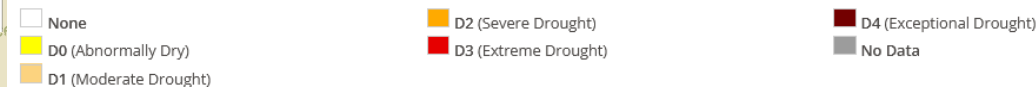


December 18



droughtmonitor.unl.edu

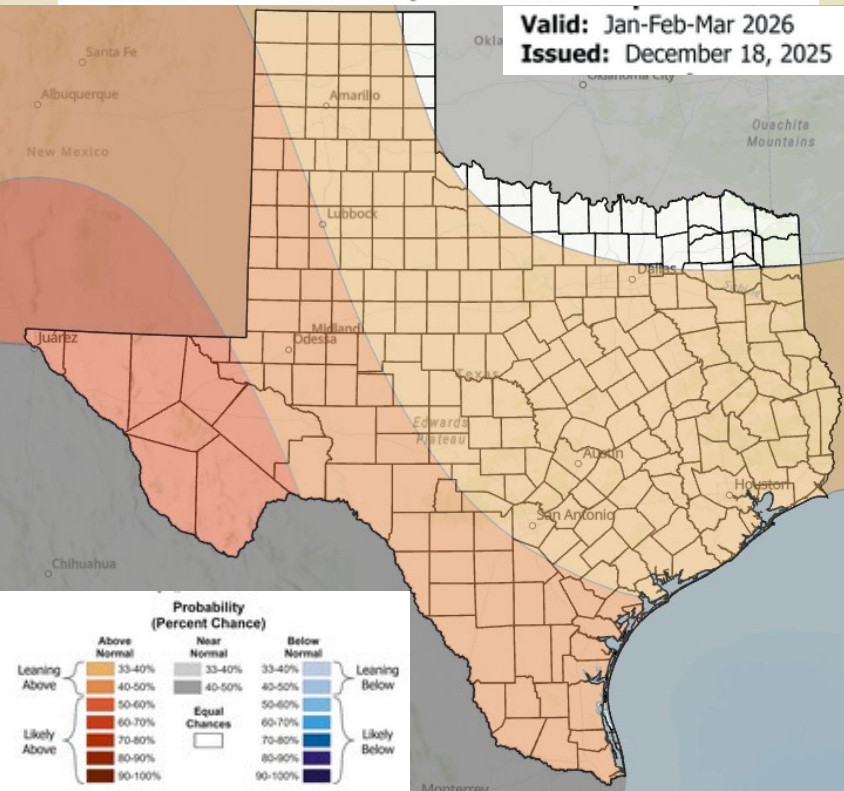
Drought Classification



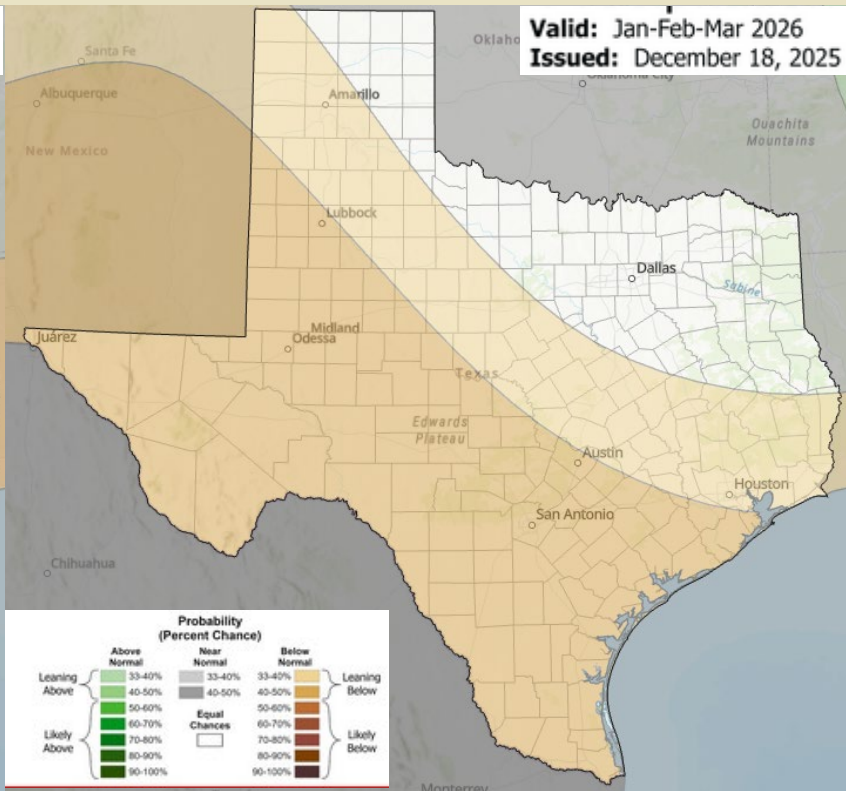
The Climate Prediction Center’s seasonal temperature and precipitation outlooks for January-March 2026 indicates an overall trend of warmer and drier than normal conditions for much of Texas, resulting in expanding drought development or persistent drought. The trend of warmer and drier conditions is consistent with the on going La Niña climate conditions.



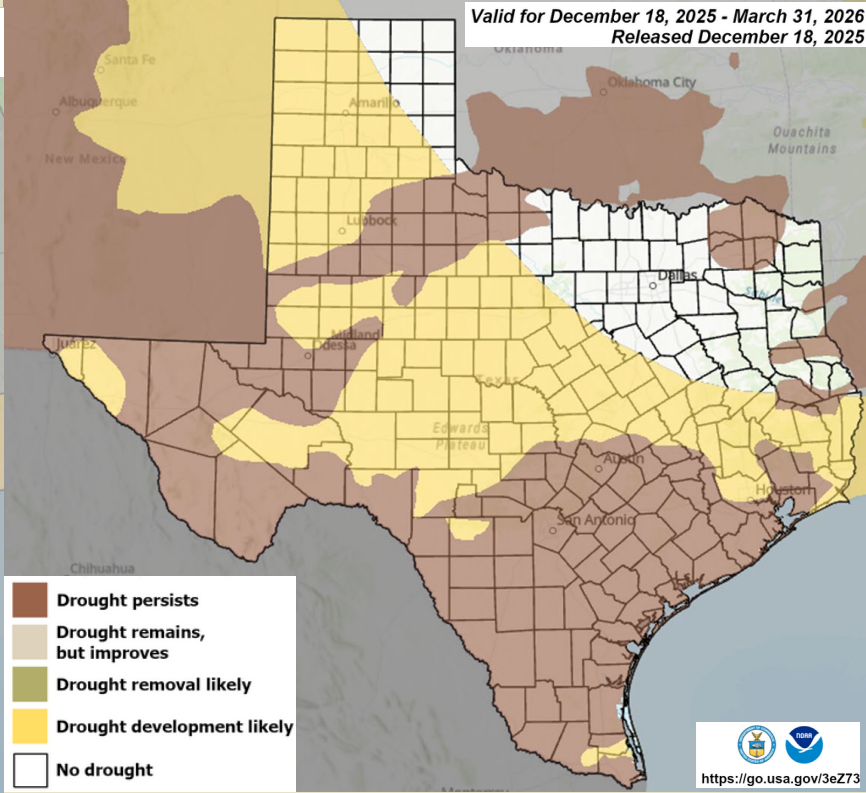
Seasonal Temperature Outlook

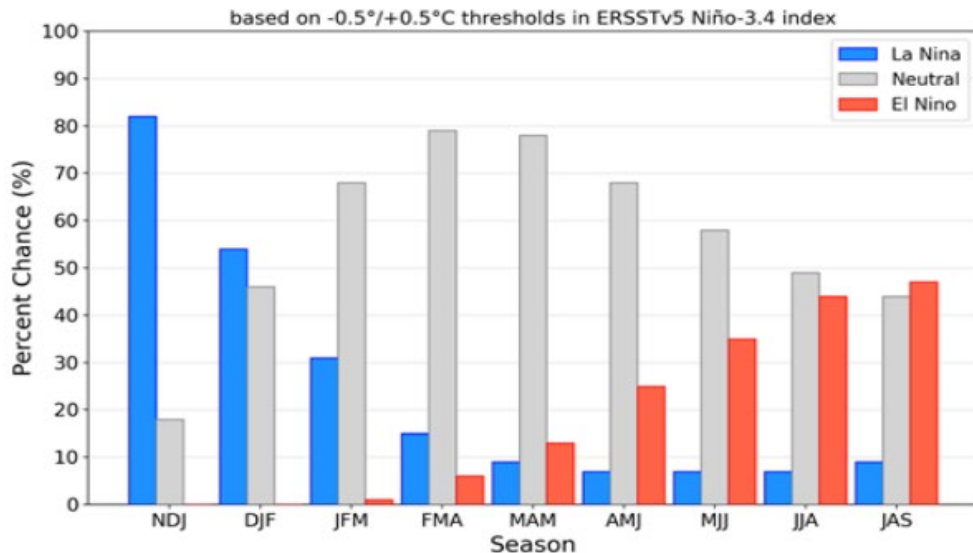


Seasonal Precipitation Outlook

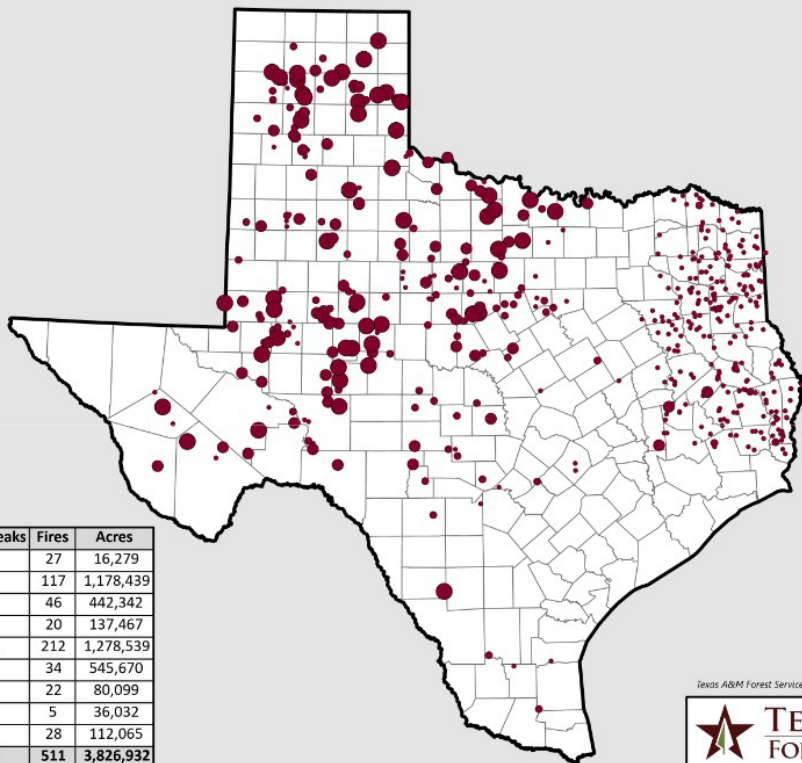


U.S. Seasonal Drought Outlook Drought Tendency During the Valid Period





Southern Plains Wildfire Outbreaks (SPWO) During La Niña Years, 2005-2022



Year	Outbreaks	Fires	Acres
2005	1	27	16,279
2006	5	117	1,178,439
2008	2	46	442,342
2009	2	20	137,467
2011	11	212	1,278,539
2017	4	34	545,670
2018	3	22	80,099
2021	1	5	36,032
2022	3	28	112,065
Total	32	511	3,826,932

Acres Burned

- < 100
- 100 - 999
- 1,000 - 9,999
- ≥ 10,000

Texas A&M Forest Service response to SPWO wildfire incidents.



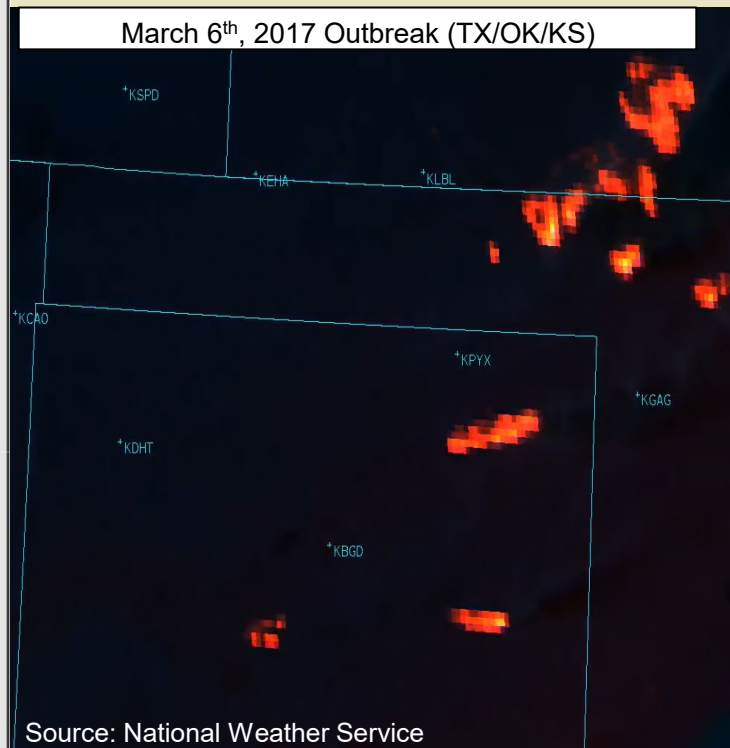
TAMFS EOC 1/2/2023



La Niña Climate Conditions and fire effective weather

The Climate Prediction Center has issued a La Niña advisory as both equatorial sea surface temperatures atmospheric anomalies over the tropical Pacific Ocean are consistent with past La Niña climate patterns ([Weekly ENSO Evolution, Status, and Prediction Presentation](#)). This pattern typically produces warmer and drier than normal conditions during the dormant season. Of concern is the often-increased frequency of fire effective weather in western Texas and Oklahoma, including the potential for high impact fire weather associated with Southern Plains Wildfire Outbreaks. Southern Plains Wildfire Outbreak events have resulted in multiple high impact fires due to extreme fire environment conditions resulting in fires with very high resistance to control. **Fires that occur during Southern Plains Wildfire Outbreak conditions can produce an immediate threat to firefighter and public safety.**

March 6th, 2017 Outbreak (TX/OK/KS)



March 17th, 2022 Outbreak (Eastland Complex)



Source: National Weather Service

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