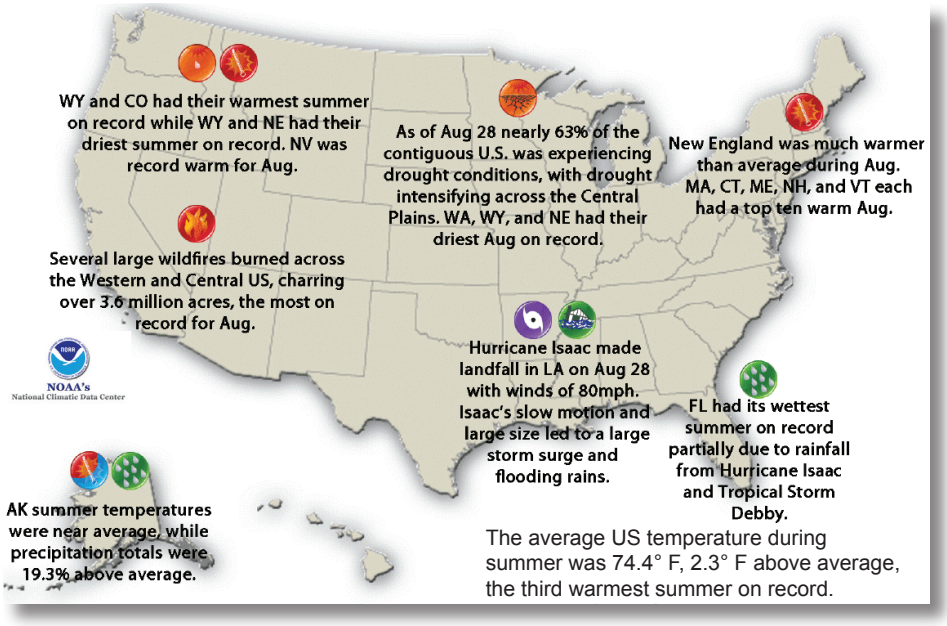
Quarterly Climate Impacts and Outlook

Western Region

September 2012

National - *Significant Events for June - August 2012*



The average US temperature during summer was 74.4° F, 2.3° F above average, the third warmest summer on record.

Highlights for the West

Critical **fire conditions** (low relative humidity, high wind, drought conditions) persisted across much of the West, allowing wildfires to develop and spread rapidly.

The **Southwest monsoon** brought rain to Arizona as well as parts of southern California, Nevada, Utah and Colorado.

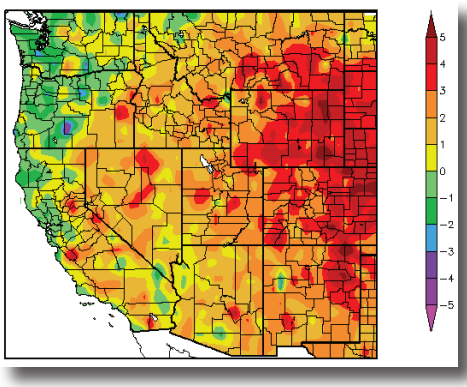
Severe thunderstorms stretched from California to Oregon and Washington at the end of July.

Coastal upwelling was a bit below normal off the Pacific Northwest, water temperatures were cooler than average, and food abundance was among the highest in 14 years.

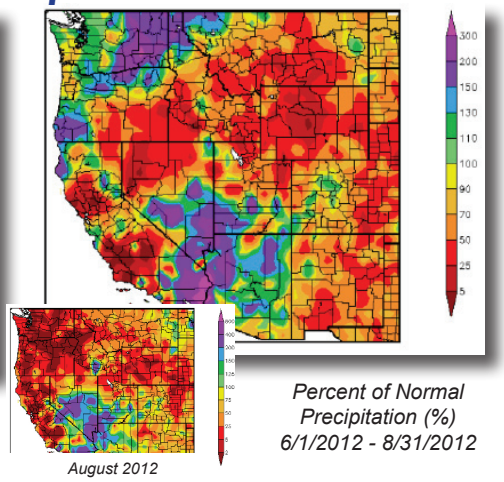
Recent **equatorial sea surface temperatures** are more than 0.5°C above average in the eastern Pacific Ocean; however ENSO-neutral conditions continued during August.

Regional - *Climate Overview for June - August 2012*

Temperature and Precipitation Anomalies

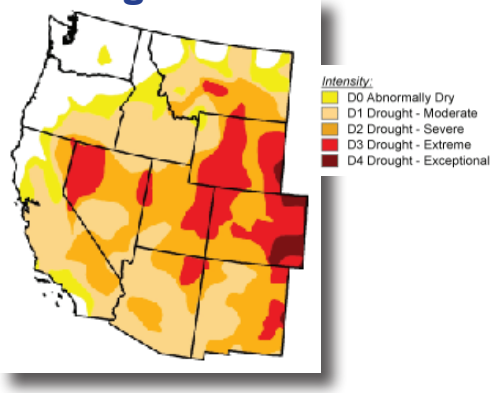


Departure from Normal Temperature (°F)
6/1/2012 - 8/31/2012



Percent of Normal Precipitation (%)
6/1/2012 - 8/31/2012

Drought in the West



US Drought Monitor
9/13/2012

The temperature anomalies shown in the left panel indicate that most of the interior West had above-normal temperatures (warm colors), with slightly cooler-than-normal temperatures in the Northwest and along the Pacific Coast.

The Pacific Northwest (Washington, western Oregon, northern California) and the Southwest Monsoon region (southern California, southern Nevada, southwest Utah and Arizona) had above-normal seasonal precipitation, while the remainder of the West received much less precipitation than normal. August precipitation in the Northwest was well below normal (see inset), and August was the driest on record in Washington. (Provisional temperature and precipitation data courtesy of the High Plains Regional Climate Center, www.hpcc.unl.edu.)

The US Drought Monitor shows abnormally dry to extreme drought conditions in much of the West. (The Drought Monitor is a collaborative product from the USDA, NOAA and National Drought Mitigation Center www.droughtmonitor.unl.edu/monitor.html.)

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