

WESTERN KANSAS WEATHER MODIFICATION PROGRAM

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WEEKLY NEWSLETTER

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For the period July 21 – July 27, 2012

General Interest: As anticipated, the drought has expanded in both area and intensity over the United States during the past two weeks. Locally, we find that 100% of Kansas now resides in at least severe (D2) drought according to the latest Drought Monitor valid July 24. Characteristics of a severe drought include likely losses to crop and pasture, common water shortages and some imposed water restrictions. More striking is the percent of Kansas that now resides in at least extreme (D3) drought. Two weeks ago, only 28% of the state was in the extreme category. Now, we find 73% of Kansas in extreme which is characterized by major losses to crop and pasture with widespread water shortages and restrictions. Extreme drought covers all of western Kansas and extends east through primarily the central portion of the state all the way to Kansas City. Lastly, we now have the highest level of drought, exceptional (D4) drought, covering about 9% of Kansas. Exceptional drought covers portions of Greeley, Wichita, Scott, Lane, Logan, Gove, Sheridan, Graham, Trego, Ness, Finney, Haskell, Grant, Kearny and Hamilton counties. Characteristics of exceptional drought include exceptional and widespread crop/pasture losses, shortages of water in reservoirs, streams and wells creating water emergencies. This time last year, exceptional drought covered about 11.5% of Kansas in the southwest, central and south-central portions of the state.

In Colorado, we find that 74% of the state resides in at least extreme (D3) drought while exceptional (D4) drought covers 3% in portions of Lincoln, Crowley, Otero, Bent and Kiowa counties. Concerning the contiguous U.S., dryness and/or drought now covers 80% of the country while at least moderate (D1) drought covers approximately 64% and extreme (D3) covering 21%. States where exceptional (D4) drought covers the highest percentage of the state are Arkansas (34%), Georgia (23%), Indiana (19%), Kentucky (13%), and Kansas (9%). Elsewhere, smaller pockets of exceptional drought are found in Nebraska, Texas, Oklahoma, Missouri, Illinois, Tennessee, Alabama, and South Carolina. According to USDA statistics valid July 22, over 90 percent of topsoil was short or very short of moisture in Nebraska, Oklahoma, Kansas, Missouri, Iowa, Illinois, Indiana and Ohio with virtually all (99 percent) short or very short Missouri and Illinois. The National Climatic Data Center (NCDC) forecast for the period July 31 – August 8th call for dry weather to dominate from the West Coast to Northern Rockies, and from the Central to Southern Plains. Above-normal temperatures are expected for much of the country, especially the Rockies and Plains states. Long-term, drought is expected to persist at current levels or intensify over nearly all of the central U.S., including western Kansas, through at least October 31 according to the latest U.S. Seasonal Drought Outlook. Unfortunately, there is little confidence of significant “drought busting” precipitation through the entire long-range forecasts that extend all the way out to October 2013. Hopefully, the long-range forecast will change through time but right now there is simply an equal chance of below normal, near normal or above normal precipitation chances expected in the central U.S. through October of next year.

Weather: Blast furnace conditions prevailed the entire week with temperatures remaining in the upper 90's to 100 degrees. A few weak storms formed during the middle of the week as a cool front moved into the area. The storms were generally brief and confined to areas along the front or near gust fronts produced by previous storm activity. These storms were rather typical of mid summer storms but have been the primary storm type this year going back to May.

Operations: No operations occurred this week.

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Walter Geiger, Meteorologist
Western Kansas Weather Modification Program