



Southwest Weather Bulletin

Spring Summer 2013 Edition

National Weather Service El Paso-Santa Teresa



Major Drought Strikes Southern New Mexico and Western Texas

The weather pattern across the southwestern United States was dominated by a persistent west to northwest flow with associated low pressure systems tracking across the region also from the west and northwest. As a result the wind fields generally transported dry continental air into southern New Mexico and western Texas. Thus severe to extreme drought conditions existed across much of the area through the winter and early spring after the region experienced a rather dry summer monsoon in 2012.

From October 2012 through April 2013 El Paso received only .93 inch of rain. To the north conditions were considerably worse as Las Cruces saw only 7 days of measurable rain with a meager .38 inch of precipitation reported. Little snow fell across the mountains of New Mexico or southern Colorado indicating a reduced water supply for the Rio Grande from snow melt. Consequently Elephant Butte Reservoir water levels were down to only 5 percent capacity by early February with other lakes, rivers and reservoirs well below normal. By April Dona Ana County NM officials were predicting the 2013 water season would be the worst in 100 years suggesting hardships for area residents. This would be especially true for



Due to the ongoing drought the wetlands portions of Mesilla Valley Bosque State Park in New Mexico were completely dry going into the late spring. (Joe Rogash NWS)

farmers dependent on irrigation who are expected to receive only 10 percent of their water allotment this growing season. Finally by late April the fire danger was also very high to extreme across the region with the potential for another active wild fire season. Unfortunately long range predictions forecast drought conditions to persist this summer.



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On December 14, 2012 5 inches of snow fell over Cloudcroft NM.

October 2012-April 2013 Weather Highlights

October 11: Severe thunderstorms with hail move across central Otero County.

November 10: Windy across southern New Mexico and western Texas with gusts to 73 mph over northeast El Paso and gusts around 60 mph in the Santa Teresa, White Sands Missile Range and Hachita areas.

December 14: Five inches of snow fall at Cloudcroft. Wind gusts near 60 mph also cause damage over El Paso.

December 19: Very windy with widespread blowing dust and low visibilities across the Borderland. Winds gust to 86 mph at White Sands Missile Range Headquarters with gusts to 71 mph at Fort Bliss and gusts around 65 mph over El Paso, Alamogordo and Mescalero. Elsewhere gusts around 50 mph were widespread. Over White Sands Missile Range the high winds rip off building roofs and break the windows of at least 75 vehicles.

December 24-25: Four inches of snow fall near Cloudcroft.



Strong winds damage this El Paso power line on December 14. (Vanessa Monsisvais El Paso Times)



December 19 wind damage over White Sands Missile Range (Las Cruces Sun News)



The El Paso and Santa Teresa areas experienced a rare ice fog event on January 6 with the fog coating trees and other vegetation with ice (left) and causing very low visibilities (right). (Joe Rogash NWS)

December 30-31: New Year's Eve storm brings widespread snowfall to southern New Mexico. Hidalgo County is especially hard hit as 10 inches of snow fall at Cloverdale with 4 inches near Rodeo. Over northern Otero County 2 to 4 inches of snow fall around Mescalero and Cloudcroft while to the west 1 to 3 inches of snow occur over Grant County in the Silver City vicinity.

January 3: One to three inches of snow fall around the El Paso and Las Cruces areas. Three inches of snow also fall at Cloudcroft.

January 6: Dense ice fog lowers visibilities across the El Paso-Santa Teresa area.

January 28: Winter storm drops 3 to 6 inches of snow around Silver City with 5 inches falling at Cloudcroft and 2 inches over Lordsburg.

January 29: Windy across the region with gusts to 72 mph at White Sands Missile Range and gusts near 60 mph across El Paso. Elsewhere winds gusted around 45 to 55 mph.

February 9: Windy with gusts around 70 mph over northeast El Paso. Elsewhere gusts from 45 to 55 mph were common.

February 11-12: Winter storm brings 7 inches of snow to Cloudcroft.



A winter storm brought snow to Las Cruces on January 3. (Jeff Passner)



Snow falls over Lordsburg on the night of January 28. (Mike Hardiman NWS)

February 20: Winter storms causes high winds with gusts above 60 mph over portions of El Paso and gusts around 50 to 60 mph across Dona Ana County. In addition 5 inches of snow fall at Cloverdale with 4 inch snows near Cloudcroft and 1 to 3 inch snows around Silver City.

February 24: Strong upper-level low with a Pacific cold front causes high winds with gusts to almost 70 mph over northeast El Paso and gusts around 45 to 55 mph elsewhere. In addition 4 inches of snow fall at Cloudcroft with 2 inches at Silver City.



By early February the Elephant Butte Lake water level was extremely low due to the drought conditions across the region. (El Paso Times)



High winds brought widespread blowing dust across El Paso and surrounding areas on February 9. (El Paso Fire Department)

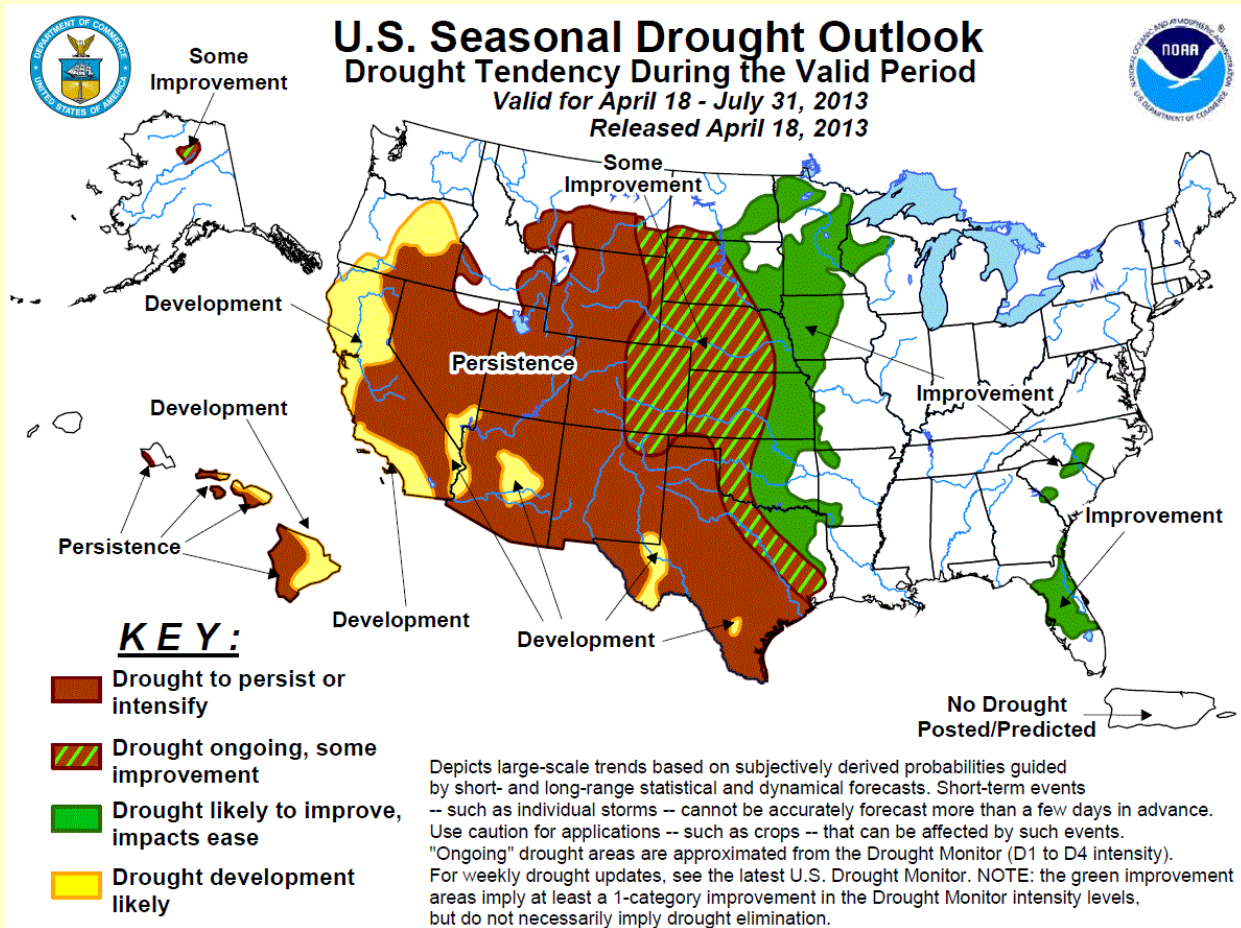
March 23: Windy with widespread gusts around 45 to 55 mph causing blowing dust over much of the area.

April 8: High winds blow across the region with gusts around 45 to 55 mph causing blowing dust over many locations. Due to the low visibilities Highway 180 was closed between Deming and Silver City.

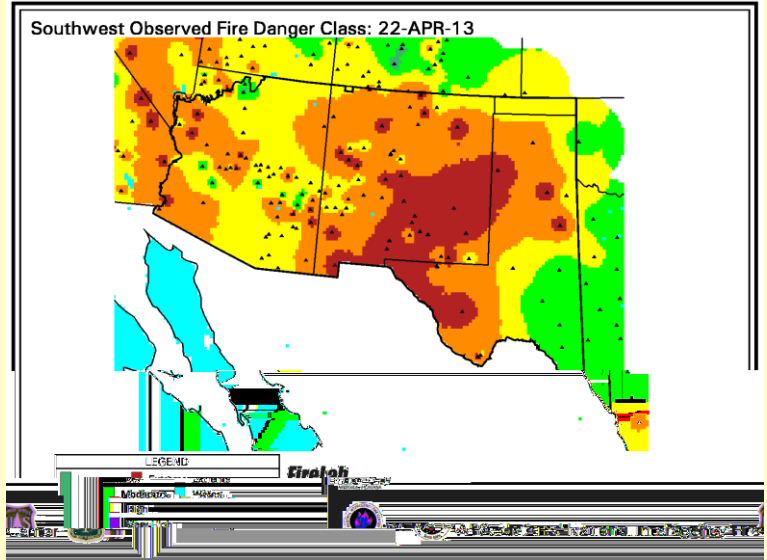
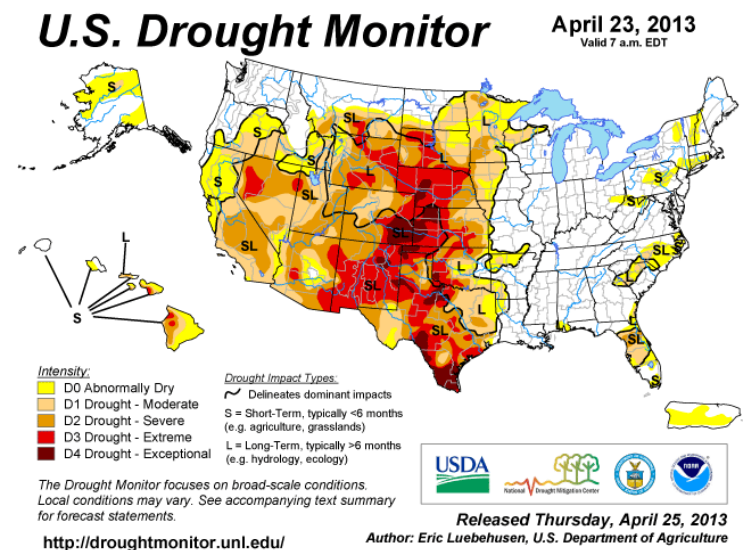
April 17: Another windy day as winds gust around 60 to 70 mph across El Paso with gusts from 50 to 60 mph elsewhere. Widespread blowing dust results in low visibilities with Highway 180 again closed between Deming and Silver City.



Blowing dust covers skies and lowers visibilities over the El Paso-Santa Teresa area on April 8 (left) and April 17 (right). (Joe Rogash NWS)



The long range outlook calls for drought conditions to worsen across New Mexico and western Texas through July.



By late April severe to extreme drought conditions existed across most of New Mexico and western Texas.

As a result of the drought the fire danger was very high to extreme across New Mexico and western Texas.



Despite the lack of rainfall these Rainbow Cactus Flowers were in full bloom by late April. (Charlotte Rogash)

Tornado

And Other Structures

Arroyos Flood Or Overflow

Rain In Less Than 2 Hours

Snow Amounts Greater Than An Inch