December 2025: Southwest Climate Outlook

Stacie Reece
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https://climas.arizona.edu/

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*Questions/Contact: Stacie Reece, sreece@arizona.edu*

Precipitation and Temperature

November precipitation was generally above normal or much-above normal for Arizona and near normal or above normal for New Mexico.

Southwest - Precipitation
November 2025, Percentile
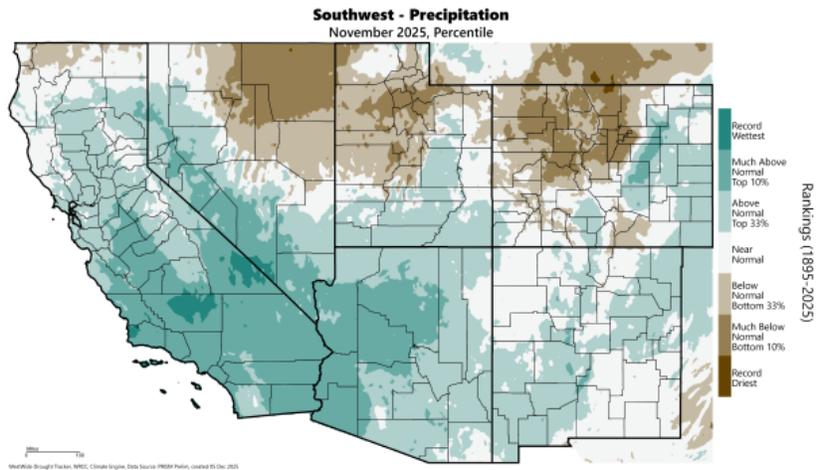
Source: WestWide Drought Tracker

November temperatures were generally much-above normal (ranking in the top 10% of November's on record) across Arizona and New Mexico, with some locations recording the warmest November-average temperature on record.

Southwest - Mean Temperature
November 2025, Percentile
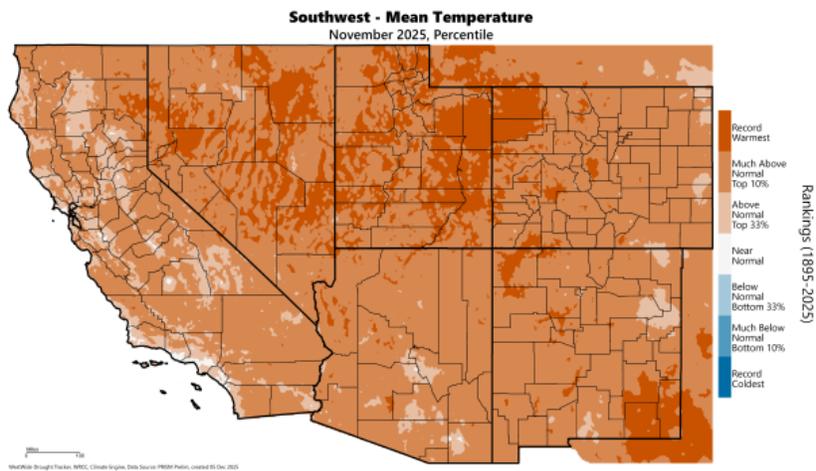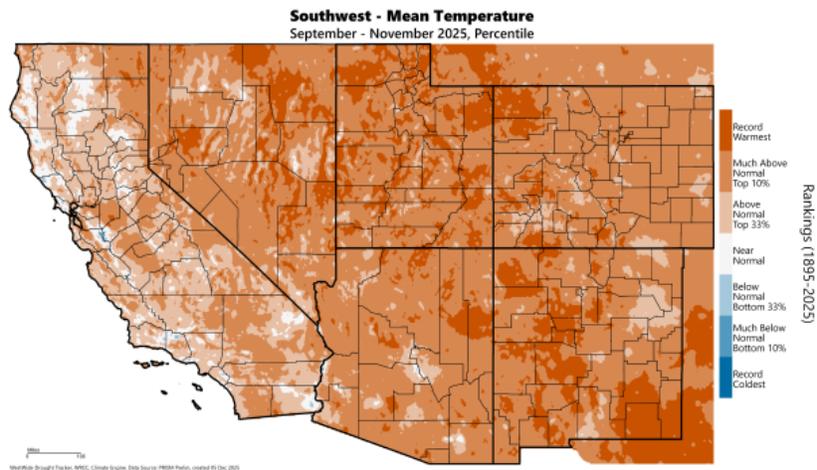
Source: WestWide Drought Tracker

September–November precipitation totals were generally above normal or much-above normal for Arizona, with New Mexico totals ranging from above normal in western parts of the state, to much-below normal in the extreme southeast part of the state.

Southwest - Precipitation
September - November 2025, Percentile
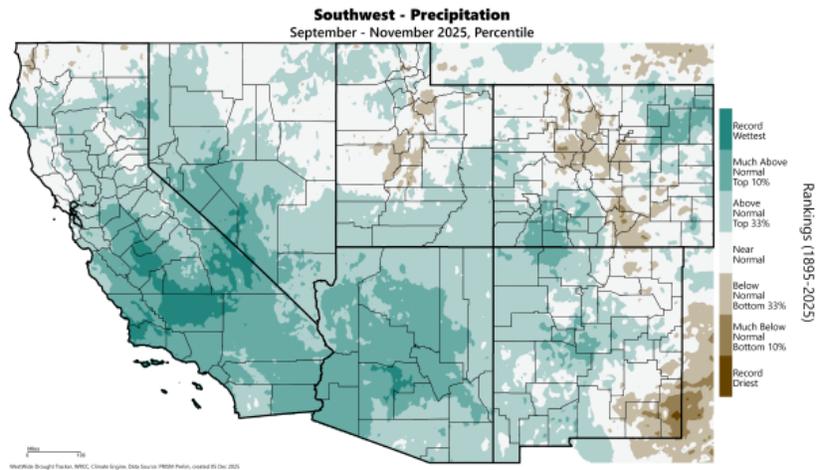
Source: WestWide Drought Tracker

September–November temperatures were generally much-above average across Arizona and New Mexico, ranking among the top 10% of September–November seasons on record, with many places having the warmest September–November season on record, including much of New Mexico.

Southwest - Mean Temperature
September - November 2025, Percentile

Source: WestWide Drought Tracker

Drought

Drought conditions saw some improvement with the above normal November precipitation, but through December drought conditions have generally persisted without much change in US Drought monitor classifications: areas of severe (D2) drought account for nearly half of New Mexico and over one quarter of lands in Arizona. Areas of moderate (D1) drought extend across an additional 20% of both states.
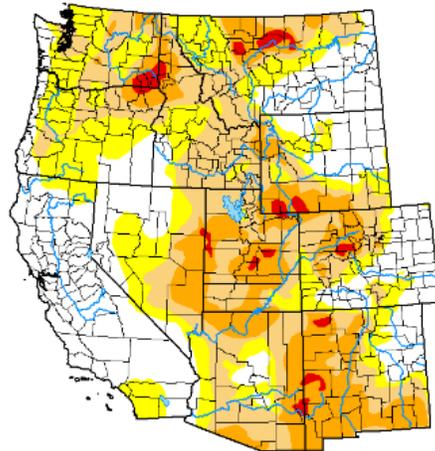
Source: U.S. Drought Monitor

NIDIS Improved and Expanded State Pages on Drought.Gov

New Mexico

Arizona

Snowpack

Snowpack is generally below normal for this time of year across Arizona, New Mexico, and the Upper Colorado River Basin. Rio Grande headwaters snow water equivalent (SWE) observations indicate levels are 60% of normal for this time of year, and SWE values averaged across the Upper Colorado River Basin come in at 63% of normal as of December 17.
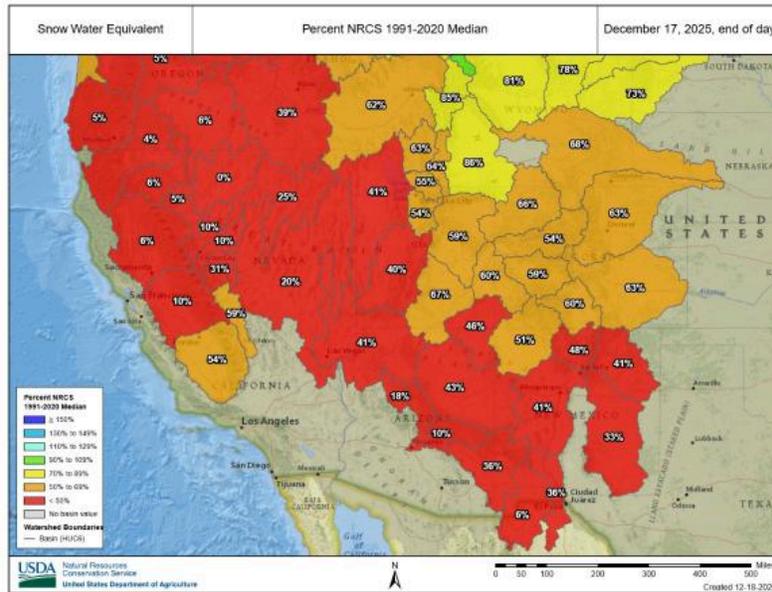
Water Supply

Reservoir storage in Arizona varies from above average for the Verde system, to near average for the Salt River system, to below average and down compared to last year for Lake Mead and Lake Powell, to near completely dry at San Carlos. New Mexico reservoir storage varies from above average for Canadian River reservoirs, to below average and down compared to last year for Navajo Lake and reservoirs of the Rio Grande.

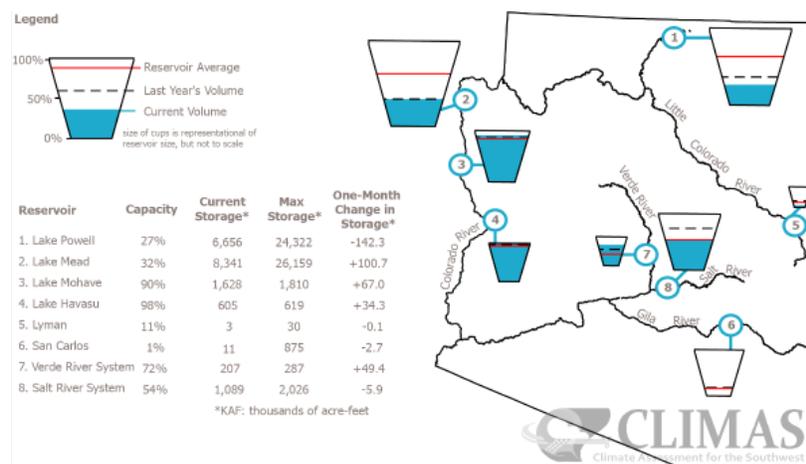| Reservoir	Capacity	Current Storage*	Max Storage*	One-Month Change in Storage*
1. Lake Powell	27%	6,656	24,322	-142.3
2. Lake Mead	32%	8,341	26,159	+100.7
3. Lake Mohave	90%	1,628	1,810	+67.0
4. Lake Havasu	98%	605	619	+34.3
5. Lyman	11%	3	30	-0.1
6. San Carlos	1%	11	875	-2.7
7. Verde River System	72%	207	287	+49.4
8. Salt River System	54%	1,089	2,026	-5.9

*KAF: thousands of acre-feet

Figure 1. Arizona reservoir volumes for the end of November 2025 as a percent of capacity. The map depicts the average volume and last year's storage for each reservoir. The table also lists current and maximum storage, and change in storage since last month.
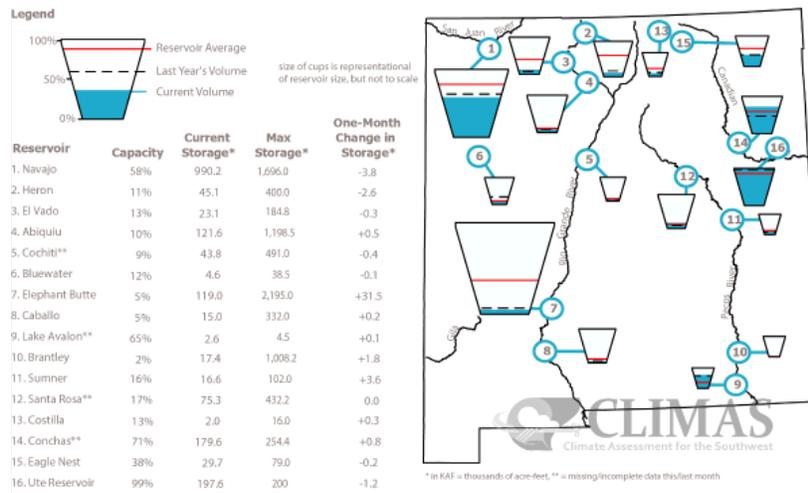
Legend

100% — Reservoir Average
50% — Last Year's Volume
— Current Volume
0%

size of cups is representational of reservoir size, but not to scale

Reservoir	Capacity	Current Storage*	Max Storage*	One-Month Change in Storage*
1. Navajo	58%	990.2	1,696.0	-3.8
2. Heron	11%	45.1	400.0	-2.6
3. El Vado	13%	23.1	184.8	-0.3
4. Abiquiu	10%	121.6	1,198.5	+0.5
5. Cochiti**	9%	43.8	491.0	-0.4
6. Bluewater	12%	4.6	38.5	-0.1
7. Elephant Butte	5%	119.0	2,195.0	+31.5
8. Caballo	5%	15.0	332.0	+0.2
9. Lake Avalon**	65%	2.6	4.5	+0.1
10. Brantley	2%	17.4	1,008.2	+1.8
11. Sumner	16%	16.6	102.0	+3.6
12. Santa Rosa**	17%	75.3	432.2	0.0
13. Costilla	13%	2.0	16.0	+0.3
14. Conchas**	71%	179.6	254.4	+0.8
15. Eagle Nest	38%	29.7	79.0	-0.2
16. Ute Reservoir	99%	197.6	200	-1.2

* in KAF = thousands of acre-feet, ** = missing/incomplete data this/last month

Figure 2. New Mexico reservoir volumes for end of November 2025 as a percent of capacity. The map depicts the average volume and last year's storage for each reservoir. The table also lists current and maximum storage, and change in storage since last month.

The map gives a representation of current storage for reservoirs in Arizona and New Mexico. Reservoir locations are numbered within the blue circles on the map, corresponding to the reservoirs listed in the table. The cup next to each reservoir shows the current storage (blue fill) as a percent of total capacity. Note that while the size of each cup varies with the size of the reservoir, these are representational and not to scale. Each cup also represents last year's storage (dotted line) and the 1991–2020 reservoir average (red line). The table details more exactly the current capacity (listed as a percent of maximum storage). Current and maximum storage are given in thousands of acre-feet for each reservoir. One acre-foot is the volume of water sufficient to cover an acre of land to a depth of 1 foot (approximately 325,851 gallons). On average, 1 acre-foot of water is enough to meet the demands of four people for a year. The last column of the table lists an increase or decrease in storage since last month. A line indicates no change. These data are based on reservoir reports updated monthly by the [Natural Resources Conservation Service - National Water and Climate Center (USDA)](#).

BOR: New Mexico Dashboard

ENSO Tracker

November-average sea surface temperatures (SSTs) show La Niña conditions in the tropical Pacific: SST anomalies (difference from average) are negative (cooler than average)

in the central and eastern equatorial Pacific. La Niña conditions are associated with warmer-than-normal, drier-than-normal seasonal climate conditions in the Southwest.
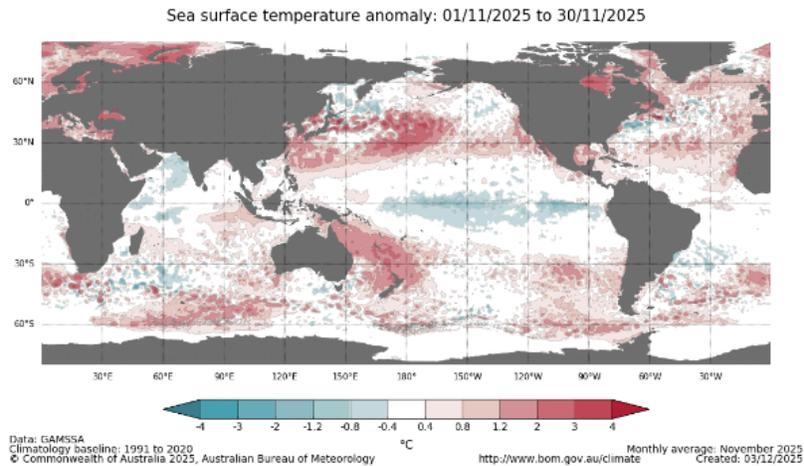


Source: Australian Bureau of Meteorology

Forecasts of how the El Niño-Southern Oscillation (ENSO) system will change in the coming months vary by forecast model and individual model simulation, but many forecasts predict a weakening of La Niña, as in the Australian Bureau of Meteorology's ACCESS model forecast for January–March SSTs, which shows near normal SSTs in the central and eastern equatorial Pacific indicating ENSO-neutral conditions (neither El Niño nor La Niña).
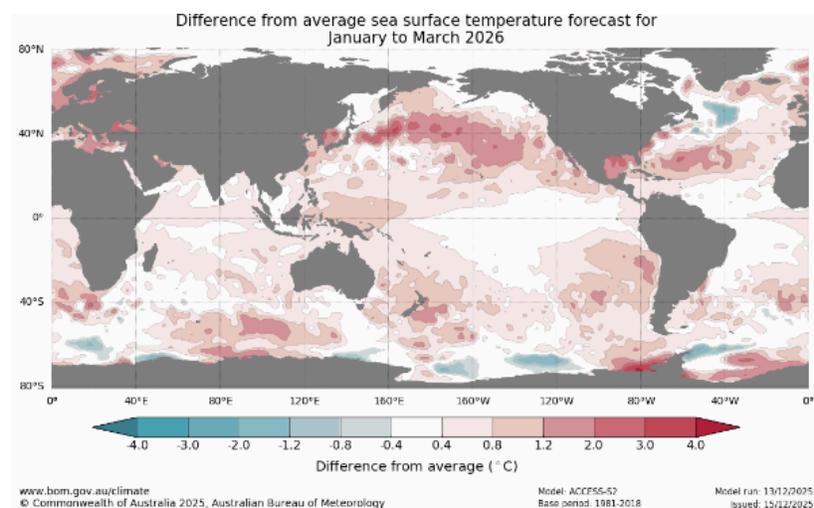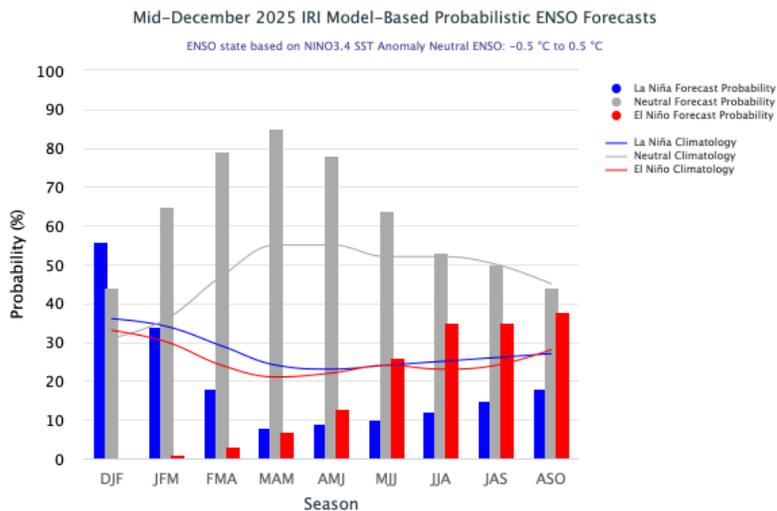

Source: Australian Bureau of Meteorology

SSTs within the Nino 3.4 monitoring region are used to diagnose ENSO status; Nino 3.4 SSTs have been within the

range qualifying as La Niña—cooler-than-average by 0.5°C or more—since mid-October.

SST Anomalies

NINO 4

NINO 3.4

NINO 3

NINO 1+2
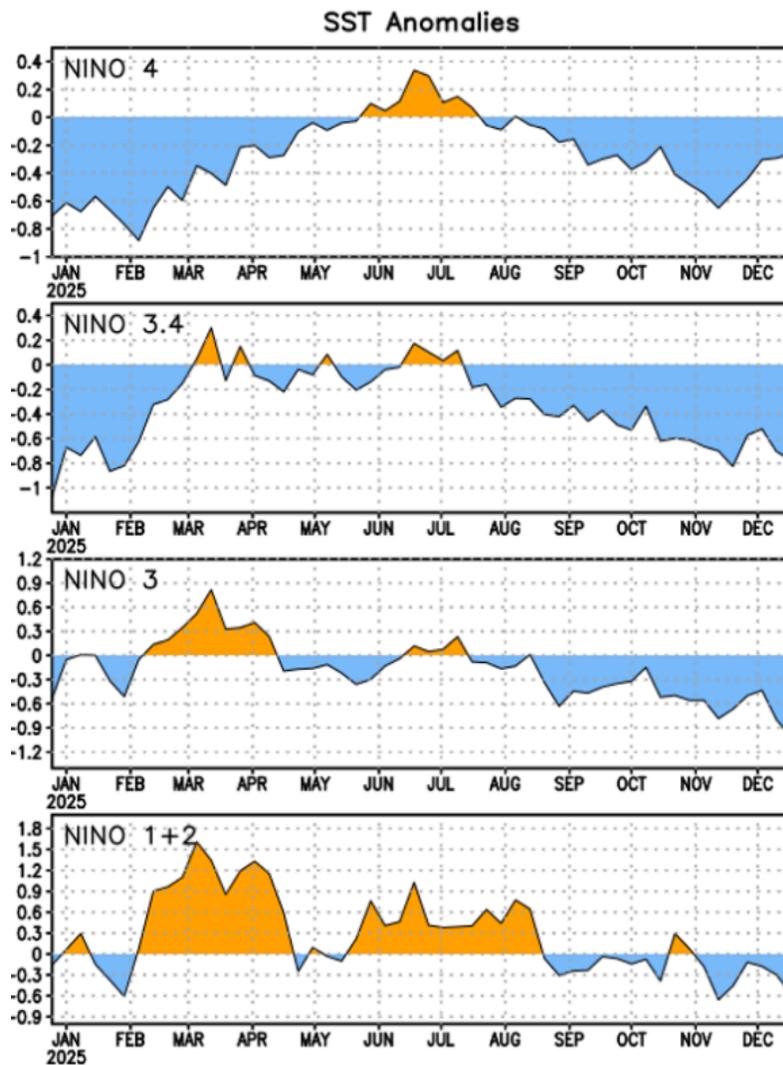
Source: Climate Prediction Center (NOAA)

La Niña conditions are more likely than not to persist through the December–February season, but models give only a slight edge to La Niña over ENSO-neutral conditions for that forecast window. By the January–March window, forecasts favor ENSO-neutral over La Niña, and by the February–March window, the La Niña forecast probability is below 20% chance, with ENSO-neutral probability at over 75% chance.

Mid–December 2025 IRI Model–Based Probabilistic ENSO Forecasts

ENSO state based on NINO3.4 SST Anomaly Neutral ENSO: −0.5 °C to 0.5 °C

Source: The International Research Institute for Climate
and Society, Columbia University Climate School

ENSO forecasts from individual models generally trend away from La Niña over each successive forecast window, with some models predicting ENSO-neutral conditions for the first forecast window (December–February; DJF). Starting with the January–March forecast, a majority of models favor ENSO-neutral conditions, and nearly every model follows a trend of warming SSTs relative to the long-term average, with several models indicating an eventual crossing of the El Niño threshold, a few as early as the March–May forecast window.
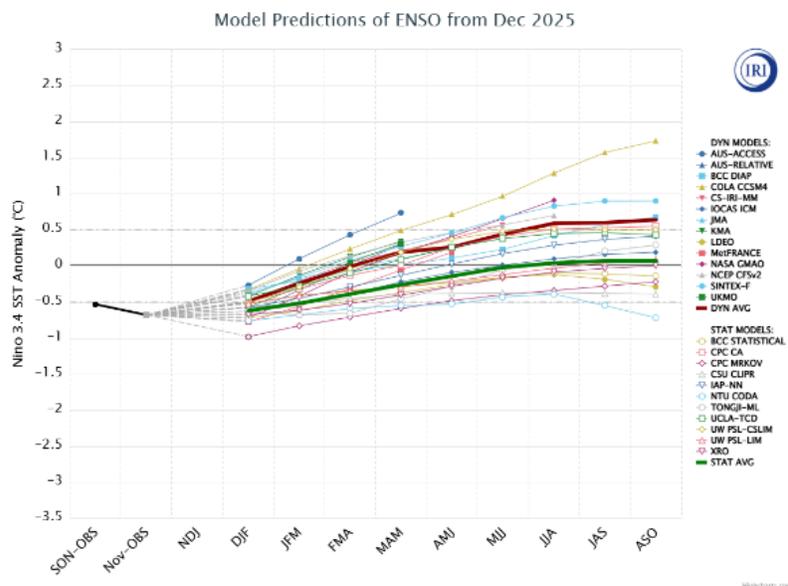
Model Predictions of ENSO from Dec 2025

Source: The International Research Institute for Climate
and Society, Columbia University Climate School

Seasonal Forecasts

The January–March seasonal precipitation forecast leans toward below normal precipitation (33–50 percent chance) for an area that includes Arizona and New Mexico. The forecast indicates slightly higher chances of below-normal precipitation for southern parts relative to northern parts of either state.
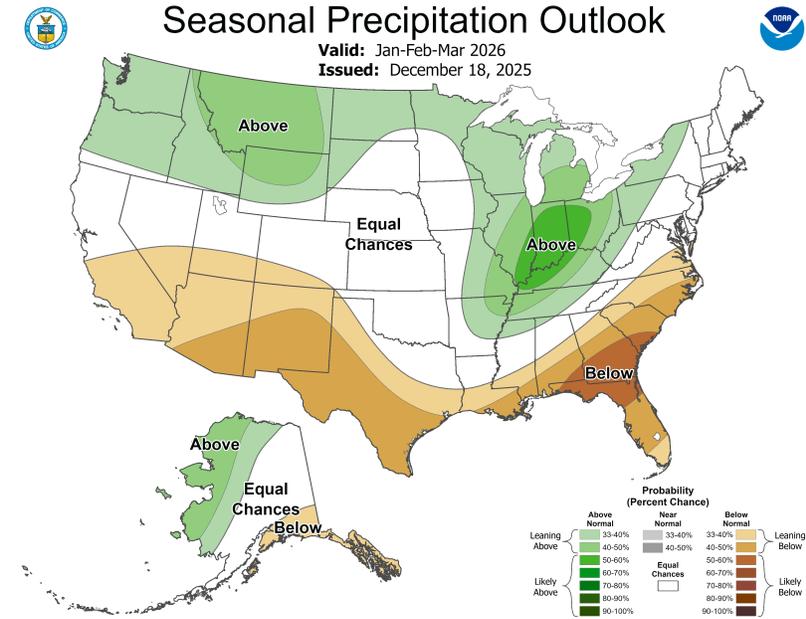
Source: Climate Prediction Center (NOAA)

The January–March seasonal temperature forecast favors warmer than normal temperatures for an area that includes Arizona and New Mexico, with the forecast assigning the highest probabilities (50–60 percent chance) to areas of southern New Mexico.

Seasonal Temperature Outlook

Valid: Jan-Feb-Mar 2026
Issued: December 18, 2025
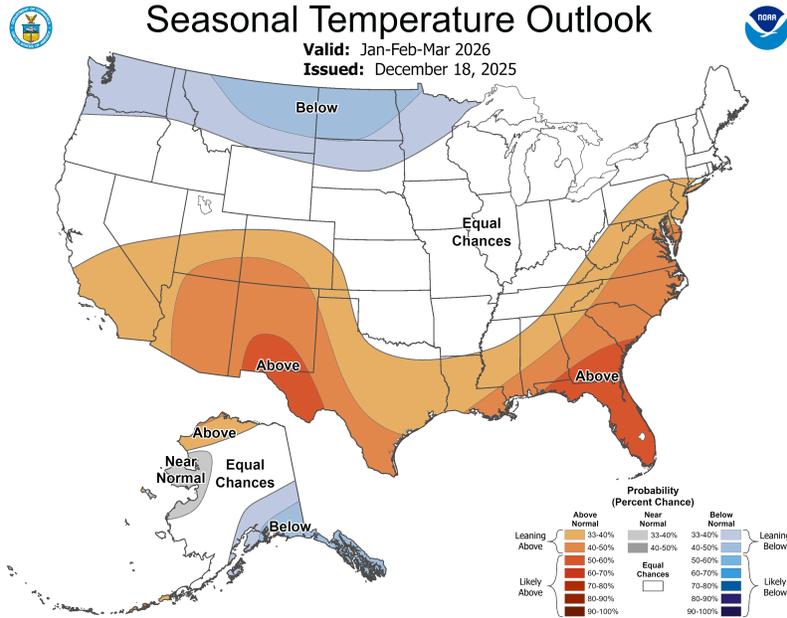
Source: Climate Prediction Center (NOAA)

Southwest Climate Podcast

December 2025 SW Climate Podcast - We've Been Ridged

*Recorded 12/19/2025, Aired 12/22/2025*

In this month's Southwest Climate Podcast episode, hosts Zack Guido and Mike Crimmins are feeling good about the warmer than normal December temps. They start out with a look at recent conditions, including the persistent ridge keeping us dry this month. This leads to a review of a paper on the Heat Dome of 2023 - and what all this warmth means for snowpack in the west. They give their End of Year review of heat, fire and precipitation in 2025. Rounding out the episode is a telling of each of their picks for the Climate Story of the Year for the Southwest.

Listen Here

About CLIMAS

The Climate Assessment for the Southwest (CLIMAS) program was established in 1998 as part of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's Climate Adaptation Partnerships (CAP) Program (formerly known as Regional Integrated Sciences and Assessments, or RISA). CLIMAS— housed at the University of Arizona's Institute of the Environment—is a collaboration between the University of Arizona and New Mexico State University. The CLIMAS team is made up of experts from a variety of social, physical, and natural sciences who work with partners across the Southwest to develop sustainable answers to regional climate challenges.
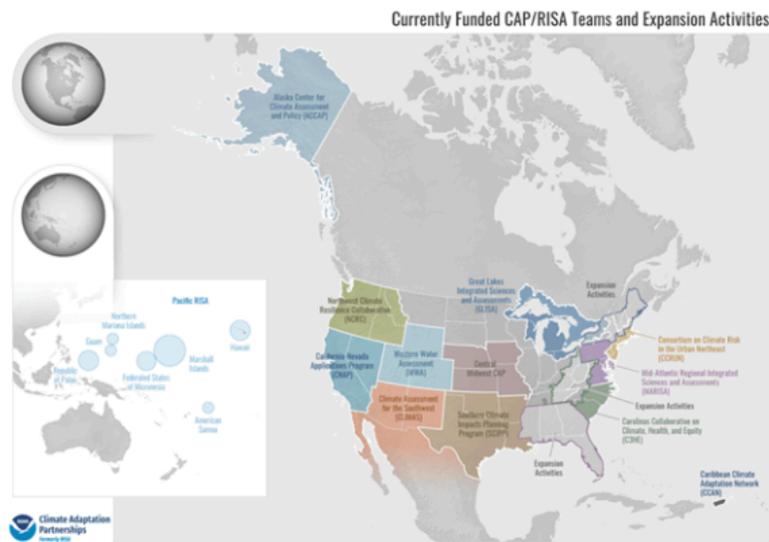
Learn more about the NOAA CAP program here
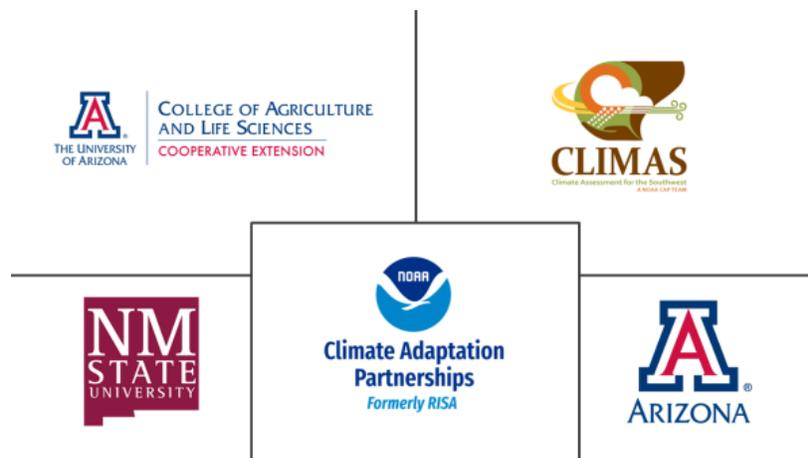
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Southwest Climate Outlook contributors:	Mike Crimmins & Matt Meko