June 2026: Southwest Climate Outlook

Stacie Reece
June 30, 2026

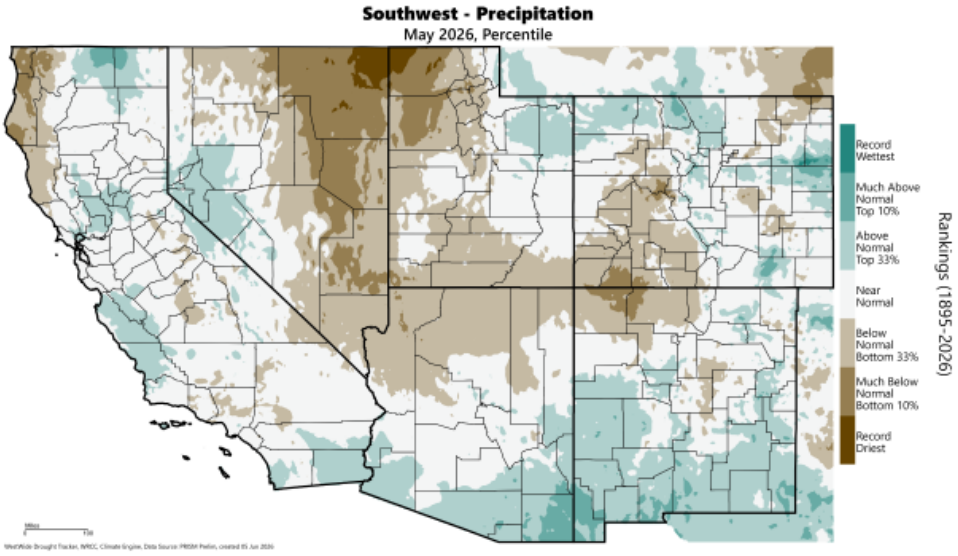
https://climas.arizona.edu/

The Southwest Climate Outlook is published by the Climate Assessment for the Southwest (CLIMAS), with support from University of Arizona Cooperative Extension, and the New Mexico State Climate office.

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

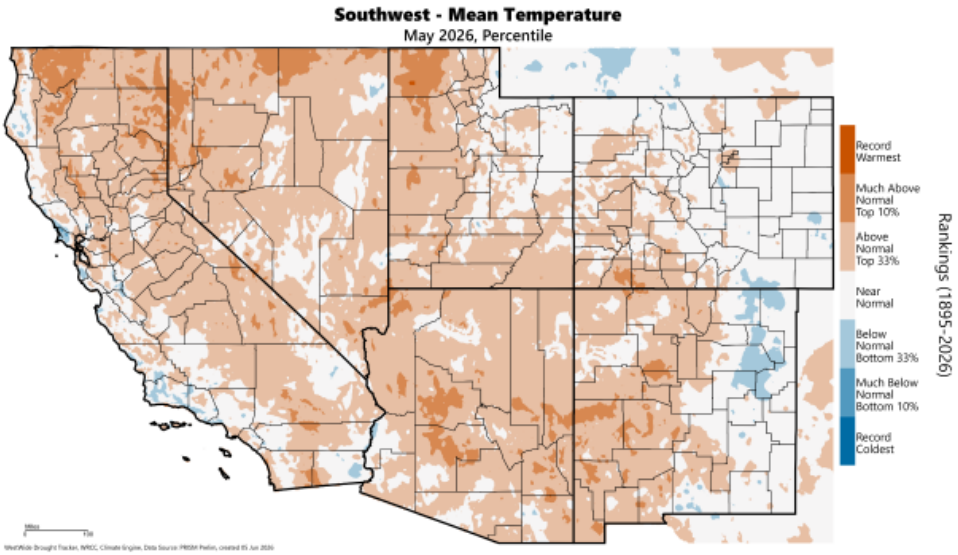
Precipitation and Temperature

May precipitation totals were above normal across southern parts of Arizona and New Mexico, ranging to near normal and below normal in the northern parts of the region.



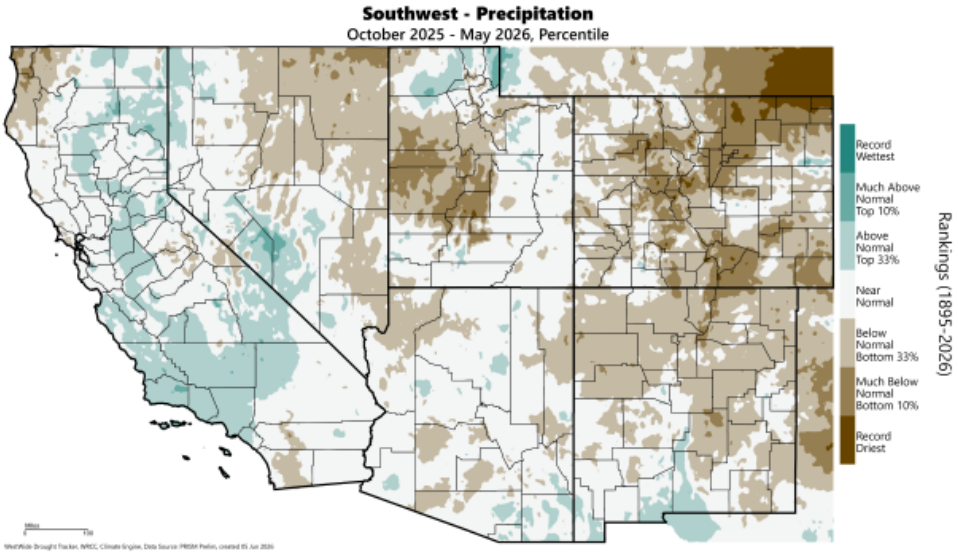
Source: WestWide Drought Tracker

May temperatures were above normal across Arizona and much of New Mexico. Eastern New Mexico temperatures were generally near normal to below normal.



Source: WestWide Drought Tracker

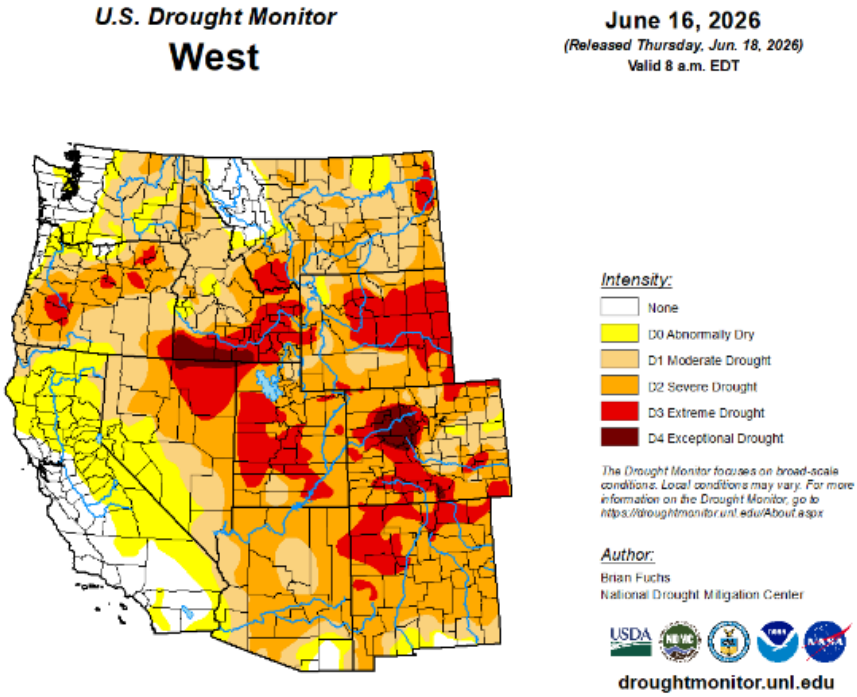
Precipitation totals for the water year so far (October 2025–May 2026) are near normal for much of Arizona and below normal for much of New Mexico. Totals are above normal for some scattered areas across Arizona and southern New Mexico.



Source: WestWide Drought Tracker

Drought

Drought conditions classified Severe (D2) or worse are extensive across the region, affecting 85% of lands within New Mexico and 62% of Arizona. Extreme (D3) drought conditions extend across northern New Mexico, including the Sangre de Cristo Mountains and large parts of the Colorado Plateau, into Apache County, Arizona. Only a few areas are not considered Abnormally Dry or in drought—parts of Cochise and Santa Cruz counties in Arizona, and southeast Otero County in New Mexico.



Source: U.S. Drought Monitor

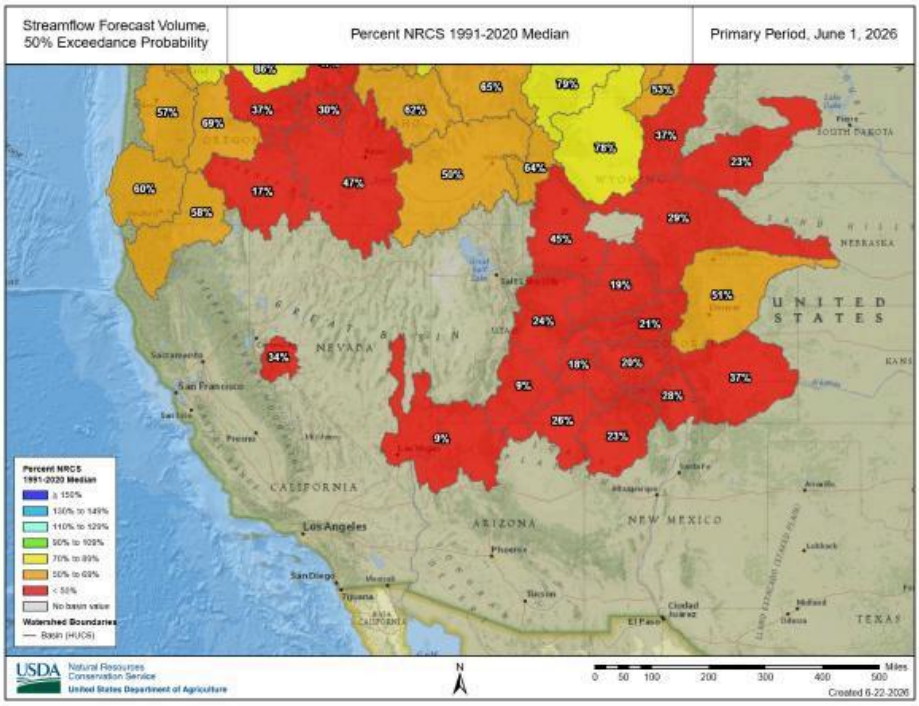
NIDIS Improved and Expanded State Pages on Drought.Gov

New Mexico

Arizona

Snowpack & Streamflow

Streamflow forecasts based on June 1 hydrological conditions indicate very low expected flow volumes for stream basins that would normally be entering peak flow this time of year—28% of normal volume for the Rio Grande headwaters, and 21% of normal volume aggregated across tributaries of the Upper Colorado River Basin.

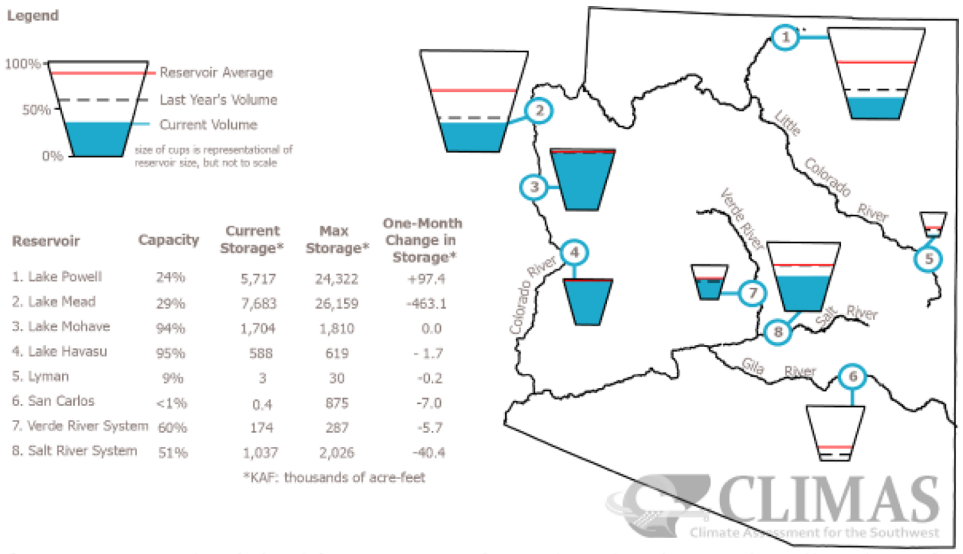


USDA: Natural Resources Conservation Service

Water Supply

Reservoir storage in Arizona is generally below normal levels and down compared to last year, especially at San Carlos, where the effects of long-term drought on the Gila River watershed have left the reservoir nearly dry. Verde River storage is an exception, with levels near normal. Colorado River storage remains in decline—drought conditions in the Upper Colorado River Basin have resulted in a failure of any rebound in storage this year at Lake Powell and Lake Mead.

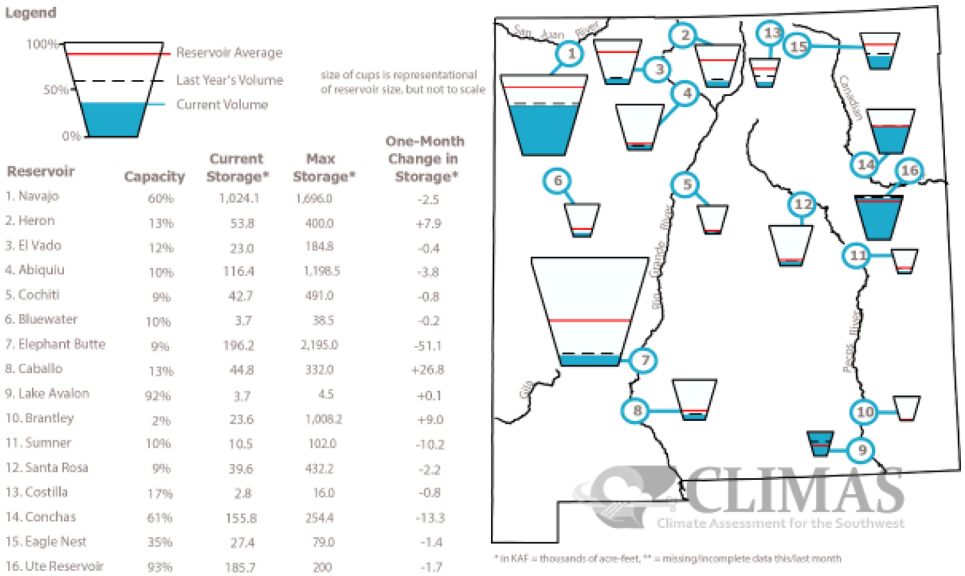
New Mexico reservoir storage is generally below normal and down compared to last year, with notable exceptions in the eastern part of the state where reservoirs of the Canadian River are at near or above normal levels.



Reservoir	Capacity	Current Storage*	Max Storage*	One-Month Change in Storage*
1. Lake Powell	24%	5,717	24,322	+97.4
2. Lake Mead	29%	7,683	26,159	-463.1
3. Lake Mohave	94%	1,704	1,810	0.0
4. Lake Havasu	95%	588	619	- 1.7
5. Lyman	9%	3	30	-0.2
6. San Carlos	<1%	0.4	875	-7.0
7. Verde River System	60%	174	287	-5.7
8. Salt River System	51%	1,037	2,026	-40.4

*KAF: thousands of acre-feet

Figure 1. Arizona reservoir volumes for the end of May 2026 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.



Reservoir	Capacity	Current Storage*	Max Storage*	One-Month Change in Storage*
1. Navajo	60%	1,024.1	1,696.0	-2.5
2. Heron	13%	53.8	400.0	+7.9
3. El Vado	12%	23.0	184.8	-0.4
4. Abiquiu	10%	116.4	1,198.5	-3.8
5. Cochiti	9%	42.7	491.0	-0.8
6. Bluewater	10%	3.7	38.5	-0.2
7. Elephant Butte	9%	196.2	2,195.0	-51.1
8. Caballo	13%	44.8	332.0	+26.8
9. Lake Avalon	92%	3.7	4.5	+0.1
10. Brantley	2%	23.6	1,008.2	+9.0
11. Sumner	10%	10.5	102.0	-10.2
12. Santa Rosa	9%	39.6	432.2	-2.2
13. Costilla	17%	2.8	16.0	-0.8
14. Conchas	61%	155.8	254.4	-13.3
15. Eagle Nest	35%	27.4	79.0	-1.4
16. Ute Reservoir	93%	185.7	200	-1.7

Figure 2. New Mexico reservoir volumes for end of May 2026 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)

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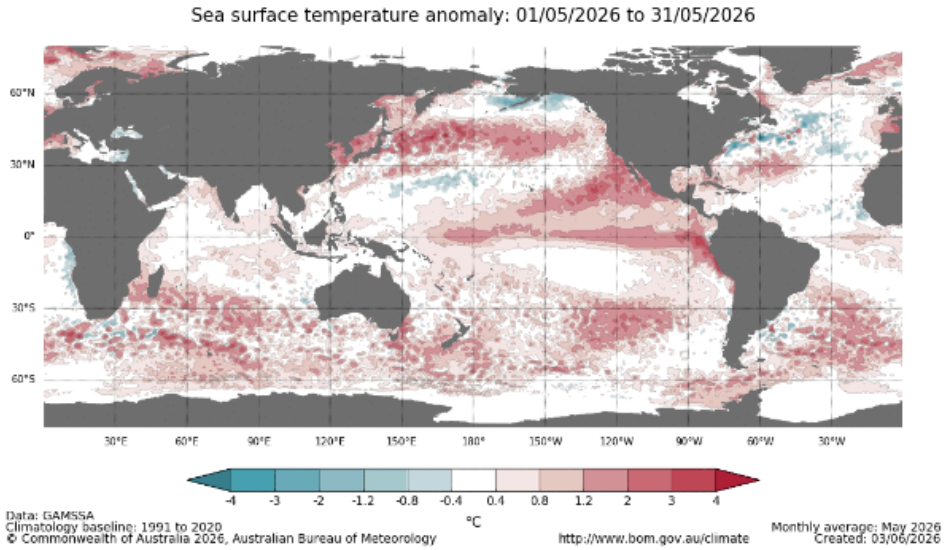
BOR: New Mexico Dashboard

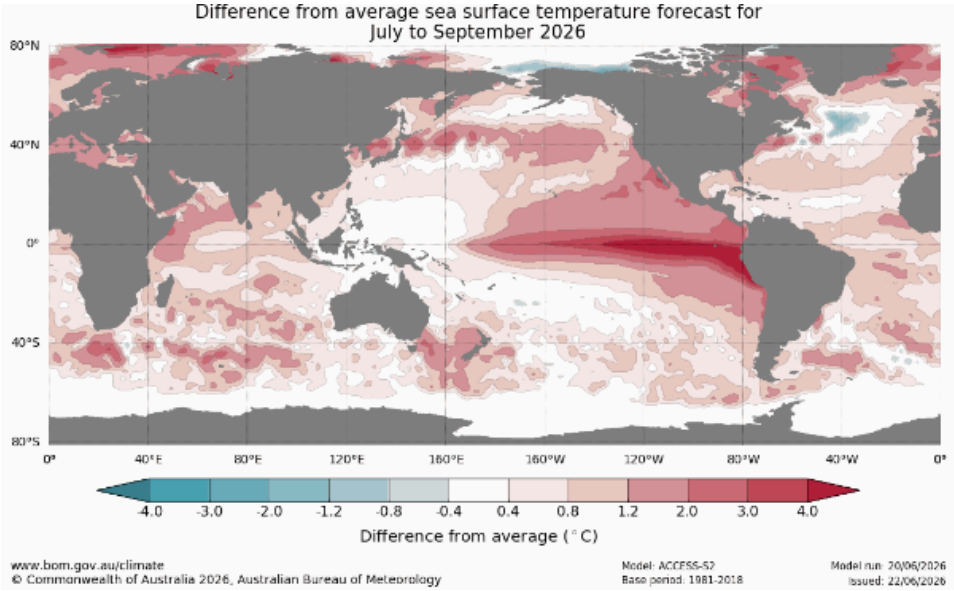
ENSO Tracker

June-average sea surface temperatures (SSTs) in the Pacific show the pattern of El Niño conditions—warmer than average SSTs along the equator in the central and eastern Pacific. There is also a region of anomalously warm SSTs to the north of the El Niño signature, extending from the west coast of Mexico. Potential for tropical cyclone activity in the east Pacific is enhanced by both of these features.



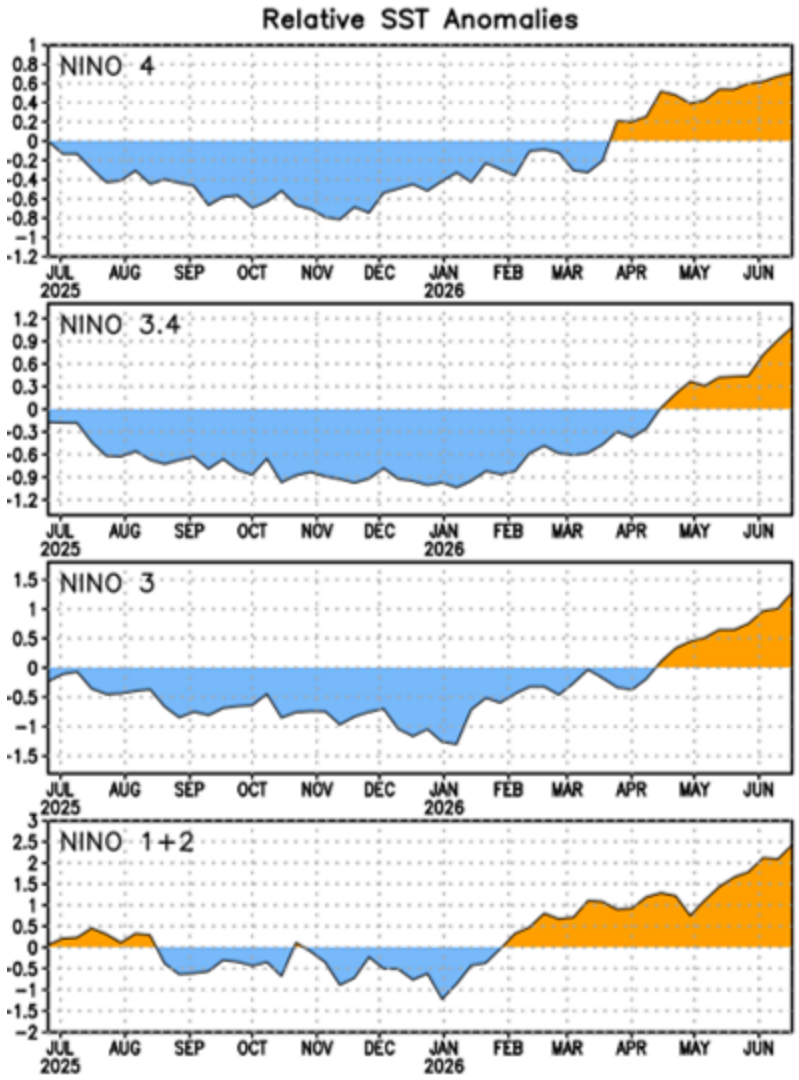
Source: Australian Bureau of Meteorology

The SST forecast for July–September from the Australian ACCESS model shows the El Niño signature strengthening over the next few months. The forecast also shows persisting warm SSTs in the East Pacific, west of Mexico. The ACCESS model's forecast is at the upper extreme of the range of model forecasts, showing greater strengthening of El Niño compared to other models (see forecast plume plot further below), so it is unlikely that observed SSTs will reach as high as shown—but the other models are in good agreement that El Niño will strengthen.



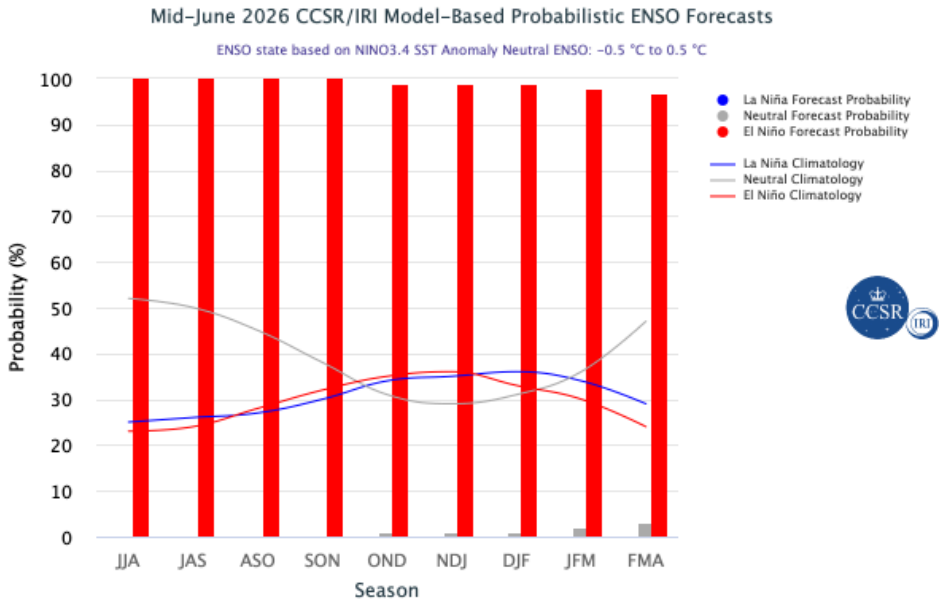
Source: Australian Bureau of Meteorology

SSTs within the Nino 3.4 monitoring region of the Pacific, which NOAA uses to diagnose ENSO status, have been above the El Niño threshold of 0.5°C warmer than average since early June, and the latest weekly SST departure was greater than 1°C. SST departures within the central Pacific monitoring region Nino 4, and the eastern Pacific regions Nino 3 and Nino1+2 have also been trending upward.



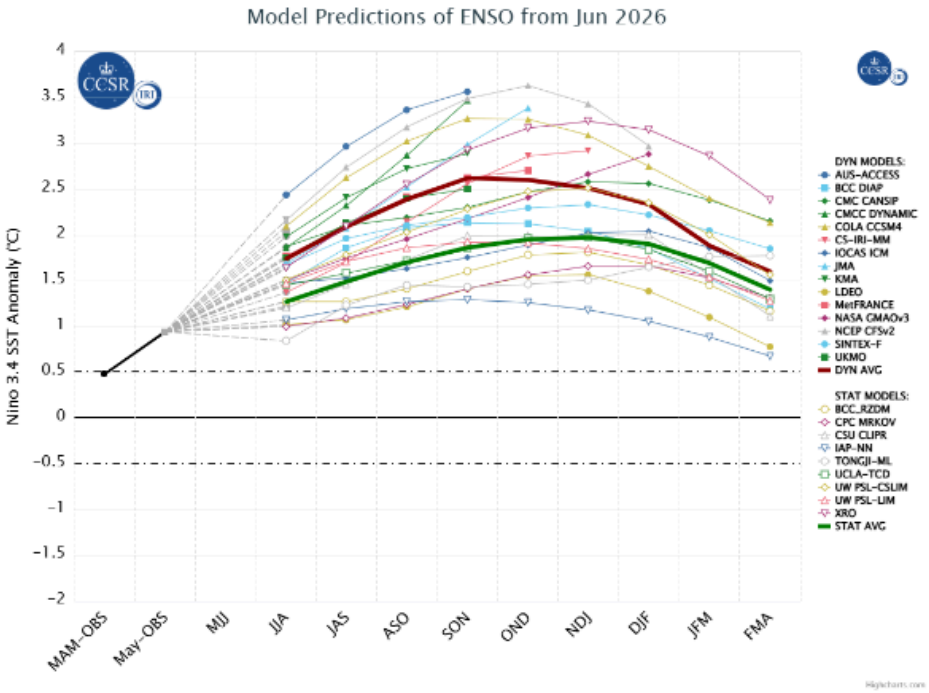
Source: Climate Prediction Center (NOAA)

The probabilistic ENSO forecast summary shows El Niño conditions are very highly likely to persist through the winter—the odds favor El Niño conditions across all seasonal forecast windows, June–August (JJA) through February–April 2027 (FMA), with greater than 95% chance probabilities.



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

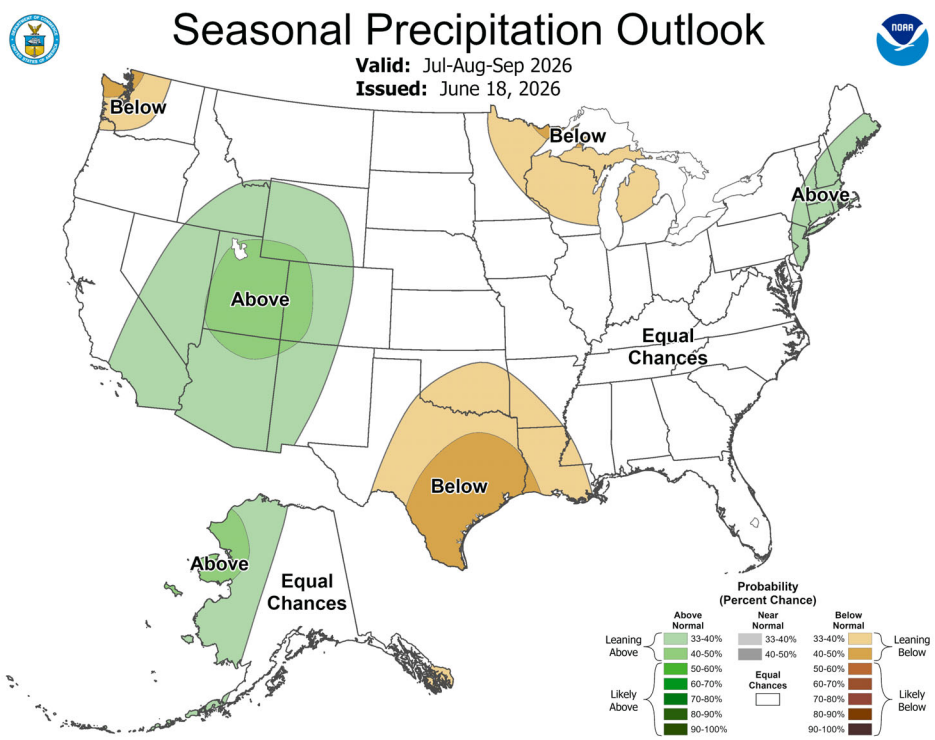
The plume plot of ENSO forecasts from individual forecast models shows the range of intensities possible for the ongoing, strengthening El Niño. At the lower extreme of the range of forecast intensities are models indicating a “moderate” El Niño—where Nino 3.4 SST anomalies stay between 0.5°C and 1.5°C. The majority of forecasts indicate the event will at least meet the criteria of a “strong” El Niño, with SST anomalies above 1.5°C—likely a “very strong” El Niño (SST anomalies greater than 2° C). The upper extreme of the range has forecast intensities peaking above 3.5°C.



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

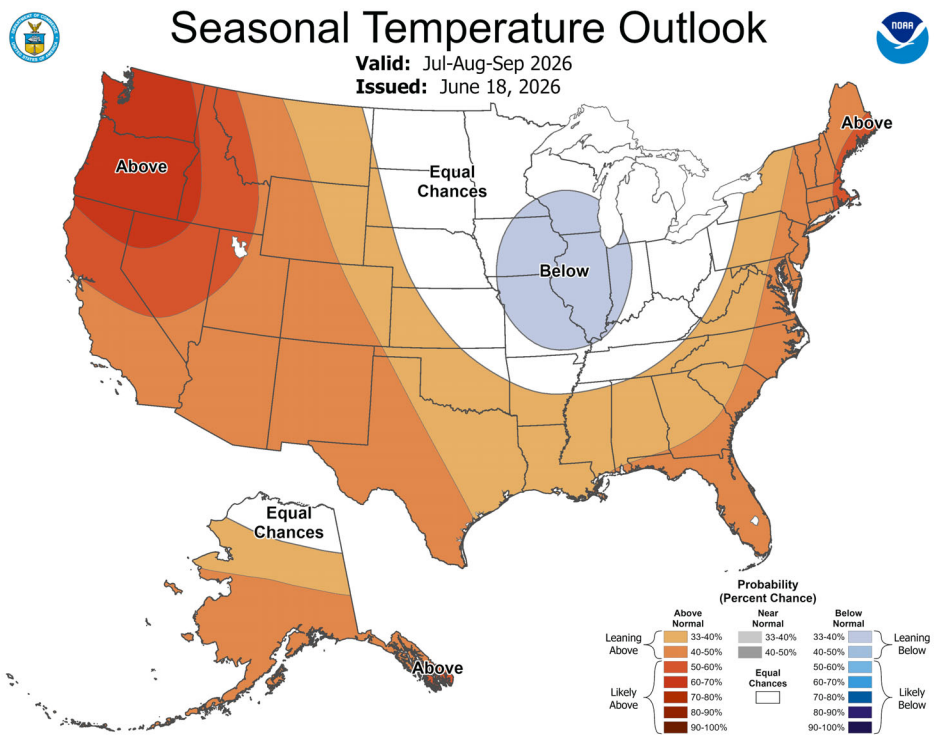
Seasonal Forecasts

The July–September seasonal precipitation forecast leans toward above normal precipitation totals for an area that includes Arizona and much of New Mexico. This expectation is based in part on a likely enhanced moisture supply from the anomalously warm Eastern Pacific, including a potential increase in tropical storms.



Source: Climate Prediction Center (NOAA)

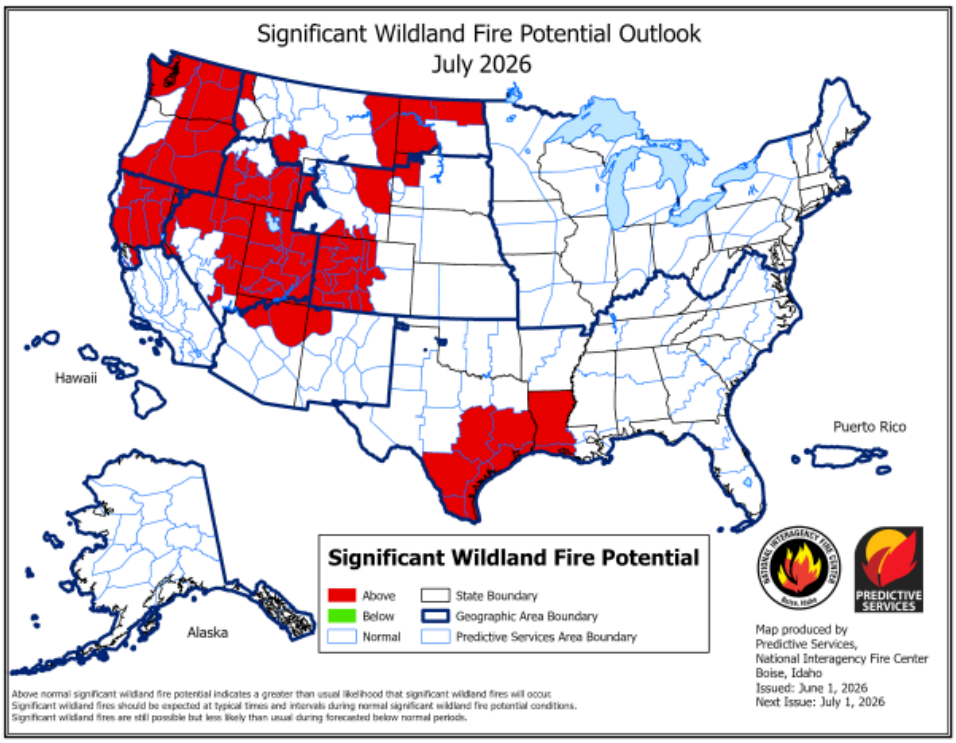
The July–September seasonal temperature forecast leans toward above normal temperatures for Arizona and New Mexico, with a 40–50% chance seasonal-average temperatures will rank in the upper one-third of years on record.



Source: Climate Prediction Center (NOAA)

Wildfire

Significant wildland fire potential is expected to be normal for much of Arizona and New Mexico in July as increased moisture makes conditions less favorable for fire, but before that, elevated potential is expected to peak in early July. Elevated potential is expected to continue through July for parts of northern Arizona and the Colorado Plateau.



Source: National Interagency Coordination Center

Southwest Climate Podcast

June 2026 SW Climate Podcast - Happy Monsoon Everyone!

Recorded 06/17/2026, Aired 06/18/2026

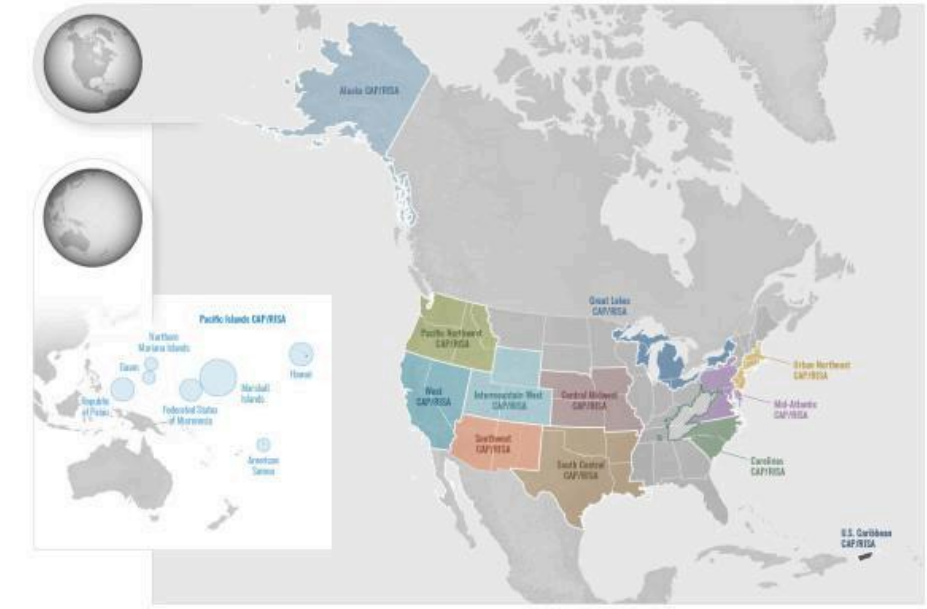
Hosts Zack Guido and Mike Crimmins kick off the 2026 Monsoon in this month's episode of the Southwest Climate Podcast. The timing couldn't have been better for a rainy official start date this past Monday. They discuss the precipitation event and whether or not it was truly monsoonal. This sets up the discussion for the upcoming monsoon forecast

and how a ‘Super’ El Niño might make for an active, yet non-typical monsoon setup. Lots of resources shared so that you can be ready to play the Monsoon Fantasy Forecast Game which starts at the end of this month - sign up today!

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 Regional Integrated Sciences and Assessments (RISA) Program. 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 RISA program here

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Southwest Climate Outlook contributors: Mike Crimmins & Matt Meko