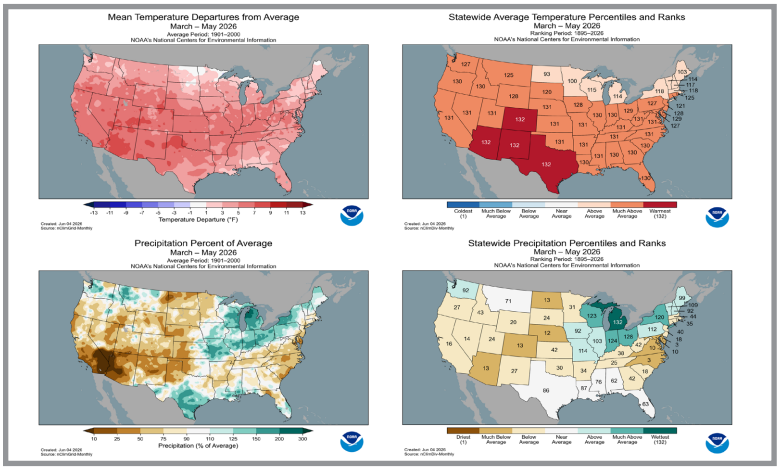
Quarterly Climate Impacts and Outlook

Southeast Region

June 2026

National and Regional Weather Highlights for Spring 2026



*Regionally, Spring 2026 was the **second warmest since 1895**. North Carolina experienced its **third driest spring**. Much of the region was **exceptionally dry** during March and April, though **wetter conditions returned** in May, especially across parts of Alabama and Georgia. Temperatures were **above average** across the Caribbean, while spring began with wet conditions but ended with increasing dryness. Drought coverage **reached record levels** across the Southeast according to the U.S. Drought Monitor, while **abnormal dryness expanded** across portions of the Caribbean. For more information, see NOAA's National Climate Report.*

Highlights for the Southeast

Several locations recorded or tied their **earliest first 90 degree F day on record**, including Tampa, FL (March 6th), Jacksonville, FL (March 10th), Wilmington, NC (March 23rd), Charlottesville, VA (March 23rd), and Atlanta, GA (April 17th).

On March 1st, 1-inch hail fell in Key Largo, FL, marking the **largest hail reported in the Florida Keys** since records began in 1950.

Several locations recorded among their **highest counts of 95 degree F days** on record, including Raleigh-Durham, NC, Richmond, VA, Washington, D.C., and Miami, FL

Augusta, GA ended its **longest dry streak on record** of 40 consecutive days on April 25th, breaking the previous record of 38 days

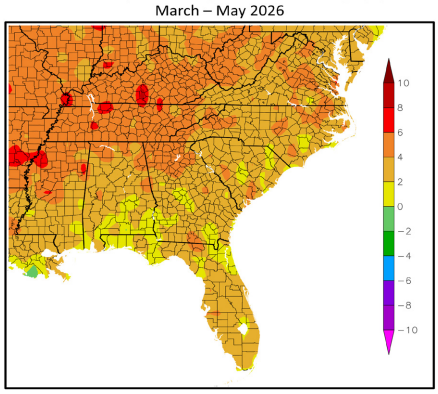
There were 18 surf zone fatalities and one lightning fatality in the Southeast this spring.

El Niño conditions are present and are expected to strengthen into the winter, with a greater than 60% chance of a very strong event that would rank among the strongest since 1950.

Regional Weather Overview for Spring 2026

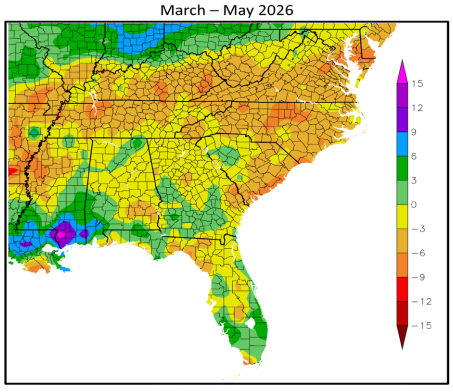
Temperature and Precipitation Anomalies

Mean Temperature Departure from Average (°F)
March – May 2026



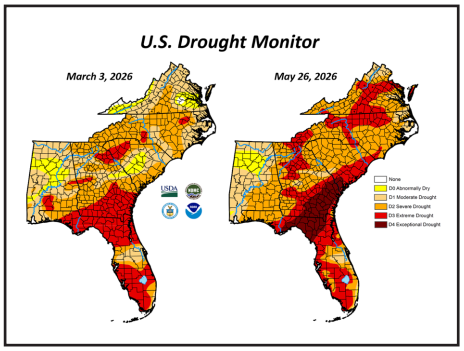
Temperatures were **above average** across the Southeast, particularly across northern and interior portions of the region as well as the FL Peninsula, where many locations were **3 to 5 degrees F above average**. Key West, FL, Sarasota, FL, and Charlotte, NC recorded their **warmest spring on record**, Muscle Shoals, AL tied its warmest spring on record, while many other locations recorded one of their top 3 warmest springs on record.

Precipitation Departure from Normal (in)
March – May 2026



Precipitation was **below average** across most of the Southeast, particularly across VA and the Carolinas, with many locations running **3 to 6 inches below average**. Raleigh-Durham, NC recorded its **driest spring on record** with less than 4 inches, while several other locations recorded one of their top 3 driest springs on record. In contrast, precipitation was **above average** across the northern Gulf Coast and southern portions of GA and FL.

Drought



Drought conditions intensified across the Southeast this spring, resulting in some of the **highest coverage ever recorded by the U.S. Drought Monitor**. By mid-April, 100% of the region was classified in at least abnormally dry (D0) conditions for the first time since January 2000. **Coverage of moderate (D1), severe (D2), and extreme (D3) drought subsequently reached record levels of 99.81%, 94.85%, and 61.50%, respectively**, surpassing the values observed during the 2007-2008 drought. Exceptional (D4) drought expanded to its **greatest extent on record for spring** (12.5%), and greatest extent since November 2016.

Contacts: Chip Konrad, Chris Fuhrmann and William Schmitz

Regional Climate Impacts for Spring 2026

Major Wildfires Impact the Southeast

The Rosindale Road fire in Bladen County, NC on April 10th (source: WECT)

For the second consecutive spring, drought and unusually dry fuels contributed to **elevated wildfire activity** across portions of the Southeast, prompting evacuations and degrading air quality. In GA, a **statewide emergency declaration** was issued as several large fires intensified, including the **Highway 82 Fire**, which burned more than 22,600 acres and became **one of the most destructive wildfires in state history**, and the **Pineland Road Fire**, which burned more than 32,000 acres. Together, these fires destroyed more than 120 homes and structures. In FL, officials described 2026 as the **state's most active wildfire season in more than 30 years**, with over 120,000 acres burned by late spring. A 2,700-acre wildfire near Jacksonville disrupted major rail service, while the **Highway 41 Fire** west of Miami forced partial closures of Everglades National Park. According to the NC State Climate Office, more than 4,000 wildfire incidents were recorded in the state, including the **East Tower Fire**, **Rosindale Road Fire (see image above)**, and **Cane Creek Fire**. Downed timber and vegetative debris from **Hurricane Helene** contributed to higher fuel loads.

Severe Weather

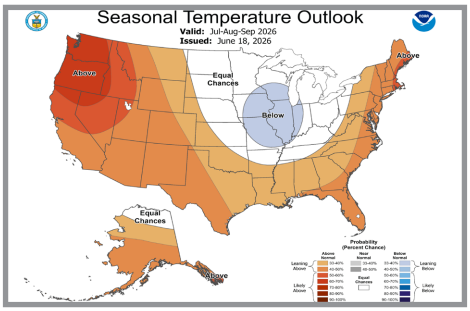
There were **984 reports of severe weather** this past spring, which is just below the median frequency observed from 2000 to 2025 (97% of normal). There were **68 confirmed tornadoes** (1 EF-U, 38 EF-0s, 28 EF-1s, 1 EF-2), which is above the median frequency of 61 (111% of normal). For the season, there were **862 reports of high winds**, which is above the median frequency of 648 (133% of normal). There were also **54 hail reports**, which is well below the median frequency of 311 (17% of normal). The largest hailstones were **2.75 inches** in central AL on May 6th. **Back-to-back severe outbreaks in mid-March** produced over 40 tornadoes across parts of AL and GA, injuring at least two people, with straight-line winds over 60 mph causing several injuries due to trees falling onto homes and vehicles. Washington's Reagan Airport recorded a gust of 68 mph and Grandfather Mountain in NC recorded a gust of 94 mph.

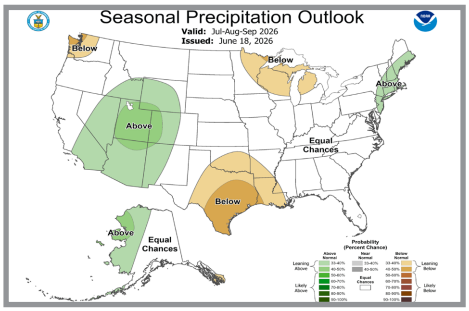
Agriculture and Livestock

Agricultural conditions deteriorated this spring as **persistent drought and periods of extreme temperatures** affected crops and livestock. **Dry soils** delayed planting, hindered seed establishment, and reduced yields for a variety of crops, including winter wheat, cotton, peanuts, onions, peaches, apples, pecans, and citrus. **Drought** reduced Vidalia onion yields and bulb size, while peach growers anticipated a smaller harvest. Pasture and hay production declined, limiting forage availability and increasing supplemental feed and irrigation costs. **Freeze events** damaged vineyards, strawberries, blueberries, and other fruit crops, while **reductions in flowering plants and water availability** stressed pollinator populations. Livestock operations also faced challenges from poor pasture conditions, declining pond levels, and limited water resources.

Regional Climate Outlook for Summer 2026

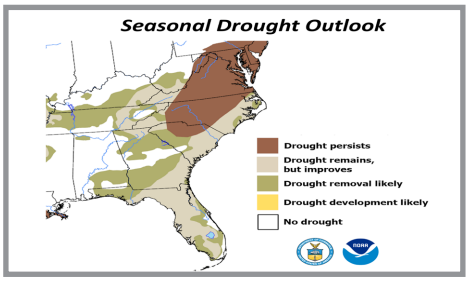
Temperature and Precipitation





NOAA's Climate Prediction Center (CPC) is forecasting **above average temperatures** across the Southeast from July to September. Probabilities are in the 33-40% range across the interior of the region and in the 40-50% range across FL and the East Coast. There are **equal chances of above or below precipitation** across the region.

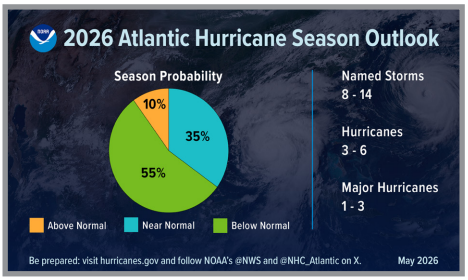
Drought



The seasonal outlook favors **improvement or removal** across much of the Southeast, particularly FL and coastal areas. **Greater uncertainty** exists across the interior Carolinas and VA, where above average temperatures and lack of wet signal favor persistence.

Atlantic Hurricane Season

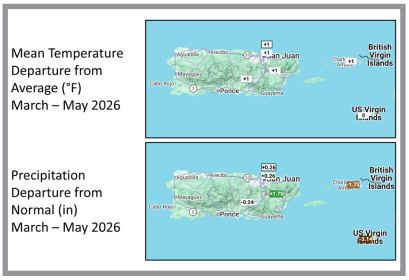
On May 21st, the CPC issued its outlook for the Atlantic Hurricane Season, which calls for **below-normal activity** this year. The forecast is for **8 to 14** total named storms, of which **3 to 6** could become hurricanes, with **1 to 3** becoming major hurricanes (Category 3+). The outlook reflects a **combination of competing factors**, including slightly warmer than normal sea surface temperatures, an intensifying El Niño, bringing stronger wind shear, weaker trade winds, and a near-average west African monsoon.

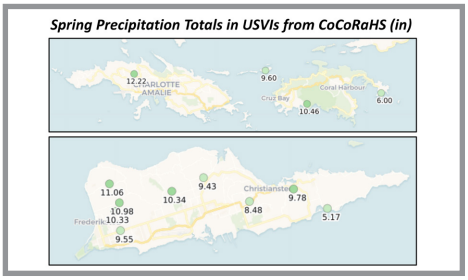


Contacts: Chip Konrad, Chris Fuhrmann and William Schmitz

Caribbean Climate Overview and Impacts for Spring 2026

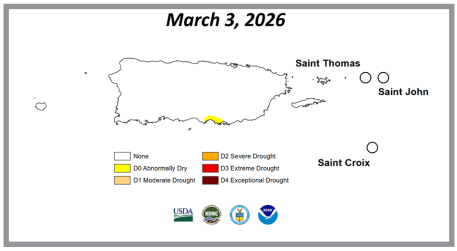
Temperature and Precipitation Anomalies

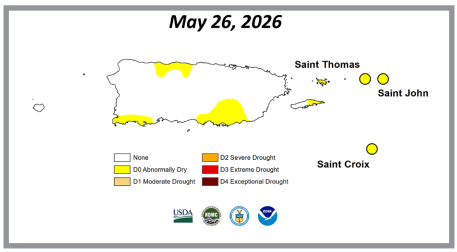




Temperatures were **above average** across PR and the USVIs this spring. Several locations recorded notably warm seasons, including San Juan, Juncos, and Aibonito, which each **ranked among their 15 warmest springs on record**, while Saint Thomas **tied its sixth warmest spring**. Precipitation was variable. **March and April were wetter than normal** across much of the region, with Coloso recording its **third wettest March** on record with 7.68 inches and San Juan recording its **fourth wettest** with 6.56 inches. In contrast, **rainfall deficits** of 2 to 4 inches developed in many areas in May. Saint Thomas recorded just 0.59 inches, less than 20% of normal and **among its ten driest Mays on record**. As a result, the region ended its climatological dry season unusually wet but entered the wet season under increasingly dry conditions.

Drought





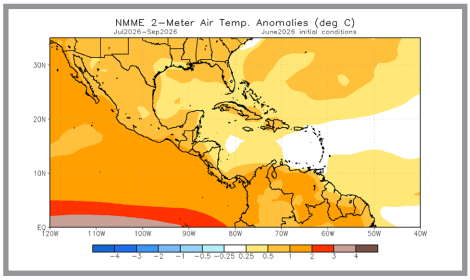
Abnormal dryness (D0) expanded across southeastern and southwestern portions of PR, and **emerged** across parts of the northern slopes and outlying islands of Vieques and Culebra. By the end of the season, it covered 17% of the island, the **highest value since the beginning of the year**. Abnormal dryness (D0) also **returned to the USVIs for the first time since February**.

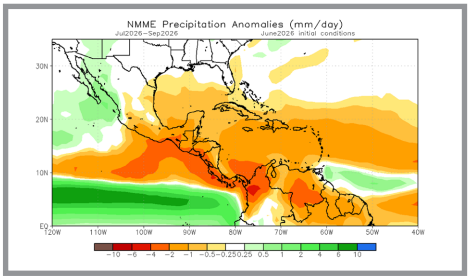
Agriculture, Water Resources, and Notable Weather

Spring began with **generally favorable hydrologic conditions** following a wet end to winter and an exceptionally wet start to the season. However, conditions changed markedly during May as hot, dry, and windy weather developed across the region. **Rapid declines in groundwater levels** were observed at several wells, particularly along the southern slopes of PR where municipal and agricultural water supplies depend heavily on groundwater resources. Water levels also began decreasing across portions of the eastern interior and in reservoirs such as Lago Cidra. **Drying soils and increasing vegetation stress** became evident by the end of the season, especially across northern and southern portions of the island. Several notable **weather-related events** also occurred, including a fatal boating accident near Ponce caused by rough seas and strong winds, a wave-related drowning incident at Poza Las Mujeres Beach, and quarter-inch hail reported in Arecibo.

Caribbean Climate Outlook for Summer 2026

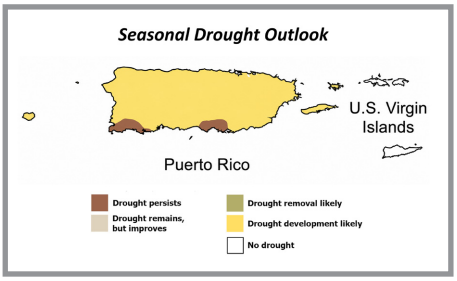
Temperature and Precipitation





According to the North American Multi-Model Ensemble (NMME), **above-average temperatures** and **below average precipitation** are expected across the Caribbean during the July-September period.

Drought



According to the CPC and Caribbean Climate Outlook Forum, **drought development is favored** across the southern slopes of PR, where longer-term rainfall deficits persist. This outlook reflects expectations for warmer, drier, and windier conditions during the climatological wet season, along with below-normal tropical cyclone activity.

Southeast Region Partners

- National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
  - National Centers for Environmental Information
  - National Weather Service Eastern Region
  - National Weather Service Southern Region
  - Climate Prediction Center
  - National Hurricane Center
  - National Integrated Drought Information System
  - Carolinas Integrated Sciences and Assessments
  - National Sea Grant Office
  - Southeast and Caribbean Regional Collaboration Team
- State Climatologists
- Southeast Regional Climate Hub
- Southeast Climate Science Center
- Community Collaborative Rain Hail and Snow Network

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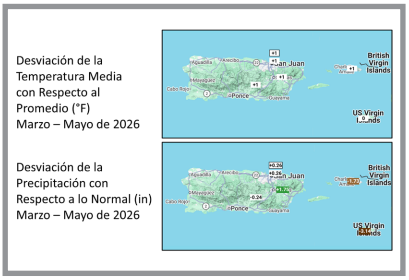
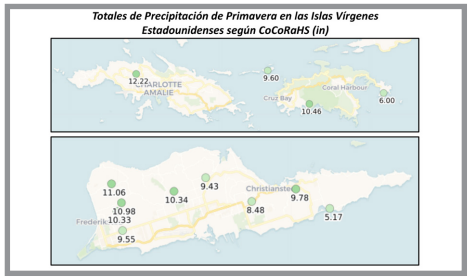
Perspectiva General del Clima e Impactos en el Caribe Durante la Primavera de 2026

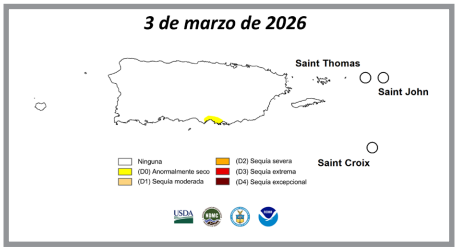
Anomalías de Temperatura y Precipitación

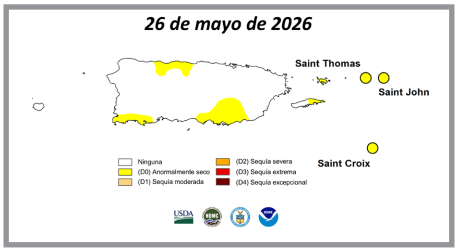




Las temperaturas estuvieron por encima del promedio en todo Puerto Rico (PR) y las Islas Vírgenes Americanas (USVI, por sus siglas en inglés) esta primavera. Varias localidades registraron temporadas notablemente cálidas, incluyendo a San Juan, Juncos y Aibonito, cada una de las cuales se ubicó entre sus 15 primaveras más cálidas en récord, mientras que St. Thomas empató con su sexta primavera más cálida. La precipitación fue variable. Marzo y abril estuvieron más húmedos de lo normal en gran parte de la región; Coloso registró su tercer marzo más húmedo desde que se tienen registros con 7.68 pulgadas de lluvia, y San Juan registró su cuarto marzo más húmedo con 6.56 pulgadas. Por el contrario, en mayo se desarrollaron déficits de lluvia de 2 a 4 pulgadas en muchas áreas. St. Thomas registró solo 0.59 pulgadas de lluvia, menos del 20% de lo normal, lo cual lo clasifica como uno de sus diez mayos más secos en registros. Como resultado, la región terminó su temporada climatológicamente seca de manera inusualmente lluviosa, pero entró a la temporada de lluvia bajo condiciones cada vez más secas.

Sequía





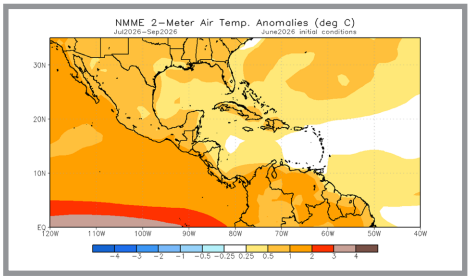
La sequedad anómala (D0) se expandió por el sureste y suroeste de PR, y emergió por partes de las laderas del norte y las islas municipio de Vieques y Culebra. Para el final de la temporada, la sequedad anómala cubría el 17% de la isla. Este es el valor más alto desde principios de año. Una sequedad anómala (D0) también regresó a las USVI por primera vez desde febrero.

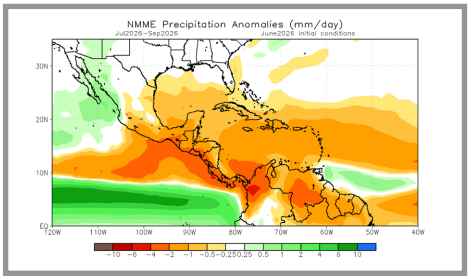
Agricultura, Recursos Hídricos y Condiciones del Tiempo Notables

La primavera comenzó con condiciones hidrológicas generalmente favorables tras un final de invierno húmedo y un inicio de temporada excepcionalmente lluvioso. Sin embargo, las condiciones cambiaron notablemente durante mayo a medida que el tiempo se tornó más cálido, seco y ventoso en toda la región. Se observaron rápidos descensos en los niveles de agua subterránea en varios pozos, particularmente a lo largo de las laderas del sur de Puerto Rico, donde los suministros de agua municipal y agrícolas dependen en gran medida de los recursos subterráneos. Los niveles de agua también comenzaron a disminuir en sectores del interior este de la isla y en embalses como el Lago Cidra. La sequedad de los suelos y el aumento del estrés en la vegetación se hicieron evidentes hacia el final de la temporada, especialmente en las zonas norte y sur de la isla. También ocurrieron varios eventos notables relacionados con las condiciones del tiempo, incluyendo un accidente náutico fatal cerca de Ponce causado por el mar picado y los fuertes vientos, un ahogamiento provocado por el oleaje en la Playa Poza de las Mujeres, y reportes de granizo de un cuarto de pulgada en Arecibo.

Perspectiva del Clima en el Caribe para el Verano de 2026

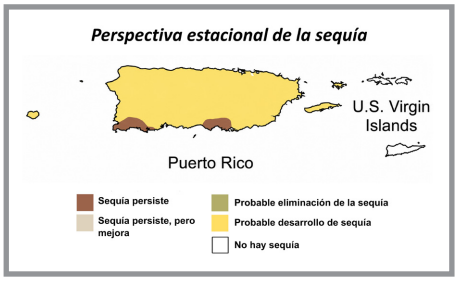
Temperatura y Precipitación





Según el Conjunto Multi-Modelo Norteamericano (NMME, por sus siglas en inglés), se anticipan temperaturas por encima del promedio y precipitaciones por debajo del promedio en todo el Caribe durante el período de julio a septiembre.

Sequía



Según el Centro de Predicciones Climáticas (CPC, por sus siglas en inglés) y el Foro de Perspectiva del Clima en el Caribe, es probable que se produzcan sequías en las laderas del sur de PR, donde persisten los déficits de lluvias a largo plazo. Esta perspectiva refleja las expectativas de condiciones más cálidas, secas y ventosas durante la temporada de lluvia, así como una actividad de ciclón tropical por debajo de lo normal.

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