

Photo by A. Csank

Notable Weather & Climate in Nevada

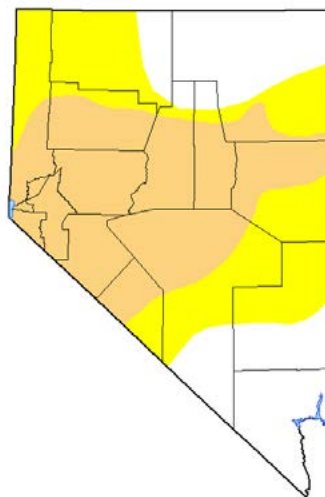
Regional precipitation patterns from the fall -- dry in the north and wetter to the south -- persisted through the winter of 2020. Winter temperatures ranged from near normal to substantially above normal. Some locations in Elko county experienced seasonal average temperatures that were 3° to 4°F warmer than normal.

Around Reno, January and February were quite dry, with less than 5% of normal monthly precipitation at many stations, but March was wetter. In northeastern Nevada, precipitation appeared spotty with some areas getting reasonable amounts of rain and snow, but others staying very dry throughout the winter. Seasonally wet conditions in southern Nevada were driven primarily by a very wet March, with many stations recording two to four times the usual precipitation.

January was, relatively speaking, the warmest month. Temperatures were above normal by as much as 8°F in northern Nevada. Only a few stations in southern Nevada experienced below normal temperatures. March was relatively cool, with below average temperatures everywhere except northeastern Nevada.

As a consequence of the relatively warm, dry winter, the March 31 Drought Monitor indicated substantial expansions of D0, Abnormally Dry, and D1, Moderate Drought, across the state. At the end of December, just less than 2% of the state was abnormally dry. By the end of March 32% of the state was in D0 and 39% of the state was already D1.

U.S. Drought Monitor Nevada



March 31, 2020
(Released Thursday, Apr. 2, 2020)
Valid 8 a.m. EDT

	Drought Conditions (Percent Area)					
	None	D0-D4	D1-D4	D2-D4	D3-D4	D4
Current	29.00	71.00	39.39	0.00	0.00	0.00
Last Week 03-24-2020	29.00	71.00	10.11	0.00	0.00	0.00
3 Months Ago 12-31-2019	98.08	1.92	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Start of Calendar Year 12-31-2019	98.08	1.92	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Start of Water Year 10-01-2019	88.81	11.19	4.19	0.00	0.00	0.00
One Year Ago 04-02-2019	89.94	10.06	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00

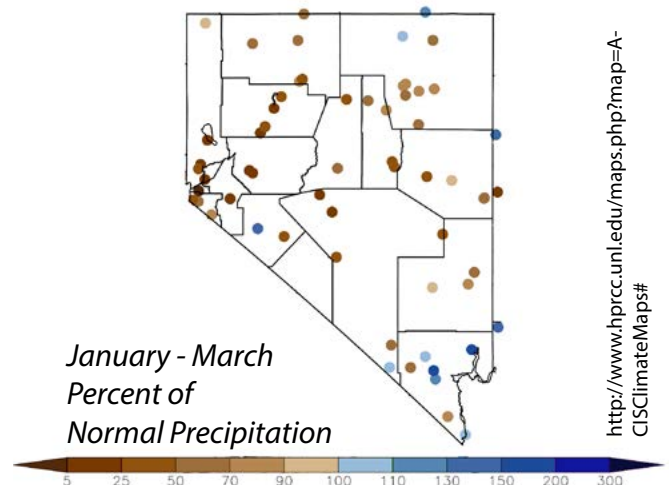
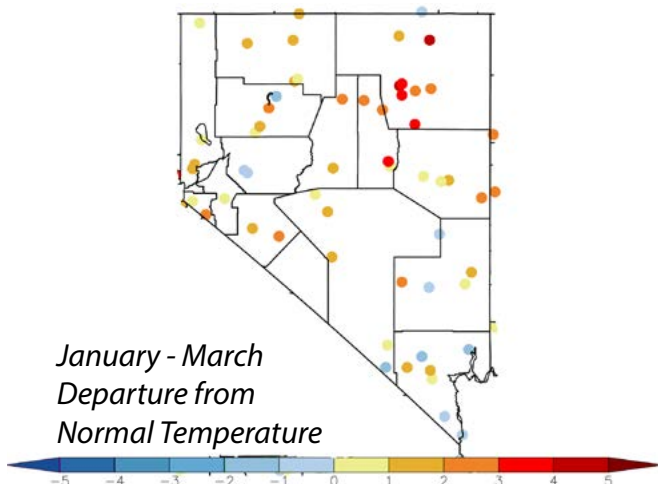
Intensity:
 None
 D0 Abnormally Dry
 D1 Moderate Drought
 D2 Severe Drought
 D3 Extreme Drought
 D4 Exceptional Drought

The Drought Monitor focuses on broad-scale conditions. Local conditions may vary. For more information on the Drought Monitor, go to <https://droughtmonitor.unl.edu/About.aspx>

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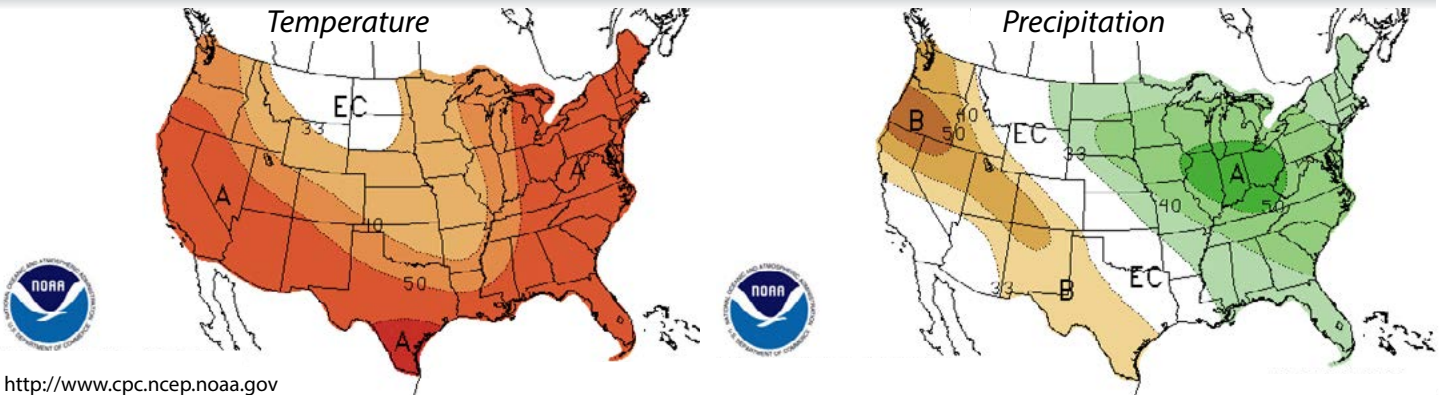
droughtmonitor.unl.edu



<http://www.hprcc.unl.edu/maps.php?map=A-CISClimateMaps#>



Outlook for April - June



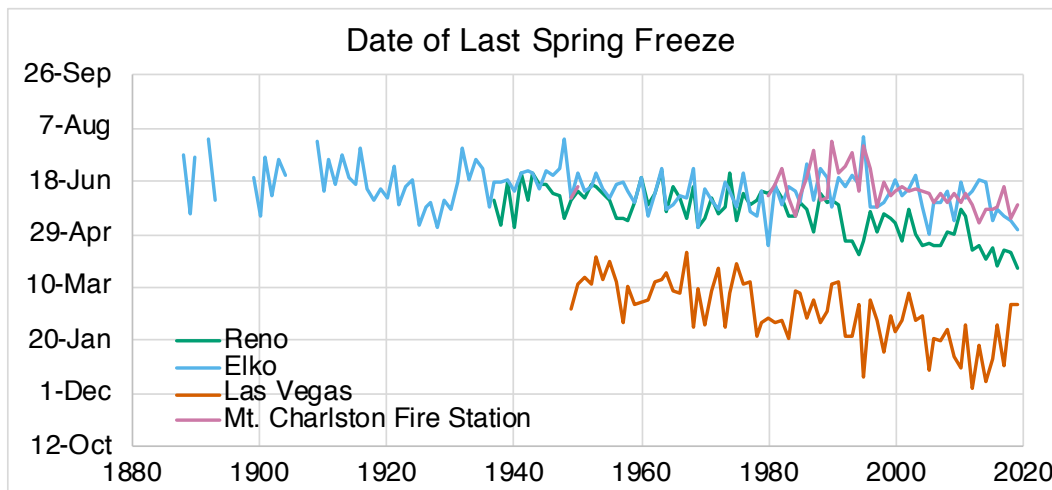
<http://www.cpc.ncep.noaa.gov>

The April - June outlook from the Climate Prediction Center suggests that the dry conditions much of central and northern Nevada experienced over the winter may continue into spring. From the northern edge of Clark county north to about Highway 50, there is a slight chance of below normal rainfall. North of Hwy. 50, there is at least a 40% chance of drier than normal conditions. Temperatures are likely to be warmer than normal. Across all but the far northeast corner of the state, there are better than 50-50 odds of a warmer than normal spring. Warm spring temperatures after a relatively dry winter could enhance fire risk. You can stay on top of the wildfire outlooks at <https://www.predictiveservices.nifc.gov/outlooks/outlooks.htm>.

In-depth: When to expect the last spring frost

With the arrival of spring, many of us think about getting the garden going. This year, as people are sheltering in place, there may be even more of us digging and planting envisioning home-grown tomatoes and cucumbers. But when to plant? Many seed packets will tell you to plant “before the average last frost” or “after danger of frost has passed.” When is that? It depends on where you are. In northern Nevada, nighttime temperatures can drop to or below 32°F into May or even June. Around Las Vegas, especially at lower elevation, the last freeze can be as early as Christmas. At the Mt. Charleston Fire Station, just outside of Las Vegas, but at an elevation of 7,460’, the average last frost is in early June.

There is local variability. Valleys and hollows where cold air pools can experience freezes much later in the season than nearby hill slopes. There can also be a lot of variability from one year to another. Back in the 1950’s Las Vegas had freezing temperatures in April. In some recent years, Reno (the airport anyway) has been freeze-free by late March.



Data from <http://scacis.rcc-acis.org/>

Speaking of gardening. Whether you’re new to the area, new to gardening, or an old-hand running into a new problem, the University of Nevada Extension Master Gardener’s program can help. Visit their webpage at <https://extension.unr.edu/program.aspx?ID=74> for articles and links to local resources.