



MANAGEMENT NOTES FOR MARCH THROUGH MAY

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May ended with heavy (and flooding) rains in some areas and little to no rain in others. This continues the pattern of the last several years! The U. S. Seasonal Drought Outlook through August predicts the drought will persist or deepen except in the eastern part of Texas (Figure 1). The three month precipitation and temperature outlook predicts above average rainfall and average to below average temperatures for the same period (Figure 2). Throughout most of Texas, July and August should have lower average rainfall, most coming as thunderstorms. Despite the recent good rains, this pattern appears to be continuing. Will we continue the 2012 pattern of periods of little or no precipitation followed by above average rainfall. As we move through summer, it will probably be either hot and damp or cool and damp if the forecasters are right. Regardless, management needs to adjust to compensate for what the weather has done over the last several years.

Major vegetation damage has occurred and continues across the rangeland and woodlands of Texas. Wildlife is suffering. Blame it on lack of water, reduced natural forage and feed, heat, or any of the other things that drought and heat bring. Just to remind you, once we get good rains and see recovery starting, it will take a long time, actually years in most areas, for the vegetation to recover to pre-drought production. It may never recover in some areas.

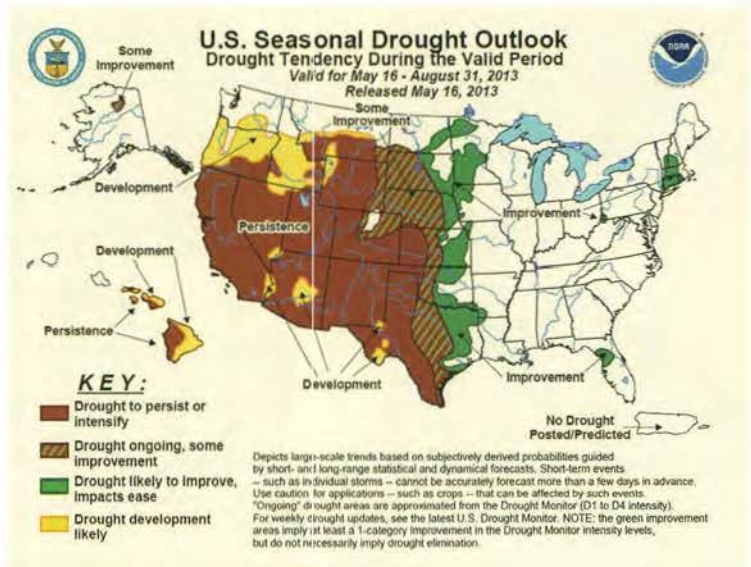


Figure 1. The Drought Outlook through August.

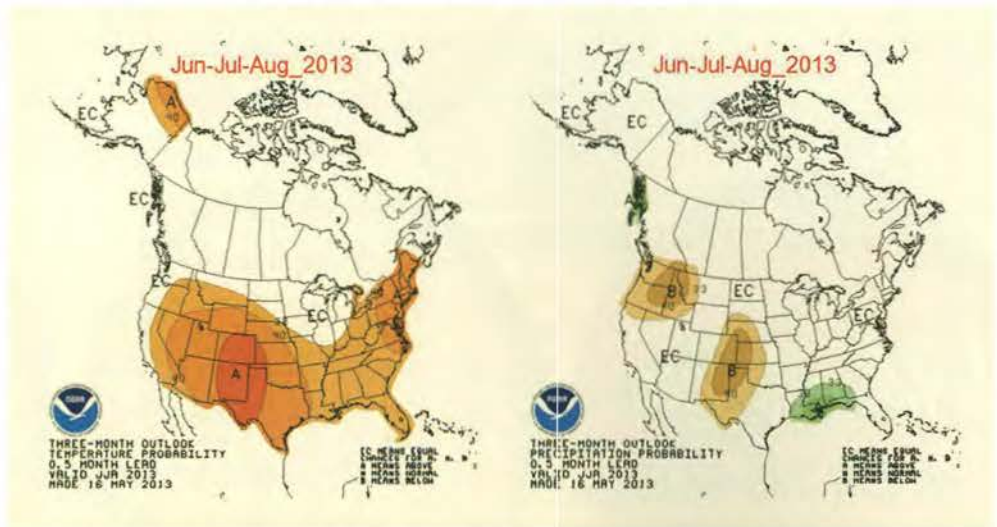


Figure 2. Precipitation outlook (left) indicates above average rainfall and average to below average temperatures.





Here are some points to consider in the next few months.

- Water must be your highest priority. If you run out of water you are out of business! Closely monitor your water resources for availability and quality. Have plans in place if water sources appear to be less than optimal or declining. By continually evaluating and planning your water needs for the rest of the year you will be prepared to move animals to where water is available if possible or other options if available. If the drought does continue, check water sources more often.
- Review rainfall records for the past 12-24 months and monitor forecasts for the next 3-6 months. Both can be an aid to determining how soil moisture availability will change over the next few months. (Note: The maps in the figures can be accessed at <http://www.grassbydesign.com/TDA/NOAA.htm>.) Even if current soil moisture is fair to good, projected plant growth will be below average as the impact of drought conditions will carry over. If drought conditions do continue, plant growth will continue to decline, potentially below 2012 levels.
- Continue evaluating grazing and browsing. If use on highly desirable species is heavy, the plants will be stressed even more. If use has been heavy over the past year, consider how you can reduce the pressure. The need is to allow the preferred species to maintain themselves and maybe even begin recovery.
- Routinely check and repair or replace, where possible, all improvements such as fences, water sources, and equipment. If herd size has been reduced and resources are available, there may be opportunities for major repairs and improvements.
- Continue to maintain an up-to-date analysis of your financial situation. Continual evaluation and adjustment of the 2013 and 5-year management and economic plans should be based on the current and

projected weather conditions plus current and projected economic conditions.

- Hope you were able to do at least some prescribed burning this year! If you did, manage your 2013 prescribed burn areas carefully. Start identifying and planning potential 2014 burn areas. When it comes to prescribed burning, planning ahead is better than just 'going out and dropping matches!'
- Continue the management of areas seeded over the last two to four years to insure long term establishment and production. Continue the management plans for 2012 areas.
- Update your land resource records through new photos or other means. As always, if you haven't started a land resource record, start now. Using photographs, establish points that you can return to and photograph at least once each year. These photographs can be a great help in seeing how your resources have changed. If you are working in the vegetation regularly, it is changing a little everyday and you can't tell it! Remember, manage your operation for profitability today and to insure the future. Base your management on your past efforts, what is currently happening, and look to the future.

Combining the past and present experiences can help develop your future plans. Remember to include how you expect weather, economic conditions and your personal life will interact. Management is never easy!

Careful planning can help in making management changes! If you haven't developed a business management plan, please get started! 🐾

