

MANAGEMENT NOTES March through May

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The U.S. Seasonal Drought Outlook through April predicts the drought will persist or deepen by April (Figure 1). Likewise, the three-month temperature outlook from the Climate Prediction Center adds above average temperatures over the same period (Figure 2). Despite some good rains in January, this pattern appears to be continuing. In 2012, many areas of the state had periods of little or no precipitation followed by above average rainfall. As we move through winter into spring, it will probably be either hot and dry or cool and dry if the forecasters are right. Regardless of what the weather has done since August, major damage continues across the rangeland and woodlands of Texas. Wildlife has suffered, and many populations have been declining. Blame it on lack of water, reduced natural forage and feed, heat and all the other things that drought and heat bring. Needless to remind most of you, once we get good rains and see recovering starting, it will take a long time for the vegetation to recover to what it was, or in some places, it may never recover.

Has your land resource withstood the ravages of summer and the drought because of your management? Be sure to evaluate the current use to determine if there will be adequate resources for use. Hope you have finished evaluating your resources and finances for 2012. By now, you should have adjusted your 2013 management plans and begun making adjustments to your 2013 and five-year plans.

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

- Water must be your highest priority. Without adequate water, production is difficult at best.
- Monitor your water resources for availability and quality. Have options in place if sources appear to be less than optimal. Continually evaluating and planning water needs for the rest of the year will be important. Be prepared to move animals to where water is available if possible.
- If drought continues, check water sources more often.
- Review rainfall records for the past 12 months, the forecast for the next three to six months, and determine if the current soil moisture availability is adequate for the next three months. Even if current soil moisture is fair to good, projected plant growth will probably be below average if drought conditions continue as has been predicted. If drought conditions do continue, prepare for below average growth in 2013 growing season.
- Evaluate grazing and browsing use as we approach spring. Reducing the amount of use on highly desirable species is critical during drought. If use has been heavy over the fall and early winter, plan to reduce the pressure if possible. Reducing the use of preferred species will allow some recovery for the future.
- Routinely check and repair or replace, where possible, all improvements such as fences, water sources and equipment. If herd size has been reduced, there may be more time for major repairs.
- Continue analyzing financial data for 2012 and early 2013. Evaluate and adjust the 2013 and five-year management and economic plans based on how you feel the current and projected weather conditions plus current and projected economic conditions.
- Use the evaluation of your 2012 broadleaf and woody plant control sites to develop your management for 2013.
- Plan the management of your 2012 prescribed burn areas for 2013. Start identifying and planning potential 2013 burns areas. When it comes to prescribed burning, planning ahead is better than just "going out and dropping matches!"

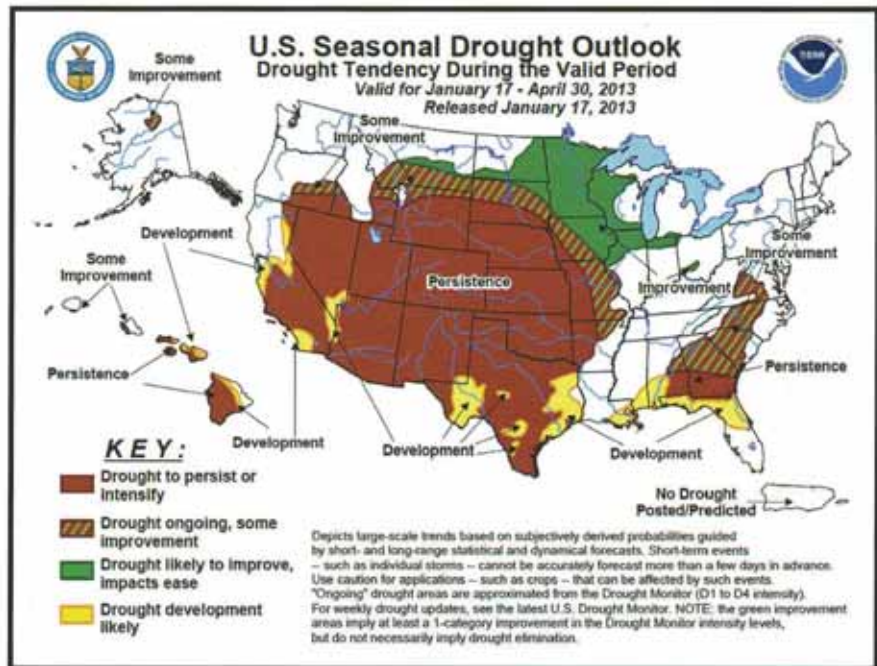


Figure 1. The January 17 through April 30 Drought Outlook.

- Continue the management of areas seeded over the last two to four years to insure long-term management is accomplished. Finalize the management plans for 2012 areas.
- Finalize plans for any seeding opportunities for 2013 and begin preparing for seeding.
- 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, this will greatly help in seeing how your resources have changed.
- Manage for today and the future based on what you have done and what is currently happening. Combine the past and present to develop your plans or to predict the future. Don't forget to include how you expect weather, economic conditions and your personal life to interact. Management is not easy but planning can help in making management changes!
- If you haven't developed a business management plan, please get started! *AA*

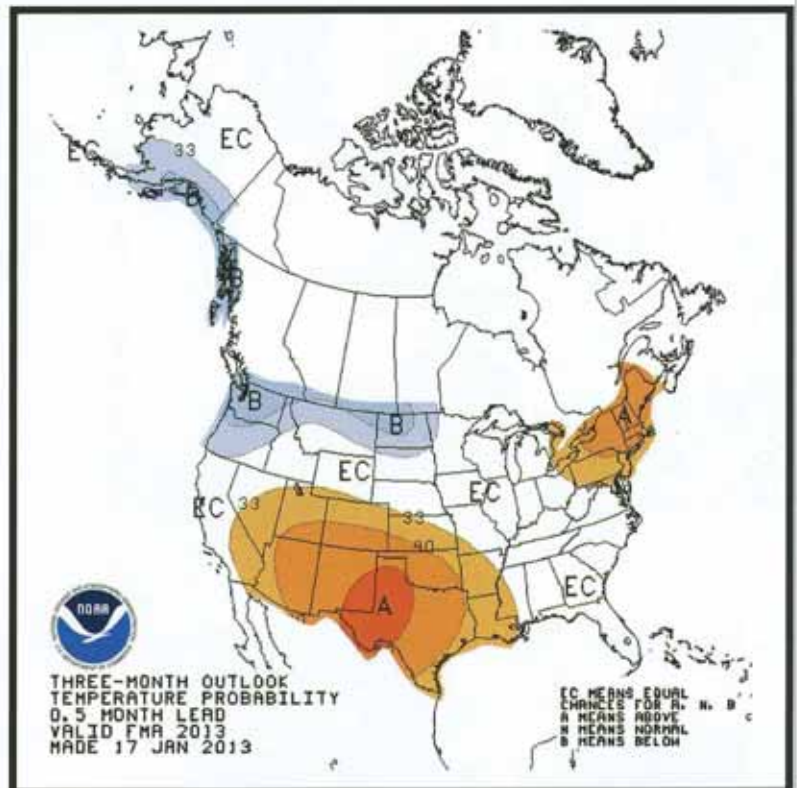


Figure 2. The temperature outlook through April.