



WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

MANAGEMENT NOTES FOR JULY THROUGH SEPTEMBER

ARTICLE BY
PAUL D. OHLENBUSCH

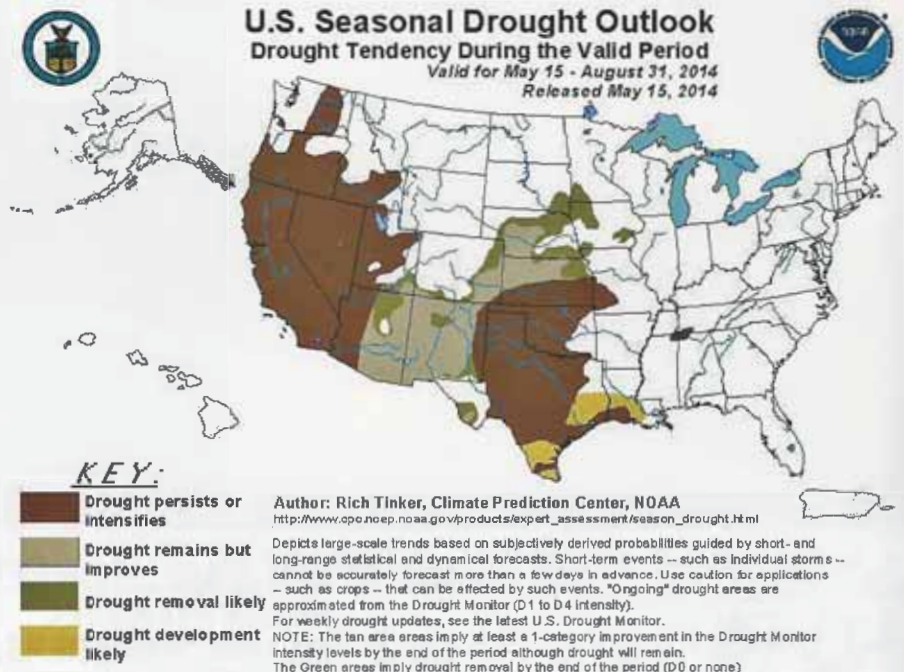
Will the drought continue or will El Nino form in the Pacific and bring rain? Is climate change real? Will water availability really become critical? To the latter, it is critical! Whether you operate an agriculture business, live in the country or city, invest in industry, or any other endeavor, water is **THE MOST CRITICAL FACTOR** for living organisms. Water is the basic need of organisms! At best, without water we have problems surviving.

The U. S. Drought Monitor indicates the drought conditions will continue through at least August. The Climatic Predication Center data indicates they expect temperatures to be above average through September and precipitation to be above average to the west and below average in southeast Texas. In between there is a 50-50 probability for precipitation to go either way.

I have mentioned before that we are in an extreme drought interrupted by floods. Much of the precipitation the last several years has been erratic, that is it comes in large amounts in short periods. Using my personal records from January 2012 through May 2014, we have had 8 months above average, 14 months below average, and 7 months within average. Since November, we have been well below average until May. Interesting, 2013 was an average year based on total rainfall but a drought year from the plant's view.

Taking a closer look, 2012 had well below average precipitation March to June, the primary early growing season for most plants. Then October to December, below average again came during the late growing season when the soil profile would normally build soil moisture. The 2013 season started with an above average January, below February, barely average March to May. Like 2012, this was the primary early

growing season for plants. With June being well below average, July well above, August well below, the plants were being bounced between wet and dry conditions and probably had trouble meeting basic growth requirements. September to November were above average to average allowing plants to make good growth and maybe rebuild some stored food reserves for 2014. The dry December to April dry period may have been offset by below average temperatures followed by above average temperatures that reduced the soil moisture evaporation that would normally be expected. As a result, plant growth has been delayed but the growth rate has been close to normal. With the late May heavy precipitation over much of the state, plants get a few weeks of good growth. If precipitation remains below average, drought conditions will continue and deepen. Doesn't this make management interesting?



Drought is predicted to continue over much of the southern plains.



Management Thoughts

If the drought continues as predicted, maintaining habitat (vegetation and water) for domestic animals and wildlife will continue to be critical. Texas is in its fourth consecutive year of intensive drought after several years of moderate drought. Water availability, carrying capacity, and other considerations will require an increased level of consideration. Maintaining the potential productivity of the habitat (ability to meet current animal needs and to recover when the drought ends) over the short and long term should be the primary consideration. If the habitat is degraded, recovery will be difficult at best with a greatly extended recovery time.

Water Facilities

It seems like this is playing a broken record! The condition, quality, and availability of water continues to be the major concern. Question: Do you have enough water of a good quality an adequate quantity to make it through the year. Remember, the role of water temperature on animals and humans is important. With summer here, water temperature need is best maintained in the 60-75 degree range which will help animals handle the heat better. Just like we don't like drinking warm (or hot water), animals don't either.

Another consideration is the possibility of open water sources (troughs, pond, etc.) losing large amounts of water through evaporation. The larger the exposed water surface area the higher the evaporation can be.

Weather Factors

In late May, many parts of Texas received above average precipitation but often it came in heavy down pours. If runoff was good, ponds may have received much needed water but it may be short lived. If below average precipitation becomes the norm, will there be enough water for your animals. If not, are you prepared to change your management to supply water or will you just not use some areas?

Also, as summer goes, heat is a major concern. Animals that have shade will graze or browse more efficiently. If you don't have enough shade, can you supply temporary shade or change their use patterns by using salt, mineral, or other attractants. Would a new water supply be in order?

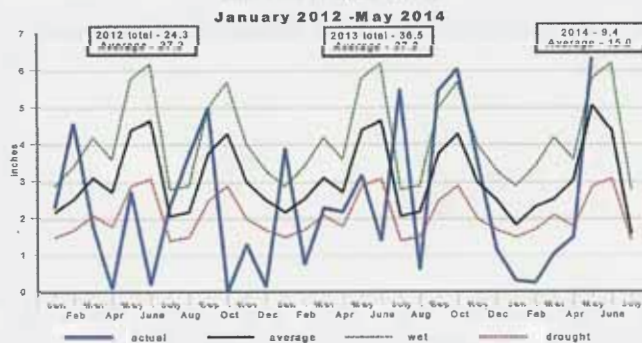
Using Records

Another broken record! Are you maintaining records like financial, weather and pasture status to help in making management decisions. When you combine your records with online services such as U.S. Drought Monitor, U. S. Seasonal Drought Outlook, and Three Month Outlooks they can help with management decisions. Explore these resources to see if they can help you with your decision making.

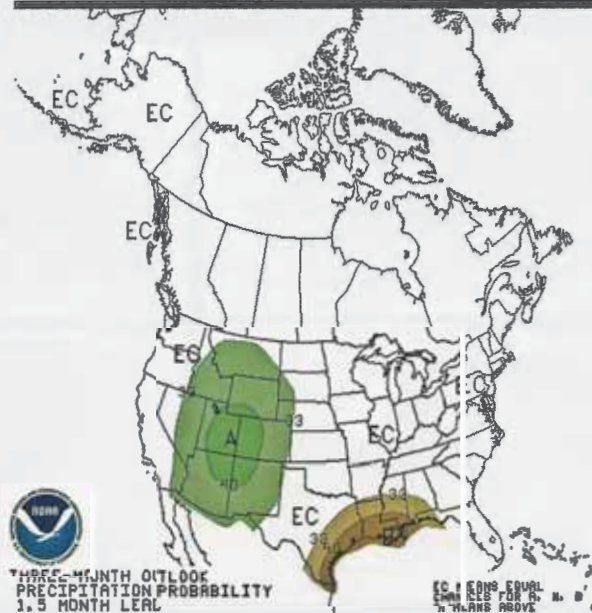
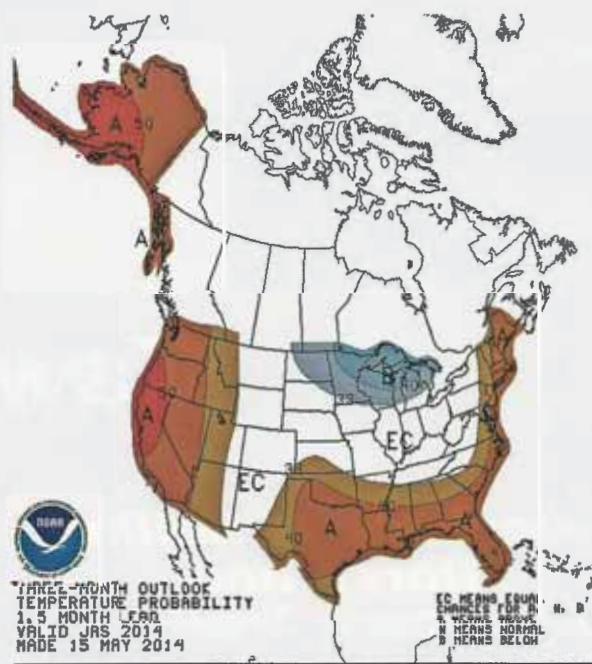
Land and Physical Resources

The condition of the habitat, how it is divided, the condition of fences, where water and facilities are located and their condition, and the condition and value of equipment should a critical factor in your decision making during drought. Good records for these items are an important part in evaluating your management options. Repairs and replacement need to be built into the annual and 5-year plans.

Rainfall Record



Temperature are predicted to be above average with precipitation to be variable.



Rainfall has been highly variable at my house with wet or dry months far out numbering average.