



GRASS BY DESIGN

MANAGEMENT NOTES FOR NOVEMBER THROUGH JANUARY

PAUL D. OHLENBUSCH

It's mid-October, the acorns and leaves are falling, had some rain last week, and the temperatures are more fall like! I guess fall is really here!

As to the weather through December, the Climatic Prediction Center (CPC) projects more than half of Texas will be out of drought conditions and the rest on the way by late January. CPC forecasters indicate a 2-in-3 chance of El Niño developing during the November 2014 - January 2015 season. It will likely remain weak into the spring 2015. That would be good news IF the weather follows previous patterns and bring average temperature and precipitation.

The outlook through January is at least a 33% chance for below average temperatures and at least a 40% chance of above average precipitation. The past several months have seen spotty precipitation and often either small amounts or several inches at a time. The latter may provide runoff but may not have provided a reasonable growing period for plants.

The plants should continue to be the focal point for management. Remember, plants may need 2 or more years of average precipitation to recover from the drought stress. Woody plants will continue to show stress, some are still dying, and more will probably die.

Water

What is the condition of your water supply going toward winter? If you rely on surface water, is there enough available and the quality good enough for the winter. If you rely on wells has production been normal or dropping and has the quality remained what you need. If you are on a rural water system are you being limited on how much you can use. These are the common points to consider now. Hope you don't have too many

problems. Consider your water situation as your most critical need. With out water you are way up a dry creek!

Records

It's coming to the end of the year and time to start evaluating 2014 and updating the management for 2015. Closing out the 2014 financial records, completing an evaluation of the land resources, and how all these have impacted 2014 and what it means for 2015 is in order.

Weather Records Review your rainfall records and how it impacted your management. The patterns have been highly variable even for neighbors. In many areas the patterns remind me of "hat rain" patterns, that is you can cover the whole rain area with a hat! If the predicted for the next months continues as predicted, management may ease some what.



U.S. Seasonal Drought Outlook
Drought Tendency During the Valid Period
Valid for October 16, 2014 - January 31, 2015
Released October 16, 2014



KEY:

- Drought persists or intensifies
- Drought remains but improves
- Drought removal likely
- Drought development likely

Author: Brad Pugh, Climate Prediction Center, NOAA
http://www.cpc.ncep.noaa.gov/products/expert_assessment/info_summary.html
Depicts large-scale trends based on subjectively derived probabilities guided by short- and long-range statistical and dynamical forecasts. Short-term events — such as individual storms — cannot be accurately forecast more than a few days in advance. Use caution for applications — such as crops — that can be affected by such events. "Ongoing" drought areas are approximated from the Drought Monitor (D1 to D4 intensity).
For weekly drought updates, see the latest U.S. Drought Monitor.
NOTE: The tan area areas imply at least a 1-category improvement in the Drought Monitor intensity levels by the end of the period although drought will remain.
The Green areas imply drought removal by the end of the period (D0 or none)



Pasture Use and Status Records What condition did your pastures end the year in? If you were able to maintain them in good condition I commend you. If not how do you plan to change your management for 2014 to at least maintain or maybe improve them in 2014. Your future depends on your land being able to meet the requirements of your animals. If the conditions are going down your feed bills are probably going up or you are selling animals.

Financial Records Its time to evaluate and update your financial records for ending the year. This allows you to adjust your 2015 and 5-year management and economic plans based on changing conditions. You may want to may include how projected weather conditions, their effect on animals together with current and projected economic and market conditions will impact 2014. Also, project how dry weather will iffpact you, the land, and your animals.

Land Management

Evaluate any prescribed burns or seedings done over the past several years. Has your management and the weather allowed the areas to grow and improve as you planned. Drought has probably had an adverse impact on their development.

This is the time to identify and plan potential 2015 prescribed burns and seedings if the weather allows. Planning these operations is better than just going out and dropping matches or throwing some seed on the ground!

Update your land resource records including current pasture use and status as well as through new photos or other means. If you haven't started a land resource record, please consider starting now.

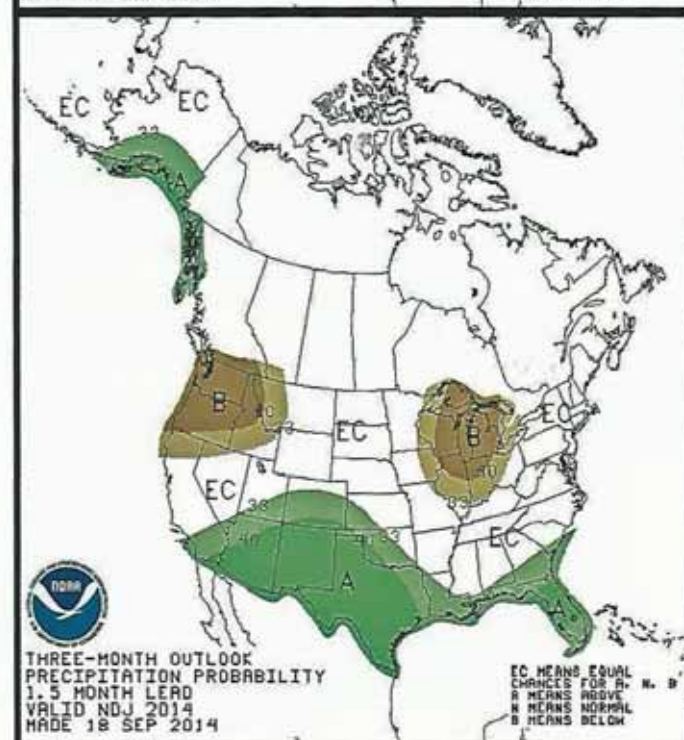
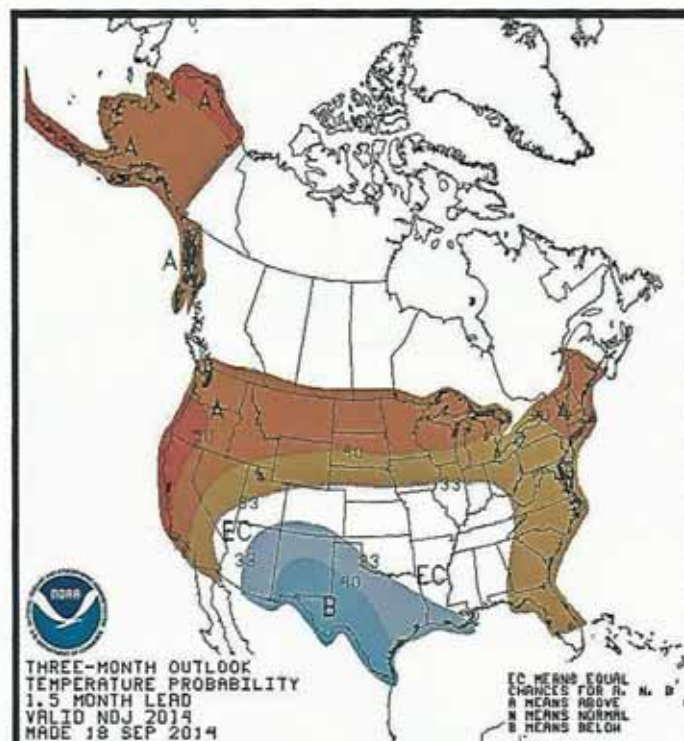
Photographs are a good method using established points you can return to and photograph at least once each year. Photographs can be a great help in seeing how your resources have changed. Combining the use of the two sets of records is a valuable tool to determining how your land resources are responding to management. You are working in the vegetation regularly and it is changing a little everyday and you may not notice it!

Physical Assets

Conduct a careful review of all improvements such as fences, water facilities, and major equipment to determine what major repairs or even replacements may be needed in 2015. Timely repair and/or replacement, can reduce management and operation problems. Neglected, broken, or missing items can lead to increased costs, labor, and stress. If herd size has been reduced, labor may be available for some of the major repairs and improvements.

A Thought

As we near the end of 2014, look around at the world we



live in. There is flooding, unrest, disease, turmoil, distrust, economic concerns, and many other concerns. Many of us are some what isolated from these and may not be looking at how they impact our lives every day. As Thanksgiving, Christmas (the Holidays if you prefer), and the New Year approach, take time to evaluate what your family has and be thankful. Consider what you can do for those less fortunate not just during the holidays, but maybe into next year.

As always, remember, management is never easy! Planning can help remove some of the stress! 🙏