



MANAGEMENT NOTES FOR JANUARY THROUGH MARCH 2015

WILL THERE BE WILDFLOWERS THIS SPRING?

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It's a new year! Hope it has been a good start for everyone. The weather has changed as usual. It's mid-December another cold front came through with the predication of rain, at least somewhere! Didn't get much here!

It looks like the weather prognosticators may have it right! As of mid December, the EL NIÑO appears to be developing! What hasn't developed is the surface circulation that would allow Pacific moisture to move into Texas. This El Nino is weak which usually means the California to Washington area and east will get the heavy moisture. We need a strong El Nino for that. As of mid-December, there has been a lot of flooding and mudslides for parts of California.

Figure 1 is the January-March Drought Outlook and shows California to be 'drought remains but improves.' For Texas, it is a mixed bag with east, south, and west Texas without drought and the Panhandle and Central Texas with improving conditions.

Figure 2 is interesting when you factor in December-February have the lowest average precipitation of the year. May and June and those areas with a September peak are the

wettest times on average. Based on Figure 2, Texas should be warmer and wetter than average through March. Using the longer projections, Texas should be warmer with average precipitation through July.

Is the drought ending? We will have to wait and see if the wildflowers are here or if the drought is taking hold again (Figure 3).

Management Suggestions

Water

Consider your water situation as the most critical need. As always, the availability and quality of water is the concern. During winter, there is the possibility of open water sources (troughs, pond, etc.) icing over during periods of extended freezing temperatures. When this happens, consider breaking through the ice regularly and as needed to allow animals to drink. Any water source that is frozen and restricts animal access can cause reduce animal performance placing the animal in stress.

If you rely on surface water, is there enough available and the quality good enough for the winter weather. If you rely on wells has production been normal or dropping and is the quality what you need. If you are on a rural water system are you being limited on how much you can use. These are common concerns in some areas this year. With out water you are up a dry creek!

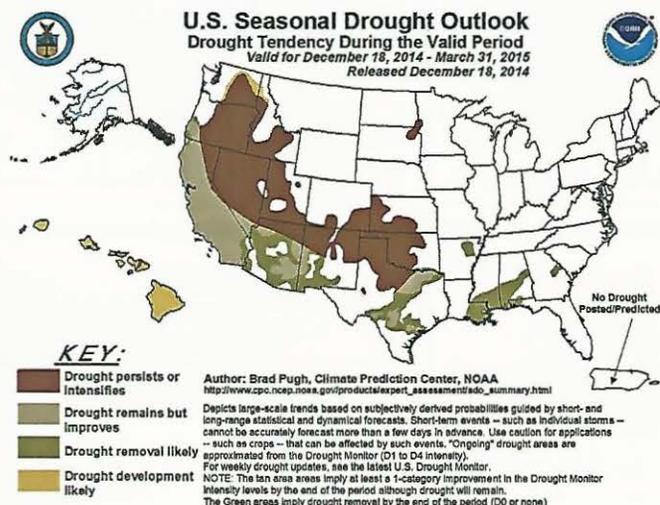


Figure 1: The Climate Prediction Center projects drought conditions will persist or deepen in much of Texas much like the last 10 or so years.

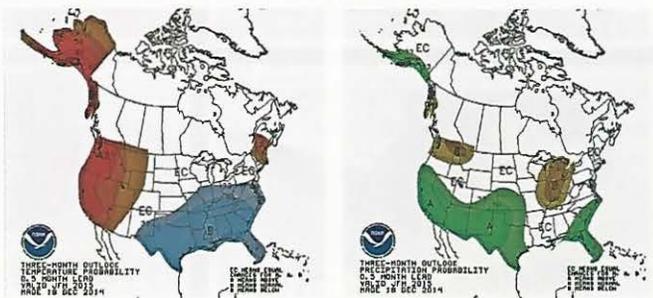


Figure 2: Through March, precipitation (top) is expected to be within average range except for the extreme western part of the state and temperature is expected to be above average over all the state.





Figure 3: Blue bonnets in the cemetery with dead or dying trees beyond. Which will we have?

Records

It's the beginning of the year and time to review and update the management for 2015. After closing out the 2014 financial records, evaluating of the land resources, and how 2014 will impact 2015 management, it is time to get going! Keep the records up to date so you are always looking at where your management is and what needs to be changed so you can prepare or make changes as needed.

Weather Records Review your rainfall records and their impact on your management. The patterns have been highly variable even when compared your neighbors. Remember the "hat rain" patterns so have more than one rain gauge around the place. That is how you can cover the whole area and know how your vegetation should respond. If the predications are correct, the drought may be moderating somewhat.

Pasture Use and Status Records Are your pastures ready for 2015? How did your pastures end the year? If you were able to maintain them in good condition I commend you. If not, how do you plan to change your management for 2015 to maintain or, hopefully, improve them. Your future depends on your land resources being able to meet the requirements of your animals. If the conditions declining, your feed bills are probably going up or you are selling animals.

Financial Records How did your pocket book feel at the end of 2014? If you evaluated your financial records at the end of the year it should have allowed you to adjust your 2015 and 5-year management and economic plans based on the changing conditions you have identified. Be sure you included how projected weather conditions and how your animals may respond. This information together with current and projected economic and market conditions will impact 2015 management well into the future.

Land Management

Evaluate any prescribed burns or seedings done over the past several years. Has your management and the weather allowed the areas to improve as you planned. This is the time to finalize the plans for 2015 and prepare for prescribed burns and seedings. Planning these operations is much better than

just going out and dropping matches or throwing some seed on the ground!

Continue to 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.

Good photographs can provide a record of change over years. This has been a good tool. It requires having 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 land use records with the other 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

If you conducted a careful review of all improvements such as fences, water sources, and equipment, you should have a plan for major repairs or even replacements for 2015 and beyond. Reducing down time and breakdowns with timely repairs and/or replacements should be the goal. Ignoring repairs or missing potential equipment can lead to increased costs, labor, and stress.

A Thought

Your operation is often your life. Managing your operation to provide profitability, efficiency, and sustainability could insure your future. Looking to the future by basing your management decisions on long term and short term management goals together with your past efforts is a valuable tool. Using factual data can help implement and modify your future plans. Weather, economic conditions, and your personal life all interact. But, they need to be kept in a reasonable balance.

Just remember, management is never easy! Having a well developed business plan can help in making management changes! ☺