

New Jersey shipyard. The towering structure known as the island, or mast, was the first section cut loose and lowered to the ground. The sections swung from the ship to shore weigh up to 10 tons each. Hydraulic shears and torches reduce the metals to manageable chunks. The carrier's four main steam-driven engines, which supplied up to 100,000 horsepower each, must be cut into segments before removal. Armaments are demilitarized and then cut into unidentifiable pieces. ISL donated switches and gauges from the Kitty Hawk to the USS Lexington Museum in Corpus Christi.

While former Kitty Hawk sailors and aviators had hoped the carrier would become a museum, they can console themselves with challenge coins cut from its brass and available from ISL. Hefty chunks of the flight deck have been cut into brick-sized mementos as well.

The public can see the dismantling progress only during the winter months, when South Padre tour companies offer ship channel cruises. The Kitty Hawk and the USS John F. Kennedy are among the eight ships ISL is breaking up in 2023.

"With the remaking of her earthly frame, her spirit will live on," says Chris Green, ISL president.

After the carrier reached its final mooring, one former sailor remarked on Facebook, "She got to go out with her kids all around her showing their love."

*This article also appeared online at [texascoopower.com](http://texascoopower.com).*

**On This Day in Texas History**

**February 10, 1721**

On this day in 1721, the castaway François Simars de Bellisle reached the French post at Natchitoches after a year and a half of wandering across Texas. Bellisle was an officer on the Maréchal d'Estrée, which ran aground near Galveston Bay in the autumn of 1719. He and four other men were put ashore to ascertain their position and seek help, but were left behind when the ship floated free and sailed away. That winter the Frenchmen were unable to kill enough game to sustain themselves. One by one, Bellisle's companions died of starvation or exposure. When he at last encountered a band of Atakapa Indians on an island in the bay, they stripped him of his clothing, robbed him of his possessions, and made him a slave. But they fed him, and he remained with them throughout the summer of 1720, traversing "the most beautiful country in the world." When a group of Bidai Indians came to the Atakapa camp, Bellisle managed to write a letter and give it to the visitors with instructions to deliver it to "the first white man" they saw. The letter, passed from tribe to tribe, at last reached Louis Juchereau de Saint-Denis at Fort Saint-Jean-Baptiste (Natchitoches).

Saint-Denis sent the Hasinais to rescue the French castaway. Bellisle returned to the Texas coast with Jean Baptiste Bénard de La Harpe in the summer of 1721 and served as an

interpreter among the natives, "who were quite surprised at seeing their slave again." Bellisle

remained in the Louisiana colony until 1762 and died in Paris the following year.

# Water Weekly

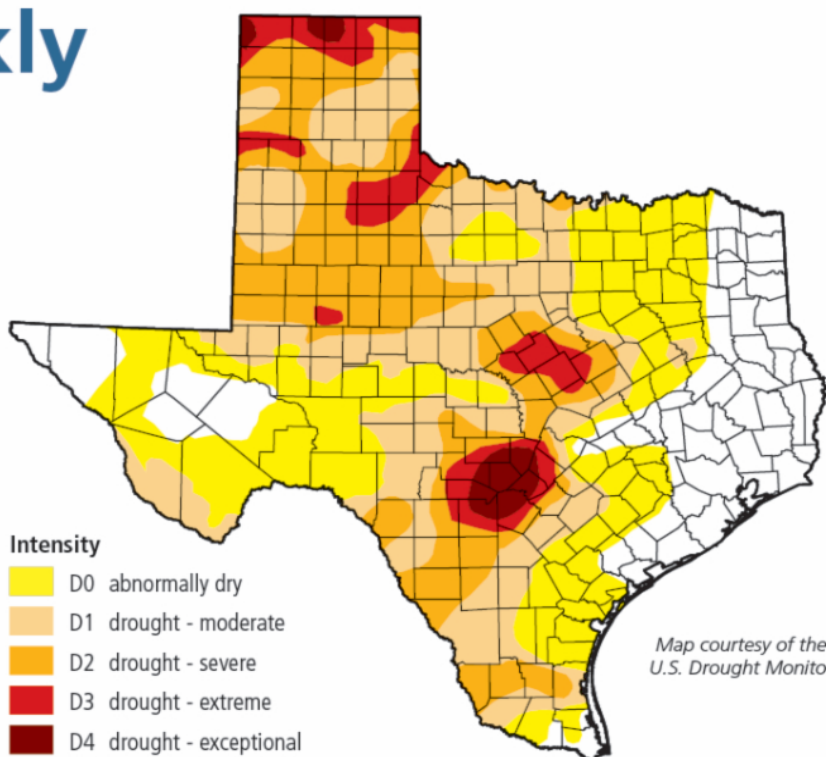
For the week of 02/06/23

## Water conditions

The latest drought monitor map, for conditions as of January 31, shows areas of improvement in North, East, and Central Texas and degradation in Central and South Texas. For the first time in six weeks, the area of the state impacted by drought has decreased from the previous week.

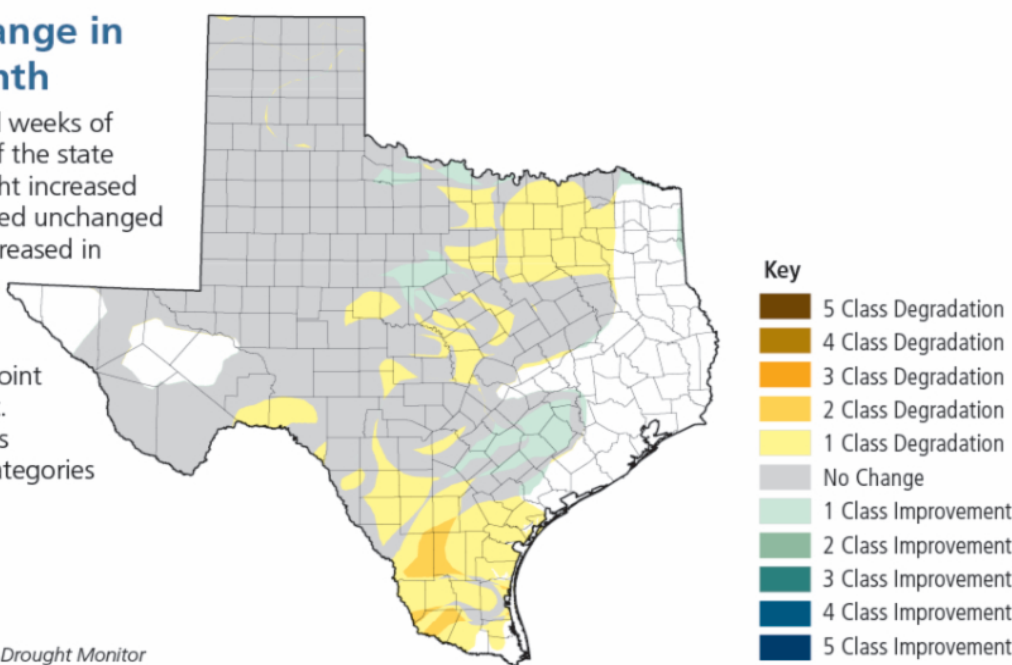
## Drought conditions

- ◆ 53% now
- ◆ 55% a week ago
- ◆ 70% three months ago
- ◆ 84% a year ago



## Drought change in the last month

During the four full weeks of January, the area of the state impacted by drought increased two weeks, remained unchanged one week, and decreased in the final week. The net change statewide was a three percentage point increase in drought. Parts of South Texas experienced two categories of degradation.



Written by Dr. Mark Wentzel — Dr. Mark Wentzel is a hydrologist in the TWDB's Office of Water Science and Conservation.

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