

U.S. House committee passes farmer bankruptcy bill

The House Judiciary Committee on July 11 passed a bill that will help more family farmers avoid liquidation or foreclosure, allowing them to stay in operation. The Family Farmer Relief Act of 2019 (HR 2336) would raise the Chapter 12 operating debt cap from \$4.1 million to \$10 million.

“Our farmer members have experienced several consecutive years of weak commodity prices and the low profitability and poor farm income that follow. As a result, farmers and ranchers are watching their equity erode as their debt-to-asset ratios climb and debt financing reaches a 30-year high,” American Farm Bureau Federation President Zippy Duvall and National Farmers Union President Roger Johnson wrote in a joint letter to Congress in May.

The tremendous challenge of record nominal farm debt and poor economic conditions has led many farmers to seek Chapter 12 bankruptcy as a debt relief and restructuring option. Though Chapter 12 has been a help to many family farmers, its \$4.1 million debt limit kept many more from using it.

The Family Farmer Relief Act of 2019 alters the definition of “family farmer” under Chapter 12 of the bankruptcy code as it pertains to the total liabilities threshold to qualify as a “family farmer.” By raising the level of total liabilities to \$10 million, the bill would address several problems plaguing small and midsize farms across the country.

“Lifting the liability cap will expand access to the restructuring and seasonal repayment flexibility that many farmers need in today’s lagging farm economy, which is being further affected by trade disputes, projections for below average farm income over the next decade and rising interest rates,” Duvall and Johnson said, encouraging lawmakers to cosponsor the legislation and pledging to work with them for quick passage.

Galveston Island State Park Remains Open Before Beachside Project Begins

Galveston Island State Park is keeping its beachside gates open through the summer before beginning a major beach redevelopment project in September. The park will continue to accept new day use and beachside overnight reservations until September 3.

The project, which is set to begin after Labor Day, includes the development of new park roads, paths, boardwalks, dune crossings, multiuse campsites, restroom and a headquarters building. The timeline for the beach redevelopment is about two years but is subject to change if the park is impacted by severe weather.

Additional details about the project are being finalized and

will be announced when available.

Because of the postponement of the project, customers whose reservations were canceled are currently being contacted to make new reservations.

The remainder of the vacant reservation slots will be opened to the public July 16 at 3 p.m. To make day use or overnight reservations at Galveston Island State Park, visit the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department website or call the Texas State Parks Customer Service Center at 512-389-8900.

Information about Galveston Island State Park can be found on their park page on the TPWD website.

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Water Weekly

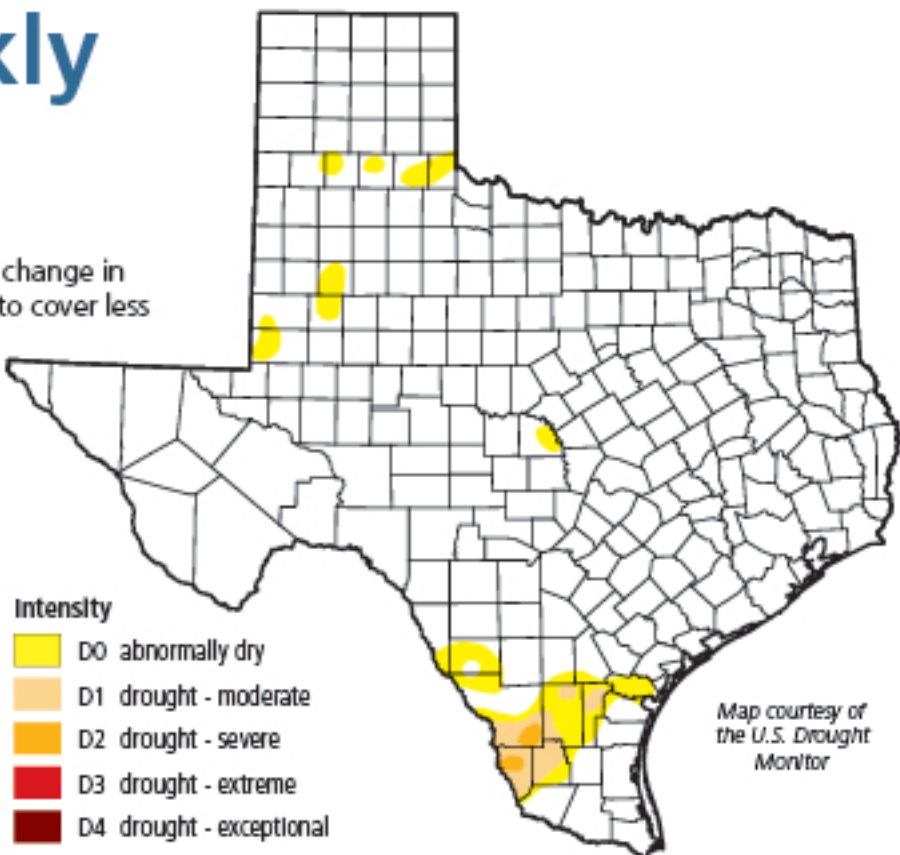
For the week of 07/15/19

Water conditions

The latest drought map shows little overall change in conditions as of July 9. Drought continues to cover less than 1 percent of the state, but there are pockets of severe drought in both Webb and Zapata counties in South Texas.

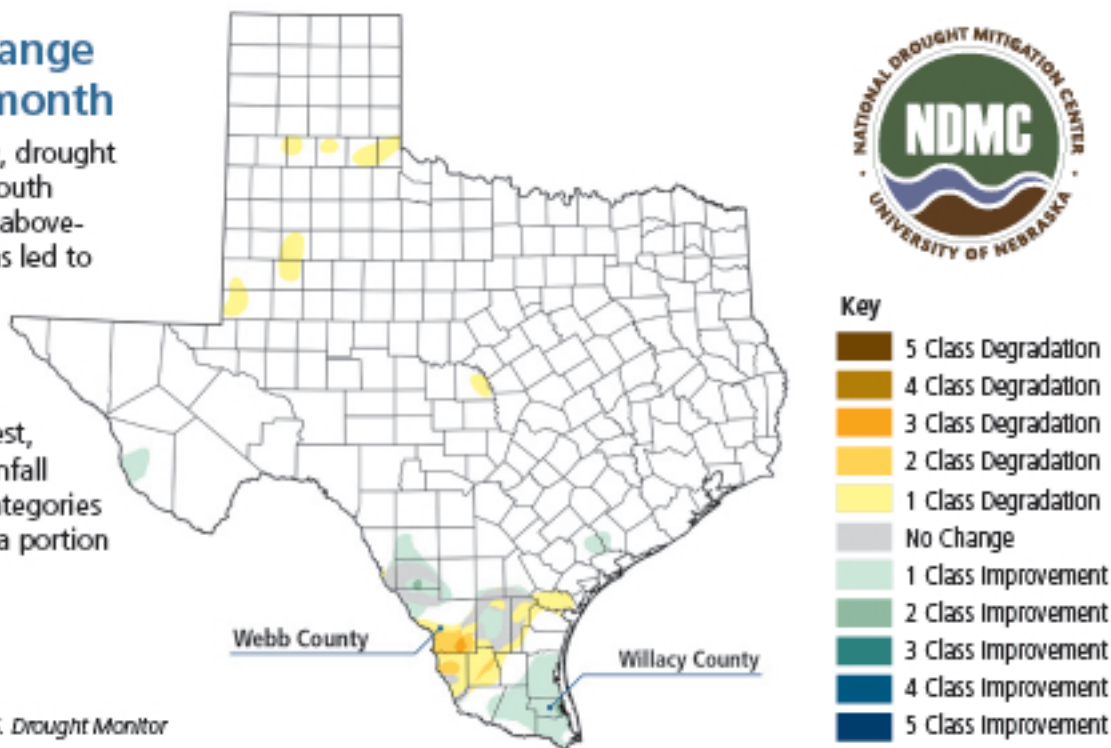
Drought conditions

- ◆ 1% now
- ◆ 1% a week ago
- ◆ 8% three months ago
- ◆ 49% a year ago



Drought change in the last month

In early June 2019, drought was confined to South Texas. Since then, above-average rainfall has led to a two-category improvement in part of Willacy County. A few counties to the west, below-average rainfall has led to three categories of degradation in a portion of Webb County.



- Key**
- ◆ 5 Class Degradation
 - ◆ 4 Class Degradation
 - ◆ 3 Class Degradation
 - ◆ 2 Class Degradation
 - ◆ 1 Class Degradation
 - ◆ No Change
 - ◆ 1 Class Improvement
 - ◆ 2 Class Improvement
 - ◆ 3 Class Improvement
 - ◆ 4 Class Improvement
 - ◆ 5 Class Improvement

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