

Coke County feeling impact of drought

Despite recent rains across parts of the Lone Star State, much of Texas remains under drought conditions, causing continued challenges for the state's farmers and ranchers.

Mid-June showers brought some hope to farmers, but it remains uncertain how much they will aid local crops and livestock.

"Recent rains have been nice, but not receiving much in May really hurt," John Ross Copeland, Coke County Farm Bureau president, said.

About half of the state is in some level of drought, compared to just two percent a year ago, according to the Drought Monitor. Precipitation numbers for the year are well behind the average, resulting in lost crops and shrinking livestock herds across Texas.

"Without adequate moisture, hay will be in short supply this year and our tanks and ponds will be low or completely dry," said.

Farmers and ranchers in the area have faced drought conditions in previous years. Lack of rain decreases crop yields and forces ranchers to cull their cattle herds.

John Ross said that while many are impacted by the current situation, farmers and ranchers will continue to be positive.

"We have to remain optimistic," John Ross said. "The rain will come—hopefully soon. But each day brings us a little closer to rain."

Applications Now Accepted for TPWD Drawn Hunt Permits

Hunters can start making plans for the upcoming seasons now by applying for the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department's Drawn Hunts. The online system is currently accepting applications and the first hunt category deadline is coming up soon.

This year about 9,500 permits in 49 hunt categories are up for grabs for drawn hunts on public and private lands. Among the offerings available through the online system are hunts for white-tailed and mule deer, pronghorn, turkey, alligator, exotic gemsbok, and scimitar-horned oryx.

New for this season, hunters will have an opportunity to draw special permit hunts for exotic Sambar deer, as well as for white-tailed deer, on the new Powderhorn Wildlife Management Area. Youth deer hunt permits on this unique coastal area will also be available. Also new this year, Palmetto State Park will be offering a youth archery deer hunt through an e-Postcard drawing.

In addition to drawn hunts managed by TPWD, the system includes applications for hunts administered by other entities, including almost 2,200 deer and exotic hunt positions on four U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service National Wildlife Refuges in Texas and 2,500 antlerless deer

permits for U.S. Forest Service properties in East Texas.

The program's highly-popular private lands dove hunt permit category will feature almost 150 hunt slots at seven prime locations around the state, including dove rich Uvalde, south of San Antonio near Pleasanton, north of Dallas/Ft. Worth in Young County, and newly acquired opportunities in Bell and Ellis counties. These permits are for dedicated hunt positions with quality dove hunting outfitters. Application fee is \$10 with no additional hunt permit fees for this category.

Among the program changes this year, all drawn hunts associated with the \$48 Annual Public Hunting (APH) Permit will not be available for application until Aug. 15, when APH Permits go on sale. Applicants for e-Postcard hunts and USFS Antlerless Deer

Permits must have a current APH to apply. This change is intended bring the postcard hunts back to the way they functioned before the draw system went on-line.

"The second big change is limiting the number of youth applications per hunt category to three," said Kelly Edmiston, TPWD public hunts coordinator. "When the new online drawn system launched, you could apply to as many different areas as you wanted within a hunt category. Because of this, we have been experiencing a number of 'no shows' in cases where youth hunters were selected for multiple hunts within a youth hunt category. To ensure more youth have an opportunity to participate and increase attendance, this year applicants will only be allowed to select up to three hunt areas in the same youth hunt category."

Drawn hunt opportunities can be viewed online by category or by area via an interactive map and all applications, fee payments and permit issuance is handled electronically. To participate, applicants will need internet access, an email address and a credit or debit card. The Customer ID number from the applicant's hunting or fishing license is one of the easy ways to access the system.

Last year, the department received 155,000 applications for drawn hunts.

The first application deadlines are in August. August 1 is the deadline for the alligator hunt categories, pronghorn, youth deer, and the new private lands dove hunts, and August 15 is the deadline for archery deer, exotic, and javelina. Application deadlines are on the 1st and 15th of each month. A full list of category deadlines can be found online. Hunters can apply

up to 11:59 pm Central Time on the application deadline, and after the application is submitted, they can check their drawing status online at any time.

The Drawn Hunts program offers affordable hunting experiences throughout the state, including several Youth-Only hunt categories. Application fees vary depending on the hunt category. Adult hunters that are selected may also need to pay a Special Permit fee for regular hunts and extended hunts. Some categories, such as the Youth-Only hunts, require no application fees or permit fees. Permits are open to resident and non-resident hunters alike. Last year, about 4 percent of applicants were non-resident.

For more information or to get started in the application process visit the TPWD drawn hunts webpage. For questions, contact hunt@tpwd.texas.gov or call 512-389-4505 between 8 am and 5 pm Monday through Friday.

Water Weekly

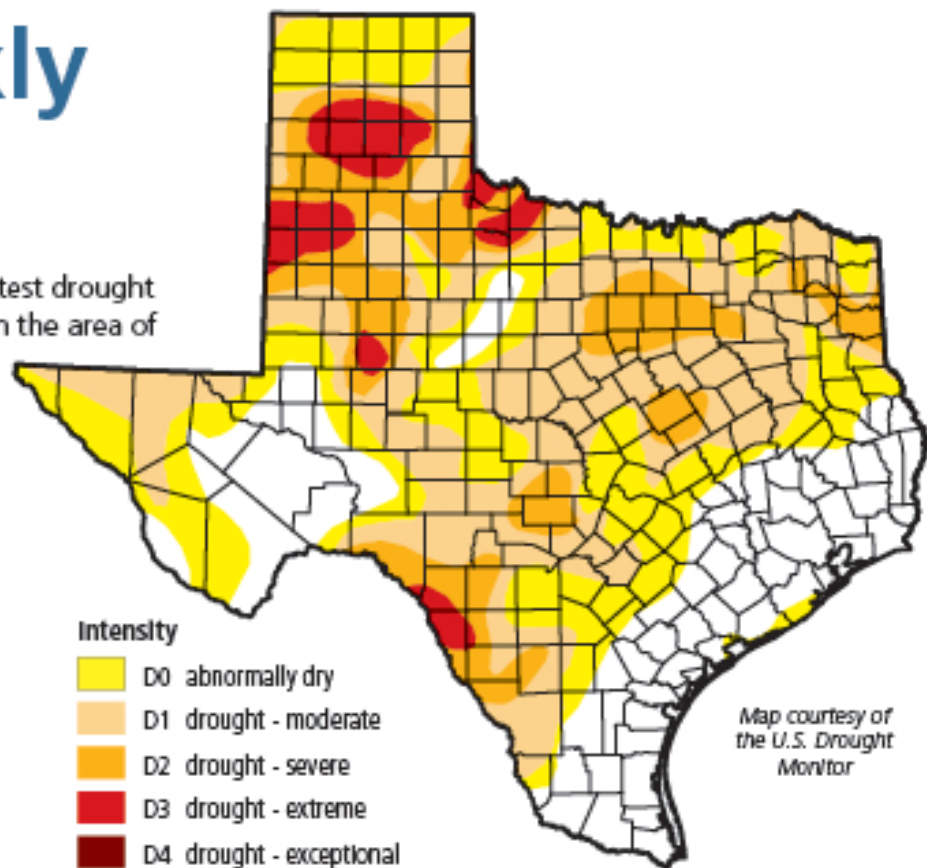
For the week of 07/16/18

Water conditions

Thanks to scattered rains since July 4, the latest drought map shows a 6 percentage point decrease in the area of the state impacted by drought. Exceptional drought was eliminated from the state as drought weakened near Del Rio. Drought intensified, however, west of Wichita Falls.

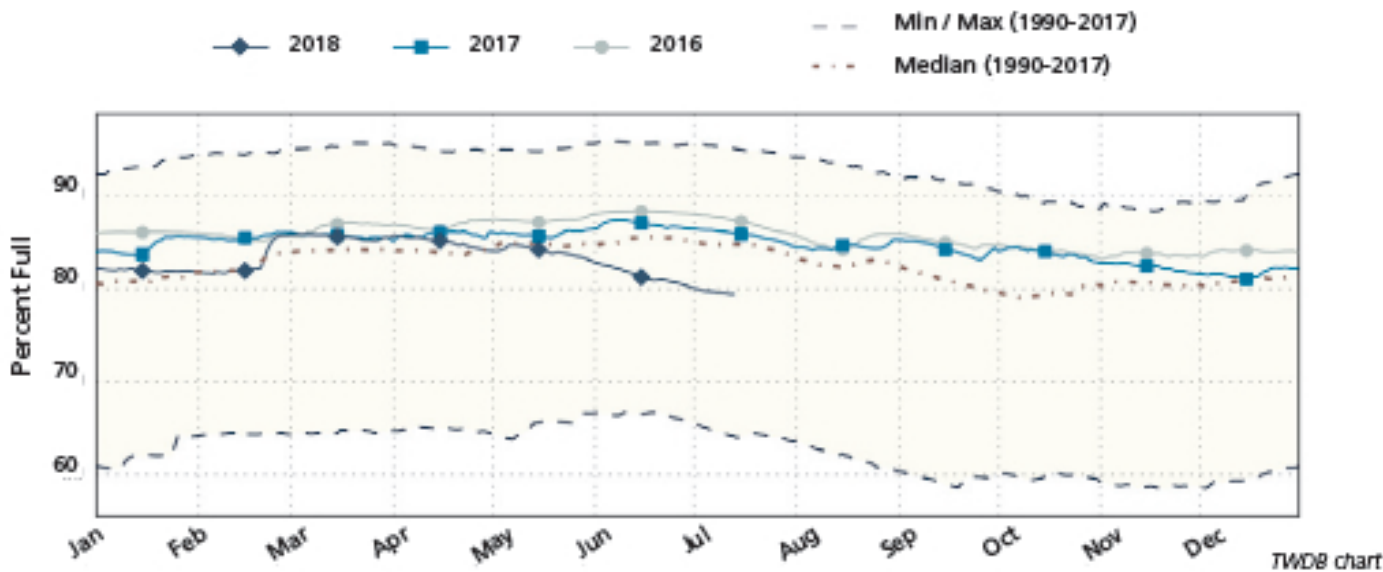
Drought conditions

- ◆ 49% now
- ◆ 55% a week ago
- ◆ 49% three months ago
- ◆ 7% a year ago



Statewide reservoir storage

During the month of June 2018, statewide conservation storage decreased by almost 3 percentage points but has dropped less than 1 percentage point since the start of July. Statewide water supply storage is currently 79 percent of capacity, about 4 percentage points lower than normal for this time of year.



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