

## USDA signs stewardship agreement with Texas

U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Sonny Perdue and Texas Governor Greg Abbott signed a Shared Stewardship agreement last week to establish a framework for federal and state agencies to improve collaboration in responding to natural resource concerns and ecological challenges in Texas.

The agreement, also referred to as a memorandum of understanding, is between the Forest Service and Natural Resources Conservation Service—both part of the U.S. Department of

Agriculture—and the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, as well as the Texas A&M Forest Service.

“This agreement strengthens the already strong partnership between the Forest Service and the State of Texas,” said Secretary Perdue. “Through Shared Stewardship, Texas and the Forest Service will work together to identify landscape-scale priorities and build capacity to improve forest conditions.”

Texas is the 15th state to agree to a Shared Stewardship framework, which uses a

modern and collaborative approach to focus on landscape-scale forest restoration activities to protect at-risk communities and watersheds across all lands. The agreement with Texas will focus on encouraging strong, long-term forest management programs, promoting sound and scientific silvicultural practices and aligning various agency land management activities to meet common goals.

“Generations of Texans have prioritized the responsible stewardship of our forest lands, and I am grateful to Secretary Perdue and this administration

for their commitment to preserving this legacy,” Abbott said. “This agreement is an important step toward strengthening our partnership with the federal government and renewing our commitment to responsible forest management. Working together, I am confident we will achieve the goals of this Shared Stewardship agreement and ensure a brighter future for the State of Texas.”

In addition to providing a framework for how the federal and state agencies will work together, the agreement also builds upon the work of the Texas

Forestry Council who have been working together to address shared forest resource issues in the state since 2009. The Council includes the Texas A&M Forest Service, Academic Deans from Stephen F. Austin State University and Texas A&M University Forestry Schools; as well as senior leadership from the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, the National Forests and Grasslands of Texas, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, the National Parks Service, AgriLife Extension Service, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, and Texas Parks and Wildlife Department.

## ...Catfish regulations

*(Continued from previous page)*

There would be no minimum length limit and anglers could harvest up to 25 catfish per day. Instead of being limited to harvesting no more than 10 fish 20 inches or longer per day, anglers would be limited to no more than five fish 30 inches or longer.

“This regulation is designed to limit the number of large catfish that an angler can harvest, which is viewed as positive by most anglers. It also may reduce the chance that large catfish will be over harvested, which could have a negative effect on the population,” added John Tibbs. “We have a similar regulation on Toledo Bend Reservoir, which is shared with Louisiana. Anglers there have supported this type of regulation.”

Finally, there is a group of reservoirs, which account for about 10 percent of all waters, that have excellent catfish populations with many large fish. Once again, the harvest regulations would be somewhat similar to the potential new statewide regulations. There would be no minimum length limit and anglers could harvest up to 25 catfish per day. Harvest of catfish 20 inches or longer would continue to be restricted. Under this regulation, anglers would be limited to harvesting no more than five fish 20 inches or longer and only one of those fish could be 30 inches or longer.

“Since 2016, anglers at Lake Tawakoni have had similar limits on the number of catfish they can keep over certain, specified lengths,” said Tibbs. “For Tawakoni and other reservoirs where we have enacted similar regulations, anglers have expressed their support.”

“We currently have about a dozen reservoirs that would be suitable for this regulation, although additional research currently underway may slightly increase this number,” Tibbs continued. “We have documented that there is a group of catfish anglers who like to fish for larger catfish and want to see the abundance of those fish increase. This regulation is designed to accomplish this by reducing harvest on catfish between 20 and 30 inches. In addition to increasing the abundance of large blue catfish and the opportunity to catch one, it will

also maintain channel catfish populations at levels that should provide good angling.”

Catfish regulations not being considered for modification at this time include those for flathead catfish, community fishing lakes (small local ponds

and lakes), waters shared with Oklahoma and Louisiana (Texoma, Toledo Bend, and Caddo), and the regulation on Lake Tawakoni.

The public can view the webinar on the TPWD YouTube channel to learn more about

these potential regulations. Questions or comments can be directed to John Tibbs (John.tibbs@tpwd.texas.gov). Biologists will consider all public input and any additional information before proposing any changes to the TPW

Commission at the January 20, 2021 meeting.

For more information on catfish in Texas, checkout the TPWD Catfish Management Plan at [https://tpwd.texas.gov/publications/pwdpubs/media/pwd\\_rp\\_t3200\\_1817.pdf](https://tpwd.texas.gov/publications/pwdpubs/media/pwd_rp_t3200_1817.pdf).

# Water Weekly

For the week of 07/20/20

## Water conditions

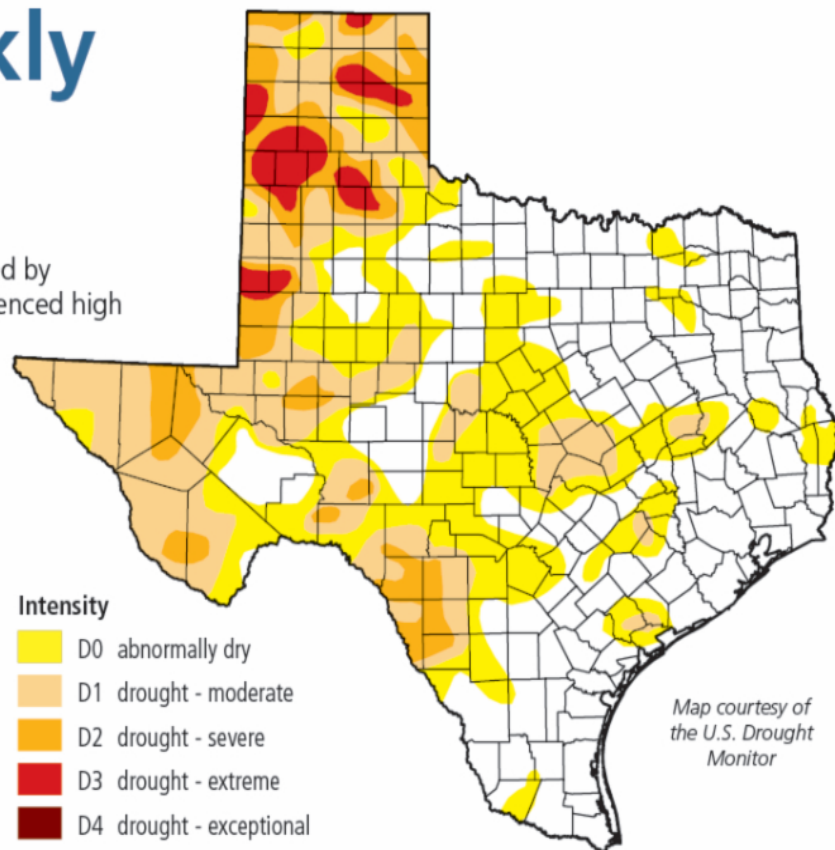
With the exception of a few areas impacted by scattered storms, most of Texas has experienced high temperatures and drier-than-normal conditions during the first half of July. As a result, the latest drought map for conditions as of July 14 shows significant expansion of drought.

## Drought conditions

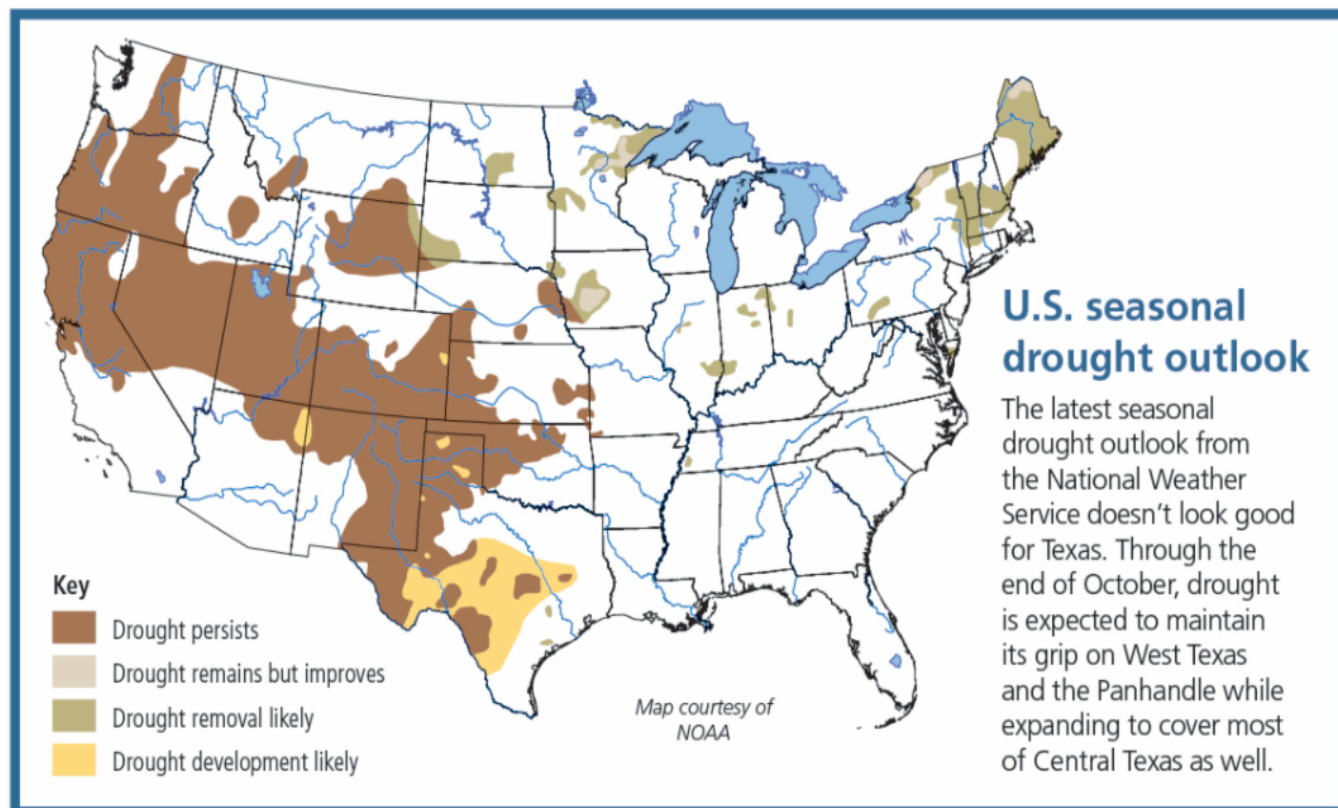
- ◆ 32% now
- ◆ 25% a week ago
- ◆ 16% three months ago
- ◆ 2% a year ago

### Intensity

- ◆ D0 abnormally dry
- ◆ D1 drought - moderate
- ◆ D2 drought - severe
- ◆ D3 drought - extreme
- ◆ D4 drought - exceptional



Map courtesy of the U.S. Drought Monitor



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