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How Much Rain *Didn't* You Get?

Good question. “A lot,” you might quip—but do you really know how much precipitation your part of the state did (or didn't) receive?

Either way, if you're looking for more information, the Wyoming Conditions Monitoring Team (WCMT) is here to help.

In June 2020, drought conditions began to rapidly intensify across much of Wyoming. The WCMT was established in response to this deteriorating situation.

This team enhances the level of conditions monitoring in the state by:

1) providing additional input and verification of conditions before drought recommendations are sent to the U.S. Drought Monitor (learn more at bit.ly/us-drought-monitor);

2) communicating to its constituents the importance of reporting local conditions; and

3) providing education and outreach to the public via webinars and online resources (available on drought.wyo.gov).

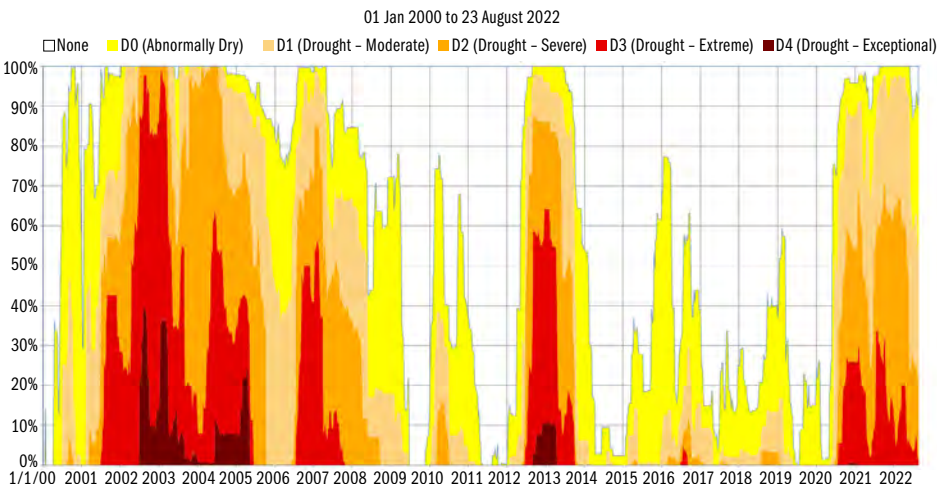
Who is the WCMT?

The WCMT is a collaborative effort of local, state, university, and federal partners whose constituents are directly impacted by drought conditions. The team comprises a diversity of expertise ranging from climate, weather, and water specialists to agriculture, wildlife, and emergency management experts, as well as education and outreach professionals.

Members include the Wyoming State Climate Office; University of Wyoming Extension; Wyoming State Engineer's Office; Wyoming Game & Fish Department; Wyoming Office of Homeland Security; USDA Farm Service Agency, Natural Resources Conservation Service, and Northern Plains Climate Hub; five National Weather Service Weather Forecast Offices; U.S. Geological Survey; and others.

While the team's main focus is currently the ongoing drought, its ultimate mission is to ensure that conditions (too wet, near normal, too dry) throughout the state of Wyoming, and associated impacts to all sectors, are accurately captured and communicated to the appropriate authorities and outlets year-round. The WCMT strives to create an efficient and sustainable condition-reporting network that gathers input from those who work in the field.

Percentage of Wyoming in each drought category by week



Wyoming Water Resources Data System/State Climate Office
<http://www.wrds.uwyo.edu>

Data from: National Drought Mitigation Center

Reporting matters

Since the inception of the WCMT, there has been an increase in the number of conditions reports submitted to the Community Collaborative Rain, Hail & Snow Network (CoCoRaHS)— a network of volunteer precipitation observers—and to the Condition Monitoring Observer Reports on

Drought (CMOR-Drought). These reports highlight areas that require further scrutiny (i.e. locations with potential improvements or degradations in conditions).

Additional volunteer reports are always welcome and may be submitted via CoCoRaHS at www.cocorahs.org or through the CMOR system at bit.ly/cmor-reports. The latter allows volunteers to submit precipitation observations each day, increasing the number of data points used to guide recommendations.

Stay informed

The WCMT hosts a monthly webinar series titled “WY Conditions & Outlooks” that features climate, water, and weather experts who discuss current conditions and near-term outlooks. Webinars cover seasonally relevant topics, such as wildland fire potential (late spring through fall) and flooding outlooks (spring/early summer).

If you are interested in attending the live webinars, email Windy Kelley at wkelley1@uwyo.edu and ask to be added to the WCMT webinar invite list. You can also subscribe to the University of Wyoming Extension’s YouTube channel to be notified when webinar recordings are available.

An additional outcome of the WCMT pertaining to outreach and education was the creation of the Wyoming Drought Page, located at drought.wyo.gov. Launched in June 2021, the site provides the people of Wyoming with information and updates on precipitation

What is CoCoRaHS?

The Community Collaborative Rain, Hail & Snow Network (CoCoRaHS) is a nonprofit, community-based network of volunteers who measure the precipitation they receive (or don’t receive) and report it daily. Volunteers come from all walks of life, span all ages, and are brought together by their interest in weather.

The program’s goal is to provide high-quality precipitation data to its end users on a timely basis and to increase the density of available precipitation data. The nonprofit encourages volunteers from all locations to take part in data collection.

Data from CoCoRaHS are used by many people and organizations, including the National Weather Service, emergency managers, city utilities, insurance adjusters, ranchers and farmers, and others with outdoor interests.

Volunteer efforts help make precipitation maps more accurate and fill in the gaps to help CoCoRaHS better depict Wyoming weather conditions. To learn more about the program or become a volunteer, visit www.cocorahs.org. For questions about CoCoRaHS, contact Tony Bergantino at antonius@uwyo.edu.

conditions, including sector-specific resources and listings of state disaster declarations. WCMT’s monthly webinars may also be viewed via the website.

While the drought has improved somewhat in many locations of the state (Figure 1), it is re-intensifying in some areas and we must remain ever-vigilant to changing conditions.

How you can help

The WCMT needs help from citizens across the state. We encourage you to let us know what you’re experiencing by submitting reports via CoCoRaHS or CMOR. We also encourage readers to join CoCoRaHS as volunteer observers and begin submitting reports to help us further quantify

precipitation—or lack thereof—throughout Wyoming.

We are always looking for more observers to track conditions and precipitation levels. Please consider joining us!

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We have a feeling that the authors of this article both enjoy rainy days. **Tony Bergantino** is the director of the Wyoming State Climate Office and Water Resources Data System in the UW Department of Atmospheric Science and is also the state coordinator for CoCoRaHS. He can be contacted at antonius@uwyo.edu or (307) 766-3786. **Windy Kelley** is the regional extension program coordinator for USDA Northern Plains Climate Hub and the weather variability and agricultural resiliency specialist for UW Extension. She can be reached at wkelley1@uwyo.edu.