National Drought Summary–March 11, 2003 D R A F T

The Rockies and Far West: This week, heavy precipitation was observed primarily across northern reaches of the region. Most locations from west-central Oregon northward through western Washington recorded at least 2 inches of precipitation, with totals of 6 inches to a foot reported in part of coastal northwestern Oregon and at scattered locations along the western slopes of the Cascades. Farther east, at least an inch of precipitation fell on most sites from northeastern Oregon and adjacent southeastern Washington eastward across the Idaho Panhandle, central Idaho, and much of western Montana, with amounts exceeding 6 inches at a few locations in the central Idaho Panhandle. Farther south, 1 to locally 4 inches of precipitation were measured in portions of northern and western Wyoming, and 1 to 2 inches were observed at scattered sites from southwestern Colorado northeastward across the central Colorado/Wyoming border region. Most other areas received a few to several tenths of an inch during the week, but little or none fell on southeastern Oregon, much of Nevada, central and interior southern California, and the lower elevations in Utah, Arizona, and New Mexico.

As a result of this precipitation pattern, most of last week's drought classifications were unchanged, with a few notable exceptions. The heavy precipitation led to the elimination of D0H conditions in northwestern Oregon and adjacent Washington, and from areas near the eastern Oregon/Washington border northeastward across the central and lower Idaho Panhandle. In addition, D1H to D3H conditions improved by one category in much of western Montana, north-central Wyoming, lower northeastern Oregon, and north-central Colorado. Most of these areas are now reporting near- to slightly above-normal snowpack water content for this time of year.

In southwestern Arizona, although little or no precipitation fell last week, D3H was reduced to D2H after a re-analysis of the previous week's precipitation and its effects on this climatologically-dry region.

In other areas that missed most of this week's precipitation, some deterioration was evident. D2H and D3H conditions expanded eastward in southeastern Oregon and adjacent Nevada, where snowpack water content remains about half of normal for this time of year. Farther south, growing 30- and 90-day moisture deficits led to the expansion of D0H into the central California valleys.

Additionally, a re-assessment of conditions across interior southern California led to D0H and D1H conditions expanding westward toward the coastal mountain ranges. Groundwater levels seem to have stabilized in the region, but remain near record-low levels, and with topsoils depleted of moisture by more than a year of consistently below-normal precipitation, it will take considerably more precipitation to substantially replenish the region's groundwater.

Low reservoir content remains a concern for many areas as the warmer part of the year, concurrent with an increase in water demand and a depletion of snowpack water, approaches. According to reports from the National Resources Conservation Center on March 1, the major reservoirs in both Nevada and New Mexico held less than half of their typical amount of water at this time of year while Colorado, Utah, Wyoming, and Arizona's major reservoirs held only 55% to 63% of typical amounts. Only Washington, Montana, and California reservoirs held more than 90% of normal early-March volume.

The Plains, Midwest, and Great Lakes: Light to moderate precipitation fell on most of the region last week, with totals generally between 0.3 and 1.0 inch across Iowa, northern Missouri, and the D0AH to D2AH areas east of the Mississippi River. Across Michigan's upper peninsula and the central and northern Plains, most locations recorded only 0.1 to 0.5 inch. As a result, dryness and drought designations were unchanged in most locations, except for the expansion of D1AH into central and eastern Wisconsin.

Farther south, no substantial precipitation was observed in west-central and northwestern Texas, western Oklahoma, and much of Southern Kansas. Many of these areas received less than

half of normal precipitation in the last 90 days, with part of the south-central Texas Panhandle recording less than 25% of normal. As a result, D0H was expanded into much of this region, except for south-central Kansas where 30- and 90-day totals were closer to normal.

New England: A few isolated sites reported over an inch of precipitation last week, but most locations measured only 0.1 to 0.9 inch, leaving D0H and D1H conditions as they were on March 4.

The Southeast: Another week of heavy precipitation was noted across southern Georgia and most of central and upstate South Carolina, where most sites accumulated 1.5 to locally 6.0 inches of rain. With groundwater levels finally beginning to increase D0H was eliminated in southern Georgia, most of central and upstate South Carolina, and part of south-central North Carolina. However, lesser amounts fell on central and east-central Georgia and the Carolina coastal plain, and with 60-month totals still extremely low, and even 24-month totals substantially below normal in many of these areas, D0H conditions were retained there.

Hawaii: Beneficial rains fell recently on the west side of the Big Island, but it doesn't yet appear as though enough has fallen to bring the region out of D0 conditions. Elsewhere, light to locally moderate rains kept D0 to D1 conditions intact.

Puerto Rico: Little or no rain kept last week's D0AH conditions intact. Farther east, below-normal totals for the last 4 or more weeks and continued reports of near-record-low streamflows for this time of year led to the expansion of D0AH conditions into parts of northeastern and east-central Puerto Rico.

Alaska: A dry week allowed D0 conditions to persist in an area approximately outlined by Unalakleet, McGrath, and Bethel, Alaska. Less than half of the seasonably-typical snowpack was evident last week, due more to exceptionally mild conditions since early January than to a lack of precipitation. Since early February, temperatures have averaged between 11°C and 14°C above normal.

Looking Ahead:

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