



OKLAHOMA CLIMATOLOGICAL SURVEY

**NEWS RELEASE**

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**Oklahoma Panhandle Drought Labeled “Exceptional”**

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Even while much of Oklahoma has been inundated with heavy rains and flash flooding, the Oklahoma Panhandle has experienced devastating drought, complete with conditions that long-time residents of the area say harken back to the Dust Bowl days of the 1930s. The drought in the western two-thirds of the Panhandle has been termed “exceptional” by the U.S. Drought Monitor, the worst such designation that organization uses to indicate drought severity. Drought designated from “extreme” to “severe” extends east through the rest of the Panhandle. The U.S. Drought Monitor incorporated impact reports from local experts in the Panhandle, data from the Oklahoma Mesonet, and input from the Oklahoma Climatological Survey in its assessment of the Panhandle drought.

The current dry spell extends back to the end of 2006 when a succession of severe winter storm systems blasted the Panhandle. The precipitation ended quickly thereafter, however, with very little significant moisture falling since that time. The Oklahoma Mesonet site at Boise City has recorded a little less than 12 inches of precipitation since January 1, 2007, which is nearly 15 inches below normal for that 18-month period. The Mesonet sites at Goodwell and Kenton have recorded 14-16 inches for the same time frame. Winds in the area have gusted to over 55 mph to go along with high temperatures that have reached triple digits on several occasions during the past month.

Local experts predict that very little non-irrigated wheat will be harvested this year and even irrigated wheat that has managed to survive the dry conditions will be poor. Many fields were not sown with wheat due to the lack of moisture during the fall planting season. Since October 1, 2007, the western two-thirds of the Oklahoma Panhandle has received between 1-5 inches of precipitation. Boise City has recorded a meager 1.6 inches since October 1.

The dry and windy conditions have begun to cause soil erosion for the first time in years, and wildfire dangers have been extreme during the spring months. A few of those fires have reportedly been caused by static electricity. Massive cattle sell-offs have been occurring due to the lack of forage for livestock. Pastures are either dormant or dead with the landscape resembling that of winter.

| Time Scale                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | Oklahoma Panhandle Precipitation |                       |               |                        |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------|-----------------------|---------------|------------------------|
|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            | Total Rainfall                   | Departure from Normal | Pct of Normal | Rank since 1921        |
| 30-Day                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     | 0.94"                            | -2.13"                | 31%           | 5 <sup>th</sup> driest |
| 60-Day                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     | 2.45"                            | -3.36"                | 42%           | 3 <sup>rd</sup> driest |
| 90-Day                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     | 3.02"                            | -4.53"                | 40%           | 3 <sup>rd</sup> driest |
| 120-Day                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    | 3.28"                            | -5.55"                | 37%           | 1 <sup>st</sup> Driest |
| Year-to-Date                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               | 3.94"                            | -5.83"                | 40%           | 2 <sup>nd</sup> driest |
| 180-Day                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    | 4.13"                            | -5.86"                | 41%           | 2 <sup>nd</sup> driest |
| Water Year (Oct 1-present)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | 5.74"                            | -7.28"                | 44%           | 2 <sup>nd</sup> driest |
| 365-Day                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    | 10.47"                           | -10.53"               | 50%           | 2 <sup>nd</sup> driest |
| Jan 1, 2007-Jun 18, 2008                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   | 20.42"                           | -10.24"               | 67%           | 7 <sup>th</sup> driest |
| <p><b>Description:</b> Cells show the historical rank of precipitation on different time scales for Oklahoma Climate Division 1 (CD1). CD1 includes the counties of Cimarron, Texas and Beaver in the Panhandle and Harper and Ellis Counties in northwest Oklahoma. Values are compared to analogous periods ending June 18. There are 87 such periods in the modern climate history.</p> |                                  |                       |               |                        |