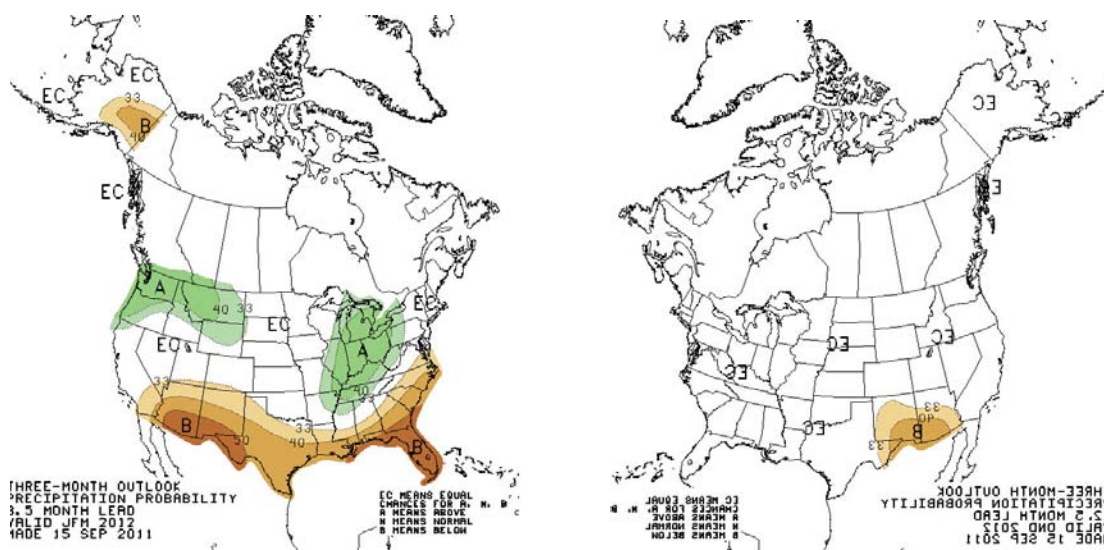


Exceptional Drought Area Shrinks; Long-Range Forecasts Not Offering Relief



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(Above) NEXT SPRING – Climate Prediction Center projection for next spring from January-March 2012.

(Above Right) NEXT YEAR – Climate Prediction Center projection for October-December 2012.

Courtesy National Weather Service/Climate Prediction Center.

LITTLE ROCK, ARK.

Don't expect much change in soil moisture in the next few months, according to projections by the National Weather Service Climate Prediction Center.

The three-month outlook for January-March 2012 shows an above-normal chance of precipitation for northeastern Arkansas, including the only spot in the state that does not have a drought classification according to the Oct. 11 U.S. Drought Monitor Map.

For the rest of the state, the January-March outlook shows equal chances of above-, normal or below-normal rainfall.

The 12-month outlook for October-December 2012 shows equal chances for above-, normal or below-normal rainfall. The projection maps can be found at: www.cpc.ncep.noaa.gov/products/predictions/long_range/seasonal.php?lead=13.

The only bright spot in the drought picture painted by the U.S. Drought Monitor is that the area of most intense drought – called exceptional – shrank slightly from the previous week's map, from 1.64 percent of the state's area to 0.69 percent. Overall, 98.79 percent of the state

remained under drought, unchanged from the previous week. The Drought Monitor map is available at http://droughtmonitor.unl.edu/DM_state.htm?AR,S.

Summer-like heat returned – without the humidity – last Sunday, with a new record high of 88 set in Little Rock and records tied in Monticello at 90 degrees and 91 at Russellville.

Meanwhile, folks in western and southern Arkansas continue to scan the skies for a hint of moisture. Much of the northern two-thirds of the state received rain on Oct. 12, but the droughted areas in the southwest received nary a drop.

"We didn't get enough rain to get you wet if you were out in the rain," said Joe Vestal, Little River extension staff chair for the University of Arkansas Division of Agriculture.

An approaching front was expected to bring showers and possibly thunderstorms Monday night and ending Tuesday to a large part of Arkansas. Farmers planting winter wheat could use the moisture to germinate their seed and livestock producers need moisture for growth of fall or winter grazing. Δ