



Regional Drought and Water Supply Status

October 2026

Summary of Current Conditions in the COG Region

The Drought Watch declared on June 3, 2026, remains in effect for the COG region. At its September meeting, the Drought Coordination Technical Committee recommended maintaining the Watch and reconvening later this fall to reassess conditions. Local water supplies remain adequate, and short-term hydrologic conditions have improved considerably; however, lingering groundwater and longer-term precipitation deficits remain key indicators for continued monitoring.

The September 29 U.S. Drought Monitor shows substantial improvement from conditions earlier in the summer. Approximately 23 percent of the Potomac River Basin remains in Moderate Drought (D1), 40 percent is classified as Abnormally Dry (D0), and 37 percent is not classified as abnormally dry or in drought.

ICPRB's September Water Supply Outlook indicates near-normal reliability of water supply releases for the remainder of 2026, representing a significant improvement from conditions earlier in the summer.

State drought indicators have improved following increased precipitation, but groundwater recovery continues to lag. Virginia DEQ continues to monitor Northern Virginia closely despite improvements in precipitation, streamflow, and reservoir levels. Maryland has experienced similar hydrologic improvement, while Central Maryland remains an area of elevated drought concern because groundwater conditions have recovered more slowly.

Overall, long-term outlooks favor continued drought improvement or removal across the COG region through the remainder of 2026. However, groundwater conditions may recover more slowly than other indicators and will require continued monitoring.



U.S. Drought Monitor Potomac Watershed

September 29, 2026

(Released Thursday, Oct. 1, 2026)

Valid 8 a.m. EDT

Drought Conditions (Percent Area)

	None	D0	D1	D2	D3	D4
Current	37.65	39.72	22.63	0.00	0.00	0.00
Last Week 09-24-2026	32.73	33.92	33.35	0.00	0.00	0.00
3 Months Ago 07-02-2026	1.78	3.99	56.58	35.28	2.37	0.00
Start of Calendar Year 01-08-2026	0.00	0.00	14.96	85.04	0.00	0.00
Start of Water Year 10-02-2025	4.61	34.36	39.54	17.48	4.01	0.00
One Year Ago 10-02-2025	4.61	34.36	39.54	17.48	4.01	0.00

Intensity:

None	D2 Severe Drought
D0 Abnormally Dry	D3 Extreme Drought
D1 Moderate Drought	D4 Exceptional Drought

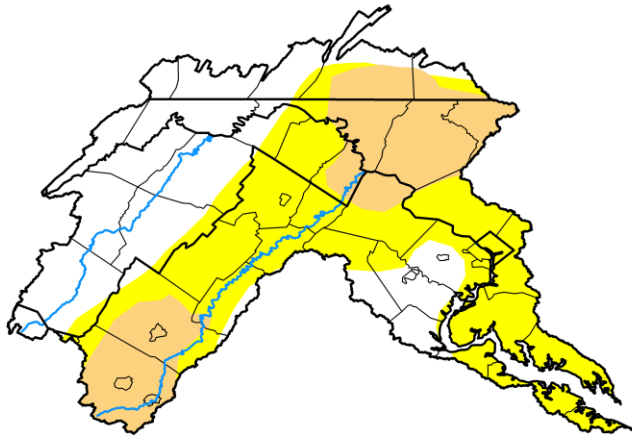
The Drought Monitor focuses on broad-scale conditions. Local conditions may vary. For more information on the Drought Monitor, go to <https://droughtmonitor.unl.edu/About.aspx>

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NASA/MSFC/UAH



droughtmonitor.unl.edu



Potomac River Streamflow Conditions

Instantaneous flows as of October 5, 2026

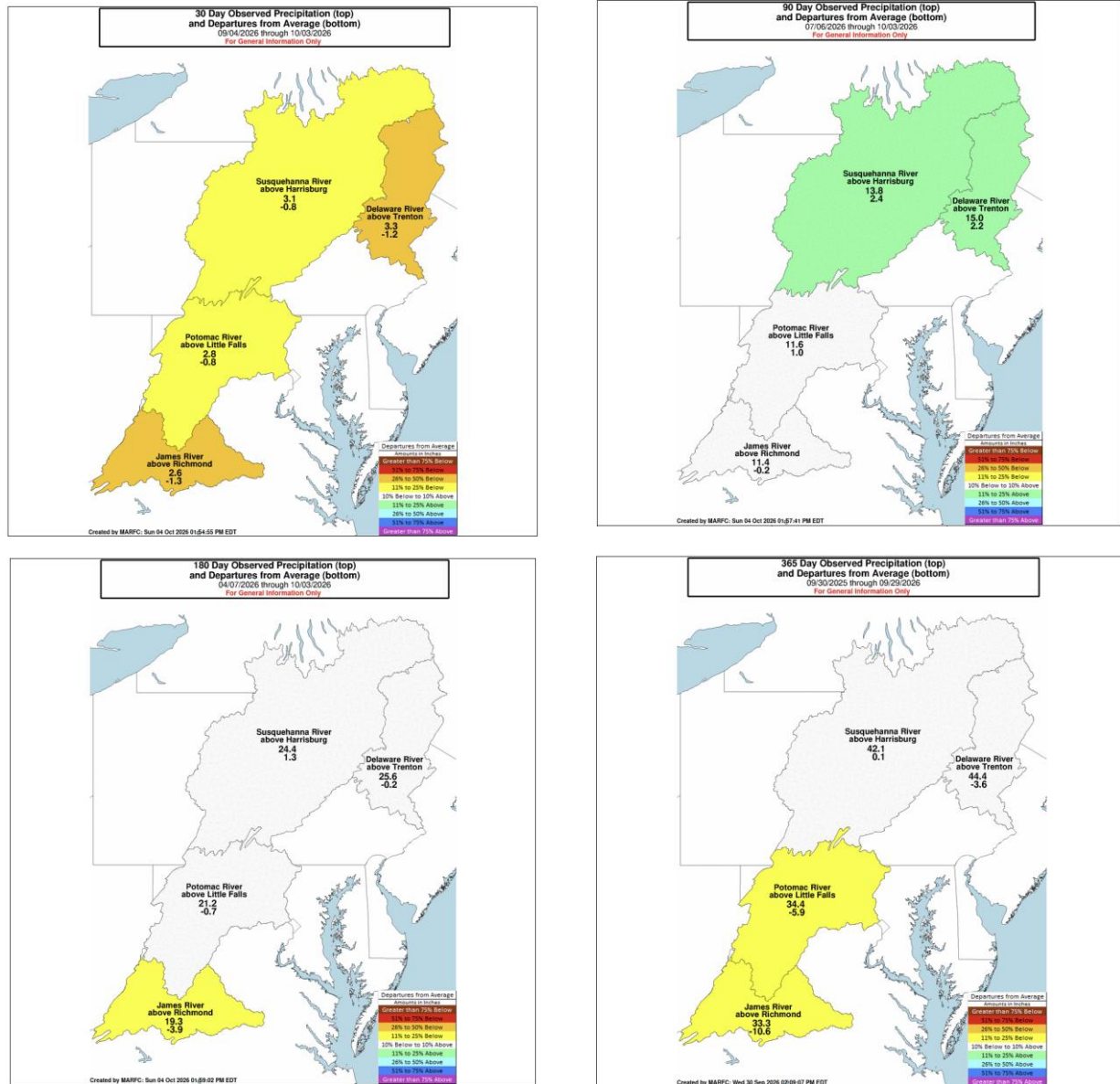
Location	Current Flow (cfs)	Median Flow (cfs)
Little Falls	1,810	2,345
Point of Rocks	1,890	2,270

Source: [USGS Little Falls](#)

Source: [USGS Point of Rocks](#)



Observed Precipitation Conditions (through 10/03/26)

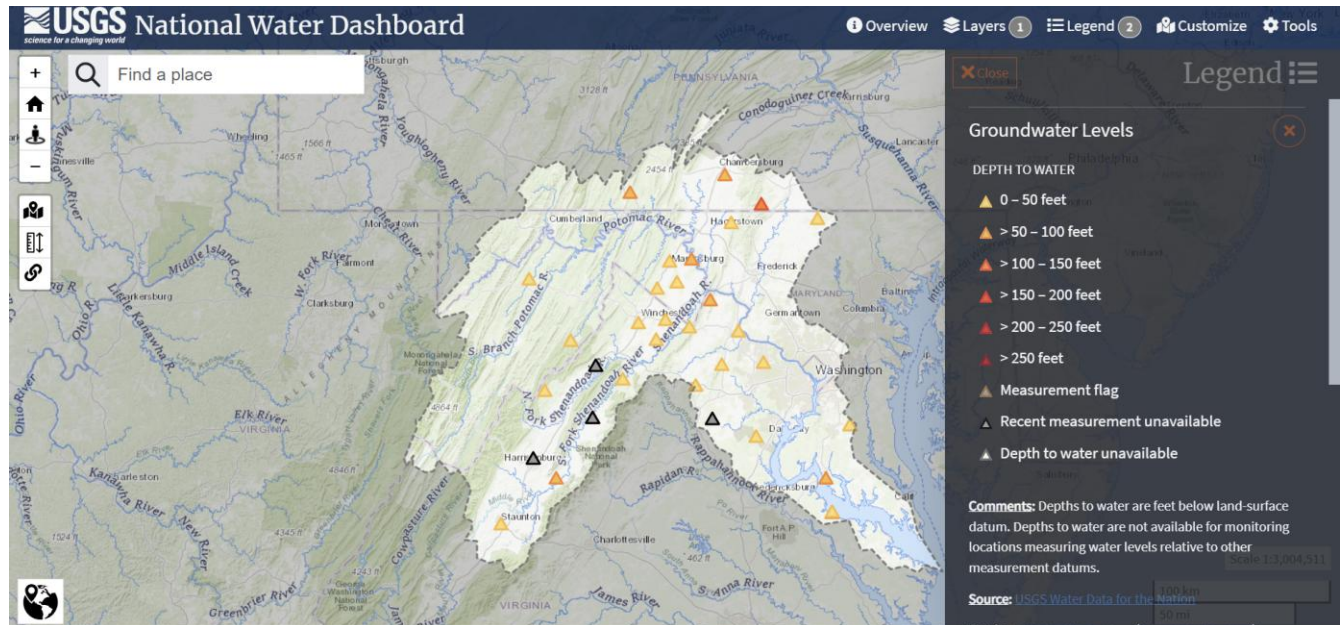


Observed precipitation shows improvement over the most recent 90-day period but continuing deficits over longer time scales. Through October 3, the 30-day total was 2.8 inches, or 0.8 inches below normal, while the 90-day total was 11.6 inches, or 1.0 inch above normal. The 180-day total was 21.2 inches, or 0.7 inches below normal. As of September 30, the 365-day total was 34.4 inches, or 5.9 inches below normal. Source: [NOAA Middle Atlantic River Forecast Center](https://www.noaa.gov/middle-atlantic-river-forecast-center).



Groundwater Conditions

Groundwater levels across the COG region remain variable, with many monitoring wells showing relatively shallow to moderate depths to water, while several locations indicate deeper groundwater levels.



Source: <https://dashboard.waterdata.usgs.gov/app/nwd/en/?aoi=geolocate-huc4&view=groundwater>

Reservoir Storage Conditions

Jennings Randolph and Little Seneca reservoirs are within normal operating ranges.

Source: [U.S. Army Corps of Engineers](#)

Probability of Water Supply Releases

As of the September 2026 report, the probability of needing water supply releases from the Washington metropolitan area's backup reservoirs during summer and fall 2026 is near-normal. Generally, the use of Jennings Randolph and Little Seneca reservoirs is triggered by low flows brought about by a combination of low precipitation and low groundwater levels. There is a 7 to 17 percent conditional probability that natural Potomac flow will drop below 600 to 700 million gallons per day (MGD) at Little Falls through December 31, 2026.

Source: [ICPRB – Cooperative Water Supply Operations on the Potomac](#)

Climate and Drought Outlooks

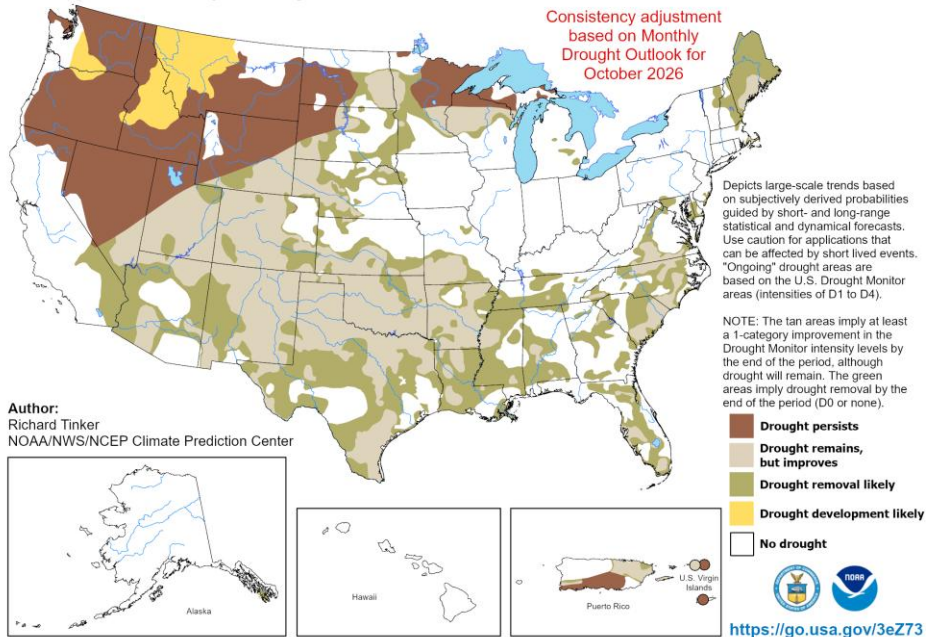
The U.S. Seasonal Drought Outlook indicates that drought removal is likely over the next three months. Source: https://www.cpc.ncep.noaa.gov/products/expert_assessment/sdo_summary.php



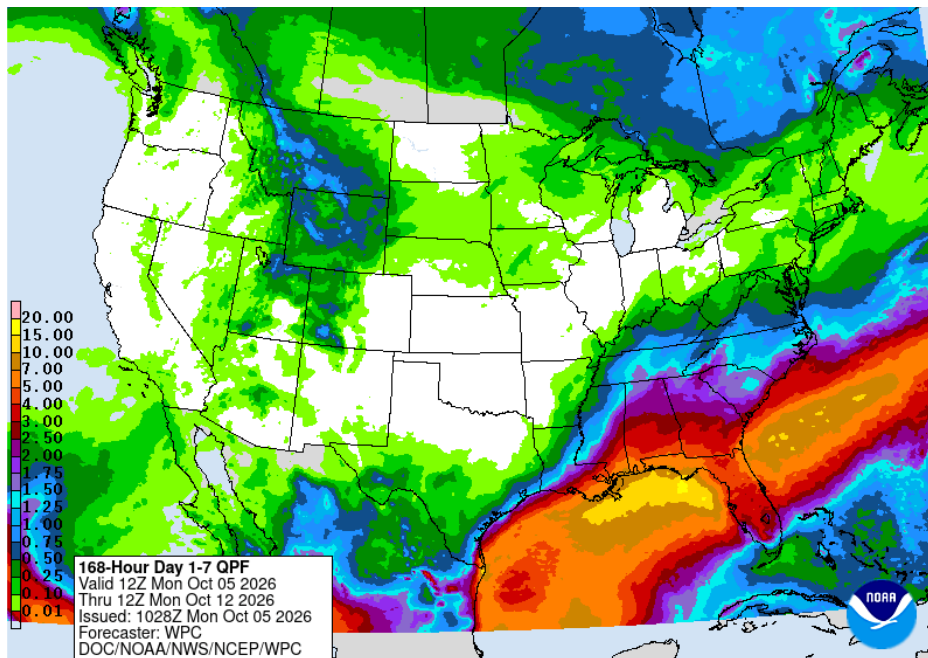
Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments

U.S. Seasonal Drought Outlook Drought Tendency During the Valid Period

Valid for October 1 - December 31, 2026
Released September 30, 2026



The seven-day total quantitative precipitation forecast calls for approximately 0.25 inches.

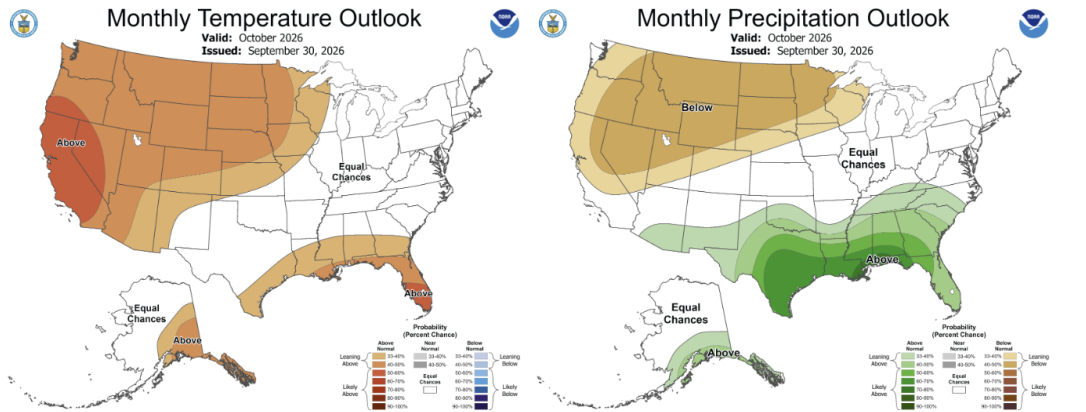


Source: [NOAA NWS Weather Prediction Center](https://www.weather.gov/wpc)



Updated OFFICIAL 30-Day Forecasts

Issued: September 30, 2026



NOAA/ National Weather Service
National Centers for Environmental Prediction
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The monthly outlook from the National Weather Service [Climate Prediction Center](#) indicates equal chances for above-, below-, and near-normal temperature and precipitation for the COG region. Source: [NOAA NWS Climate Prediction Center](#)