

July 2026

Precipitation

Kentucky experienced its third straight month of above normal precipitation, continuing to improve the drought conditions from earlier in the year. The Commonwealth saw numerous days during the month with precipitation, but much of that precipitation was from convective thunderstorms. Because of that, the precipitation was not evenly distributed resulting in some areas experiencing flash flooding while others experienced below normal precipitation for the month. The wettest areas were in western and central Kentucky while eastern Kentucky was drier.

Preliminary data shows the Commonwealth averaged 5.88 inches of precipitation for July, 1.64 inches above normal. It was the 24th wettest July on record. The Western Climatic Division averaged 7.28 inches of precipitation, 3.44 inches above normal and the 9th wettest July on record. The Eastern Climatic Division averaged 4.71 inches of precipitation, 0.04 inches below normal and the 54th driest July on record.

As of the August 4th U.S. Drought Monitor, only 3% of the Commonwealth was in Moderate Drought (D1) located in southeastern Kentucky. This is a vast improvement from 2 months ago when 69 % was in at least Moderate Drought (D1) and nearly 5% was in Extreme Drought (D3).

According to the Kentucky Mesonet, Ballard County recorded the highest monthly rainfall total for July at 10.92 inches, while Trimble County had the lowest at 1.82 inches.

Table 1. Regional precipitation patterns.

Climate Region	Departure From Normal (inches)					Palmer Drought Severity Index*
	This Month	Past 2 Mos.	Past 3 Mos	Past 6 Mos	Past 12 Mos	
Western	3.24	5.46	5.93	-0.10	-6.95	-1.67
Central	1.60	5.70	6.70	0.24	-3.73	0.39
Bluegrass	-0.46	1.99	3.67	-0.25	-2.71	0.58
Eastern	-0.19	0.28	0.91	-4.28	-7.58	-2.07

*4.0 and above (Extremely Moist)
3.0 to 3.9 (Very Moist Spell)
2.0 to 2.9 (Unusual Moist Spell)
-1.9 to 1.9 (Near Normal)
-2.0 to -2.9 (Moderate Drought)
-3.0 to -3.9 (Severe Drought)
-4.0 or less (Extreme Drought)

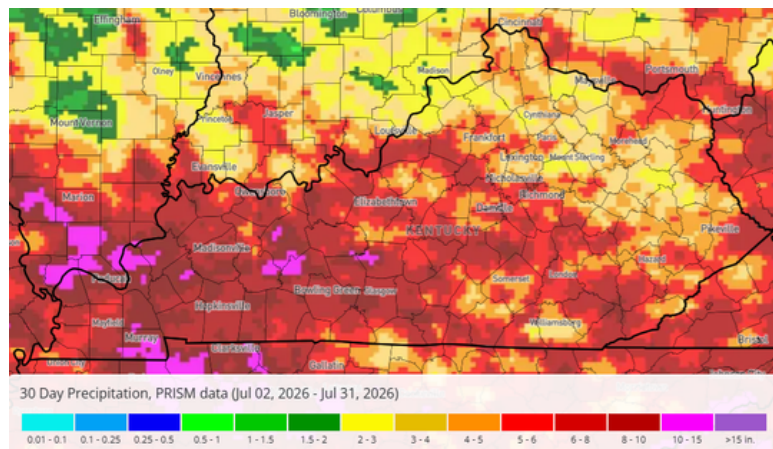


Figure 1. Monthly precipitation map.

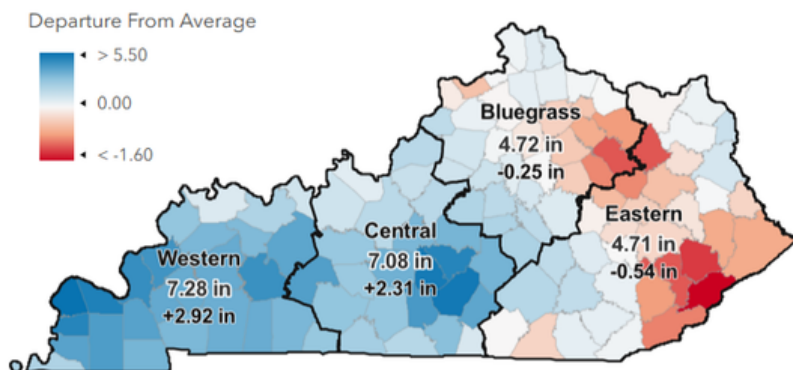


Figure 2. Departure from normal precipitation by county and climate division.

U.S. Drought Monitor Kentucky

August 4, 2026
(Released Thursday, Aug. 6, 2026)
Valid 8 a.m. EDT

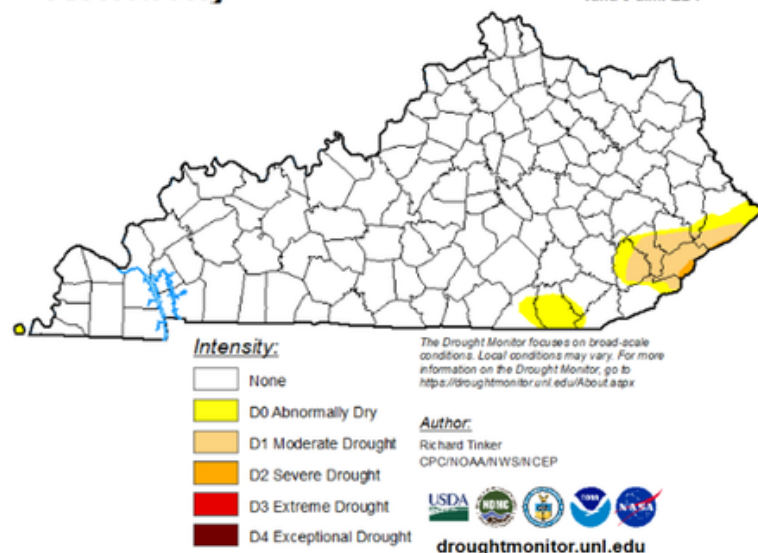


Figure 3. Current US Drought Monitor Map.

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Streamflow

Streamflows in July started the month at or above normal in most areas. Flows generally remained at or above normal throughout the month. Many streams and rivers experienced large spikes in flow associated with heavy rains from convective thunderstorms. Given the hit or miss nature of convective thunderstorms, a few streams may have experienced below normal flow, especially in eastern Kentucky.

The Commonwealth remains out of hydrological drought conditions that existed earlier in the year. Flows will need to be watched closely if drought conditions develop this fall. This is especially true in eastern Kentucky, where precipitation amounts have been lower.

The Division of Water's Water Supply Section will continue to monitor conditions closely.

Table 2. Mean Stream Discharge select stream gages.

River and Location	Drainage Area (mi ²)	7 Day		28 Day	
		Average Flow (cfs)	Percentile	Average Flow (cfs)	Percentile
Levisa Fork at Prestonsburg	1,702	419	27	578	43
Tygarts Creek near Greenup	242	22	32	57	43
South Fork Licking River at Cynthiana	621	78	50	249	61
North Fork Kentucky River at Jackson	1,101	303	45	492	50
Kentucky River at Lock 8	4,414	1,777	69	2,532	61
Elkhorn Creek near Frankfort	473	267	71	444	83
Cumberland River at Cumberland Falls	1,977	1,001	66	1,268	66
Buck Creek near Shopville	165	87	62	203	79
Beech Fork at Maud	436	106	64	361	81
Barren River at Bowling Green	1,849	763	57	914	51
Green River at Munfordville	1,673	1,614	85	2,387	88
Green River near McKinney	22	78	71	41	90
Tradewater River at Olney	255	384	96	727	95
Bayou De Chien near Clinton	69	24	56	167	91
Ohio River at Greenup Dam	62,000	40,700	59	49,568	64
Ohio River at Louisville	91,170	60,057	70	63,248	56

* Base Period 1980-2023

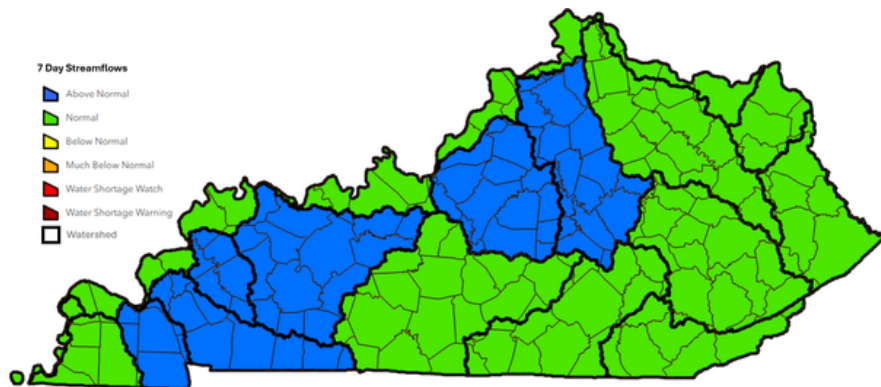


Figure 4. Average streamflow by watershed over the past 7-days (July 25-31).

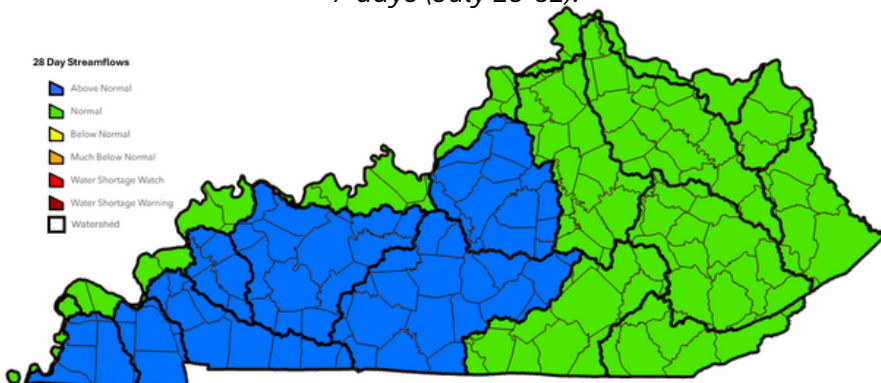


Figure 5. Average streamflow by watershed over the past 28-days (July 4-31).

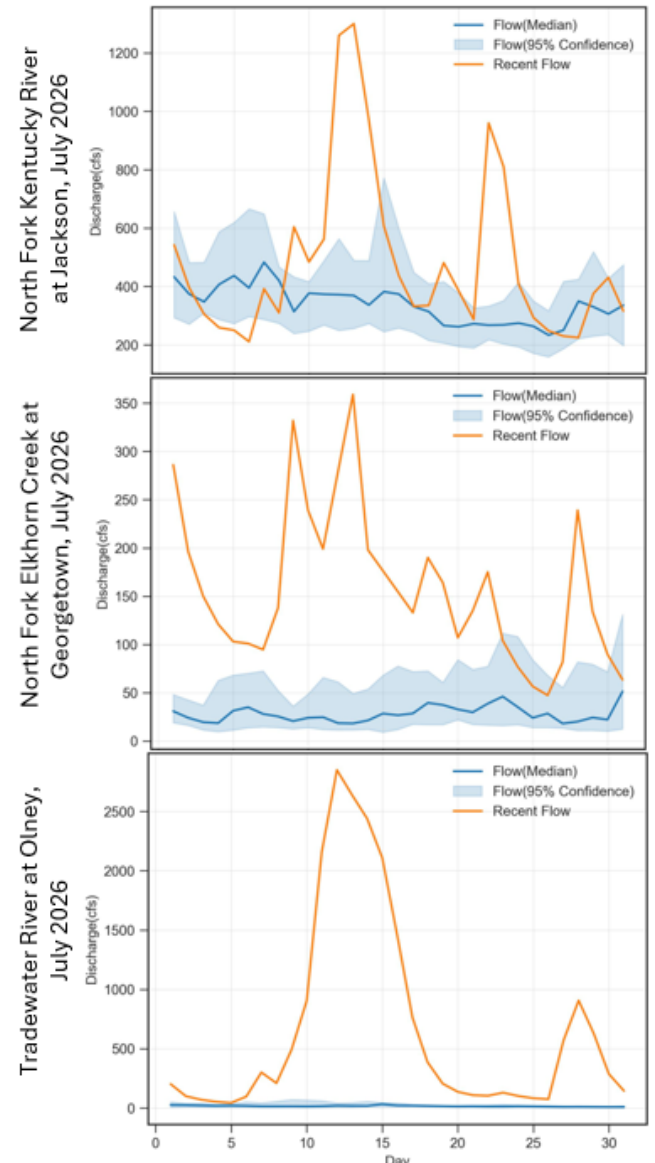


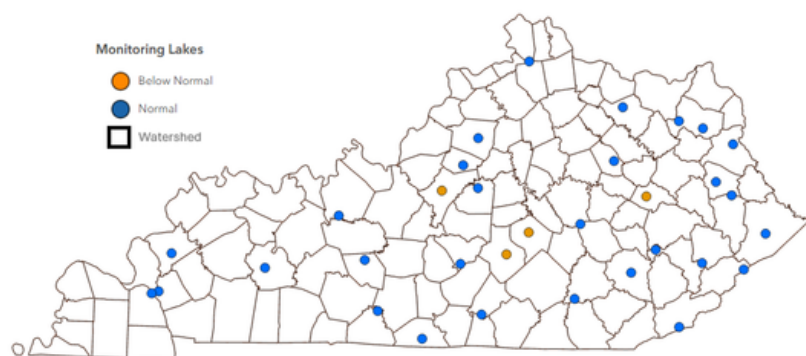
Figure 6. Streamflows compared to median flows for the month.

July 2026

Reservoir Storage

Most reservoirs in the state remain near normal for this time of year. However, a few small water supply reservoirs remain below normal due to the historically low precipitation this past winter and spring, resulting in them having an inadequate supply for the rest of the year. The recent above normal precipitation, along with conservation measures and alternative supplies, has helped slow the rate of decline of these reservoirs and prolong the supply. During the summer, evaporation and evapotranspiration typically outpace precipitation, resulting in most precipitation being taken up by soils. This makes it nearly impossible for reservoirs with small drainage areas to receive enough precipitation to refill this time of year. As we move into late fall and winter, and evaporative demand drops, the reservoirs will begin to refill, provided there is adequate precipitation.

Figure 7. Locations of reference reservoirs across the state. Status of reservoir levels indicated by color.



Groundwater

General Statement: Kentucky is a geologically, and hydrogeologically, diverse state. Groundwater data is limited in availability and where available may only be applicable to the immediate area given regional geologic variability. Local conditions may not be accurately reflected by the reference locations selected and local rainfall and surface water conditions may provide additional or more representative information. Current data is compared to a 30-year reference period (1980 – 2010) or the longest available period of continuous data.

Inner Bluegrass: Inner Bluegrass: Flow at Royal Springs (Scott Co.) started July well above normal flow following heavy rain across June. Flow remained above historical flow until falling back to normal flow towards the end of July. Moving into August, flows between 2 and 20 CFS are expected with higher flows possible following heavy rainfall.

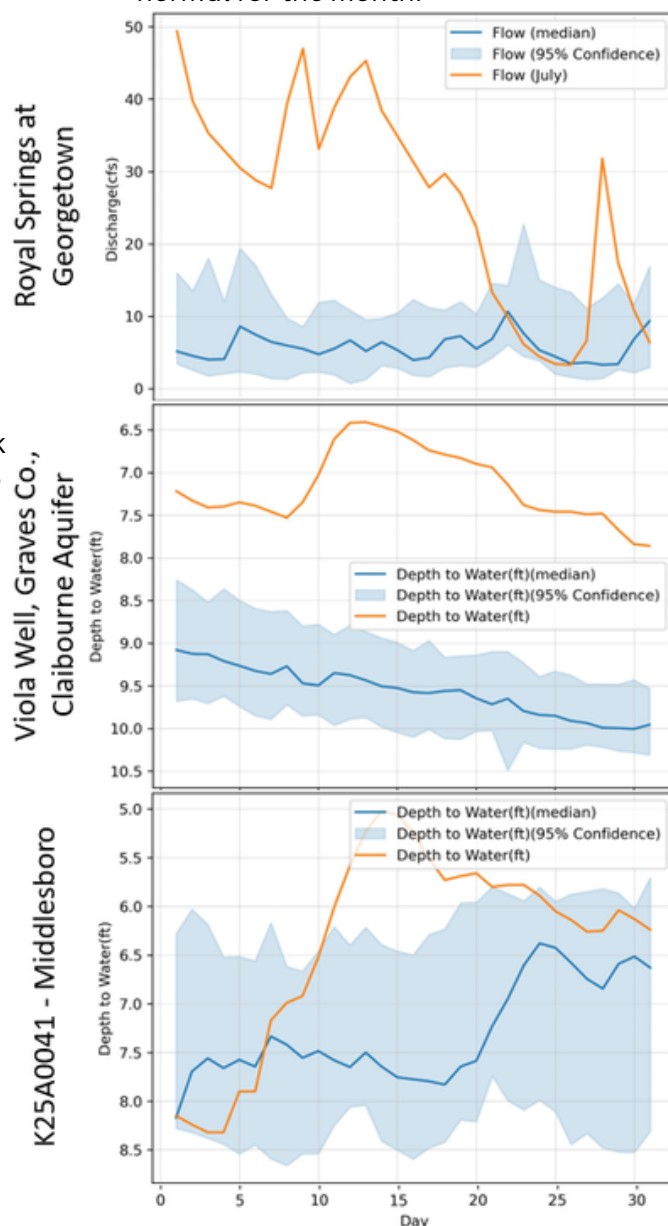
Jackson Purchase: Jackson Purchase: Water levels in the Viola Well (Graves Co.) stayed above the historical median across all of July. Falling water levels across the month followed the historical trend and are expected to continue falling as Fall begins towards an annual low. Notably, water levels exceeded historical normal values, rising above the 95th percentile for the historical record from the 10th to 20th of the month. The slight drop in water levels was also observed in the Hickman Deep (Claibourne aquifer) in contrast water levels were steady in the MSU Deep well (McNairy aquifer).

Middlesboro: Middlesboro: Water levels within the Middlesboro well (Bell Co.) stayed within the historical range across July excluding a brief rise above normal in the middle of the month. The rise in water levels follows the same trend as the reference period of increasing across July.

Additional data can be found at:

<https://www.uky.edu/KGS/water/water-groundwater-monitoring.php>

Figure 9. Groundwater observations compared to normal for the month.



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Forecast

The Climate Prediction Center (CPC) is currently predicting equal chances for above or below normal precipitation during August and above normal chances for above normal precipitation for August through October for the entire Commonwealth. Short-term forecasts are predicting above normal precipitation chances and the potential for more flash flooding during the first half of August.

The current U.S. Monthly Drought Outlook shows drought improvement and removal during August for Kentucky.

Note: These forecasts do not provide the quantity above or below normal, just the probability it will occur.

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

Valid for August 2026
Released July 31, 2026

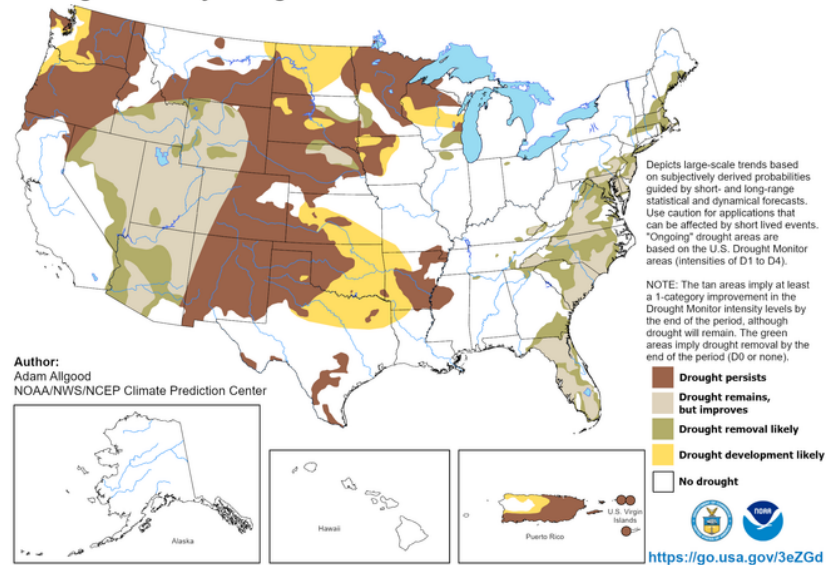
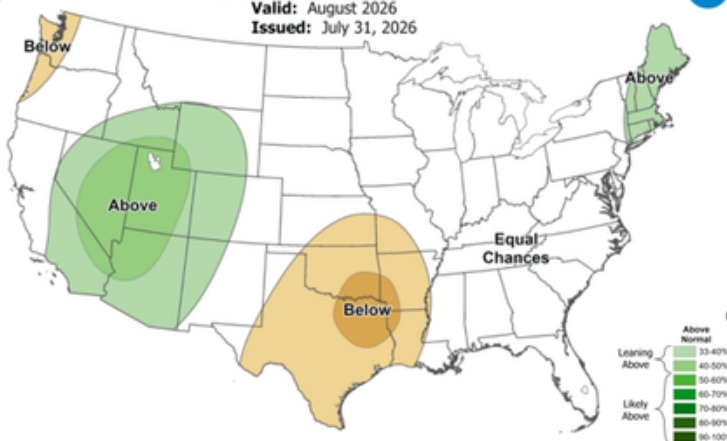


Figure 10. Monthly drought outlook.

Monthly Precipitation Outlook

Valid: August 2026
Issued: July 31, 2026



Seasonal Precipitation Outlook

Valid: Aug-Sep-Oct 2026
Issued: July 16, 2026

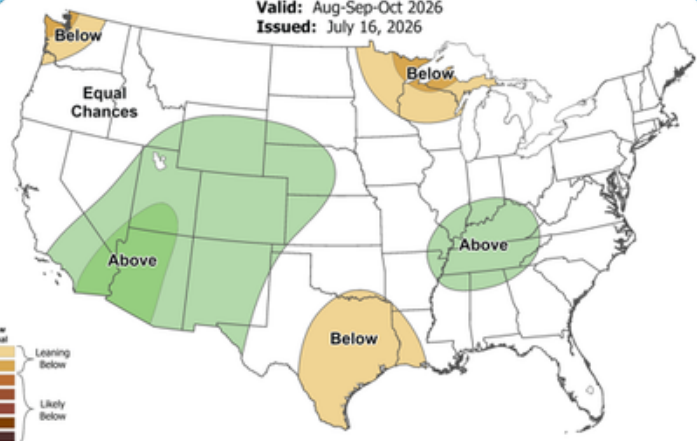


Figure 11. Monthly and seasonal precipitation outlooks.

Contact Us

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Report Drought Conditions



Acknowledgments

Precipitation Data:

U.S. Department of Commerce, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, National Centers for Environmental Information; Kentucky Mesonet; Midwest Regional Climate Center; Southern Regional Climate Center.

Streamflow Data:

U.S. Geological Survey, Water Resources Division.

Reservoir Data:

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Huntington, Louisville, and Nashville Districts; Kentucky Division of Water, Water Supply Section.

Forecast Data:

U.S. Department of Commerce, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, Climate Prediction Center.