

NSW Seasonal Conditions Summary - February 2014

Highlights

- Dry conditions continue to expand across NSW. 90% of NSW had below average rainfall over the 6 months to January, & 57% had rainfall in the lowest 10% of years.
- The outlook indicates that the chances of a drier or wetter February to April period are nearly equal & that warmer daytime temperatures are likely in the south east, & overnight in the south & on the mid north coast.
- Three distinct heatwaves occurred during January & rainfall was below average over nearly half of NSW.
- January pasture growth was low across most of the north west, tablelands, slopes & coast. Over the last 6 months it was low across western & central NSW.
- Modelled topsoil moisture was low across 99% of NSW. Subsoil levels were stable, but remain low over 55% of NSW.
- Stock water was low over areas of the west, north west & tablelands.
- Stock condition & pasture production will depend upon follow up rainfall over the coming months. Considerable resources are available to assist in management at <http://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/agriculture/emergency/drought/managing>

Dry conditions continue to expand across NSW. Over the six months to January, 90% of NSW had below average rainfall and 57% of NSW had rainfall in the lowest 10% of years.

The outlook for February to April indicates the chances of a drier or wetter season are nearly equal across NSW, with a slightly reduced chance of exceeding median rainfall in the central and southern areas. February is likely to be drier than normal, and the chances for drier or wetter March are near equal.

Warmer than normal daytime temperatures are likely in the south east of NSW over the February to April period, and overnight across the south and mid north coast. For the remainder of NSW, the chance of warmer or cooler than normal daytime and overnight temperatures is roughly equal. February is likely to be warmer than normal, and in March, the chances are roughly equal for warmer or cooler conditions.

The ENSO climatic indicators are currently neutral, and the outlooks suggest a high

probability for neutral conditions to continue over summer and autumn. However, most models indicate a warming trend over autumn/winter.

Over January, 49% of NSW received below average rainfall, with much of NSW receiving less than 40% of normal. The worst affected areas included the coast, tablelands and the north west. The majority of NSW received falls of only 1-25 mm. Daytime and overnight temperatures were above average with three distinct heatwaves occurring.

Stock water supplies were low in January across areas of the north west, tablelands, Monaro, south west slopes and areas of the Riverina and western NSW. In these areas streamflow analysis has shown well below average to extremely low run off over the last 1-2 years.

In relative terms, quarterly rainfall was below average across 72% of NSW, particularly across most of the western, central and tablelands areas. Relative rainfall for the last six months was below average across the majority of NSW, except for areas in the south, south east and on the coast, and showed a similar pattern over the last 18 months.

Modelled topsoil moisture was low over 99% of NSW, with levels of total soil moisture of 10-20 mm or less. Modelled subsoil moisture levels were stable from December, but remain low over 55% of NSW. Higher than normal rainfall is needed to replenish depleted profiles.

Modelled pasture growth for January was low over most of NSW. Relative to historical records, it was below average across 42% of NSW over the north west, tablelands, slopes and coast. Biomass levels declined over a similar area of the State. Relative to historical records, biomass was low across the north west, tablelands and central NSW.

Quarterly and half yearly relative pasture growth was low over 60% or more of NSW. Only the far south east, south and areas of western NSW had near average relative growth over the last 6 months.

The seasonal outlooks presented in this report are obtained from the Australian Bureau of Meteorology & other sources. These outlooks are general statements about the likelihood (chance) of (for example) exceeding the median rainfall or minimum or maximum temperatures. Such probability outlooks should not be used as categorical or definitive forecasts, but should be regarded as tools to assist in risk management & decision making. Changes in seasonal outlooks may have occurred since this report was released. Outlook information was up to date as at 6th - 10th February 2014.

Figure 1: Relative monthly topsoil moisture

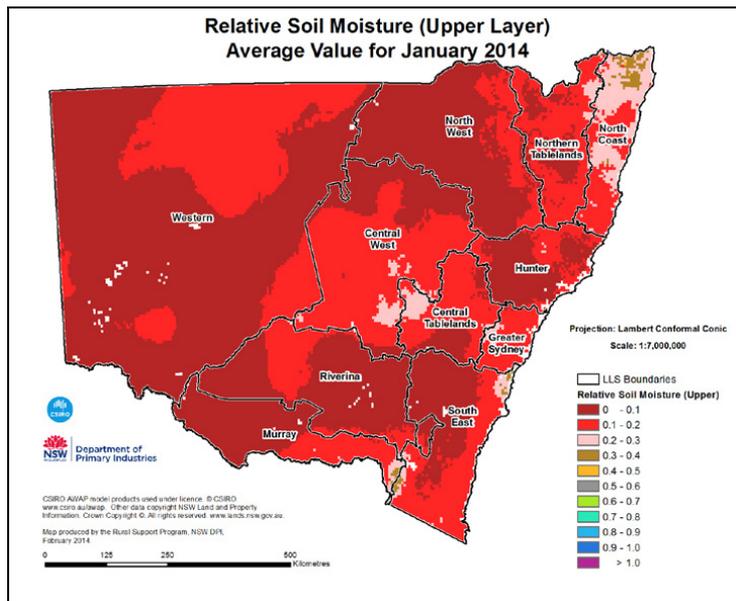
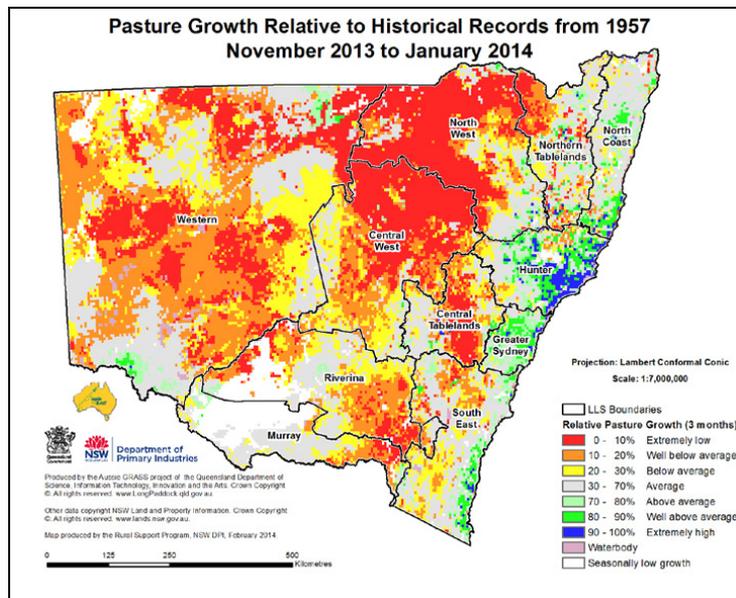


Figure 2: Relative quarterly pasture growth



More information

For more information, contact the NSW Department of Primary Industries on 02 6391 3100 or Local Land Services on 1300 795 299.

Acknowledgments

Information used in this report was sourced from the Bureau of Meteorology, CSIRO, Queensland Department of Science, Information Technology, Innovation and the Arts, NSW Local Land Services and NSW Department of Primary Industries.

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