

NSW Seasonal Conditions Summary - March 2014

Highlights

- Good rainfall in mid-late February eased dry conditions across much of NSW. However, areas of the north west, north east, far west & far south east received below average rainfall. More rainfall is needed to sustain pastures & replenish soil moisture & water supplies.
- The outlook indicates the chances of a drier or wetter March to May period are nearly equal, as are the chances for warmer or cooler daytime temperatures. Overnight temperatures are likely to be warmer.
- February pasture growth was average across much of NSW, but low in the north west, north east & south east. Over the last 6 months it was low across much of NSW.
- Modelled topsoil moisture improved, but still remains low across 98% of NSW. Subsoil levels declined slightly.
- Stock water supplies remain low over areas of the west, north west, north east & 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>

Good rainfall occurred across most of NSW in mid-late February, although follow up rainfall is needed to sustain pasture growth and to replenish soil moisture reserves and stock water supplies. Areas of the north west, far north east, far south east and far west only received light falls and rainfall in these areas was below average or worse.

The outlook for March to May 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 north west, north east and parts of the central west, and a slightly increased chance in the south east. March is likely to be drier than normal, and the chances for drier or wetter April are near equal. The chances of warmer or cooler than normal daytime temperatures are near equal across NSW over the March to May period, with slightly increased chances of warmer conditions across the east. Warmer than normal overnight temperatures are likely, particularly in the south east. March and April are likely to be warmer than normal.

The ENSO climatic indicators are currently neutral, although a warming trend is likely over autumn, approaching El Niño levels in winter.

Over February, 58% of NSW received average rainfall, with only 10% receiving below normal rainfall. The worst affected areas included the north coast, far south east and areas of the west and north west. The majority of NSW received falls of 25-100 mm. Daytime and overnight temperatures were above average.

Despite the rainfall, stock water supplies remained low across areas of the north east, north west, tablelands, Monaro, south west slopes, Riverina and western NSW. In these areas streamflow analysis shows well below average or worse run off over the last 1-2 years.

In relative terms, quarterly rainfall was below average across 46% of NSW, particularly across the north west, northern tablelands and coast, but near average over much of the western, southern and central areas. Half yearly relative rainfall was below average for the majority of NSW, except areas in the south and south east.

Modelled topsoil moisture remained low, but was improved by rainfall across the slopes, central west and south west, as well as areas of the north west, tablelands and central to mid-north coast. Modelled subsoil moisture levels declined slightly, being low over 59% of NSW. Continued rainfall is needed to replenish depleted profiles.

Modelled pasture growth improved during February across the tablelands, slopes and south west. Relative to historical records, it was average or better over 62% of NSW and below average in the north east, south east and parts of the north west. Biomass levels were stable. Relative to historical records, biomass was low across the north west, central NSW and the north and south coast. Quarterly relative pasture growth was low over 31% of NSW, particularly the north west and south east. Half yearly relative pasture growth was poor across 66% of NSW including the north west, north east, tablelands and slopes and areas of the far west.

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 March 2014.

Figure 1: Relative monthly topsoil moisture

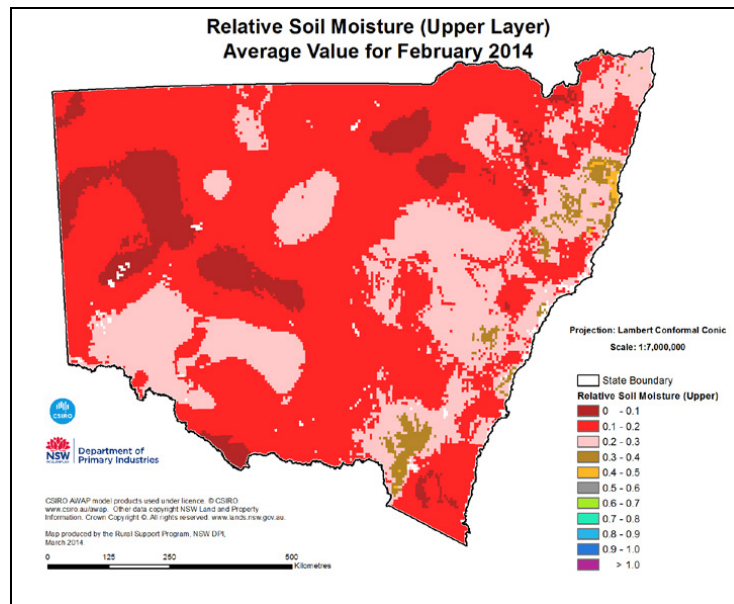
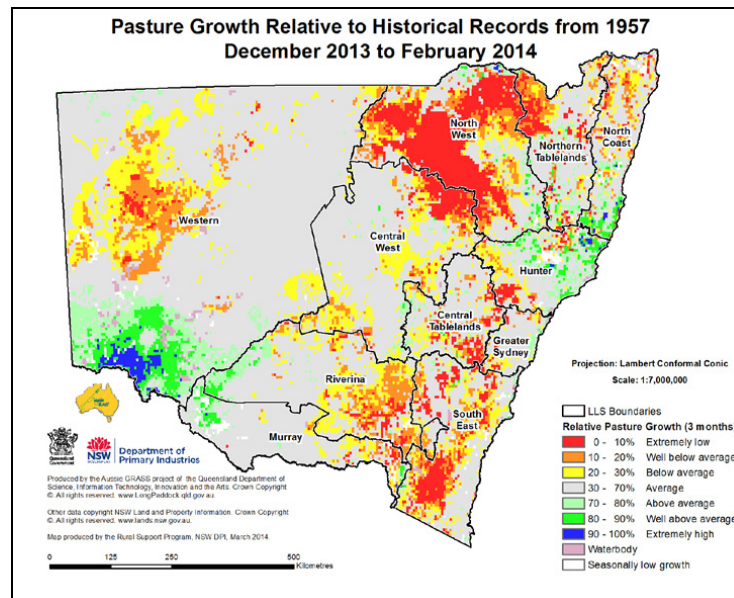


Figure 2: Relative quarterly pasture growth



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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