

Water Supply Outlook

August 5, 2020

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Interstate Commission on the Potomac River Basin (ICPRB)

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The ICPRB, through its Section for Cooperative Water Supply Operations on the Potomac (CO-OP), coordinates water supply operations during times of drought and recommends releases of stored water. These operations ensure adequate water supplies for Washington metropolitan area water users and for environmental flow levels. The water supply outlooks are published by CO-OP on a monthly basis between April and October. They are meant to provide an update on the possibility of low-flow conditions in the Potomac basin.

Summary/Conclusions:

There is a near-normal probability of releases from the Washington metropolitan area's back-up water supply reservoirs for the 2020 summer and fall seasons. The use of Jennings Randolph and Little Seneca reservoirs is generally triggered by low flows brought about by a combination of low summer precipitation and low groundwater levels. Average precipitation in the Potomac Basin in July was 0.5 inches below normal. The 12-month cumulative basin precipitation is 4 inches below normal as of July 31. Though a dry weather pattern persisted in the region for several weeks, significant rain events have occurred in the last week of July, and the beginning of August. Streamflow is currently above normal, and groundwater levels are normal with some local exceptions. The Middle Atlantic River Forecast Center's (MARFC) outlook for water resources and supplies is good. Precipitation and temperatures in August are expected to be above normal.

At present, there is sufficient flow in the Potomac River to meet the Washington metropolitan area's water demands without augmentation from upstream reservoirs. In the event that low-flow conditions do develop, the Washington metropolitan area is well-protected from a water supply shortage owing to carefully designed drought-contingency plans.

ICPRB's Low Flow Outlook:

There is a 5 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 of this year; at these flow levels, water supply releases from Jennings Randolph and Little Seneca reservoirs may occur. Releases occur when predicted flow is less than demand plus a required environmental flow. Drinking water demand ranges from 400 to 700 MGD during the summer months and the minimum flow-by at Little Falls is 100 MGD. Note that natural flow is defined as observed flow at the Little Falls gage plus total Washington metropolitan Potomac withdrawals, with an adjustment made to remove the effect of North Branch reservoir releases on stream flow.

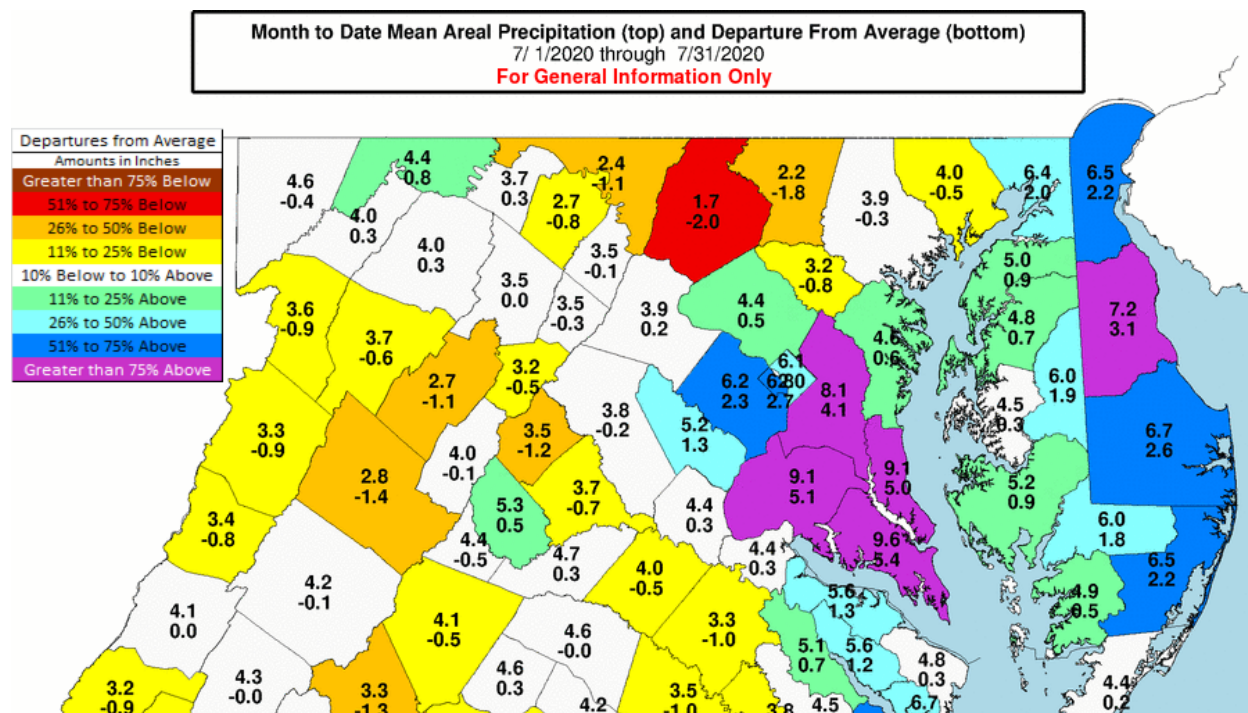
The conditional probability is estimated by analyzing the historical stream flow records and giving consideration to recent stream flow values, precipitation totals for the prior 12 months, current groundwater levels, and the current Palmer Drought Index. Past years in which watershed conditions most closely resemble current conditions are weighted more heavily in the determination of conditional probability. The historical, or unconditional, probability is based on an analysis of the historical record without weighing for current conditions. The 5 to 17 percent conditional probability compares to the 7 to 15 percent historical probability and is considered the more reliable indicator.

Outlook for natural Potomac River flow at Little Falls – Watershed conditions as of August 1, 2020

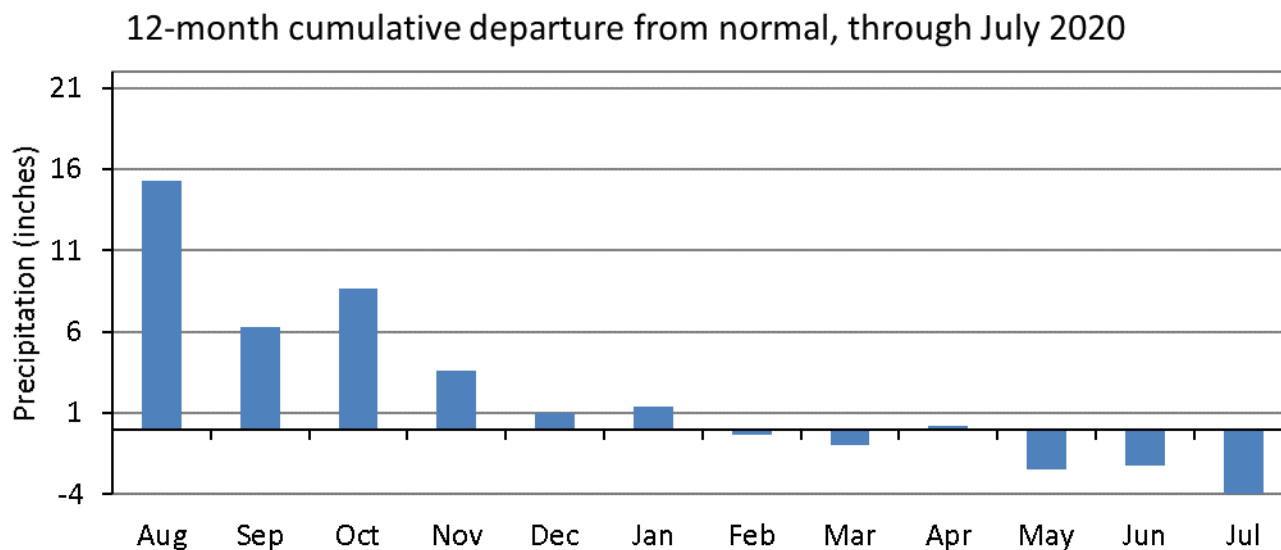
| Low flow threshold (MGD) | Low flow threshold (cfs) | Historical probability of lower flow August 1 through December 31 | Conditional probability of lower flow August 1 through December 31 |
|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|--|---|
| 1200 | 1858 | 67% | 81% |
| 1000 | 1548 | 47% | 67% |
| 800 | 1238 | 24% | 30% |
| 700 | 1084 | 15% | 17% |
| 600 | 929 | 7% | 5% |

Past Precipitation:

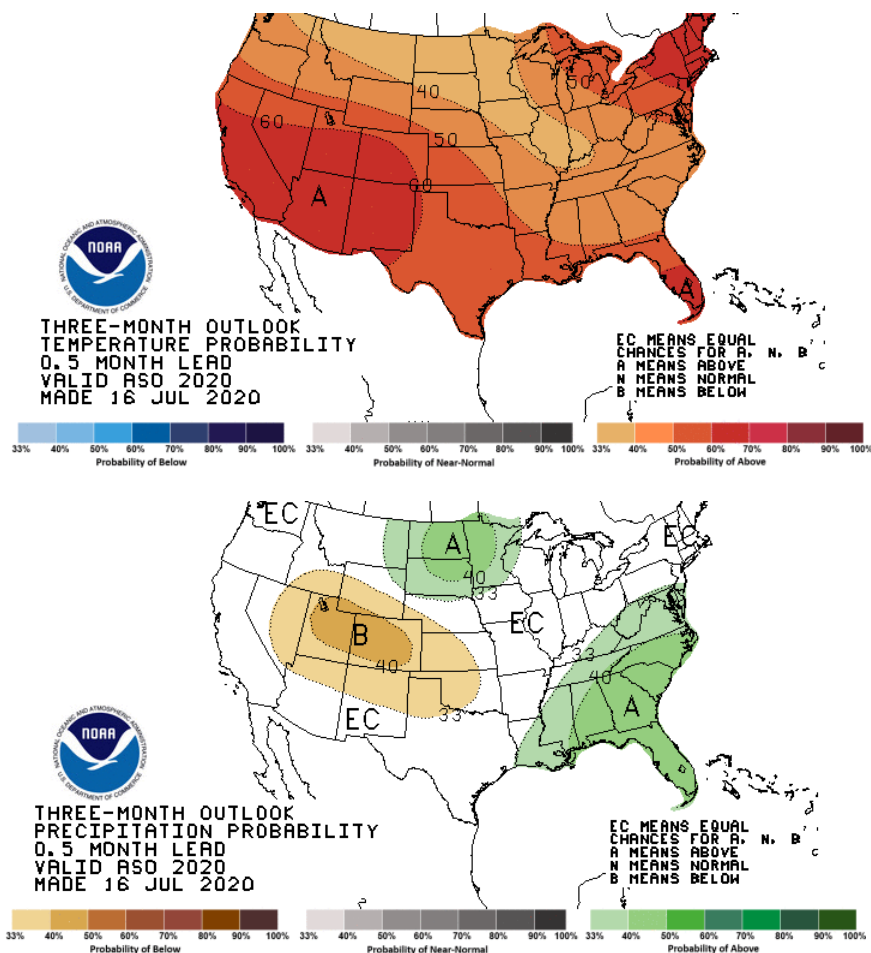
Data from the National Weather Service's Middle Atlantic River Forecast Center (MARFC) shows that the Potomac basin upstream of Washington, D.C. has received a precipitation total of 3.3 inches for the month of July, which is -0.5 inches below normal. The 12-month cumulative basin precipitation is 4 inches below normal as of July 31 (see graph).



Source: Middle Atlantic River Forecast Center, National Weather Service



Precipitation and Drought Outlook for August, September and October 2020:



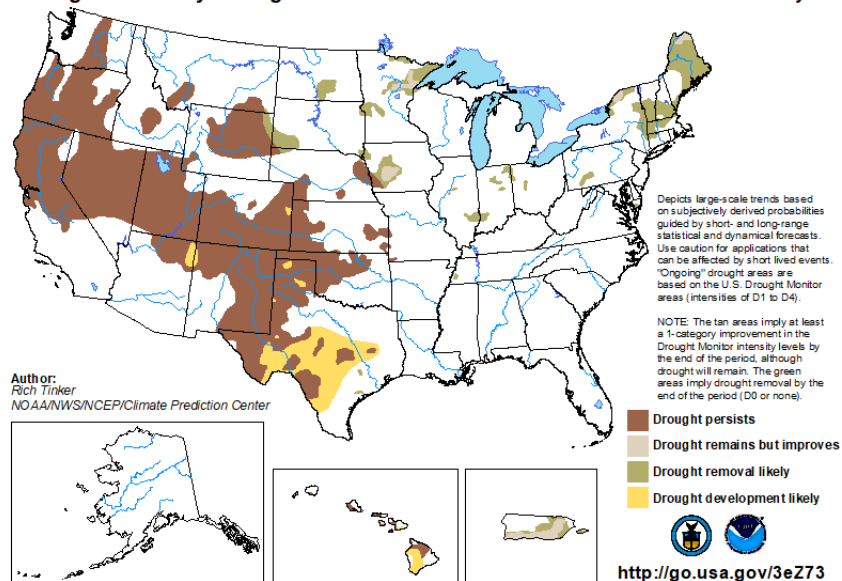
The Middle Atlantic River Forecast Center's (MARFC) outlook for water resources and supplies is good.

The National Weather Service Climate Prediction Center's one-month outlook for August calls for above normal temperatures, and above normal precipitation in the Potomac Basin. The 90-day outlook for August through October calls for above normal temperatures and above normal precipitation.

As of July 16, 2020, the Climate Prediction Center's U.S. Seasonal Drought Outlook reports no drought development in the Potomac basin.

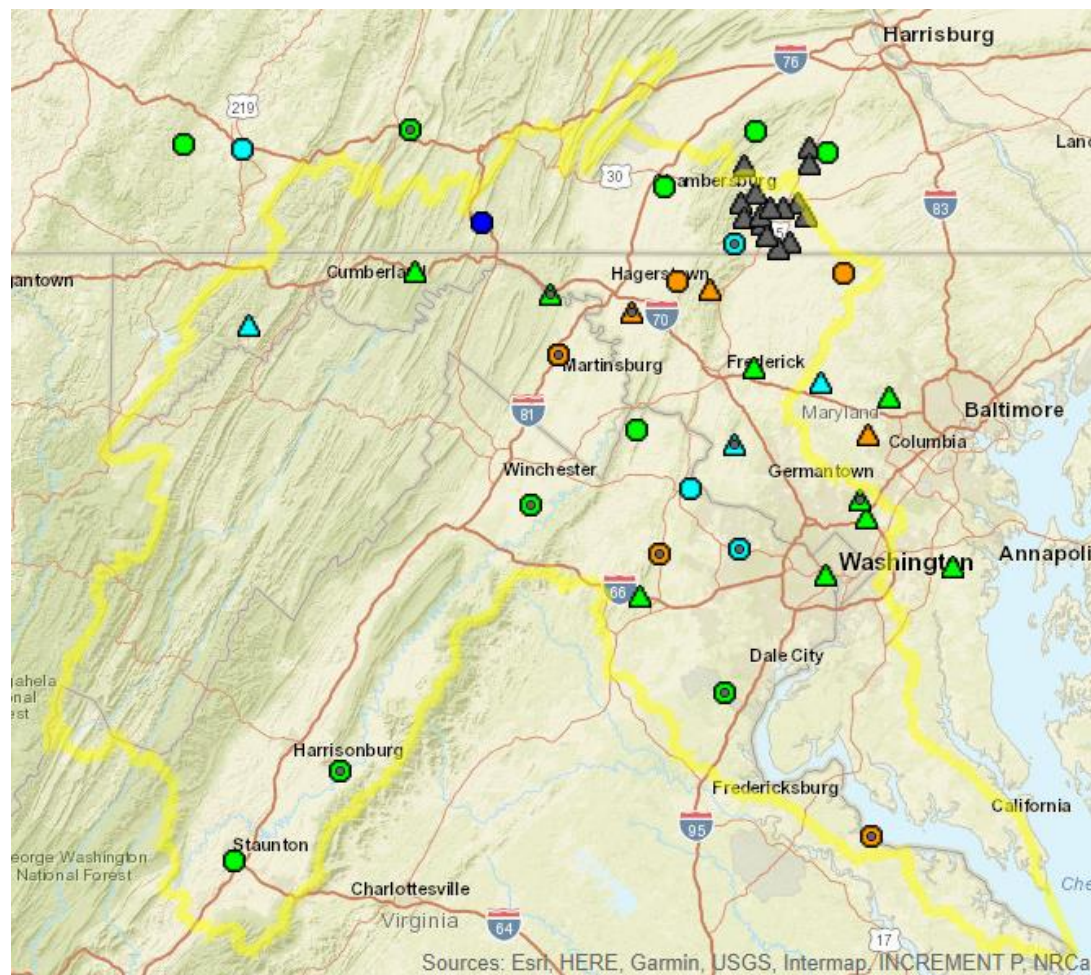
U.S. Seasonal Drought Outlook Drought Tendency During the Valid Period

Valid for July 16 - October 31, 2020
Released July 16



Groundwater – Current Conditions:

The groundwater map below, developed by the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS), Pennsylvania Water Science Center, shows that current water levels in most monitoring wells in the Potomac basin are in the “Normal” range. Wells with a gray dot inside the symbol identify Water Supply Outlook wells. In this map, the USGS defines “Normal” as between the 25th and 75th percentiles, and “Below Normal” as between the 10th and 24th percentile. “Much Below Normal” is defined as below the 10th percentile.



Wells with a gray dot inside the symbol identify water supply outlook wells

| Explanation - Percentile classes (symbol color based on most recent measurement) | | | | | | | |
|--|------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|--|---|--------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● |
| Low | <10 | 10-24 | 25-75 | 76-90 | >90 | High | Not Ranked |
| | Much Below Normal | Below Normal | Normal | Above Normal | Much Above Normal | | |

| Wells | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| ○ | ◼ | △ | ◼ |
| Real Time | Continuous | Periodic Measurement | |

Reservoir Storage – Current Conditions:

No water supply releases from the CO-OP shared system have been made this year. An artificially varied flow release for Jennings Randolph reservoir is planned for August 29-30, 2020.

Reservoir storage as of August 5, 2020

| Facility | Percent Full | Current usable storage, BG | Total usable capacity, BG |
|--|--------------|----------------------------|---------------------------|
| WSSC's Patuxent reservoirs ^{4,5} | 83 | 8.8 | 10.5 |
| Fairfax Water's Occoquan Reservoir | 100 | 8.1 | 8.1 |
| Little Seneca Reservoir ¹ | 99 | 3.8 | 3.9 |
| Jennings Randolph water supply ² | 100 | 13.1 | 13.1 |
| Jennings Randolph water quality ² | 89 | 14.5 | 16.3 |
| Savage Reservoir ³ | 79 | 5.0 | 6.3 |

¹ Usable capacity consistent with Ortt, *et al.* (2011).

² 2013 revised stage-storage curve provided by Bill Haines, US Army Corps of Engineers, Baltimore District.

³ 1998 revised stage-storage curve provided by Bill Haines, US Army Corps of Engineers, Baltimore District.

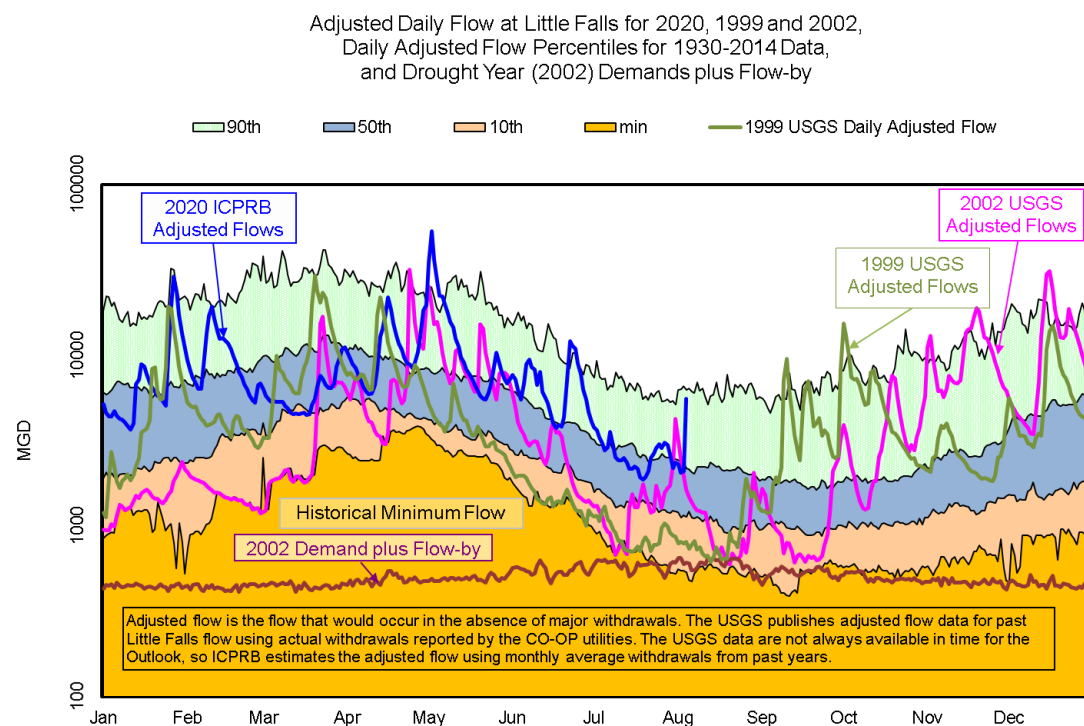
⁴ Bathymetric study conducted December 2015 with revisions in December 2016, and unusable storage corrected June 2017.

Potomac River Flow:

The estimated adjusted Potomac flow at Little Falls on August 1 was 2.2 billion gallons per day (BGD). For this day of the year, this value was slightly below the 50th percentile flow value of 2.3 BGD. Following recent rain events, the adjusted flow has risen to 5.5 BGD, nearing the 90th percentile flow. Adjusted flow, shown in the figure below, is the flow that would occur in the absence of major Washington metropolitan area withdrawals, but includes releases from upstream reservoirs. Adjusted flow averaged 7.9 BGD for the past three months and 2.7 BGD in July.

Environmental Flow-by:

Average observed Potomac flow at Little Falls in July was well above the minimum recommendation of 100 MGD.



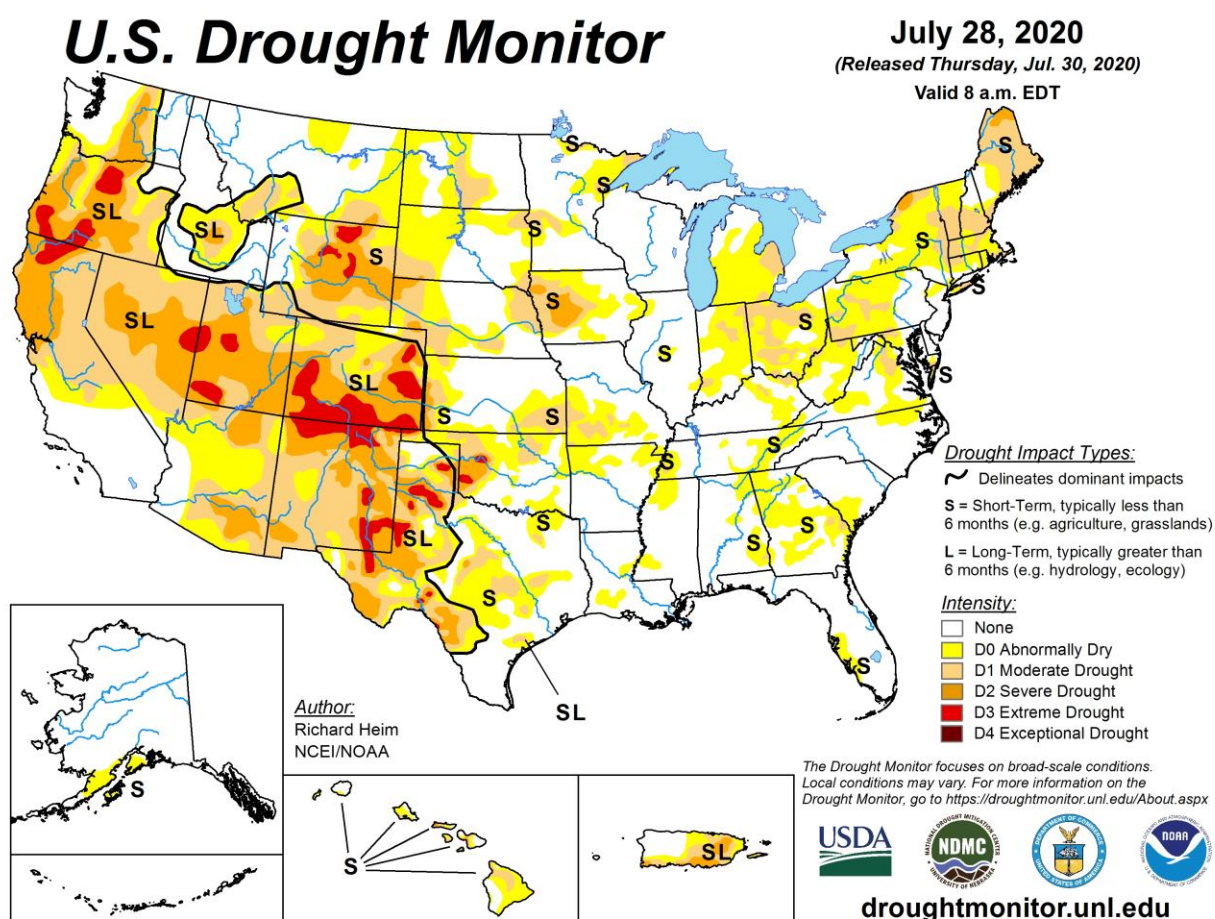
Little Falls flow statistics are based on 1930 through 2014 USGS published gage flow, "USGS 01646502 POTOMAC RIVER (ADJUSTED) NEAR WASH, DC". To create this flow record, the USGS has added historical water supply withdrawals from the Potomac as reported by FW, WSSC, the Aqueduct, and Rockville to the Little Falls gage flow record.

Drought Status:

Drought status in [Maryland](#), [Pennsylvania](#), and [Virginia](#) is “Normal”. The current drought stage as defined in the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (MWCOC)’s water supply and drought response awareness plan is normal.

Drought Monitor and Soil Moisture:

The NOAA Climate Prediction Center’s U.S. Drought Monitor map (see first figure below) indicated the presence of abnormally dry and moderate drought conditions within the Potomac basin as of July 28, 2020. The Palmer Drought Severity Index by Division map (see second figure on next page) indicated moderate to severe drought conditions in parts of the Potomac basin as of August 1, 2020. Recent rain events in the region are not reflected in these maps.



Drought Severity Index by Division
Weekly Value for Period Ending Aug 01, 2020
Long Term Palmer

