



Panhandle Water News

OCTOBER 2017

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Recent Rains Help Fill Lake Meredith

Canadian River Municipal Water Authority (CRMWA) reports recent rainfall in our area is contributing to rising lake levels. In early October, reports show Lake Meredith to be over 30 percent full at 68.76 feet. Seeing an increase of over 42 feet since 2013 when the lake hit an all-time low of 26.14 feet.

CRMWA operates under the Canadian River Compact, an agreement between New Mexico, Texas and Oklahoma dating back to 1950. Ute Lake can hold 200,000 acre-feet of water before it must release water into the Canadian River, which eventually makes it way to Lake Meredith.¹ On October 6 water began flowing over Ute Lake's spillway. As soon as the spilling subsides, CRMWA will ask for the flood control gates to be opened, and that water could, with a varying degree, reach Lake Meredith within four days.



Ute Lake spillway on October 8, 2017. Picture courtesy of Kent Satterwhite.

Kent Satterwhite, CRMWA General Manager said to meet state drinking water requirements, lake water is blended with groundwater. "This inflow will bring down chloride levels in the lake, which means we can increase lake water and reduce our groundwater usage," said Satterwhite. Inflow will also increase total water supply for member cities during their peak usage months (summertime), which in turn will help those cities reduce groundwater usage locally.

CRMWA has been blending lake water with groundwater since late 2001. The John C. Williams wellfield, located in Roberts County covers 50,000 acres. The organization owns over 450,000 contiguous acres of water rights, making them the largest owner of groundwater in the State of Texas.²

References:

¹"FAQ." CRMWA, <http://www.crmwa.com/faq>

²"CRMWA/Lake Meredith/Ogallala Aquifer Facts." CRMWA, 18 Aug. 2015, www.crmwa.com/Resources/Lake%20Meredith%20Facts%208182015.pdf.



Study and Conservation Areas to Remain

During the August 24 PGCD Board Meeting, Board of Directors voted to keep all Study and Conservation Areas as currently delineated. At this time, there are 16 Study Areas and one Conservation Area.

The main determining factor for delineation into a Study Area is exceeding the acceptable annual decline rate of 1.25 percent. Conservation Areas are those that have exceeded the 1.25 percent for two or more years, while also exceeding the acceptable cumulative decline in saturated thickness, which varies across the District. All criteria for Study and Conservation Areas can be found in District Rules, which are posted online at www.pgcd.us/rules/.

Under District Rule 15.2 (f-2), regarding Study Areas, meters are required on all non-exempt wells and require well operators to verify contiguous acreage. The District is working to update our records; if you received a certified Contiguous Acreage Form we ask you to send that back at this time. Also, to avoid enforcement, please ensure irrigation wells, 3in or larger, located within a Study Area, are metered.

2017-2018 PGCD Scholarship Question

The Panhandle Groundwater Conservation District established its scholarship program in 2002 and has since given away \$135,000 to graduating District students. First place is awarded a \$4,000 scholarship, second place receives \$3,000 and third place \$2,000. Each scholarship amount is split into a four year payout.

Graduating seniors living within the District (Armstrong, Carson, Donley, Gray, Potter, Roberts and Wheeler counties) are eligible to apply for the scholarship. Applicants must write a 500-1,000 word essay on the topic chosen by the District. Recipients are required to enroll as a full-time student, attend college the fall semester immediately following selection and maintain at least a 2.5 GPA at the college of their selection.

The 2017/2018 essay topic is:

In your opinion, why are people complacent about conserving water for future generations? Can conservation be taught, and/or what can be done to change the current mindset?

Applications and additional information can be found online on the District's website at www.pgcd.us.

La Niña Possible During Fall and Winter 2017

So far through 2017, ENSO-neutral conditions have persisted with average sea surface temperatures (SSTs) across the central and eastern Pacific Ocean. However, the Climate Prediction Center has issued a La Niña watch in their October 12 report stating that there is an increasing chance (55-60%) of La Niña during the Northern Hemisphere through fall and winter 2017-18.

During September, SSTs were trending down by registering a near-to-below average across the central and eastern Pacific Ocean. In Figure 1 below the negative SST anomalies are evident along the South American northwestern

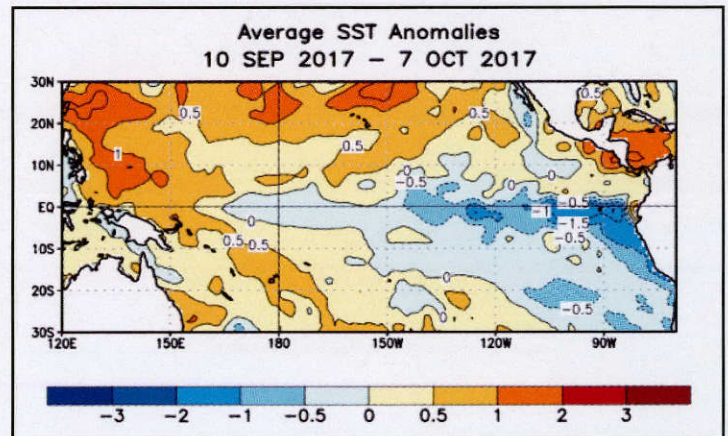


Figure 1: Average SST anomalies across the Pacific Ocean for September 10-October 7.

coast and west along the equator towards the central Pacific Ocean.

In order for a La Niña to be documented, the SSTs will have to see a negative departure from normal of -0.5°C or more for a period of at least five consecutive overlapping three-month sessions. The last recorded La Niña was August-December 2016, and before that a longer period of June 2010—March 2012 which brought a severe drought to the Texas Panhandle. At this time, most of the models are leaning towards a weak La Niña, but also show SSTs warming back up by early spring 2018 and moving back to ENSO-neutral conditions.

This year the Panhandle did see some abnormally dry to moderately dry times during mid-summer especially in the eastern portions of the Panhandle; however, August rainfall totals did eliminate those problems. According to the October 10 U.S. Drought Monitor map (Figure 2) no areas of drought are currently present within the Panhandle. August was an extremely wet month with the National Weather Service reporting a total of 7.40 inches of rainfall received. This came close to breaking the current wettest August of 8.07 inches in 2009.



According to PGCD's rain gauge totals (Figure 3) through September all counties are currently at or above the average yearly total rainfall. The current Climate Prediction Center's three month outlook for October, November and December issued September 21 shows the Panhandle in a 50% possibility of above normal temperatures and an equal chance possibility of above or below average precipitation.

Education Program Starting 18th Year

PGCD is starting up the eighteenth year of its education program. The program was created in 1999 and has since reached out to thousands of students across the District. It is stated in PGCD's management plan for the District to reach out to at least 80 percent of the schools within the district boundaries to teach them about water conservation. However, our goal is to reach 100 percent to ensure we are making an impact on the importance of water conservation to our future generations.

The program focuses on fifth grade students, teaching them about the importance of water conservation, the water cycle, about the Ogallala Aquifer, where our water comes from, and playa lakes. Many of the topics discussed teach them objectives they are tested on in the State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness test, making it a great educational aid for teachers.

We also have an underground flow model that is a great visual aid of how wells operate, what the aquifer looks like, and how water flows beneath the earth. At the end of the presentation we give the students a water saving kit that allows them to take conservation practices into their own hands.

It is a great tool for educating our youth about water conservation and we are excited to be able to start another year in the classrooms. If you would like to schedule an education presentation or would like any other type of presentation given please contact Britney Britten at the PGCD office at (806) 883-2501 or by email at pgcd_education@yahoo.com.

In addition to the 5th grade education presentation, Britney also presents to local civic groups and other organizations. Topics include, General District Information, Xeriscape Gardens, Rainwater Harvesting Information and Ways to Conserve Water at Home. Our presentations are great for any Club, including: Lion's Club, Boy or Girl Scout Troops or evening gardening clubs. Contact the office today to schedule your next presentation.

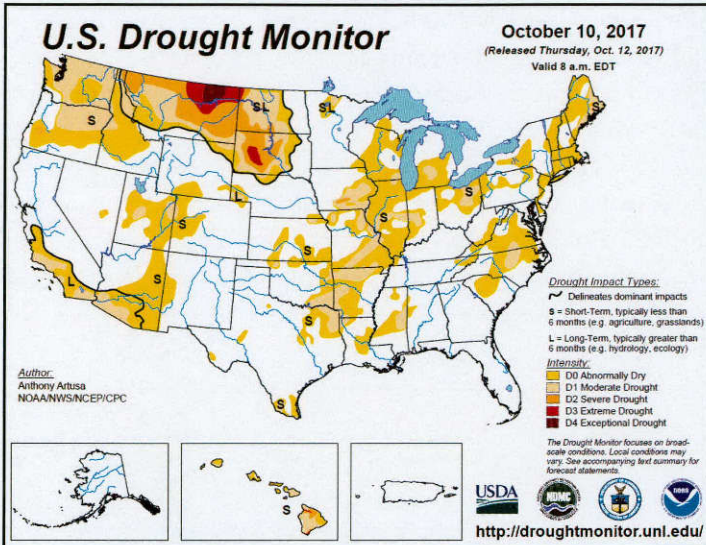


Figure 2: U.S. Drought Monitor October 10, 2017.

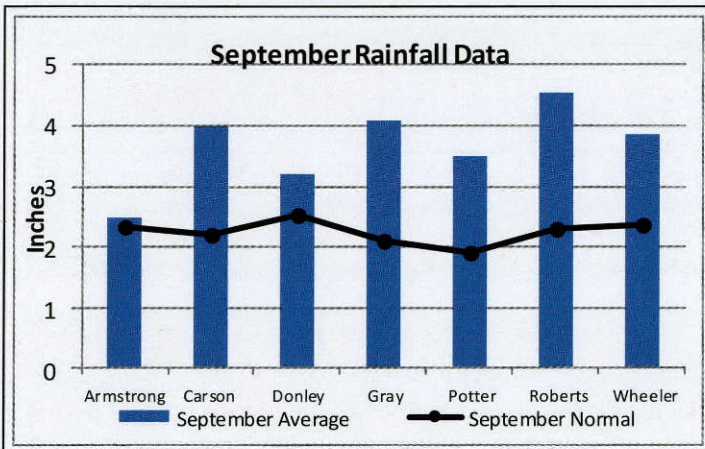


Figure 3: PGCD's year to date rainfall for 2017 by counties.

Public Meeting Scheduled

The Texas Alliance of Groundwater Districts (TAGD) is having a Groundwater Seminar on November 8, 2017. The seminar will be at Texas A&M AgriLife Research & Extension Center, 6500 Amarillo Blvd West, Amarillo, TX 79106 from 5:00 - 7:30 p.m. The District encourages anyone within our District to attend the seminar, which includes a free, catered dinner and time to meet with our local elected officials. Topics include: GCD 101 presented by TAGD, Legislator Panel Discussion and a GMA Panel Discussion. **RSVP required by calling 806-883-2501.**

2017-2018 Tax Rate

During the August 24 Board Meeting, Panhandle Groundwater Conservation District's Board of Directors approved the 2017-2018 tax rate. The tax rate will be 0.00905/\$100 valuation. Though a slight increase, the effective tax rate is the total tax rate needed to raise the same amount of property tax revenue for PGCD from the same properties in both the 2016 and 2017 tax year.

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- 100th Anniversary of the Conservation Amendment
- Cybersecurity and Water

Conference Hosted By:



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