

Drought

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later in the season.

Any runoff is welcome to build up streams, Today said.

“In the central and southern plains, those streams are running quite dry for this time of year,” he said. “Typically, it’s drier this time of year, so for it to be running drier than normal — it’s very low this year.”

The drought continues to impact agriculture, Today said.

The timing of the first frost holds little meaning this fall, as crops were harvested much earlier because of the drought, Today said. But winter wheat is running far behind the five-year average. South Dakota would normally see 97 percent of its winter wheat emerged, but only 43 percent has emerged so far.

“It’s very dry soil that’s not allowing the seed to break dormancy. They are way behind,” he said. “Nebraska and South Dakota have a large percentage of winter wheat in poor or very poor condition. Almost a quarter of the winter wheat is under D4 (exceptional drought) conditions. The winter wheat folks have become very aware of this situation.”

In addition, the hard freeze and arrival of winter signals the end of most soil moisture recovery, Today said.

The drought has already exerted a major impact on the Missouri River, according to Kevin Grode with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers in Omaha. At a recent meeting in Sioux City, he contrasted the historic flood year of 2011 with the historic drought year of 2012.

“We had 61 million acre-feet of runoff in 2011 and 19 million acre-feet in 2012,” he said. “The 2012 September runoff was the lowest in 114 years of record-keeping. There have been dramatic changes in the basin in just over a year.”

During Thursday’s conference call, Grode noted the reservoir levels continue to drop. The system held 50.6 million acre-feet of water Oct. 25, and the level is still falling.

The total system storage on the six mainstem reservoirs currently is 49.5 million acre-feet (maf) as of November. That’s more than 7 million acre-feet below the flood control stage. The Corps hopes to have 56.8

million acre-feet in storage for the start of the next runoff season.

“The next runoff season, which starts March 1, would start with an estimated 48.7 million acre-feet, or about 1 million acre-feet less than we see now,” Grode said.

The Corps plans to start reducing its releases next Friday in moving toward its minimum releases, he said. The navigation season ends Dec. 1 at the mouth near St. Louis.

“Right now, the releases are at 36,500 cubic feet per second (cfs),” he said. “We will allow the reduction of releases over a two-week period, ideally to reach 12,000 cfs.”

The Corps has previously

taken the river down to 12,000 cfs as its minimum release, Grode said. In 2007, the Corps released 12,000 cfs several times, he said.

“The 12,000 cfs goal may not be reached right away, or it may not be reached at all this winter,” he said. “It depends on what happens for the reservoirs during the last few weeks.”

Last September, the Corps sent emails to intake owners and persons in need of water supplies below Gavins Point Dam, Grode said. At that time, they were informed of the Corps’ plans to release the minimum of 12,000 cfs, he said.

“We are very cognizant of the fact that the river has changed somewhat due to the historical

releases from the system in 2011,” he said. “We are being very cautious as we reduce releases to the minimum level.”

Without significant precipitation in the months ahead, officials worry the region may be headed for a multi-year drought.

The southeast region of South Dakota saw some moisture during the past week, according to the state’s weekly crop report. All reporting stations recorded precipitation, with Yankton and Vermillion the highest with about a half-inch each.

However, Yankton, Bon Homme, Hutchinson, Turner, Clay, Union and Lincoln counties remain up to a half-inch below normal for the past month. Charles Mix and Douglas counties are a half-inch to one inch below normal for the month.

And the entire southeast region remains in exceptional drought, the worst category. The region remains at least 7 inches below normal for the growing season, which started April 1.

The following are the precipitation readings at reporting stations in southeast South Dakota:

- Academy: 0.45 inches since Oct. 1, or 1.82 inches below normal; 11.52 inches since April 1, or 9.51 inches below normal;
- Centerville: 0.72 inches since Oct. 1, or 2.04 inches below normal; 9.23 inches since April 1, or 12.96 inches below normal;
- Pickstown: 0.67 inches since Oct. 1, or 1.84 inches below normal; 9.88 inches since April 1, or

11.95 inches below normal;

- Vermillion: 1.57 inches since Oct. 1, or 1.27 inches below normal; 13.14 inches since April 1, or 11.60 inches below normal;
- Yankton: 1.63 inches since Oct. 1, or 1.20 inches below normal; 10.13 inches since April 1, or 12.75 inches below normal.

According to the Nebraska weekly crop report, the northeast district received 0.10 to 0.40 inches last week. The northeast district has received nearly 13 inches of moisture since April 1, or 59 percent of the normal 22 inches.

You can follow Randy Dockendorf on Twitter at twitter.com/RDockendorf

Wal-Mart And Target: A Tale Of 2 Discounters

BY ANNE D'INNOCENZIO
AP Retail Writer

NEW YORK — This holiday season, the biggest discount chains in the U.S. will tell the tale of two very different shoppers: those that have and those that have not.

Wal-Mart Stores Inc., the world’s largest retailer, on Thursday acknowledged that its low-income shoppers continue to struggle in the economy and issued an outlook for the fourth quarter — which encompasses the holiday shopping period — that falls below Wall Street estimates. On the same day, its smaller rival Target Corp., which caters to more affluent shoppers, said it expects results during the quarter to exceed the Street’s projections.

The two discounters offer valuable insight into how Americans will spend in November and December, a period that’s traditionally the busiest shopping period of the year. Some merchants depend on the holiday shopping season for up to 40 percent of their annual sales, but economists watch the period closely to get a temperature reading on the overall mood of American consumers.

The forecasts seem to confirm a trend that has taken shape during the economic downturn. Well-heeled shoppers spend more freely as the economy begins to show new signs of life, while consumers in the lower-income brackets continue to hold tight to their purse strings even as the housing and stock markets rebound.

Wal-Mart and Target both are discounters, but they cater to different customers. Wal-Mart, which says its customers’ average household income ranges from \$30,000 to \$60,000, hammers its low-price message and focuses on stocking basics like tee shirts and underwear along with household goods. But Target, whose customers have a median household income of \$64,000 a year, is known for carrying discounted designer clothes and home decor under the same roof as detergent and dishwashing liquid.

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