

Upper Clark Fork Basin Conditions Report

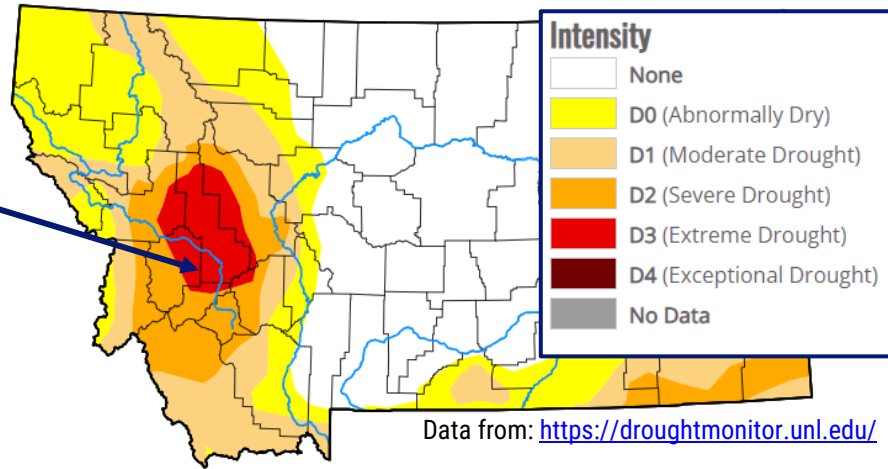
March 12, 2025



The Montana Department of
**Natural Resources
& Conservation**

US Drought Monitor

Upper Clark Fork is in D2–Severe Drought to D3–Extreme Drought. The upper portion of the basin has transitioned out of D3 over the winter into D2. 50%+ of the basin still in D3.

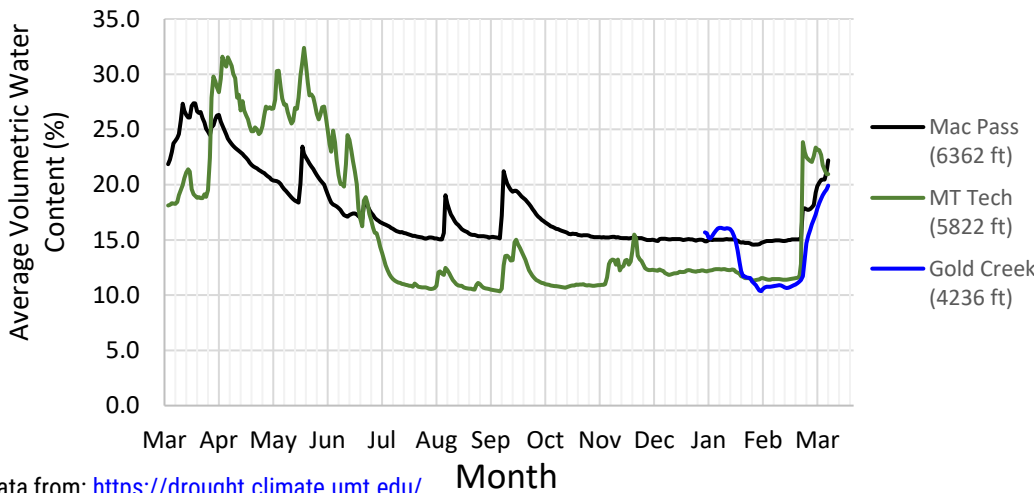


Data from: <https://droughtmonitor.unl.edu/>

Drought status progression



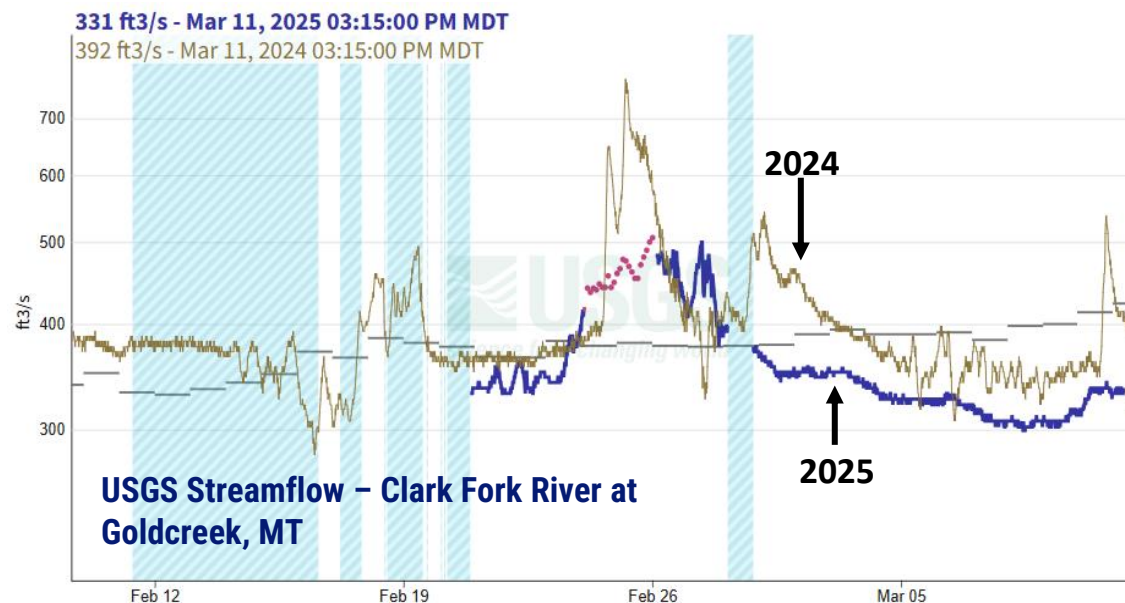
Soil Moisture



Monitoring sites showed a jump in soil moisture across elevations due to warm temperatures in mid-late February. Soil moisture across elevations is slightly below this time last year. This does not mean there is less moisture in the basin, it just might be in a different form still (snowpack). Warmer March temperatures will drive soil moisture up, lower March temperatures will keep soil moisture steady.

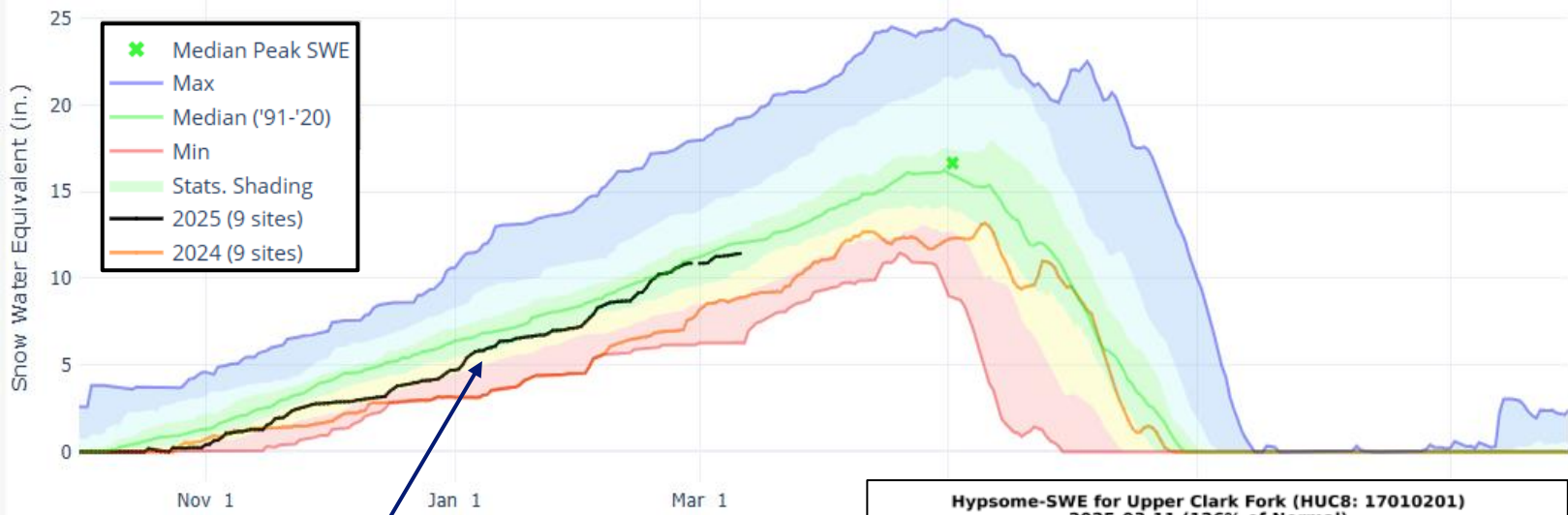
Streamflow

Clark Fork River flows at Gold Creek, MT show slightly less runoff over the past month compared to last year and less flow than the median average. This is consistent with soil moisture trends. Most of this runoff is lower-mid elevation snowpack melting with warmer temperatures. Much higher streamflows would indicate melting of higher elevation snowpack. Good news that this has not happened.

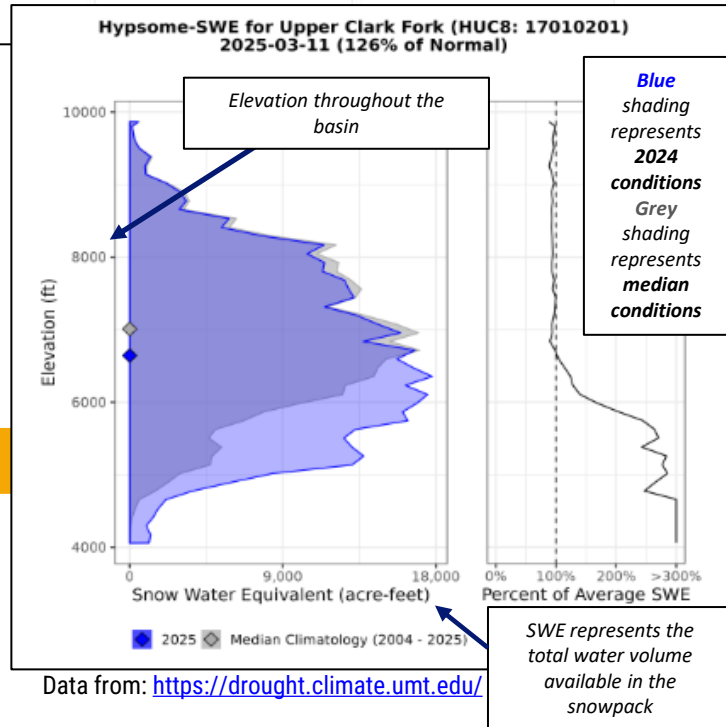


Data from: <https://waterdata.usgs.gov/monitoring-location/12324680/>

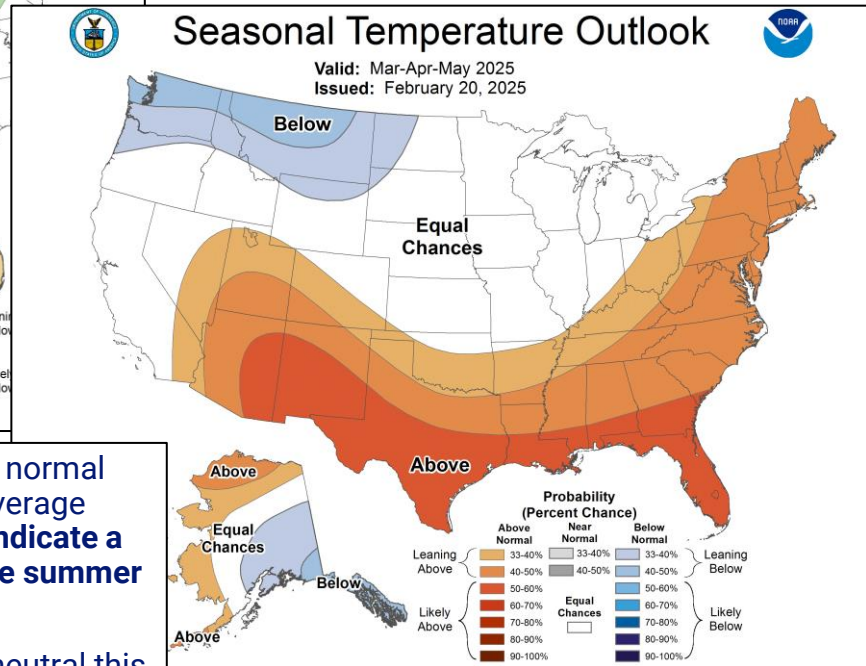
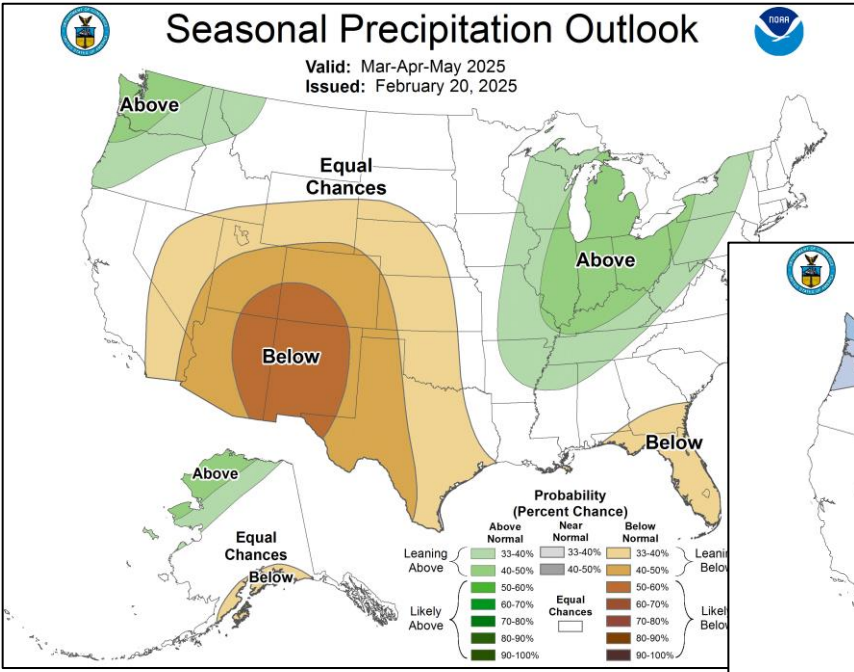
Snowpack Conditions



SNOTEL sites in the basin indicate snowpack is currently 95% of the 1991-2020 median, higher than this time in 2024. Hypsometric SWE graphs represent snowpack modeled across all elevations. Snowpack in higher elevations in the basin is near median, while currently lower-middle elevations have much more snowpack than median. This is due to both heavier snowpack at these elevations, as well as colder February temperatures. Temperature is critical this time of year when evaluating snowpack.



Seasonal Outlook



Short term forecasts predict below average to normal temperatures the rest of March and above average precipitation in March. **Longer term forecasts indicate a trend toward warm and dry conditions later in the summer (July – Sept).**

Currently expected to transition from La Niña to neutral this summer, however **we are expected to transition back to La Niña condition Winter 2026.**

Data from: <https://www.cpc.ncep.noaa.gov/products/predictions/90day/>