



# Rain Over Texas Quenches Dry Lone Star State

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Morning Edition

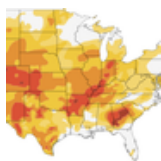
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Eric Gay/AP

While severe drought is taking hold in the Midwest, Texas is doing better. At this time last year, the state was on fire, crops were desiccated in the field and livestock were slowly starving. But recent rains have almost ended more than a year of record drought.

## Watch The U.S. Dry Out



Environment  
Interactive: Mapping  
The U.S. Drought

"If you look at the way we were thinking and feeling on the last July 16, that was desperation. That was despair," says Gene Hall, public relations director for the Texas Farm Bureau.

If you want to find true despair in a drought, talk to farmers. The Texas Farm Bureau represents nearly 100,000 of them. Hall says the Lone Star

State had never seen anything like the blast furnace that was last summer.

Bales of hay spontaneously combusted as countywide fires raged out of control. Dying horses were abandoned roadside by desperate grief-stricken owners, and thousands of skinny cattle flooded auction. Hall says herds of cattle built painstakingly over decades had to be sold completely.

"When you've built up those genetics over a long period of time," he says, "oh, it's tough to have to sell that."

### Timely Rainfall

As the heartless August 2011 turned into hot September and finally blessed October, meteorologists told Texans to expect one more year of the same La Nina drought. Happily, they were wrong.

"Most of the state has gotten some very timely winter and spring rains, even summer rains," Hall says. "In July we're looking at about between 3 and 5 inches of rain here in Central Texas, and that's just almost unprecedented. So it is a very different situation we're looking at."

### A Fight For Water In Drought-Stricken Texas



U.S.  
Texas Seeks New  
Water Supplies Amid  
Drought

The relief is not uniform, but it is widespread. In North Texas, the lakes filled back up completely. East Texas saw hard rain, too. June was hot and dry, which damaged corn crops. But then in July, surprisingly, the skies opened up in Central, East and parts of South Texas, dumping up to 6 inches at a time and causing sporadic flash flooding. Facebook was full of Texans tickled pink.

Mark Svoboda, a climatologist with the National Drought Mitigation Center in Lincoln, Neb., says the eastern corridor of the state, from Houston to Dallas, is in much better shape.

"It's good news for a change. You know, it's been a long 18-, 22-month period," says Svoboda, who adds that last year's drought in Texas was one of the worst on record. "Fortunately, though, that didn't continue into this summer as far as that same intensity, and intensity is a part of how much impact you can expect to see out of a drought. So that's probably what's keeping this from looking like the 1950s."

### A Lasting Wet Spell?

Svodoba says Texas is not out of the woods. A multiyear drought will

sometimes be broken in the second or third year by a wet spell that goes away and doesn't come back.

"Does that mean that's where we are now? No, I think it's too early to say," he says. "But this trend ... has occurred when we didn't expect it so much, and it's sort of been independent of any tropical storm activity."

Still, for now the rains have increased the water content in the soil. Moist soils tend to cool the atmosphere, which in turn encourages precipitation — the negative feedback loop in reverse.

When September turns to October, Texas eyes will turn skyward and look to see just what sort of future Mother Nature is writing for them there.

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