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<https://climate.ncsu.edu>

Pains Bay fire, from US Fish & Wildlife Service

Summary

In terms of intensity or duration, the 2011 drought was not particularly impressive. However, dryness shifting from west to east during the spring and a rain-starved summer at the coast made for an active and prolonged fire season across North Carolina. At times, multiple large fires burned or smoldered until containment efforts – and precipitation from summer storms including Hurricane Irene – finally reined them in.

Statistics

For all of North Carolina



DM

2011	Jan	-3.8°	-2.0"	D0
	Feb	+3.8°	-1.3"	D0
	Mar	+1.3°	+0.9"	D0
	Apr	+3.6°	+0.1"	D0
	May	+1.2°	-0.9"	D0
	Jun	+3.4°	-1.4"	D1
	Jul	+3.1°	-1.3"	D1
	Aug	+2.1°	+1.7"	D0
	Sep	+0.8°	+1.1"	none

Narrative

During the dry **La Niña** winter of 2010-11, Moderate Drought (D1) expanded across the Piedmont in early January.

A stretch of **dry, windy days in mid-February** helped spread several fires in the western Piedmont and southern Mountains.

Above-normal rainfall across central and western NC helped drought conditions subside in March and April, but **drought emerged along the coast** by early May amid the warm, dry spring there.

In May, the central and northern Coastal Plain received just **half an inch of rainfall**, causing soils and vegetation to dry up.

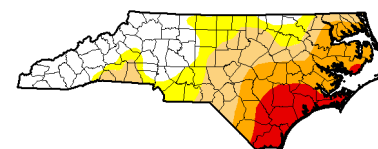
Several lightning-caused wildfires ignited in May and June, including the long-lived **Pains Bay, Holly Shelter, and Juniper Road** fires.

Persistent high pressure over the eastern US yielded a hot, dry summer, with Extreme Drought (D3) developing by early July.

More than 12 inches of rain in August, including from **Hurricane Irene**, helped put out the fires and alleviate the drought.



The Judes Gap fire burns in Polk County in February. (From NCFS)



US Drought Monitor, July 19, 2011

Timeline Legend



Statewide temperature and precipitation departures from 1901-2000 normal, from the National Centers for Environmental Information.

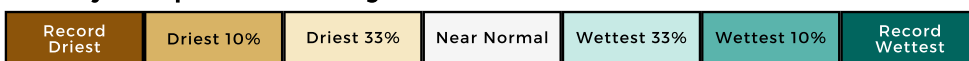
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Most common US Drought Monitor category in **North Carolina**, by area covered.

Monthly Temperature Rankings:



Monthly Precipitation Rankings:



US Drought Monitor Categories:

