

Climate at a Glance: Drought

Bullet-Point Summary:

- The United States is benefiting from fewer and less extreme drought events as the climate modestly warms.
- In 2017 and 2019, the United States registered [its smallest percentage of land area](#) experiencing drought in recorded history.
- The United States is undergoing its longest period in recorded history with fewer than 40 percent of the country experiencing “very dry” conditions.
- The [U.N. IPCC reports](#) with “high confidence” that precipitation has *increased* over mid-latitude land areas of the Northern Hemisphere (including the United States) during the past 70 years, while IPCC has “low confidence” about any negative trends globally. (See https://www.ipcc.ch/site/assets/uploads/sites/2/2019/06/SR15_Chapter3_Low_Res.pdf, p. 191.)

Short Summary: Real-world data show drought in the United States has become less frequent and severe as the climate has modestly warmed. Moreover, the United Nations reports “low confidence” about any negative trends globally. Droughts have always occurred, and they always will, so alarmists cannot claim that any droughts are necessarily caused by global warming. Instead, analysis of global and U.S. drought data show the droughts that have occurred recently are less frequent and severe than the droughts of the past several decades.

For example, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration chart below shows that the United States is undergoing its longest period in recorded history without at least 40 percent of the country experiencing “very dry” conditions. Note also the peaks in drought around 1978, 1954, 1930, and 1900 are much larger than what the U.S. experienced in the 21st century and the late 20th century.

Figure 1: U.S. Wet and Dry Extremes

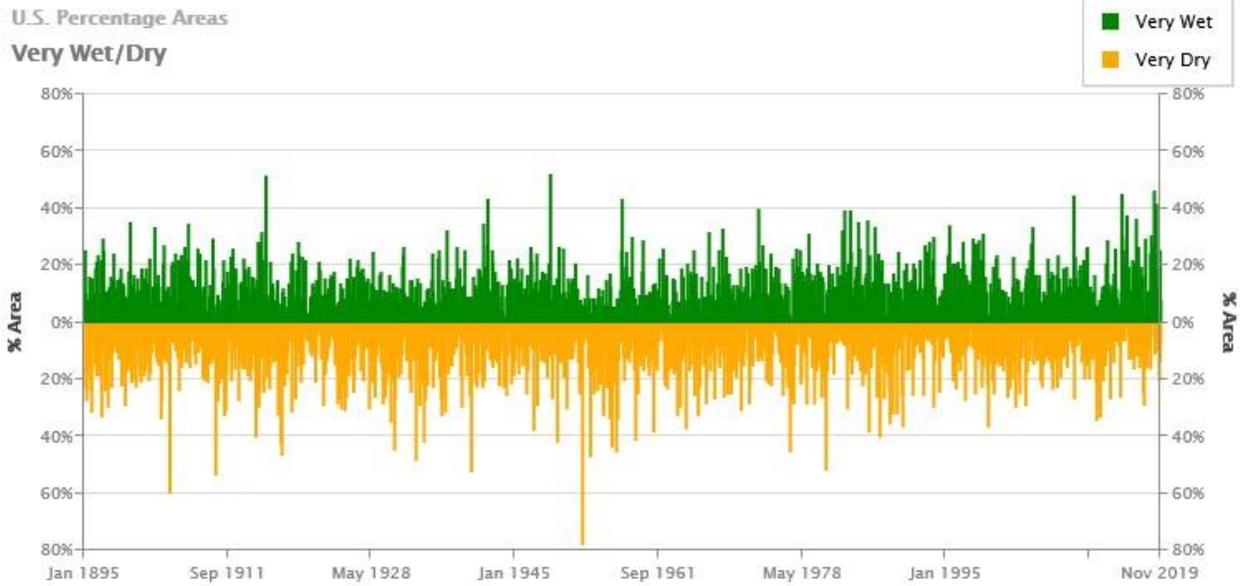


Figure 1: Percentage of United States experiencing “very wet” (in green) and “very dry” (in yellow) conditions. Source: National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration: <https://www.ncdc.noaa.gov/temp-and-precip/uspa/wet-dry/0>.

Climate At A Glance is a Project of [The Heartland Institute](http://www.heartlandinstitute.org)

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