

# Rio Grande|Bravo

CLIMATE IMPACTS & OUTLOOK 2015

## SUMMARY

In general, 2015 was both wetter and hotter than the 1981–2010 averages in the Rio Grande Basin. Forecasts indicate increased precipitation in early 2016 due to the continued presence of El Niño conditions.

## 2015: YEAR IN REVIEW

The average annual temperature across the Rio Grande Basin in 2015 was 0.5–2.5°F (0.3–1.4°C) hotter than average for almost the entire region, with only a few small areas experiencing average annual temperatures below the 1981–2010 average (Figure 1). Precipitation in the region ranged from 130% to 200% of average in 2015 (Figure 2), the wettest year on record in Texas, ameliorating drought conditions in the state.

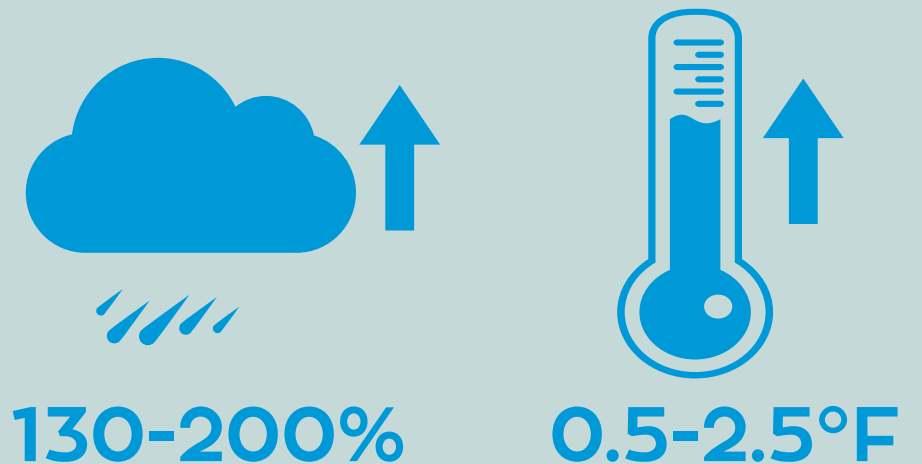


Figure 1 (Right) Departure from normal temperature (°F) for 2015. Map from HPRCC.

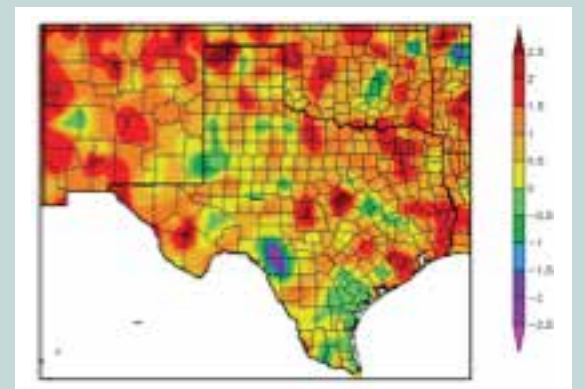
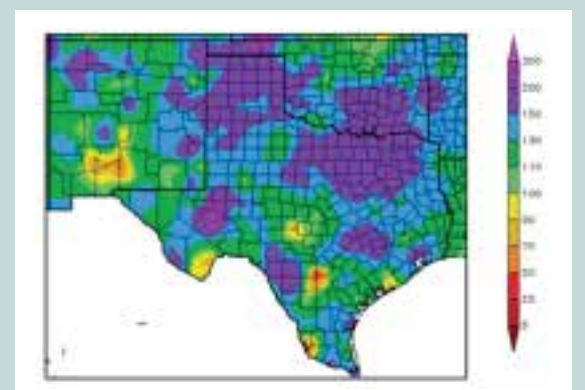


Figure 2 (Right) Percent of normal precipitation for 2015. Map from HPRCC.



## 2015 HIGHLIGHTS



### Rio Grande/Bravo Basin

The entire region was drought-free at the end of 2015, with only small areas considered abnormally dry



### Texas

Above-average precipitation in October prevented the planting of 700,000 acres of cotton throughout the state



### Elephant Butte Reservoir, New Mexico

Reservoir levels ranged from 8% to 20% of capacity, ending 2015 at 15% of capacity



### Central Texas

A wildfire in Bastrop County destroyed 70 homes in October

## EL NIÑO 2015–2016

El Niño conditions developed in the equatorial Pacific Ocean in the summer of 2015. By late 2015, measurements of sea surface temperatures in the same region confirmed that this event was one of the strongest on record, with strength peaking in November–December. Precipitation in the Rio Grande/Bravo Basin was 0–8 inches above average for most of the region from October through December. Strong El Niño conditions remain in the Pacific Ocean, and NOAA forecasts high chances of above-average precipitation for the U.S.-Mexico border region through April.

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