

PACIFIC BUSINESS NEWS

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Hawaii experiencing drought conditions

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When it comes to rainfall, January was a dry month for most of Hawaii.

That's bad news for cattle ranchers and growers of coffee, macadamia nuts, flowers and fruit.

The **National Weather Service** in Honolulu reported that most rain gauges across the state reported less than 50 percent normal rainfall last month.

The eastern half of the state "continues to bear the brunt" of the drought, according to the NWS.

Extreme conditions persist in South Kohala and leeward North Kohala on the Big Islands, the south and west portions of Maui, and the western third of Molokai.

Severe drought conditions continue to affect central Maui and portions of North Kona, South Kona and the Kau District on the Big Islands.

Moderate drought conditions applied to lower Kona slopes from Honaunau to Kalaoa and over all of Lanai, while windward sections of the Big Islands and the northeastern section of Kauai are experiencing moderate drought.

Oahu is the only major island without any areas classified for drought.

The National Weather Service said the dry conditions are due to El Niño conditions, and are likely to continue.

But on Maui, pastures and general vegetation conditions remain in a "highly degraded state" from Lahaina to

Wailea, while the Department of Water Supply has asked residents to conserve water use.

On Molokai, ranchers have reported losses and "an above-average culling of herds."

Meanwhile, recent fires in the South Kona district "have highlighted the enhanced risk," said the weather service.

According to the NOAA Climate Prediction Center, El Niño conditions are to blame for the drought and are expected to last well into the spring.