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Hawaii is nation's driest state

The National Weather Service says rainfall will remain subnormal

[By Helen Altonn](#)

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Below-normal rainfall is expected for the remainder of the summer, the National Weather Service says.

Most of the state is ranked between abnormally dry (D-1) and exceptionally dry (D-4), the weather service said.

Hawaii was last drought-free April 15, 2008, according to a drought information statement issued yesterday. "The ongoing episode of extreme drought began nearly a year ago on July 27, 2009," the statement said.

Jim Weyman, meteorologist-in-charge of the Honolulu Forecast Office, said, "Hawaii is the only location with D4 (exceptional drought) or D3 (extreme drought) at this time. We're the driest location in the entire United States."

The drought status does not surprise Tom Greenwell, who owns Greenwell Farms in Kona with his wife, Jennifer.

"It definitely has affected our crops," he said in a telephone interview, explaining they have about 45 acres in coffee and manage about 20 other farms for a total of 150 acres.

This harvest season, he said, they received only about 30 percent of normal rainfall and lost some of their crop.

"The biggest impact will be the amount of crop lost in the coming season because of defoliation," he said.

The Big Island's South Kohala district has had D4 drought for the third consecutive month, while extreme drought conditions affected most areas in the Kau, North Kona and South Kona districts, the weather service said.

Lower elevations of Leeward Maui, the western two-thirds of Molokai and Lanai also have had severe drought conditions affecting agriculture.

On Oahu a significant drop in the Waimanalo Reservoir's water level resulted in a mandatory 30 percent cutback in irrigation water use and service limited to three days a week.

Brian Kau, administrator of the Agricultural Resource Management Division of the state Department of Agriculture, said the reservoir has been at the lowest service elevation the past couple of weeks -- about 10 feet from the bottom.


As a result, that part of Oahu also is considered under extreme drought on the U.S. drought monitor map.

Many Big Island leeward crops have been affected by the ongoing drought, including coffee, avocados, rambutan, bananas, macadamia nuts, loquat and jaboticaba, the weather service said. Ranchers in lower Kau and on leeward

Kohala slopes report old and sick cattle dying because of poor pasture conditions.

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