

VOA Special English Science Report DROUGHT WARNING FOR U.S.

This is Bill White with the VOA Special English Science Report.

American officials say the dry weather that affected much of the United States last year is likely to continue during the next few months.

The officials say the drought conditions are a threat to individuals, agriculture and industry across the United States. They say the situation probably will get worse before it gets better. *

Last month, the National Weather Service released its first ever drought warning. Weather Service Director John Kelly said the agency was able to prepare the warning because of improved methods of collecting research about the weather. 100

Mr. Kelly said the weather event known as La Nina has caused a serious lack of rainfall in many areas. La Nina develops when winds near the western coast of South America strengthen. This causes cooler than normal temperatures in the eastern and central Pacific Ocean.

Mr. Kelly noted that La Nina has controlled weather conditions in the United States for the past two years. La Nina is expected to continue through the spring and possibly into the summer. *

American weather experts say they expect drought conditions to continue through the spring and to worsen in some areas. They say the South and North Central parts of the country will be affected most. 200

The National Weather Service notes that the Southern states of Alabama, Louisiana and Mississippi had the driest weather in February in more than 100 years. Already this year, wildfires have damaged more than 84,000 hectares of land nationwide. That is almost four times the land burned at this time last year. *

The drought could affect Americans in several ways. It could cause food prices to rise. And it could decrease the water supply for homeowners and for outdoor sports.

Experts say a drought happens somewhere in the United States every year. A drought causes an average of about 6,000 million dollars a year in damage to crops and loss to businesses. The drought warning was released only a few days after the end of the warmest winter weather ever reported. For the third time in three years, the United States mainland set a record for winter warmth. Weather experts say the recent winter was the warmest since the government began keeping information about the weather more than 100 years ago. 300 *

This VOA Special English Science Report was written by George Grow. This is Bill White.

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