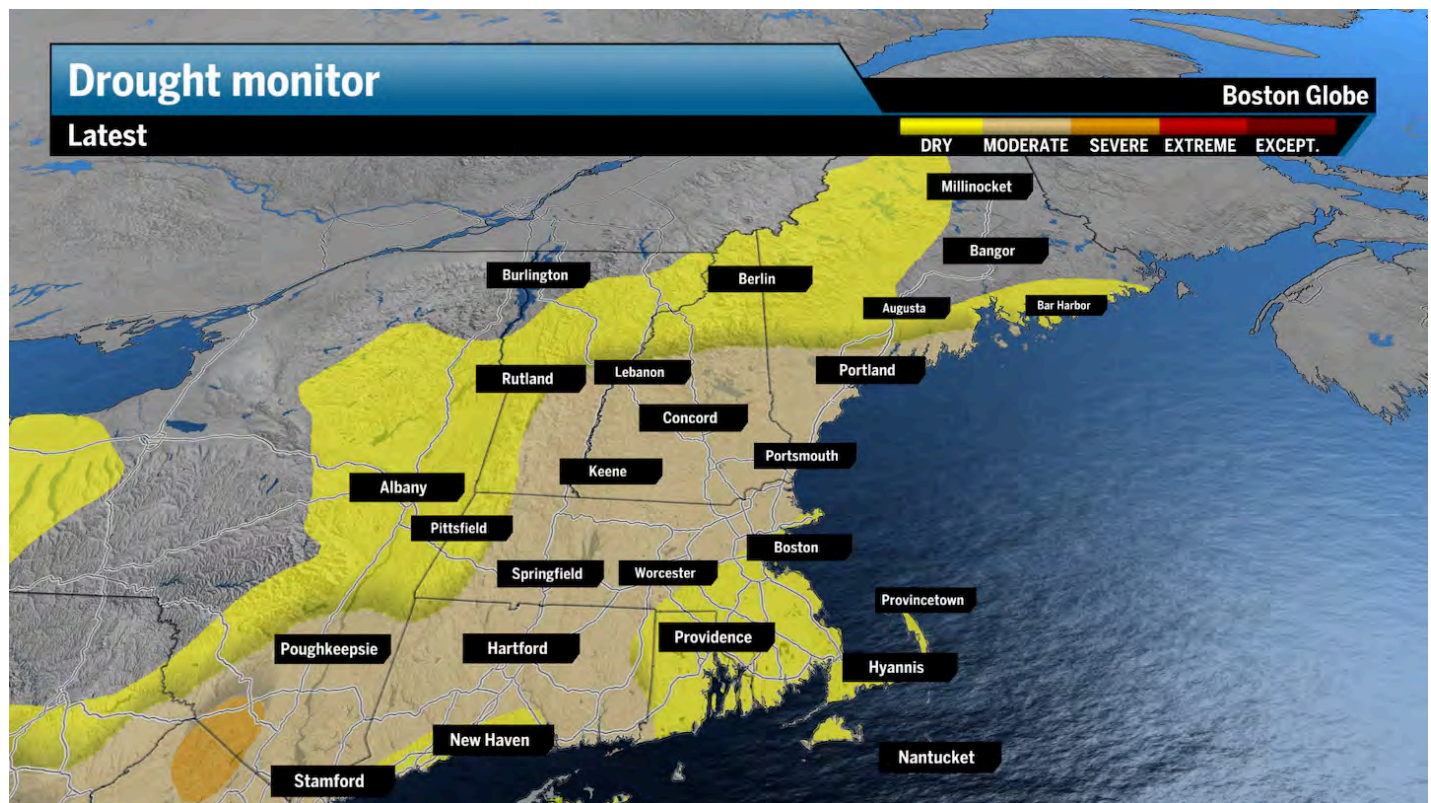


If the drought doesn't resolve soon, New England could be in for a rough summer

By [Ken Mahan](#) and [Chris Gloninger](#) Globe Staff, Updated April 1, 2025, 37 minutes ago



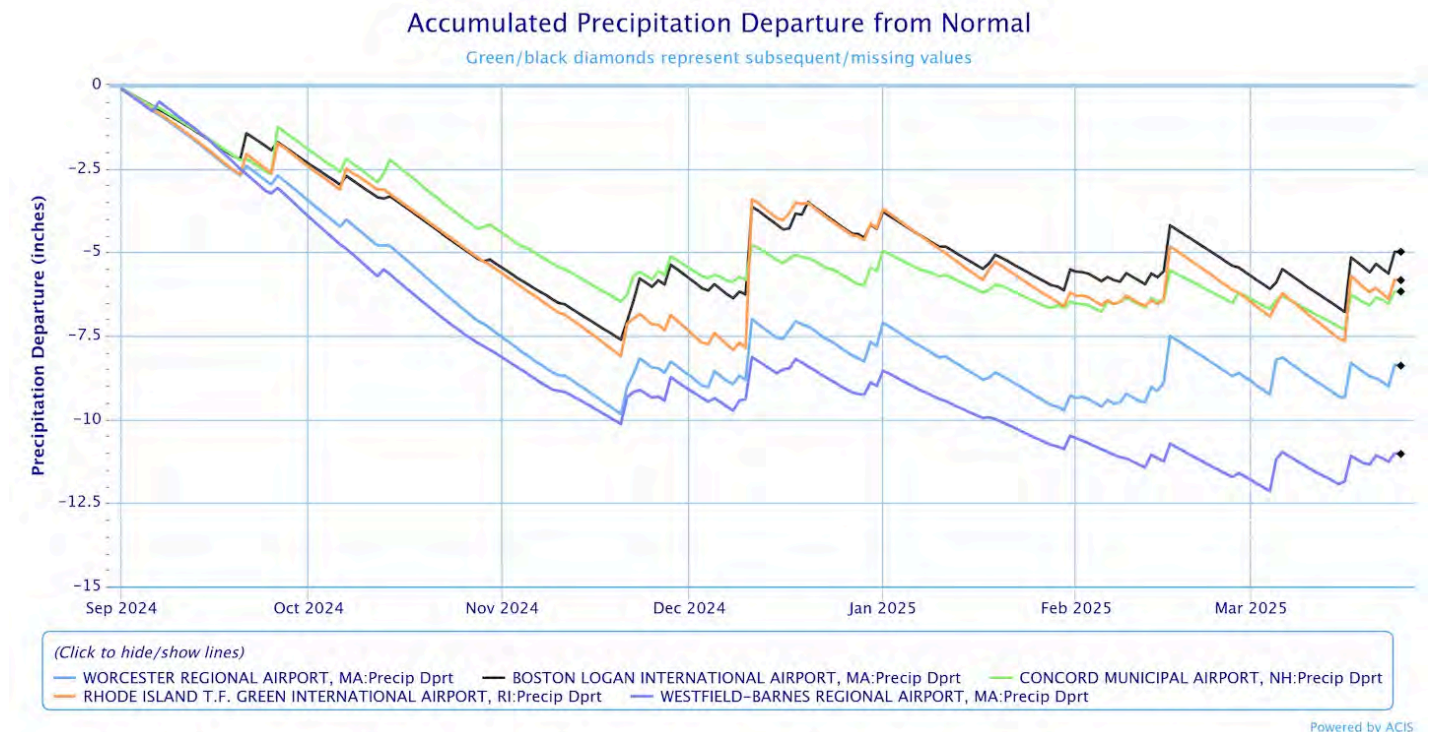
Although recent rain has improved conditions, much of New England remains in a drought, according to the US Drought Monitor. BOSTON GLOBE

It's become a weather mantra: New England can sure use more rain. The recent wet weather has not been nearly enough for parts of Massachusetts and New Hampshire still struggling with drought after seven long months. And as we head into April and warmer May weather, alleviating drought conditions will be even more critical for communities across the region.

Region-wide, rainfall deficits have shown slow and gradual improvement as a rainy day here and there have replenished low water levels, but a vast area of New England

remains thirsty with rainfall deficits of over a foot reported in some locations.

According to the latest data, most cities across New England are pacing 5 to 11 inches behind since the drought started in early September. Boston is 5 inches below the precipitation average, while Westfield-Springfield is experiencing a double-digit deficit.



Boston, Concord, Worcester, and the Springfield and Providence areas are still well below the normal precipitation amounts. They have been since Sept. 1. SC ACIS

Warm temperatures and a more active weather pattern in March have helped rejuvenate the soil with more precipitation and snowmelt, resulting in a desperately needed boost in ground moisture.

The Boston area, which is currently classified as “abnormally dry,” ended the month a hair below its monthly rainfall average.

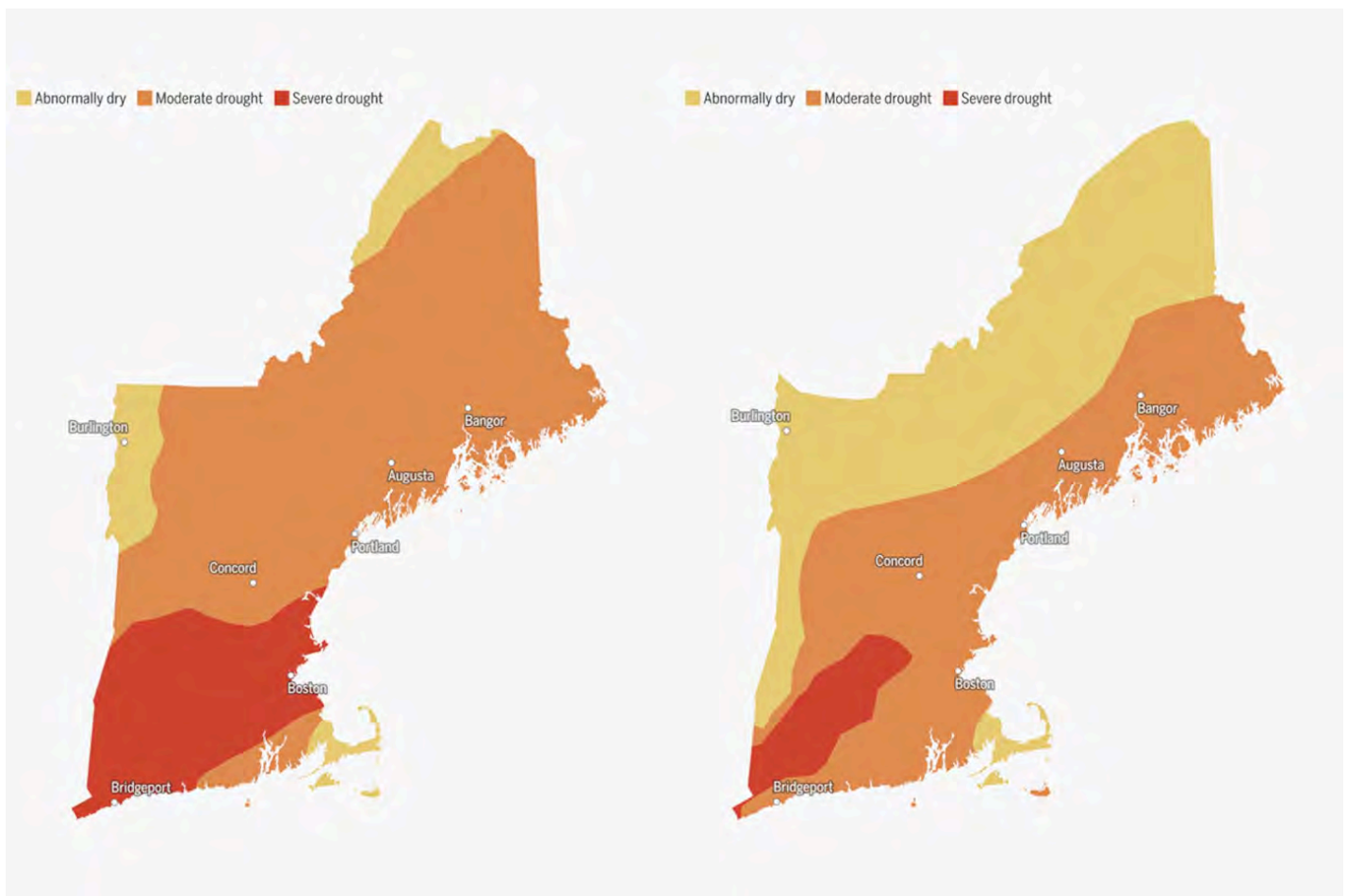


Daily March rainfall totals for the Boston area. BOSTON GLOBE

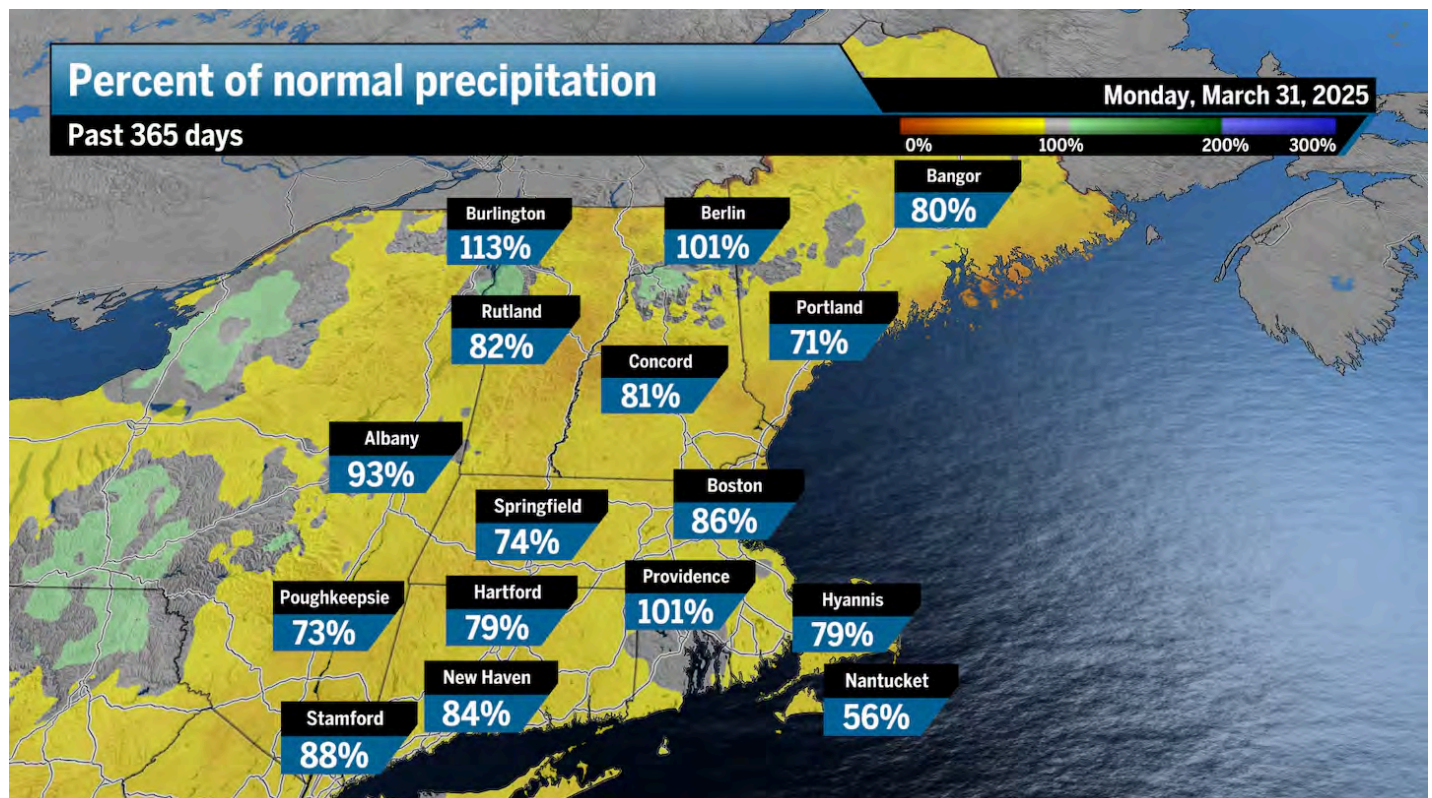
Other parts of Massachusetts and Connecticut were able to pull out of “severe drought” status in recent weeks, according to the US Drought Monitor.

February marked the seventh straight month in which Massachusetts and the rest of New England saw below-average precipitation, both rain and snow, with an average 1 to 1.5 inches below normal for the Bay State.

Fall and winter combined fell below normal, allowing for drought levels to reach severe and extreme levels during that stretch. It’s only been until recent weeks that the drought has improved, albeit slowly, upgrading Massachusetts from a “severe drought” to “moderate drought” status.



Map visualizations show drought conditions across New England as of Dec. 10, 2024 (left) compared with Feb. 11, 2025 (right). YOOHYUN JUNG



The percent of normal precipitation New England has received in the past year. BOSTON GLOBE

Looking ahead, New England's weather is expected to stay pretty active in terms of storm frequency heading into April as our jet stream positions near our region, bringing slightly above-average rainfall through the first week of the month. If we see marginally above-average rainfall or more storms, that should allow the region to improve and pull further out of the drought. Boston typically sees 3.59 inches of rainfall in April.

This week ahead may likely deliver three systems through New England.

But climate experts caution that rainfall spread out over several days would be the most beneficial in helping New England gain some traction in this drought fight.

"Drought relies on other factors as well, and we don't want all that precipitation to fall at once," said Jessica Spaccio, climatologist at Northeast Regional Climate Center.

Spaccio said extended drought changes the ability for soil to absorb water, making it difficult for heavy single-day downpours to have much of an impact. Dry soil becomes compacted as it breaks down and fills up space, preventing water from seep through. The parched soil has become hydrophobic, meaning it's acting as a surface repellent, making water absorption much more difficult. Also, heavy rainfall during a drought causes flooding as the water runs along the surface instead of being absorbed.

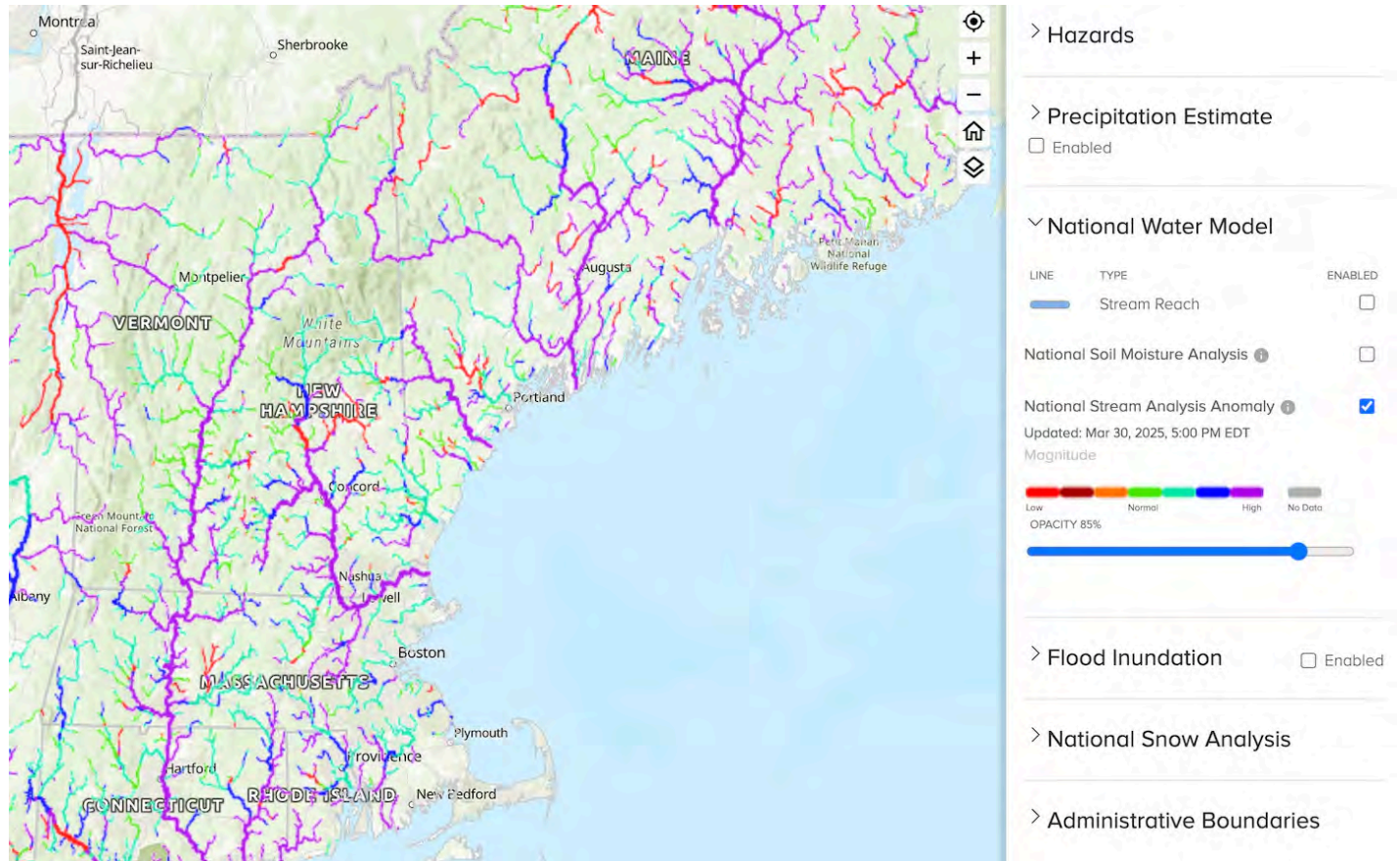
Wildfire risks are a concern during excessively dry ground conditions during the spring across New England. [As we witnessed last fall](#), continued drought on top of little rain makes the region highly susceptible to wildfires.

As [La Niña continues to fade](#) this spring, New England could expect more precipitation.

Having persistent rainfall will also be critical in the weeks ahead as spring brings the return of rapid vegetation growth and agricultural demands.

Experts are hoping the drought doesn't drag on into summer, noting that a very hot season will not only worsen dry conditions but also add stress to plants and trees.

“Impacts into the spring and summer continue to be low flows in benchmark streams that will trigger water use restrictions and reservoirs that may not reach needed capacity to last through the summer,” said David Boutt, a professor of hydrology at UMass Amherst.

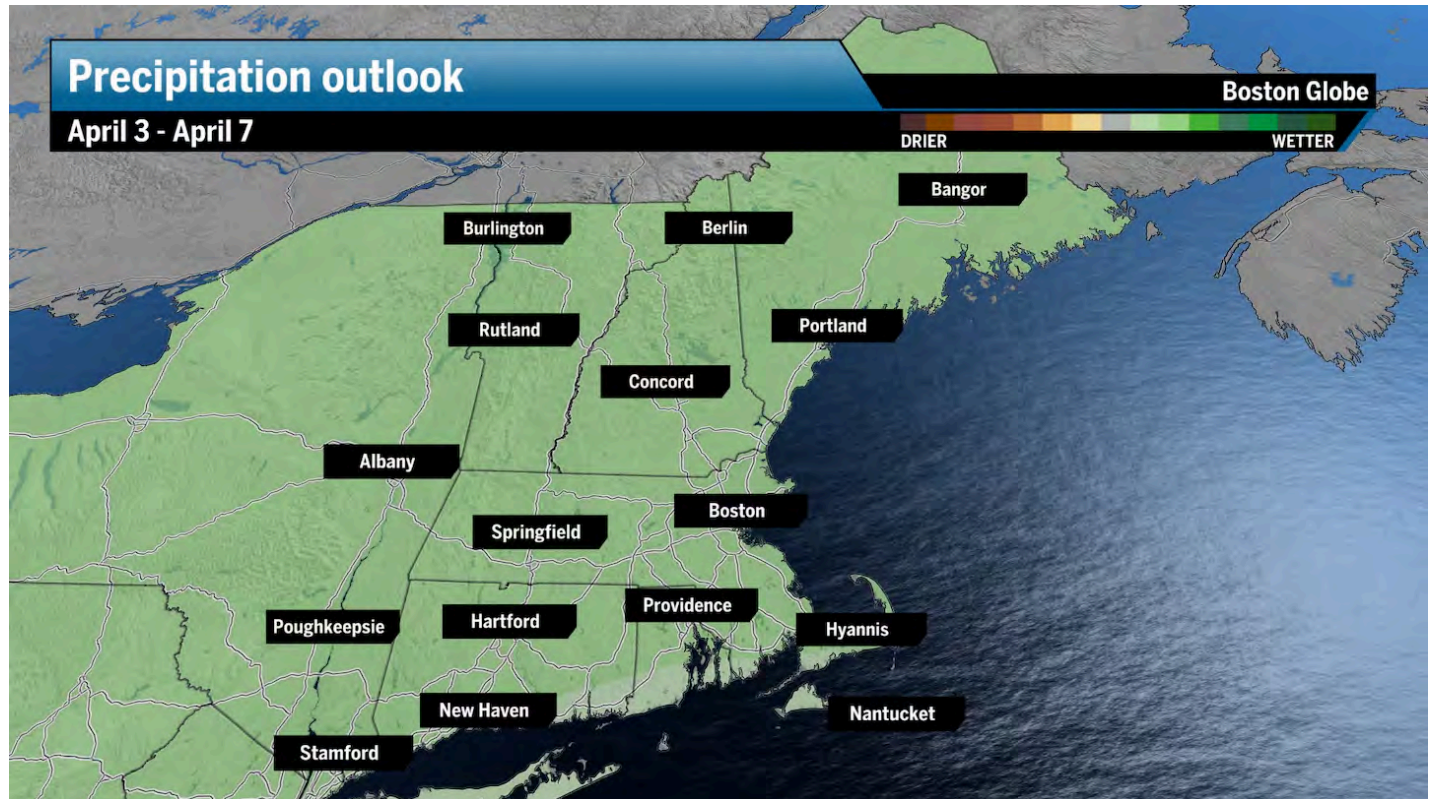


Most streams in New England have at normal or above normal water levels. USGS

Water levels in the Quabbin Reservoir — the largest reservoir in Massachusetts — are at 84 percent capacity, and 91 percent at the Wachusett Reservoir. Both supply Boston’s drinking water.

“Deficits in June and July really matter because this is peak tree growth for the growing season, a few weeks before and after the solstice (June 21),“ said Neil Pederson, senior ecologist at Harvard Forest. ”A dry spring, no doubt, will cause some stress and adaptation for some trees, but overall, it’s often cool during these periods, so the stress would be a little less.”

With droughts persist into the growing season, he said, “trees might not grow as tall. There might be more spikey crowns... devoid of leaves. This would be the first phase of some kind of dieback. We noticed this in 2017 after the late summer drought of 2015 and the full summer drought of 2016.”



The first week of April may likely bring slightly above-average precipitation. BOSTON GLOBE

Ken Mahan can be reached at ken.mahan@globe.com. Follow him on Instagram [@kenmahantheweatherman](https://www.instagram.com/kenmahantheweatherman).

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