

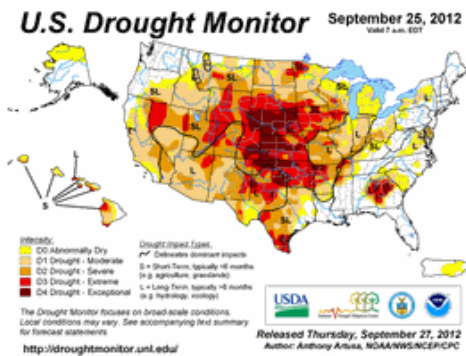


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**(Regional)-Stubborn Drought Maintains Grip On Most Of U.S.**

By: Roxie Graham-Marski Posted at: 09/27/2012 11:01 AM



*Photo: The latest U.S. Drought Monitor Map shows the extent of the drought this year. Portions shaded dark red signify exceptional drought, red portrays extreme drought, orange highlights severe drought, peach showcases moderate drought, and yellow signifies abnormally dry areas.*

ST. LOUIS (AP) - A weekly update on U.S. drought conditions shows the nation's worst drought in decades slightly worsened in the lower 48 states with the Midwest corn harvest in full swing.

The U.S. Drought Monitor's new map posted Thursday shows 65.5 percent of the contiguous U.S. was experiencing some form of drought as of Tuesday, up from 64.8 percent a week earlier.

It shows 21.5 percent of that area was in extreme or exceptional drought - the two worst classifications. That's up three-quarters of a percentage point.

The area of Iowa, the biggest corn producer, deemed to be in exceptional drought rose from 2.4 percent last week to 2.5 percent. That most severe classification rose 2.3 percentage points in Nebraska, to 73.25 percent.

Conditions in Kansas, Missouri, Illinois and Indiana remained unchanged.