

Blackfoot Drought Response 2025

Presented to the Blackfoot Drought Response Committee

January 28, 2026

Drought Response at a Glance

An Historic Year (2024)

January 1, 2023	Blackfoot SWE at 31%	RECORD LOW since 1979
April 11	Peak SWE at 121"	6 th lowest on record since '79
May 17	Peak Discharge at 3,080cfs	3rd lowest on record since 1899
July 11	Discharge <700cfs Drought Response Activated	Earliest ever in program's history
July 12	Hot Owl Fishing Restrictions Implemented	Frist time since 2016
July 22	Discharge <500cfs All Juniors Called	2 nd time and earliest ever in program's history
September 31	End of 2024 Water Year Average Daily Discharge 802.9cfs	6 th lowest on record since 1939
October 15	Drought Response Lifted	Longest ever in program's history

Drought Response at a Glance

An(other) Historic Year (2025)

May 12	Peak Discharge at 4,050cfs	Two weeks earlier and ~2,000 cfs less than average
June 5	Discharge <2,000 cfs	Murphy Right callable
June 28	Discharge below Milltown enforceable flows 4 of 5 consecutive days	Milltown Right callable
July 9	Discharge <700cfs Drought Response Activated	Earliest ever in program's history, 2 days before last year
July 24	Discharge <500cfs	All Juniors Called
August 2	Water temperature at Bonner > 71° F for 3 consecutive days	Hot Owl Fishing Restrictions Implemented
September 10	North Fork closed to fishing due to low flows	

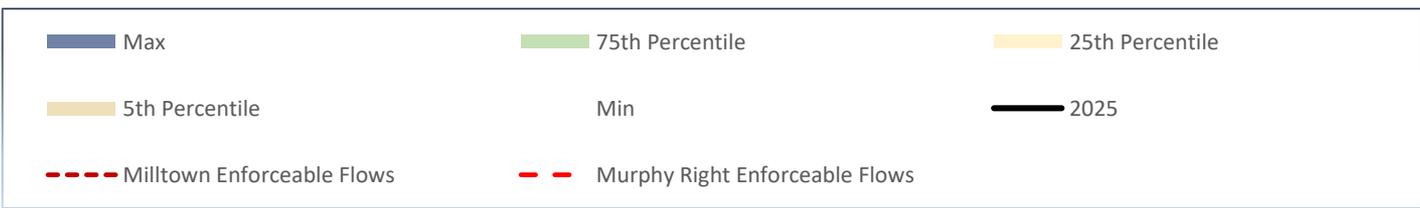
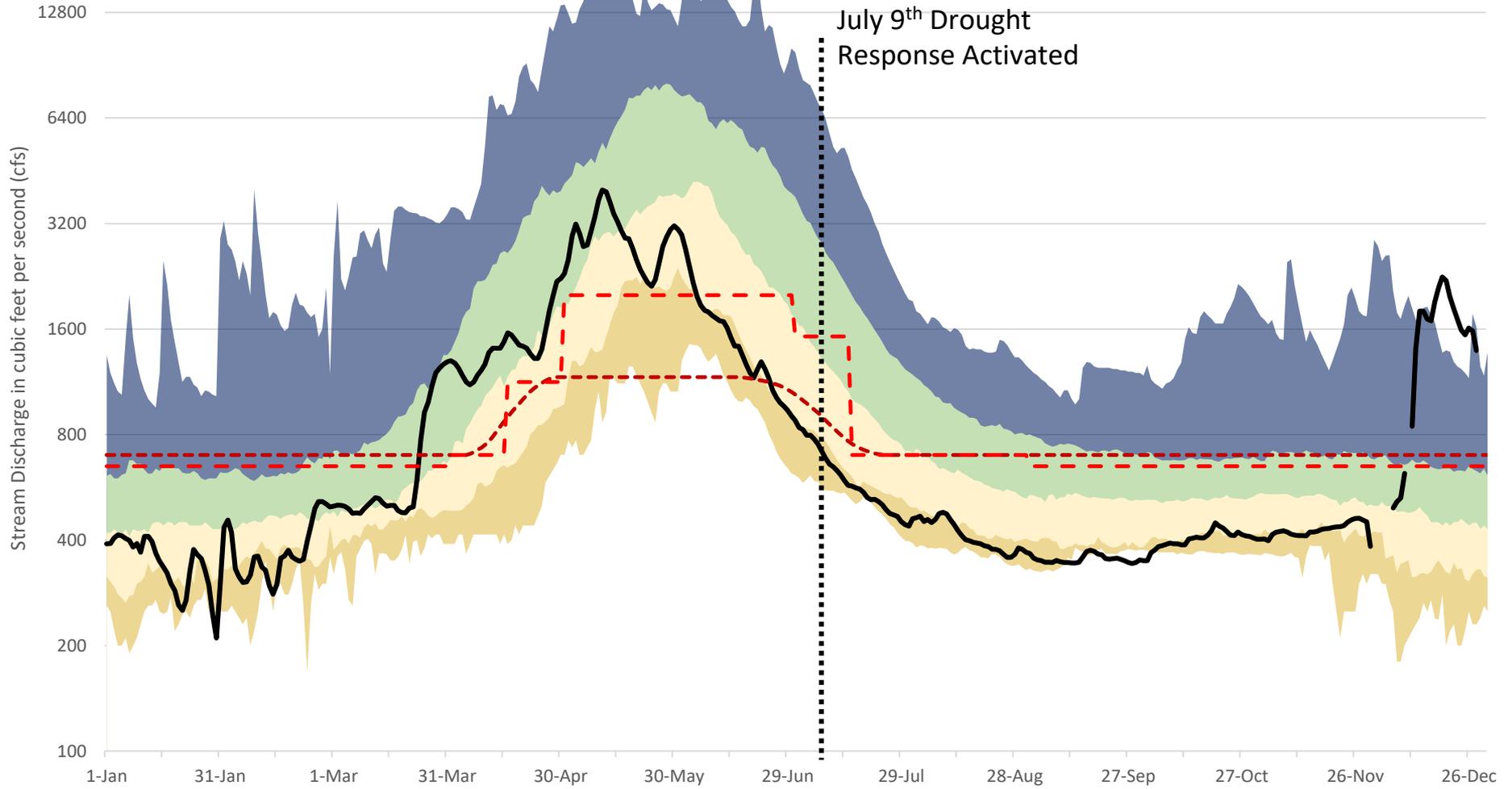
Drought Response at a Glance

An(other) Historic Year Continued

September 11-15	Average daily discharge drops to	Lowest flows on record at Bonner
September 18 –	~350 cfs	
October 3		
November 1	Drought Response Ended	Longest period of drought response in program's history
December 17-27	Record high flows recorded at Bonner	1 st time on record with record low and high flows in same calendar year
December 1-31	Blackfoot receives 255% of normal precipitation	All SNOTEL sites report highest or 2 nd highest precipitation accumulations on record for month
January 1 –		Warmest year on record in western Continental US
December 31		

Blackfoot at Mouth

USGS 12340000 Blackfoot River near Bonner, MT



2025 Committee Activities

- Early Communications beginning on July 1.
- Milltown Implementation WG sent a letter to all participants on July 15
- Reviewed a letter penned by BC and BWC in support of collaborative water management during drought
- Met weekly through Summer and into October to assess changing conditions



Milltown Implementation

- FWP and CKST made call on their jointly owned water rights (Murphy and Milltown) for the first time ever
 - 161 non-participating individuals associated with 231 water rights
- Participants received a letter from the Milltown Implementation WG informing them their junior water would not be called as long as they were implementing their plans AND while flows remained above 500 cfs
- 6 individuals/entities reached out during the summer to establish new drought plans



The 500cfs Call Process (2024)

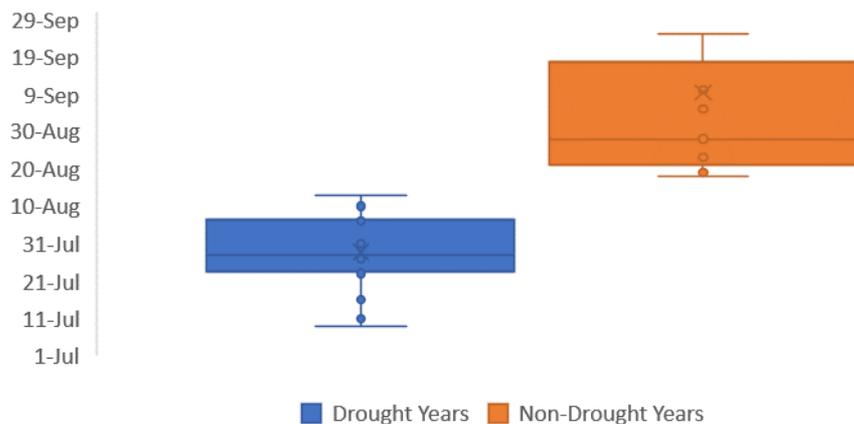
Category	Description	Number	Action
Senior	Water rights in operation are all senior to the Murphy right	16	BC Confirmation
Water Trade	Drought Plan actions include a 1:1 water trade, wherein the cessation of available senior water offsets use of junior water.	8	BC Confirmation
Mitigated Junior	Drought Plan actions fully mitigate junior water use through full shut down, nonuse, or leasing of all junior water	24	BC Letter and Confirmation
Unmitigated Junior	Drought Plan actions do not include a 1:1 water trade and use of junior rights is not fully mitigated	20	FWP Call Letter

The 500cfs Call Process

Category	Description	Number	Action
Senior	Water rights in operation are all senior to the Milltown right	16 1	BC Confirmation
Water Trade	Drought Plan actions include a 1:1 water trade, wherein the cessation of available senior water offsets use of junior water	8	BC Confirmation
Mitigated Junior	Drought Plan actions fully mitigate junior water use through full shut down, nonuse, or leasing of all junior water	24 31	BC Letter and Confirmation
Unmitigated Junior	Drought Plan actions do not include a 1:1 water trade and use of junior rights is not fully mitigated	20 21	CSKT/FWP Call Letter
Water Pool	A senior operator agrees to reduce use of a senior water right to allow for continued use by a junior operator	2	BC Confirmation

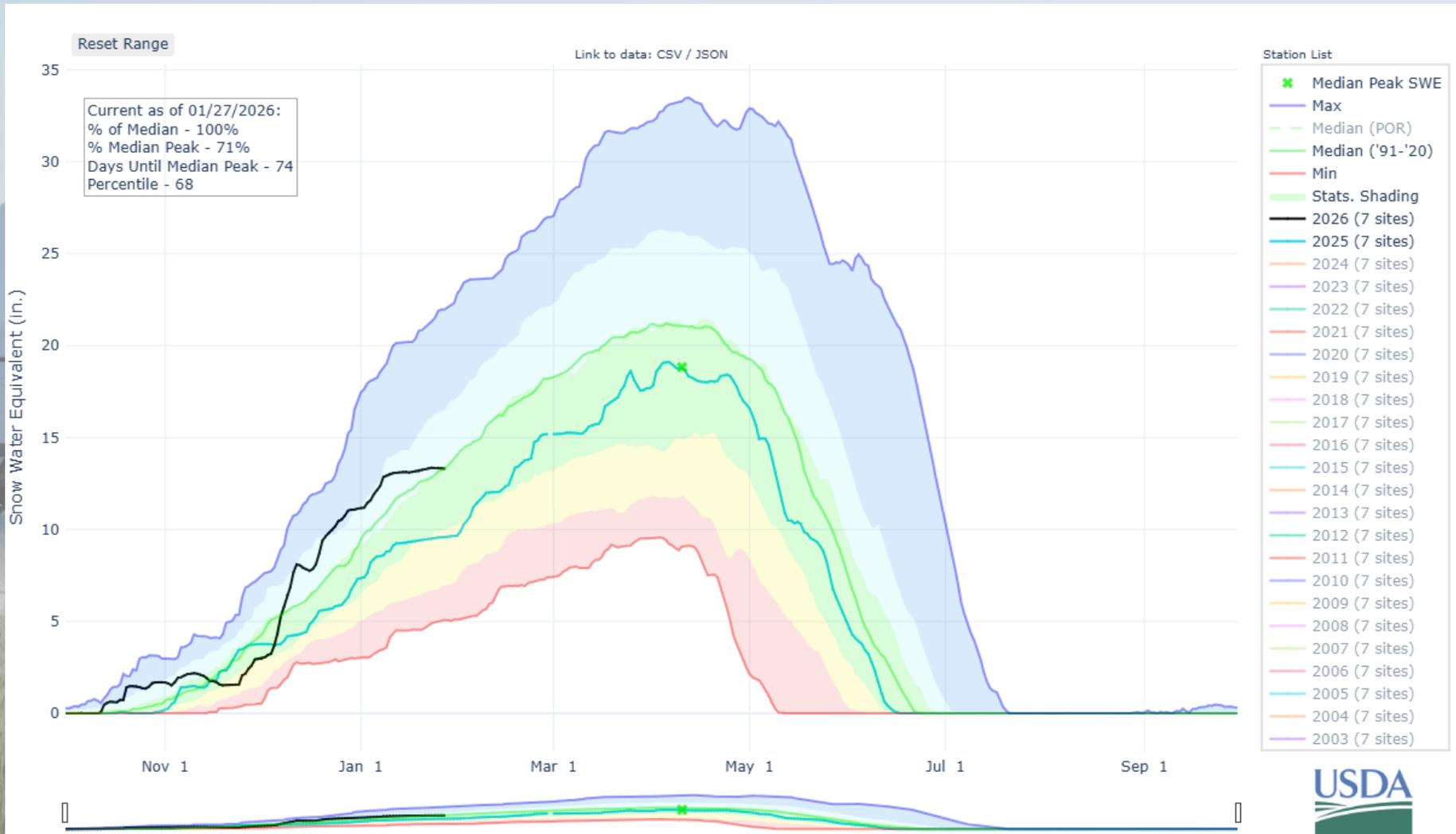
Drought Response Over the Decades

Comparison of Date when Blackfoot River Drops Below 700 cfs 2000-2025



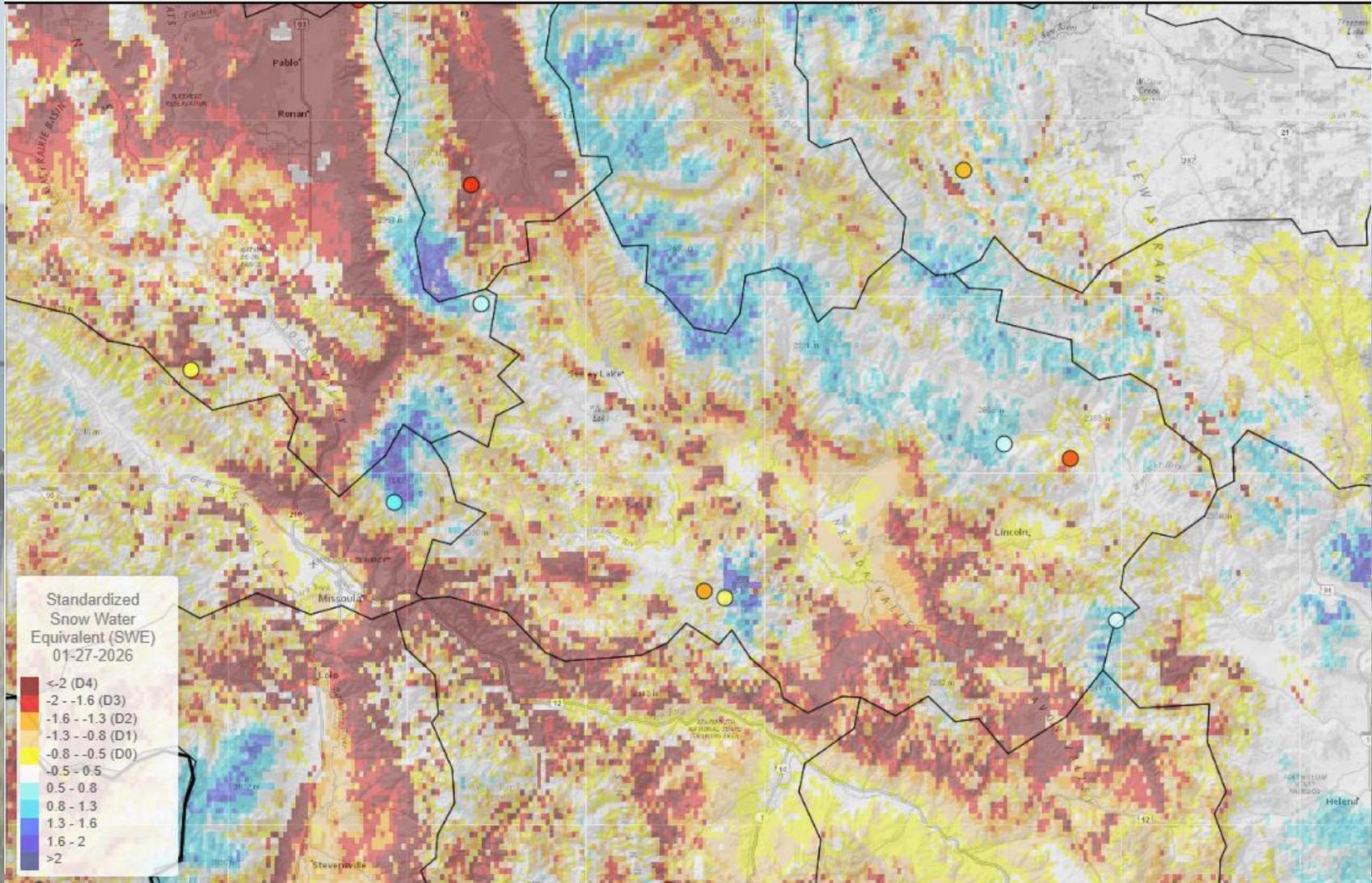
- Drought Response activated in 17 of the last 26 years (65%)
- July 28th is the average date that the river drops below 700cfs during drought years
- September 9th is the average date during non-drought years

Looking Ahead



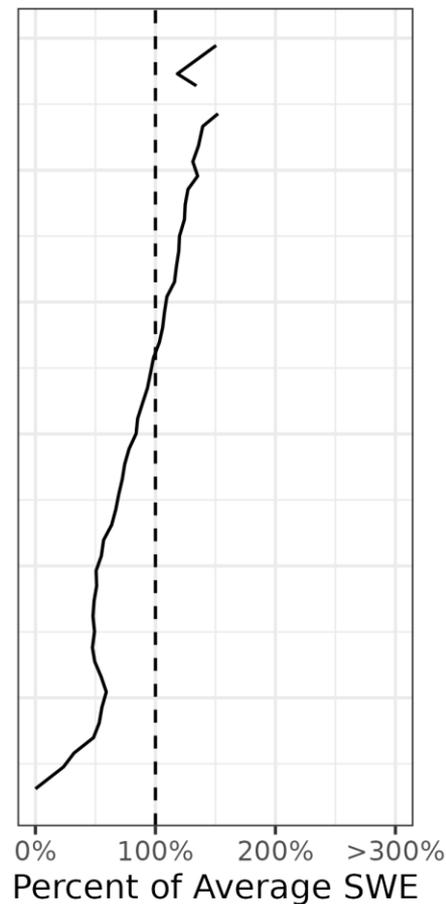
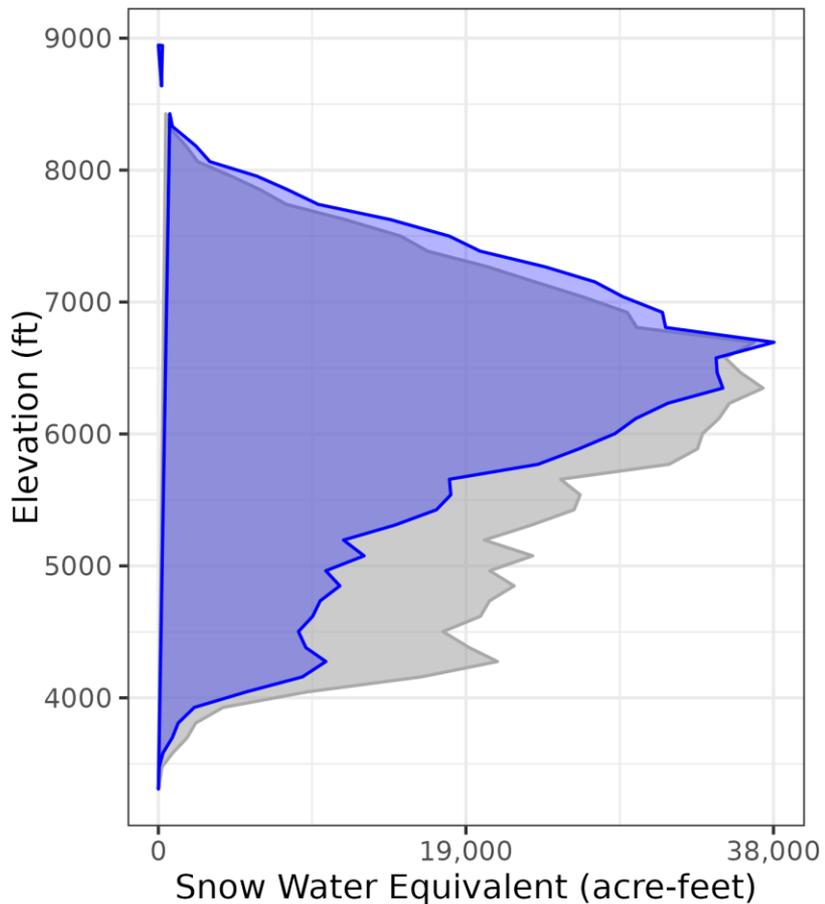
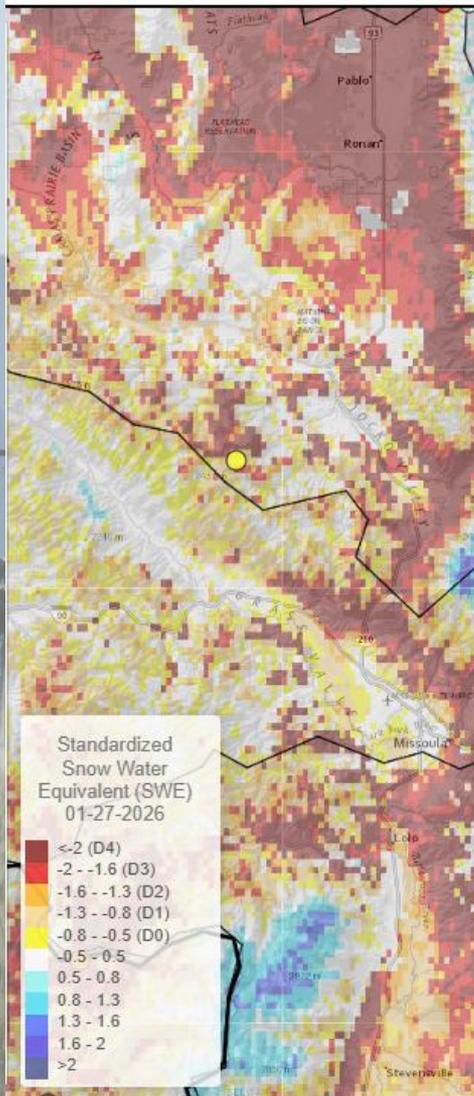
Looking Ahead

Standardized SWE for 01-27-2026



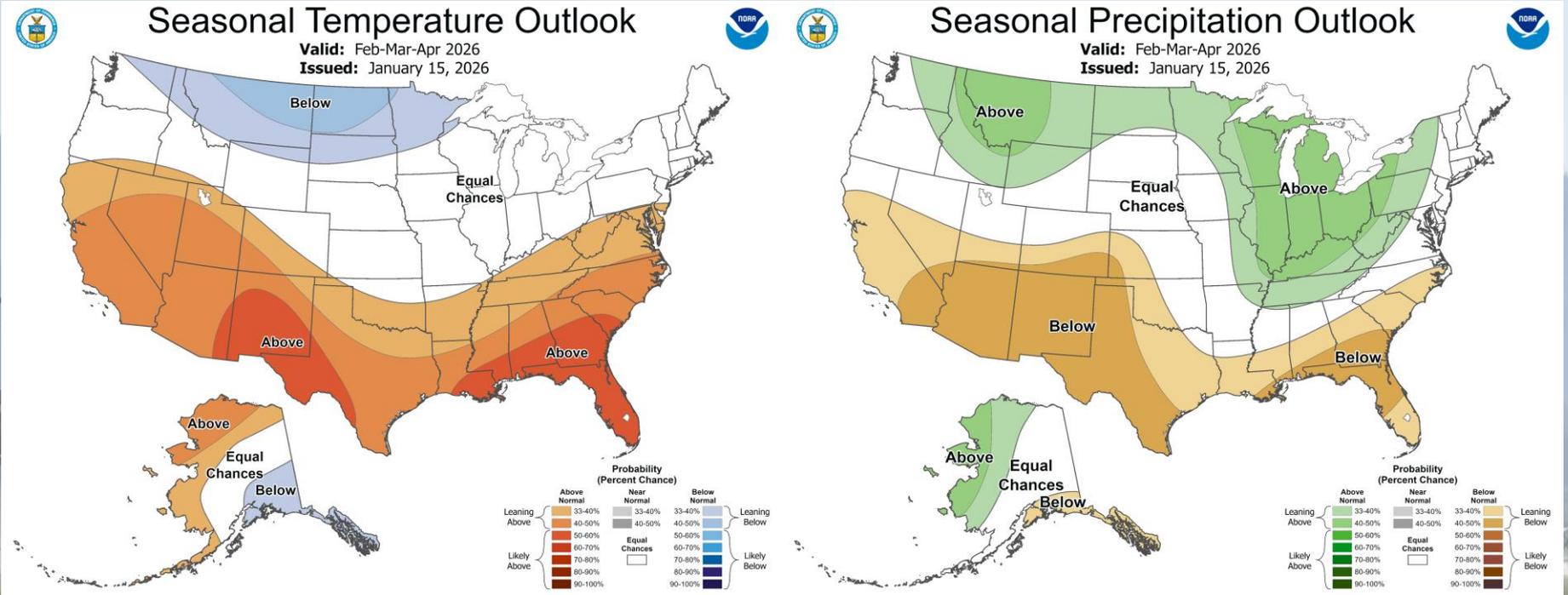
Looking Ahead

Hypsome-SWE for Blackfoot (HUC8: 17010203)
2026-01-27 (83% of Normal)



◆ 2026 ◇ Median Climatology (2004 - 2026)

Looking Ahead



Questions?

