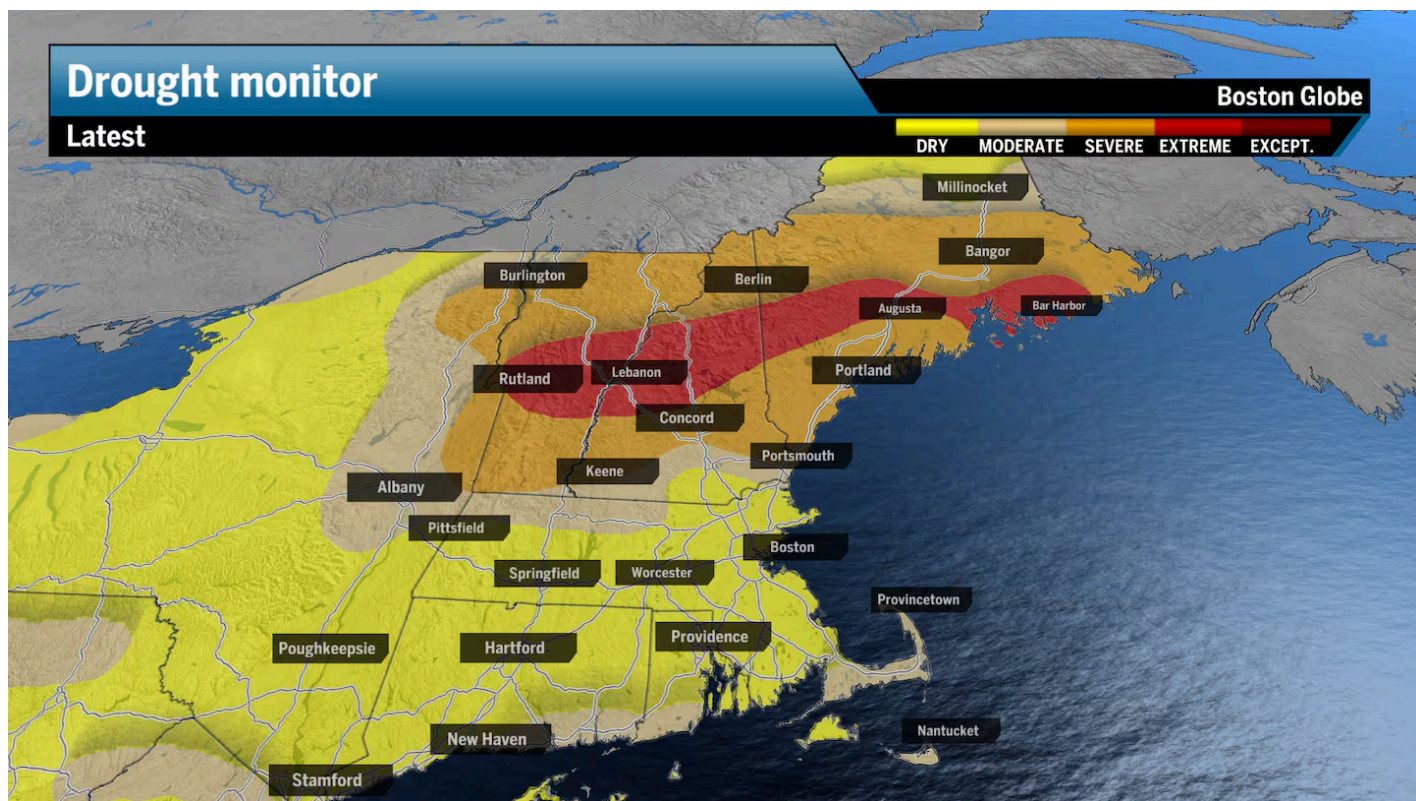


# Latest data show ‘extreme’ drought conditions expanding in Northern New England

By **Ken Mahan** Globe Staff, Updated September 28, 2025, 7:22 p.m.

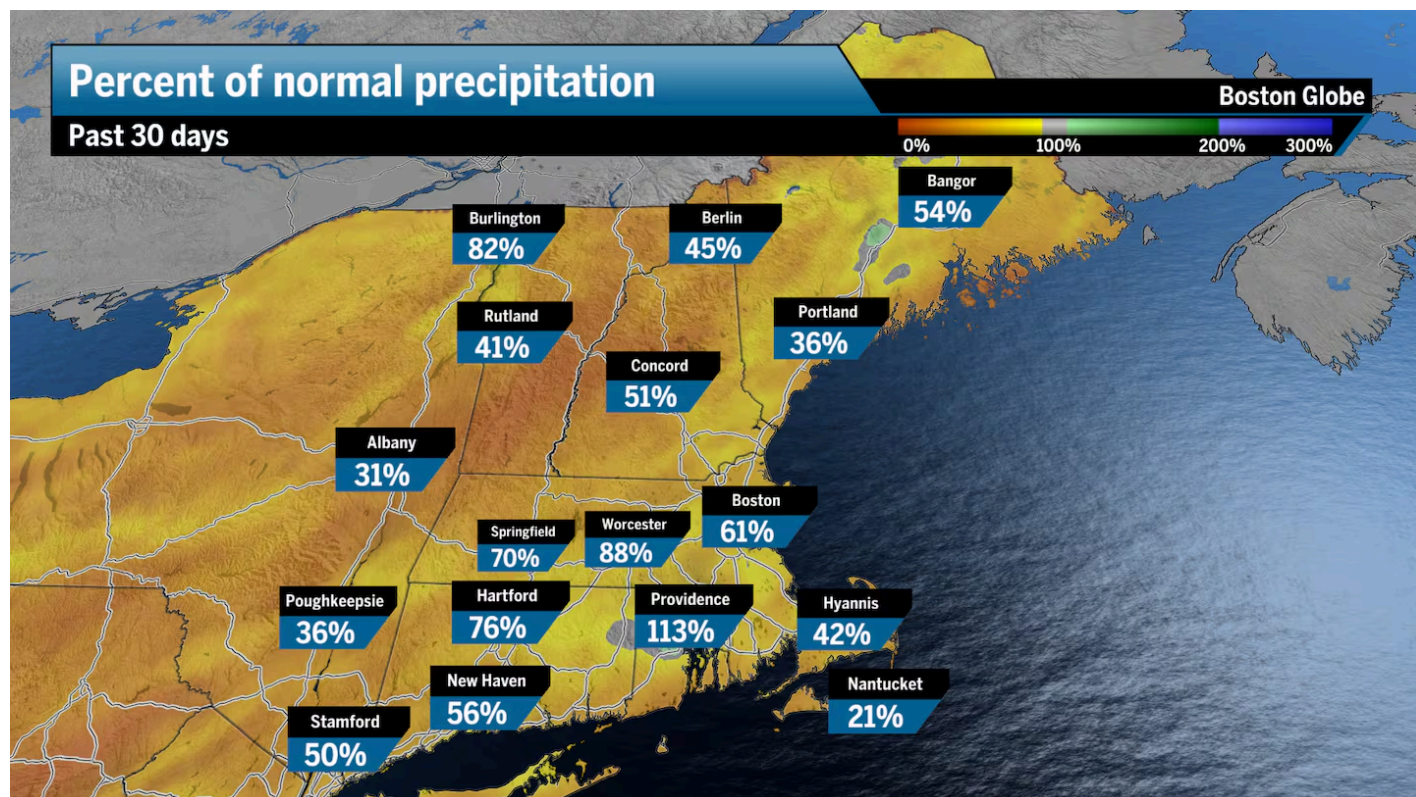


All of New England is experiencing abnormally dry to extreme drought conditions. BOSTON GLOBE

The latest data show [New England’s drought](#) continues to deepen, with the worst of it spreading across portions of Northern New England as the region struggles with persistent rain shortfalls. New Hampshire, Vermont, and Maine are facing the most “extreme” conditions, with portions of Massachusetts, Rhode

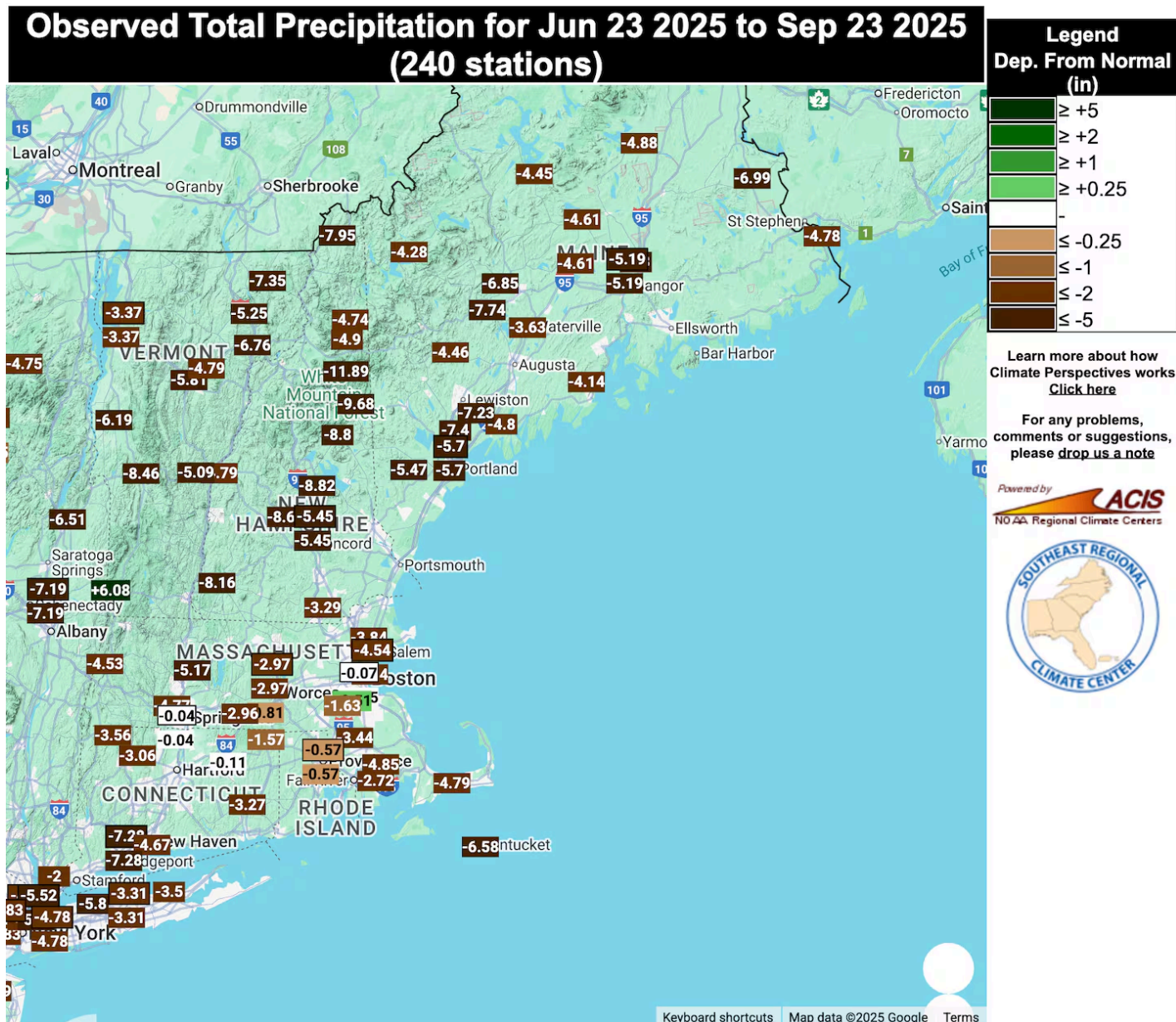
Island, and Connecticut seeing moderate levels of drought, according to the [U.S. Drought Monitor's Thursday update](#).

After a very wet, above-average spring, the summer brought the driest season on record since 1949, with the New England rainfall average plummeting more than 4 inches below the seasonal norm.



Most of New England has seen below-average rain over the past 30 days. Above, 100 percent is the average. BOSTON GLOBE

Combine that little rainfall with warmer-than-average temperatures, and the region slipped into a drought rather quickly this year. Rainfall over the last three months has been particularly scarce, with all of New England running deficits. Boston has seen about 4.5 inches less rainfall during that stretch, while folks up north have ranged between 7 and 12 inches below normal.



Rainfall across the region over the past two months has reached double-digit deficits for some. NERCC

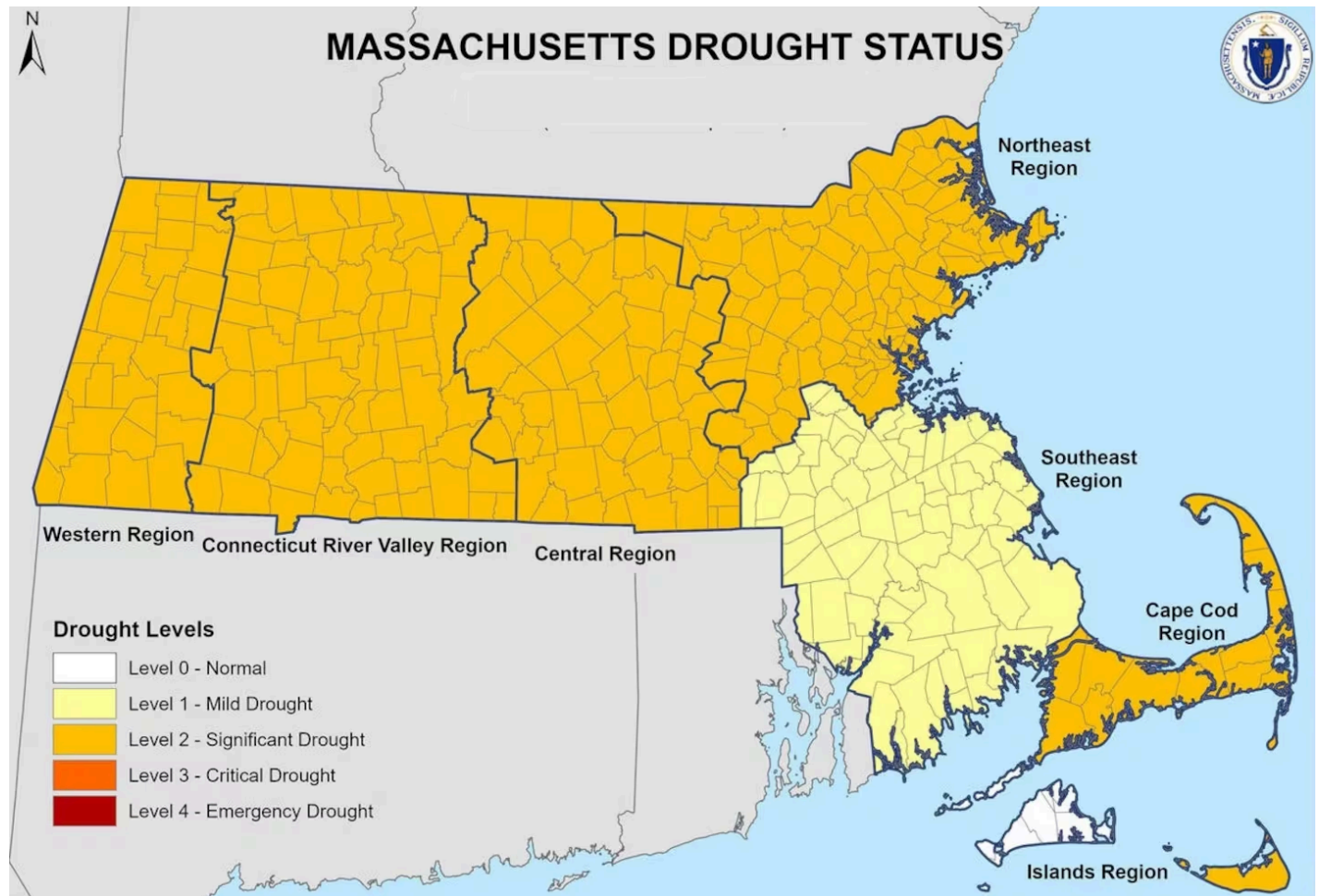
Groundwater and [streamflow levels](#) have plummeted across portions of Northern New England and a [few locations across Massachusetts](#). There have been several water [bans issued across communities](#) as well.

All of New England is faring worse than this same time last fall, just as an [extensive drought](#) was taking hold.

## Massachusetts under ‘significant’ drought

For Boston and most of Massachusetts, including Cape Cod, the drought has worsened to “significant” levels over the past month, but not to the same extent as the northern tier, according to the state’s own data. Three-month precipitation deficits remain widespread, with much of the state receiving only 40 to 80 percent of normal rainfall, officials said.

The Mass. drought level appears worse than the [Drought Monitor’s updates](#) because some state agencies use different thresholds in determining each drought level.



Drought has expanded in Massachusetts, where most of the state is in a significant drought status. MASS. DEP

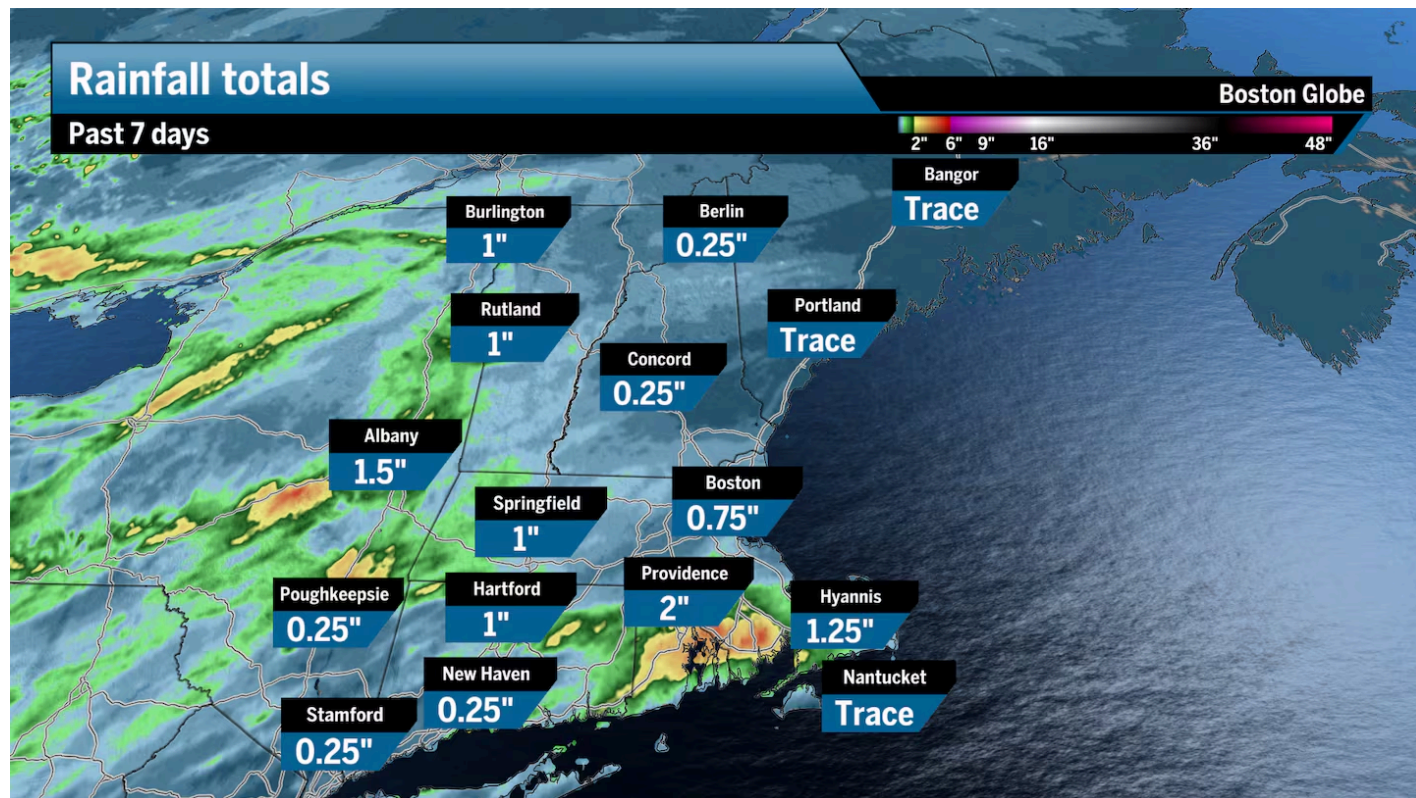
The state has been [urging residents to follow local water restrictions](#) and be careful of outdoor fire risks.

## Will this week's much-needed rain help?

The good news is that New England should benefit from [this week's wet pattern](#), which may actually provide some relief. Rain has picked up over the past week, and this isn't counting today's soggy weather, but after such a dry spell, any measurable rain is good rain.

“As we have seen with recent droughts, we need a string of events like this to return the hydrologic system back to more normal conditions,” said David Boutt, a professor of hydrogeology at UMass Amherst. As the system resets and water moves “more efficiently from the soil to streams and ponds, etc., these events help raise those levels and begin the recovery process.”

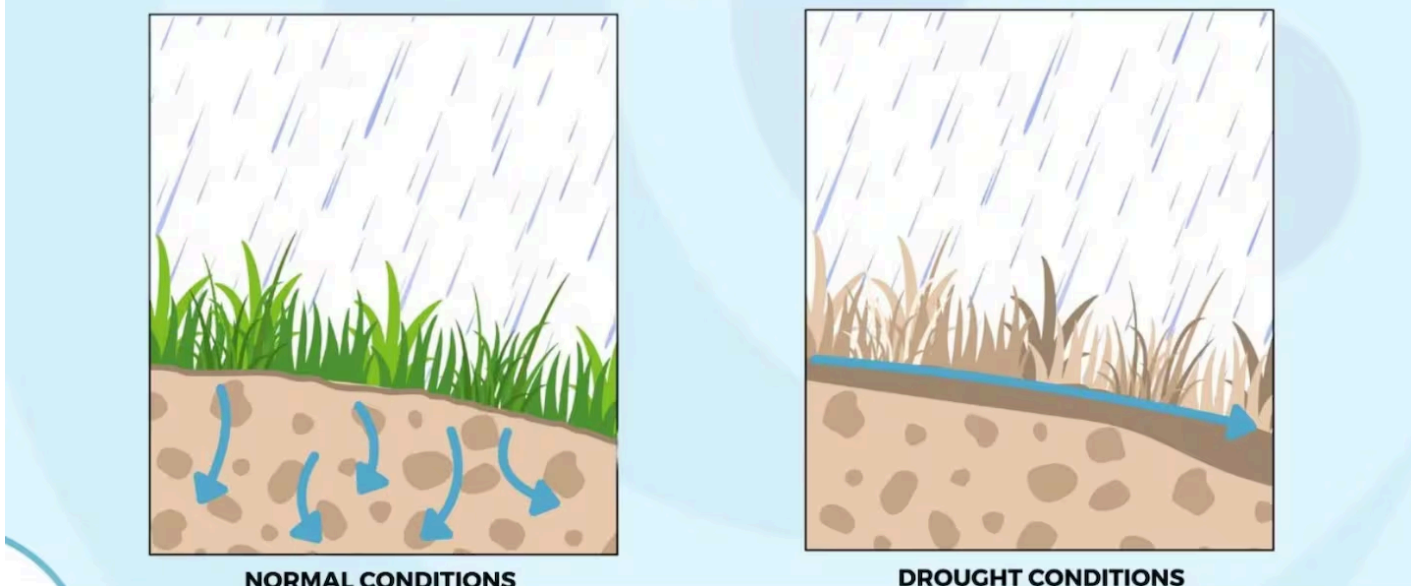
The map below shows recent rainfall totals, not including Thursday's rounds of precipitation, which will double these amounts. The key is that rain needs to fall steadily but not too quickly.



Rain totals over the past week across New England. BOSTON GLOBE

Droughts make the ground hard and compact, allowing less space for water to filter through when it rains. So if a burst of heavy rain falls, the chance for flash flooding is actually higher because the water cannot be absorbed as quickly as the rainfall rates, causing flooding on the surface. Add in the varying terrain of Western Mass. to Northern New England, and then the flash flooding is an even greater risk during drought.

After a drought, soil becomes hard and compact. When heavy rain falls, water runs off the surface instead of soaking in, leading to flash flooding.



When it does rain over drought-riddled ground, rainwater can run off the surface before being absorbed. NWS

It takes a handful of days to see how rain improves drought conditions because it takes time to filter through the soil. I'm hopeful that at least the [recent wet stretch](#) will curb the rate of drought and help bring some brighter colors to the leaves during [peak fall foliage](#).

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