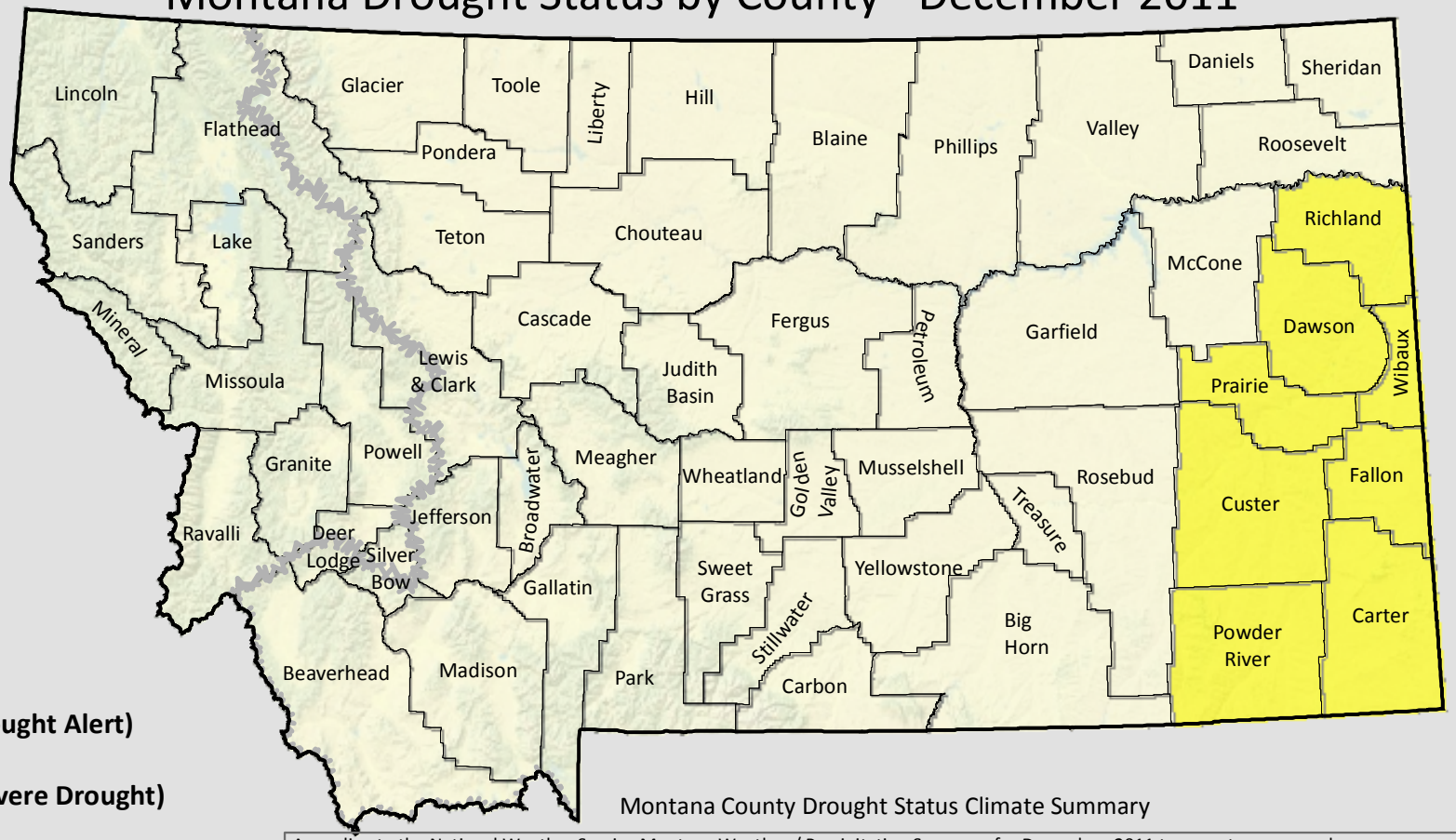
Montana Drought Status by County - December 2011

http://drought.mt.gov



Map Key

Continental Divide

Drought Impact Type

Drought Status

December 2011

- Moist
- No Drought
- Slightly Dry
- Moderately Dry **(Drought Alert)**
- Severely Dry
- Extremely Dry **(Severe Drought)**

Drought Impact Types -

A = Agricultural - Soil Moisture, Range conditions

H = Hydrological - Water Supplies, Streamflow, Groundwater

Drought Alert - Governor's Drought Advisory Committee strongly encourages local officials to convene local drought committees.

Severe Drought - Local officials should have local drought planning efforts underway or should reconvene the local drought committee at the earliest opportunity.
For recommended responses, see the Montana Drought Plan

Montana State Library Natural Resource Information System

http://nris.mt.gov/drought/

Montana County Drought Status Climate Summary

According to the National Weather Service Montana Weather / Precipitation Summary for December, 2011 temperatures were above average across most of Montana for the 6th consecutive month leaving December as the 34th warmest December on record. "For the period of October through December 2011 precipitation averaged 2.62 inches statewide," very close to normal. However, snowfall was only about 50 percent of normal averaging only 5.2 inches across the state, ending the month with the 25th lowest snowfall of record. The January 4, 2012 NOAA National Snow Analysis Snow Water Equivalent map indicates that almost all of the state's prairie lands are "open" or devoid of snow cover.
See: www.nohrsc.noaa.gov

As of January 4, 2012 Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) Snotel network indicates snow water equivalent of the mountain snowpack for the five major Montana river basins west of the Continental Divide ranges from about 80 to 90 percent of average, and between 75 and 90 percent for the 11 river basins east of the Divide, with the exceptions of the Tongue and Lower Yellowstone basins at 134 and 101 percent. NRCS records indicate that for the period of record 1971-2000 the mountain snow accumulation period will be reaching its 50 percent point by mid-January.

The Montana Agricultural Statistics Service Crop Weather Report for December 31, 2011 reported that topsoil and subsoil moisture were at 52 and 51 percent adequate and surplus. Winter wheat condition was rated 30 percent good and excellent and wind damage was 95 percent light and none. Freeze damage was 100 percent light and none. However, snow cover was rated as 98 percent none and light with range and pasture feed condition 31 percent good to excellent and grazing 84 percent open.

NOAA's Climate Prediction Center (CPC) January 5 ENSO Update reported that "Collectively, the ongoing oceanic and atmospheric conditions reflect the continuation of weak to moderate La Nina." The report goes on to call for increased chance for below average temperatures over the western and north-central U.S. with above average precipitation favored across the northern tier of states. Montana tends to experience cooler, and to a lesser degree, wetter winters during La Nina events.