2025-2026 Winter Forecast & Year Ahead Outlook
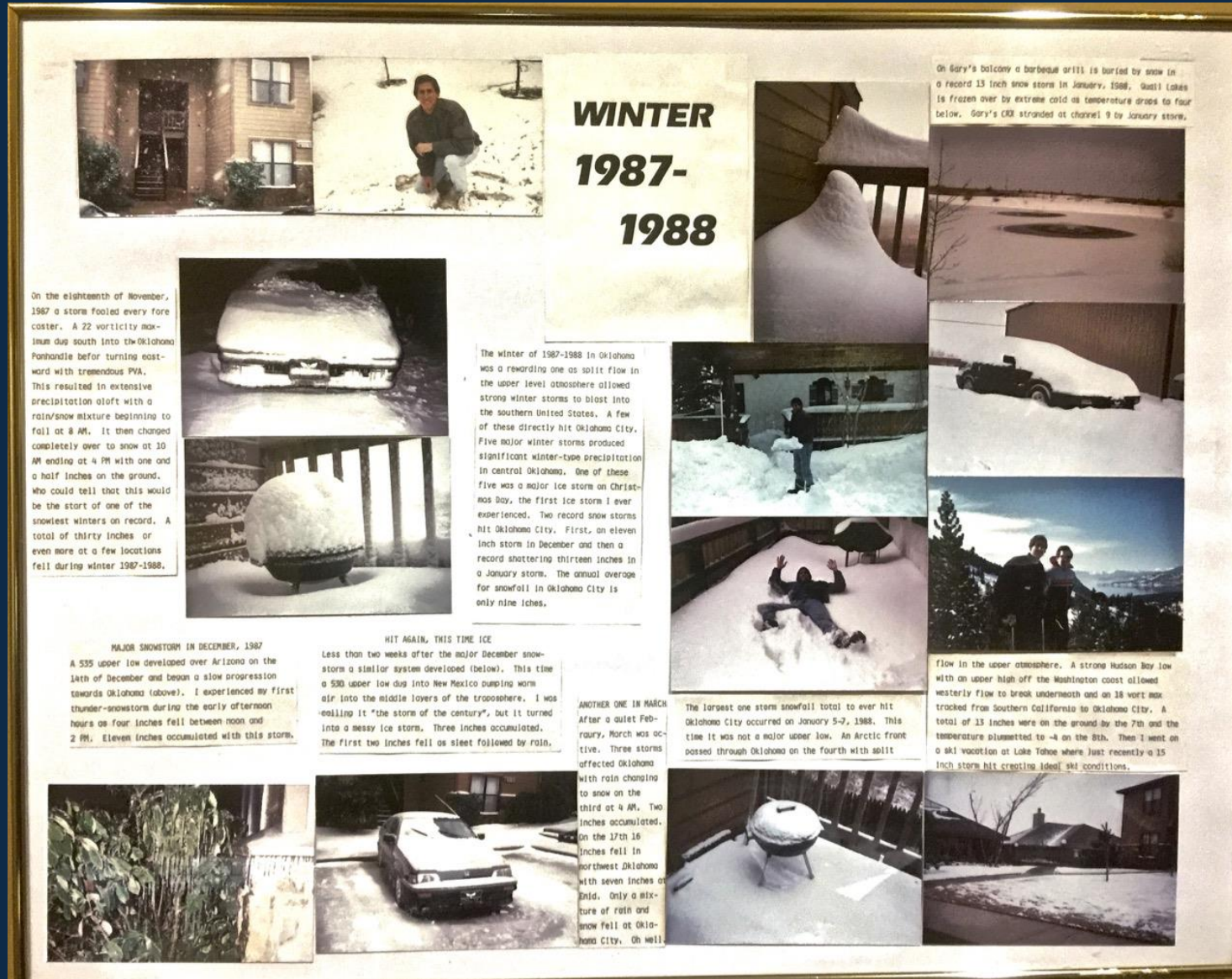

Powered by the Lezak Recurring Cycle (LRC)

Issued December 5, 2025

"Winter Has a Blueprint. We Found It."

The Big Picture: Why Long-Range Weather Is Predictable

- Every winter follows a unique atmospheric pattern – illustrated here by the mural from the winter of discovery (1987-1988).

- This year's pattern began developing in early October.

- Once the pattern is established, it repeats – rhythmically – for 10 to 11 months.

- This repeating, oscillating cycle becomes the blueprint of the atmosphere.

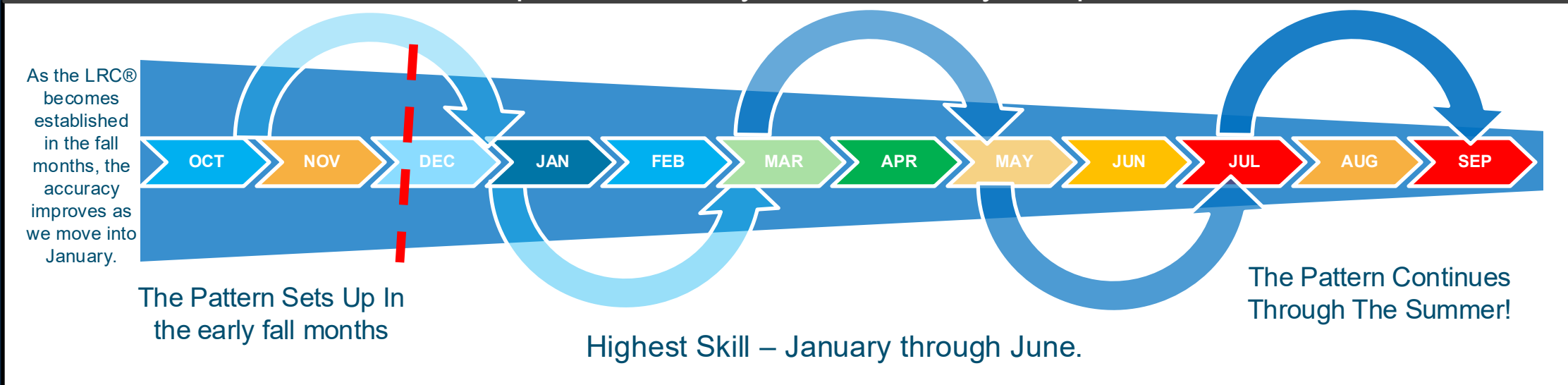- When you understand this cycling pattern, you can plan with confidence.

Most Forecasters use the corners. The LRC Completes the Puzzle

- Most forecasters rely only on the corner pieces – ENSO, AO, NAO, MJO, or avoid long-range forecasting altogether.

- They're missing the centerpiece of the atmospheric jigsaw – the LRC

- If you knew the rhythm of the pattern months in advance, how would you plan differently?

- When you know when and where storm systems, cold spells, dry windows, and major events will occur, surprises turn into strategy

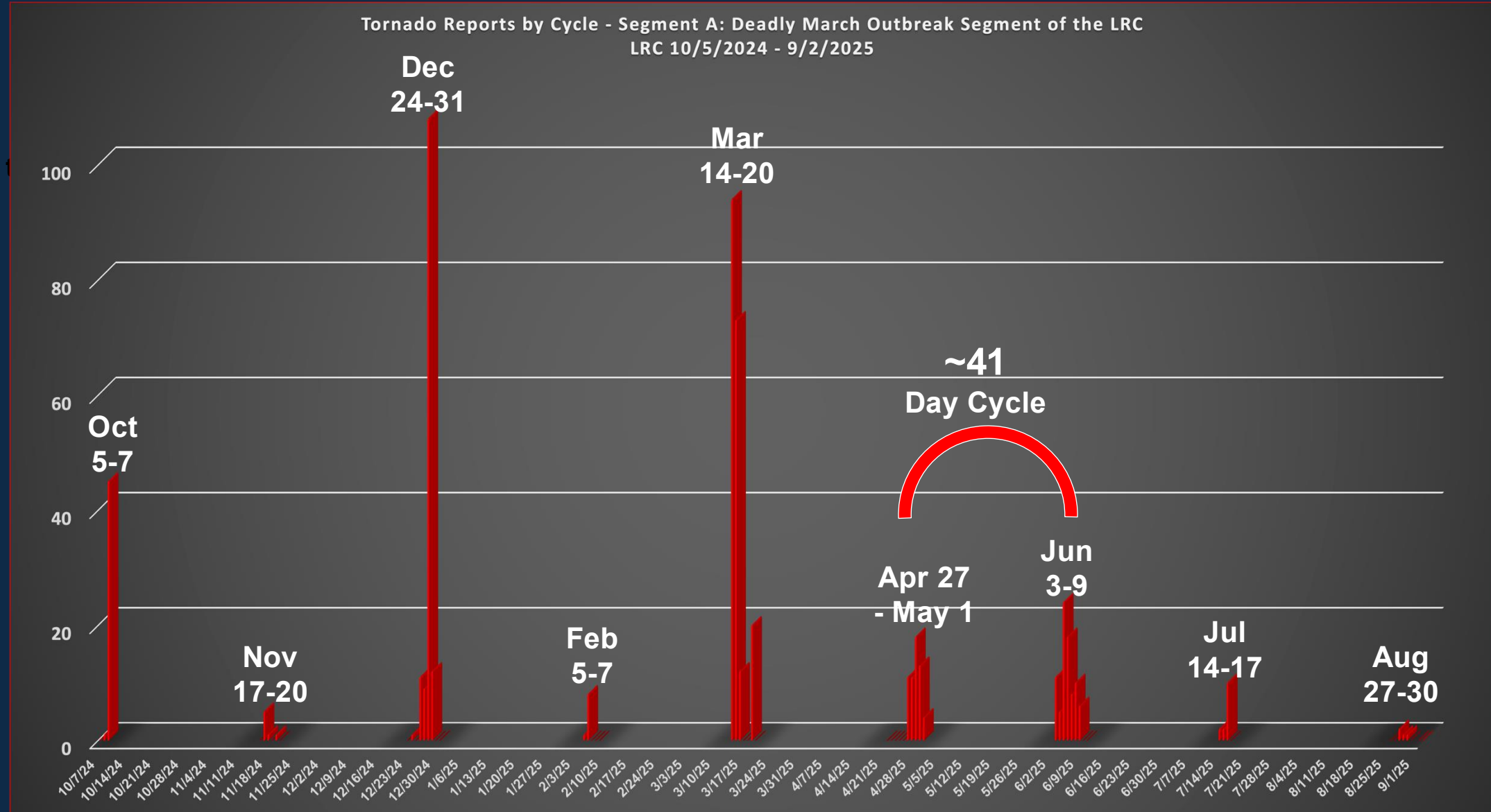# Why The LRC Dominates Long-Range Forecast Skill

The LRC® describes the order in what many think is just chaos, in the river of air above us. The "sweet spot" of accuracy is from January – September!

As the LRC® becomes established in the fall months, the accuracy improves as we move into January.

OCT NOV DEC JAN FEB MAR APR MAY JUN JUL AUG SEP

The Pattern Sets Up In the early fall months

The Pattern Continues Through The Summer!

Highest Skill – January through June.

- **October – December:** The LRC becomes defined for the season, and long-range forecasts are issued by our meteorologists and powered by the LRC Model

- **January – June:** Highest forecast skill – ideal for agriculture, natural gas, winter storms, drought signals, and flood risks

- **March – July:** Over 90% accuracy on predicting when and where severe weather outbreaks will develop

- **July - September:** Peak tropical skill – plus strong confidence in predicting where and when heat waves will develop
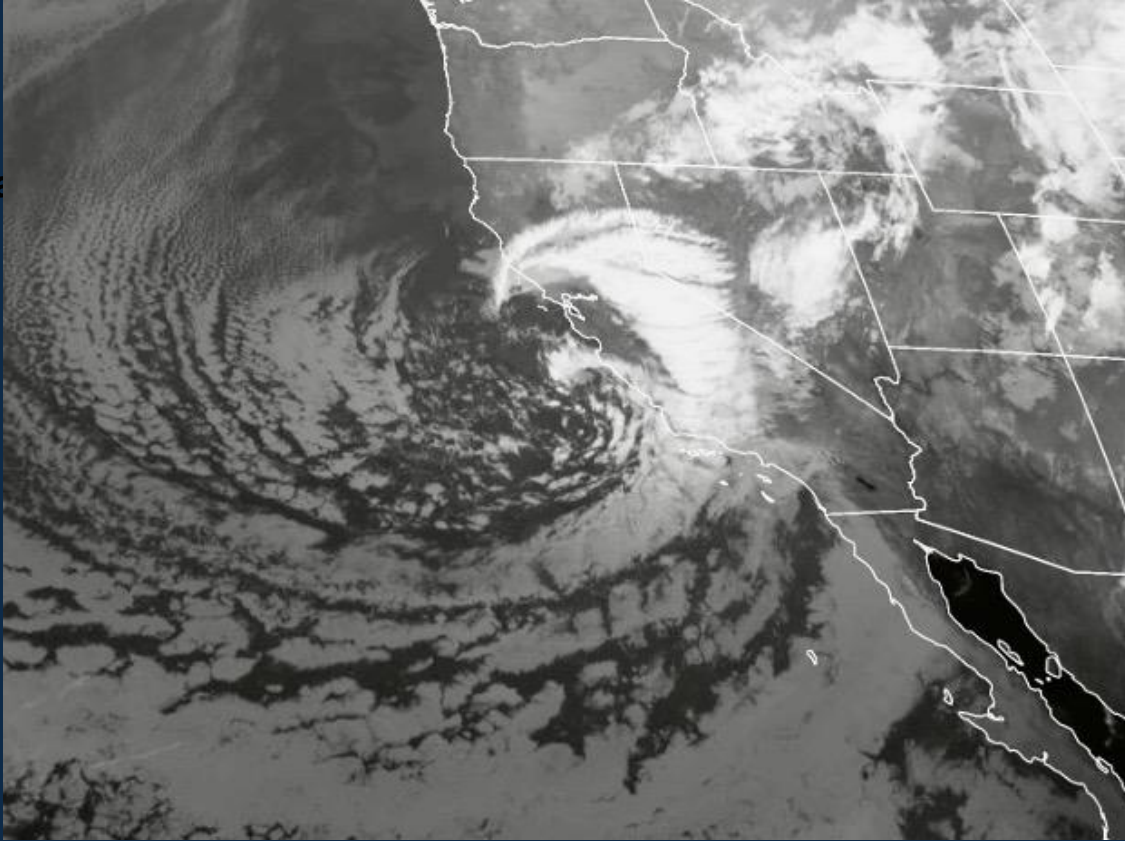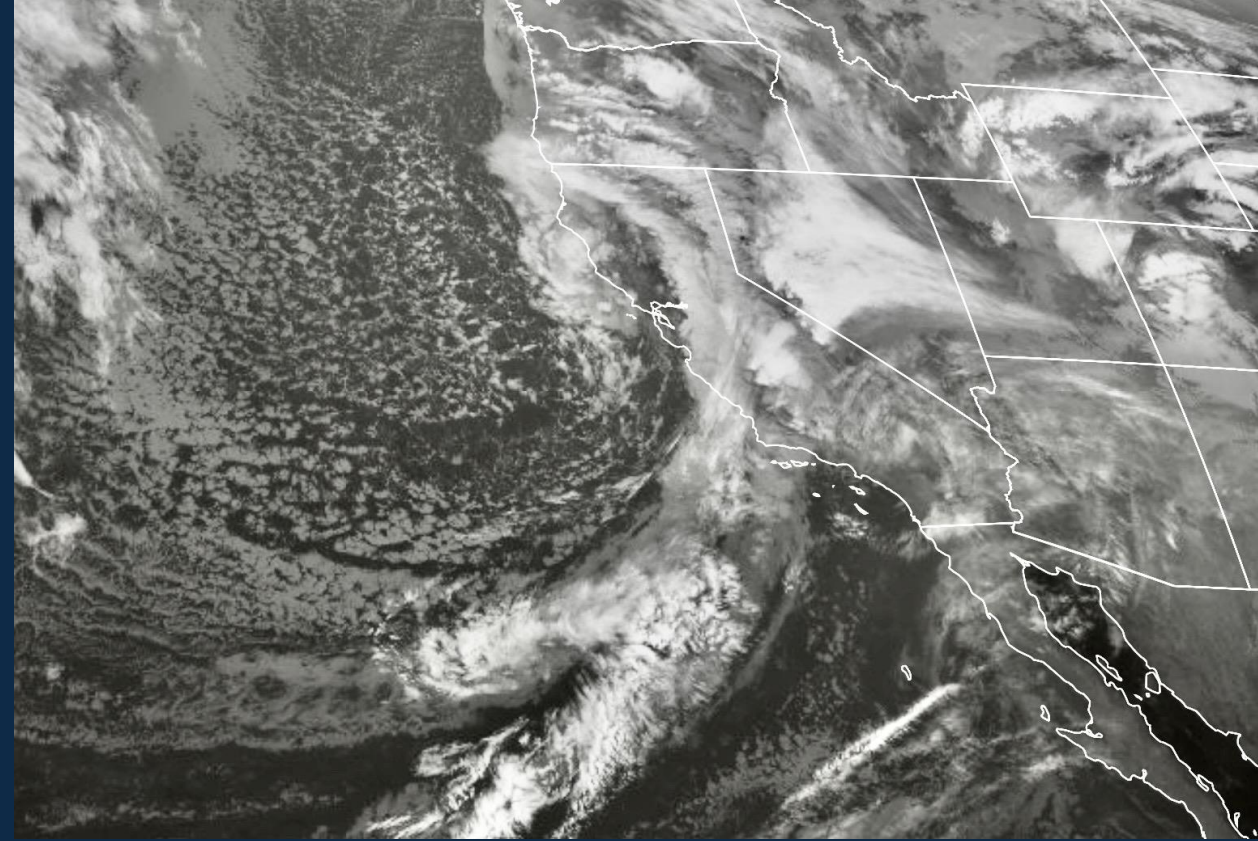
Identifying Each Year's Cycle

Tornado Reports by Cycle - Segment A: Deadly March Outbreak Segment of the LRC
LRC 10/5/2024 - 9/2/2025

Finding This Year's Cycle!

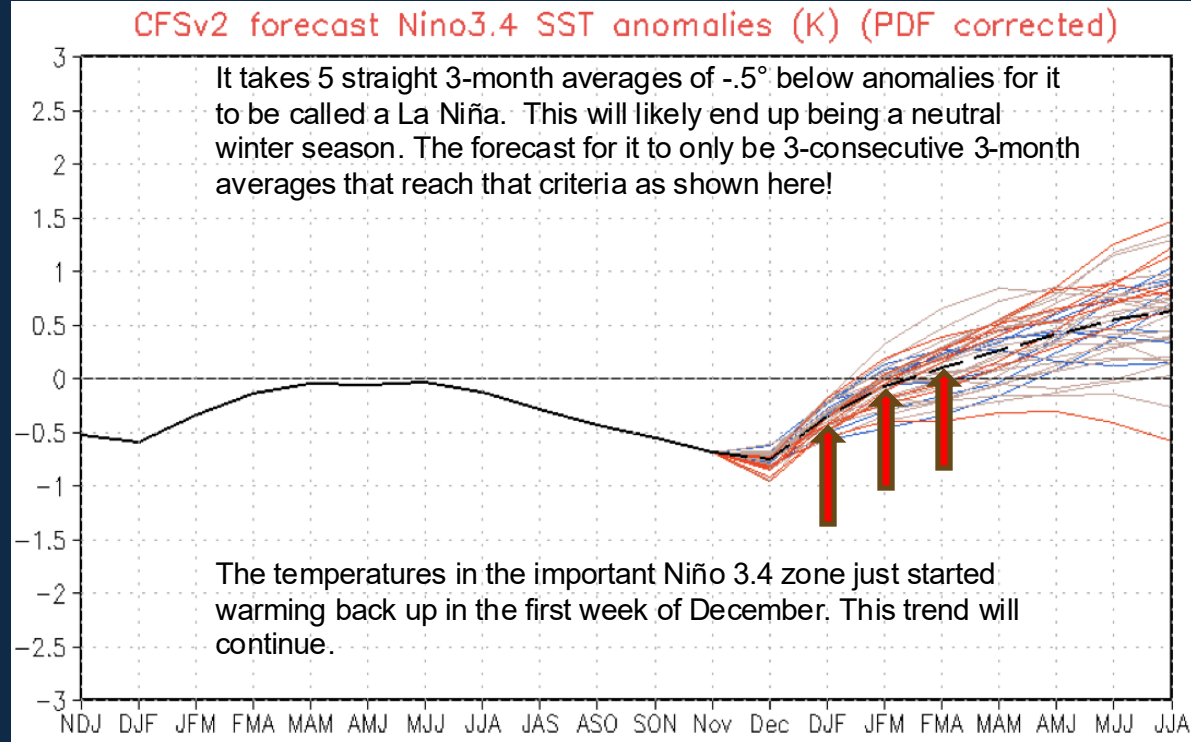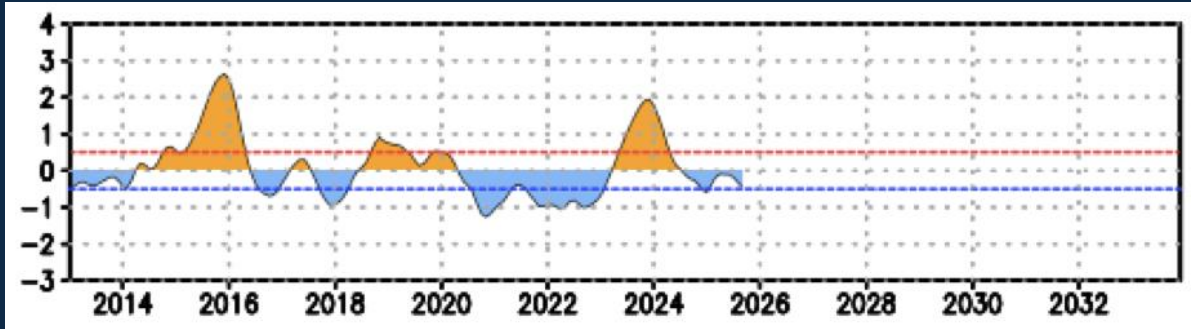**This Storm Formed Early As The LRC Was Setting Up – October 14th**

This Storm Formed As Part Of A Series Of Storms – November 17th

These two storm systems formed in two different parts of this year's LRC. This is an exhibit of Phase 2 and it was one of our early predictions to return. Expect this part of the pattern to cycle through twice in each cycle in the year ahead.

6

Big Piece #2 – The El Niño/Southern Oscillation (ENSO): It Will Likely Be A Neutral Winter

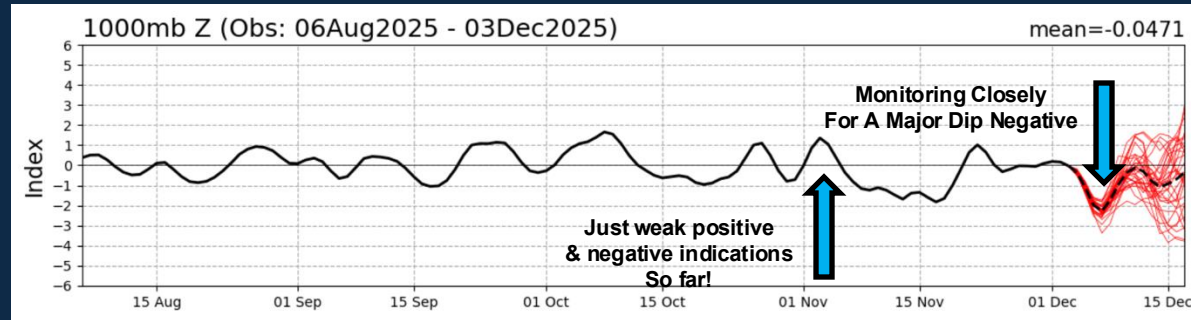CFSv2 forecast Nino3.4 SST anomalies (K) (PDF corrected)

It takes 5 straight 3-month averages of -.5° below anomalies for it to be called a La Niña. This will likely end up being a neutral winter season. The forecast for it to only be 3-consecutive 3-month averages that reach that criteria as shown here!

The temperatures in the important Niño 3.4 zone just started warming back up in the first week of December. This trend will continue.

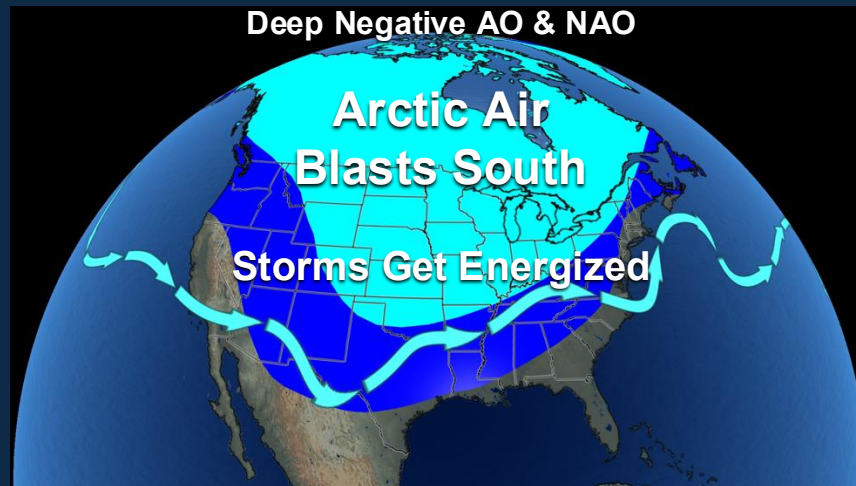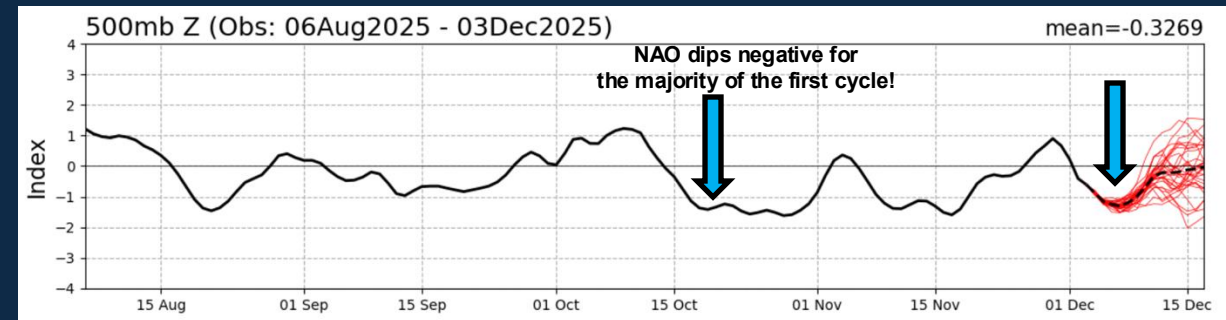| Year	DJF	JFM	FMA	MAM	AMJ	MJJ	JJA	JAS	ASO	SON	OND	NDJ
2013	-0.4	-0.4	-0.3	-0.3	-0.4	-0.4	-0.4	-0.3	-0.3	-0.2	-0.2	-0.3
2014	-0.4	-0.5	-0.3	0.0	0.2	0.2	0.0	0.1	0.2	0.5	0.6	0.7
2015	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.7	0.9	1.2	1.5	1.9	2.2	2.4	2.6	2.6
2016	2.5	2.1	1.6	0.9	0.4	-0.1	-0.4	-0.5	-0.6	-0.7	-0.7	-0.6
2017	-0.3	-0.2	0.1	0.2	0.3	0.3	0.1	-0.1	-0.4	-0.7	-0.8	-1.0
2018	-0.9	-0.9	-0.7	-0.5	-0.2	0.0	0.1	0.2	0.5	0.8	0.9	0.8
2019	0.7	0.7	0.7	0.7	0.5	0.5	0.3	0.1	0.2	0.3	0.5	0.5
2020	0.5	0.5	0.4	0.2	-0.1	-0.3	-0.4	-0.6	-0.9	-1.2	-1.3	-1.2
2021	-1.0	-0.9	-0.8	-0.7	-0.5	-0.4	-0.4	-0.5	-0.7	-0.8	-1.0	-1.0
2022	-1.0	-0.9	-1.0	-1.1	-1.0	-0.9	-0.8	-0.9	-1.0	-1.0	-0.9	-0.8
2023	-0.7	-0.4	-0.1	0.2	0.5	0.8	1.1	1.3	1.6	1.8	1.9	2.0
2024	1.8	1.5	1.1	0.7	0.4	0.2	0.0	-0.1	-0.2	-0.3	-0.4	-0.5
2025	-0.6	-0.4	-0.2	-0.1	-0.1	-0.1	-0.2	-0.3	-0.5			

- Sea-surface temperatures in the tropical Pacific have just begun warming in early December.

- Official El Niño or La Niña events require five consecutive 3-month averages of at least +.5°C (El Niño) or -.5°C (La Niña).

- We are forecasting ENSO-neutral conditions this winter. For the second year in a row, La Niña was widely "hyped," but-just like last year- the criteria will not be met.

- So, what does this mean? It means this winter will likely not have any classic La Niña or El Niño impacts!

Puzzle Pieces #3 & #4: The Arctic Oscillation (AO) & The North Atlantic Oscillation (NAO)

The Arctic Oscillation (AO)

1000mb Z (Obs: 06Aug2025 - 03Dec2025)   mean=-0.0471

Monitoring Closely For A Major Dip Negative

Just weak positive & negative indications So far!

The North Atlantic Oscillation (NAO)

500mb Z (Obs: 06Aug2025 - 03Dec2025)   mean=-0.3269

NAO dips negative for the majority of the first cycle!

Deep Negative AO & NAO

Arctic Air Blasts South

Storms Get Energized

High Positive AO & NAO

Arctic Air Is Held Up North

Storm Systems Are Weaker & It Is Warmer

- The AO & NAO are important indexes to track as they showcase potential cold and warm periods and how strong storms may be?
- When these indexes dip deep negative, below -3 to -4, there is a much better chance that Arctic air will blast south. This energizes the jet stream and may increase the strength of storm systems
- When these indexes rise into positive territory, especially above +3 to +4, Arctic air most likely to be held far to the north and storm systems end up weaker, and this happened in the first cycle of this year's LRC

- As the winter forecast was being issued, the AO and NAO were showing some potential for a dip deeper into negative territory, something we will be monitoring day-by-day
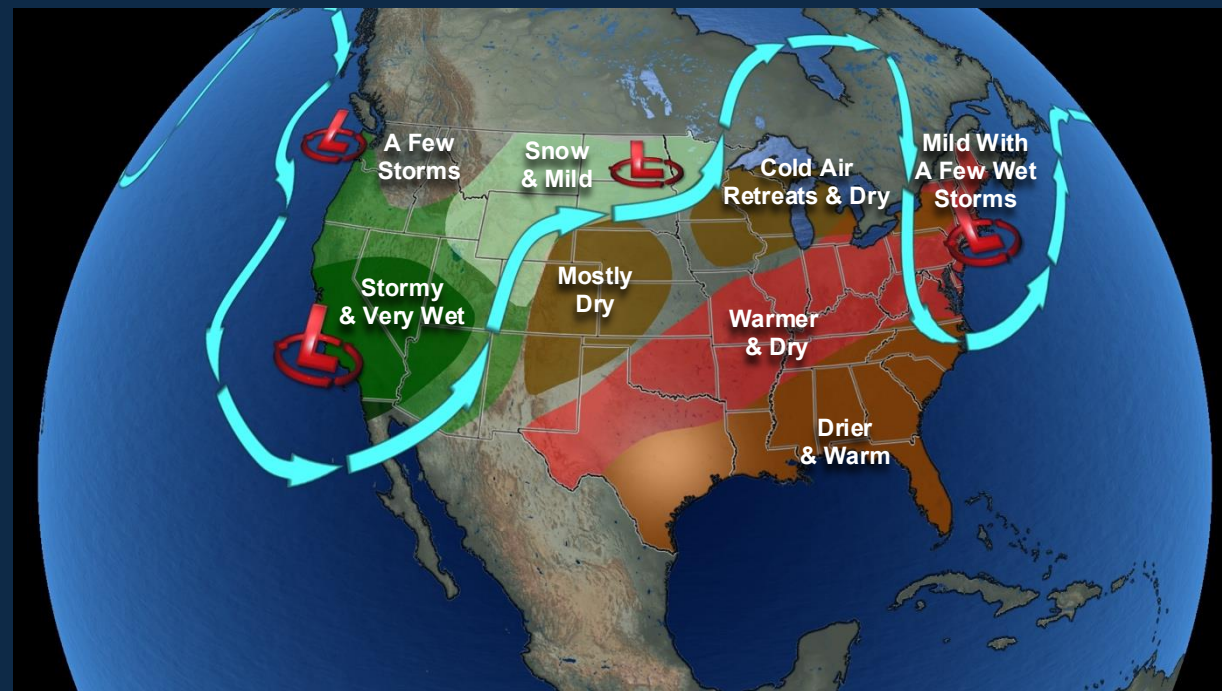
Two Main Phases Of The 2025-2026 LRC Have Been Identified

This year's LRC Consists of Two Primary Jet Stream Phases That Recur Throughout the Season
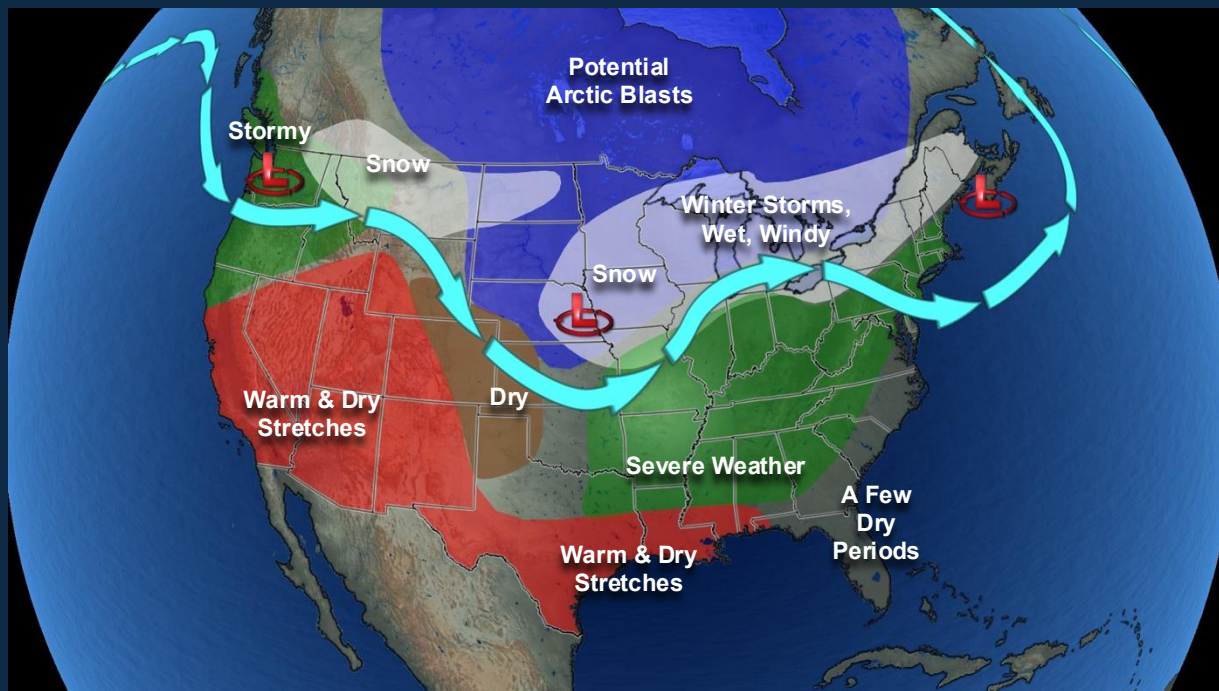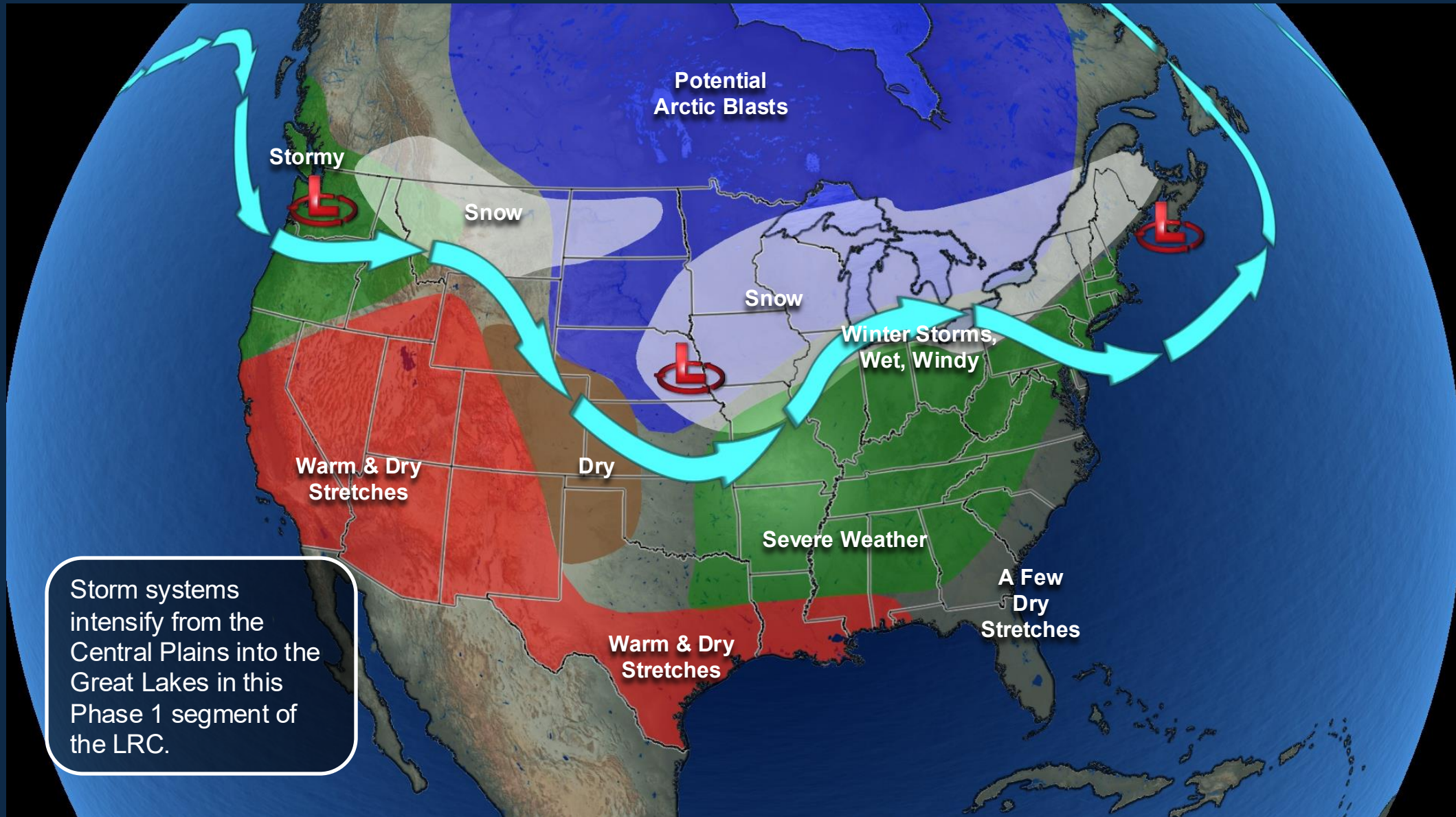

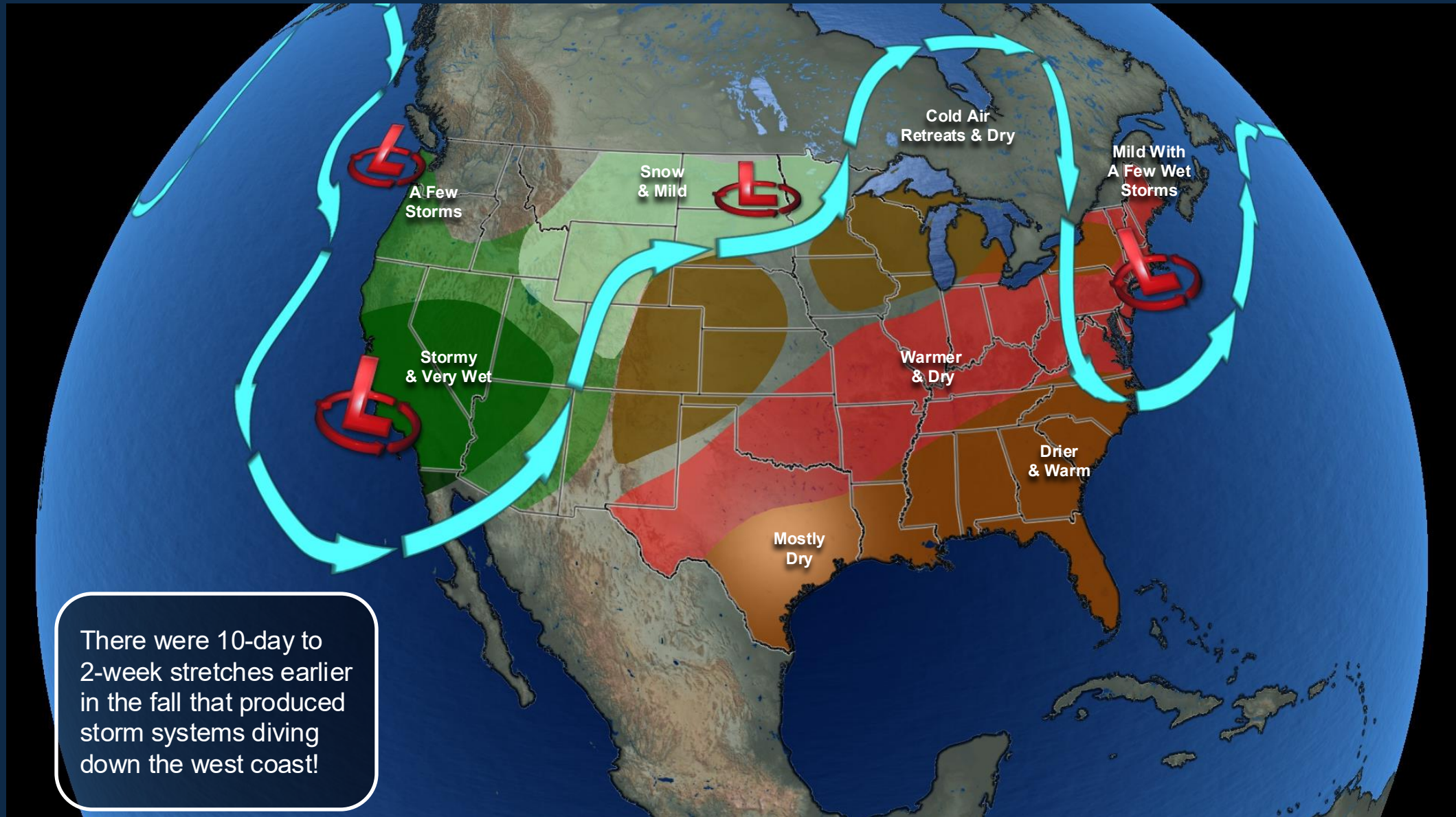Phase 1: Systems That Intensify & May Tap Into Arctic Air

Phase 2: Storm Systems Dive Down The West Coast

- The 2025-2026 cycling pattern has set up into two distinct phases each lasting a couple of weeks or longer.

- Phase 1: The dominant phase mirrors the late-November to early-December pattern that produced major snowstorms. It frequently intensifies storm systems and may tap into Arctic air. This part of the pattern has lasted two to three weeks at a time and is likely to help create the conditions for Arctic Blasts this winter.

- Phase 2: The secondary phase features storm systems diving down the West Coast before turning east, then northeast. This phase has been cycling at intervals of about ten days and will be responsible for several impactful winter storms.

Phase 1 of the 2025-2026 Winter Season – Storm Systems Intensify Over The Central Plains & Great Lakes

Potential Arctic Blasts

Stormy

Snow

Snow

Winter Storms, Wet, Windy

Warm & Dry Stretches

Dry

Severe Weather

A Few Dry Stretches

Warm & Dry Stretches

Storm systems intensify from the Central Plains into the Great Lakes in this Phase 1 segment of the LRC.

Phase 2 of the 2025-2026 Season – Storm Systems Blast The West Coast

Cold Air Retreats & Dry

Mild With A Few Wet Storms

Snow & Mild

A Few Storms

Warmer & Dry

Stormy & Very Wet

Drier & Warm

Mostly Dry

There were 10-day to 2-week stretches earlier in the fall that produced storm systems diving down the west coast!

Phase 2 Amplification – This phase of the jet stream is likely to amplify once or twice. When it does, it can produce a *major ice-storm setup*.
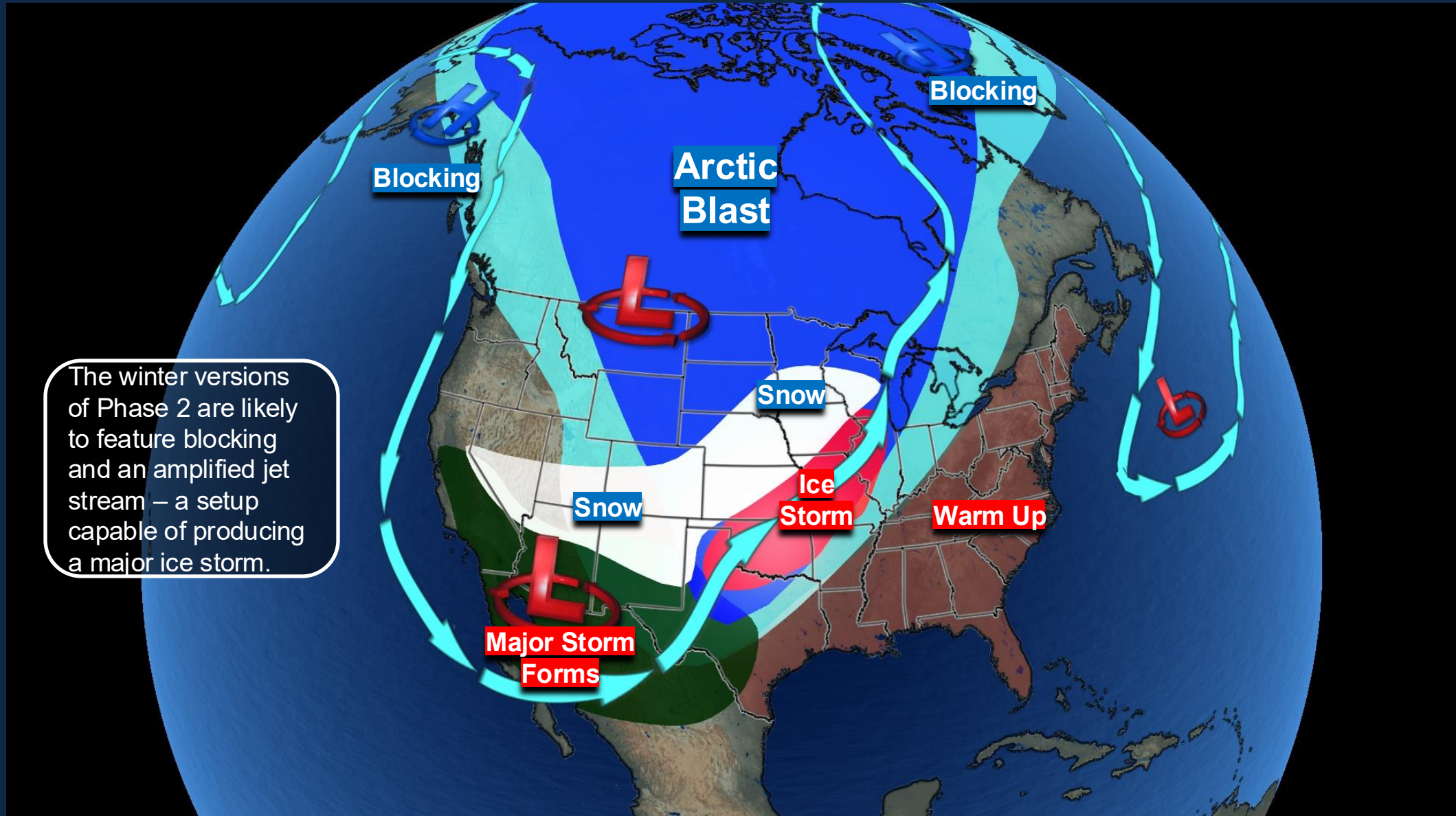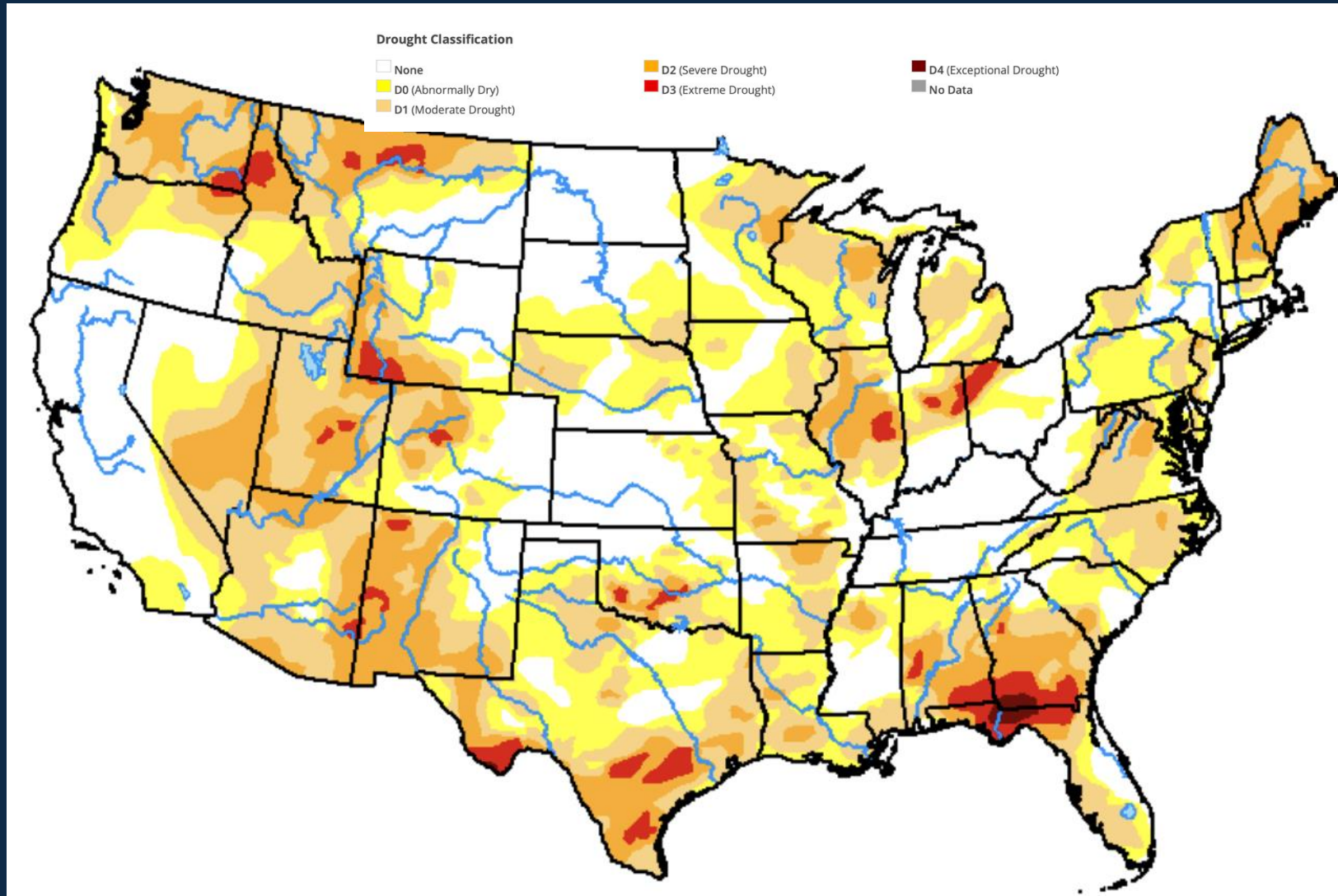
Drought & Ag Forecasts

Drought Conditions September 30
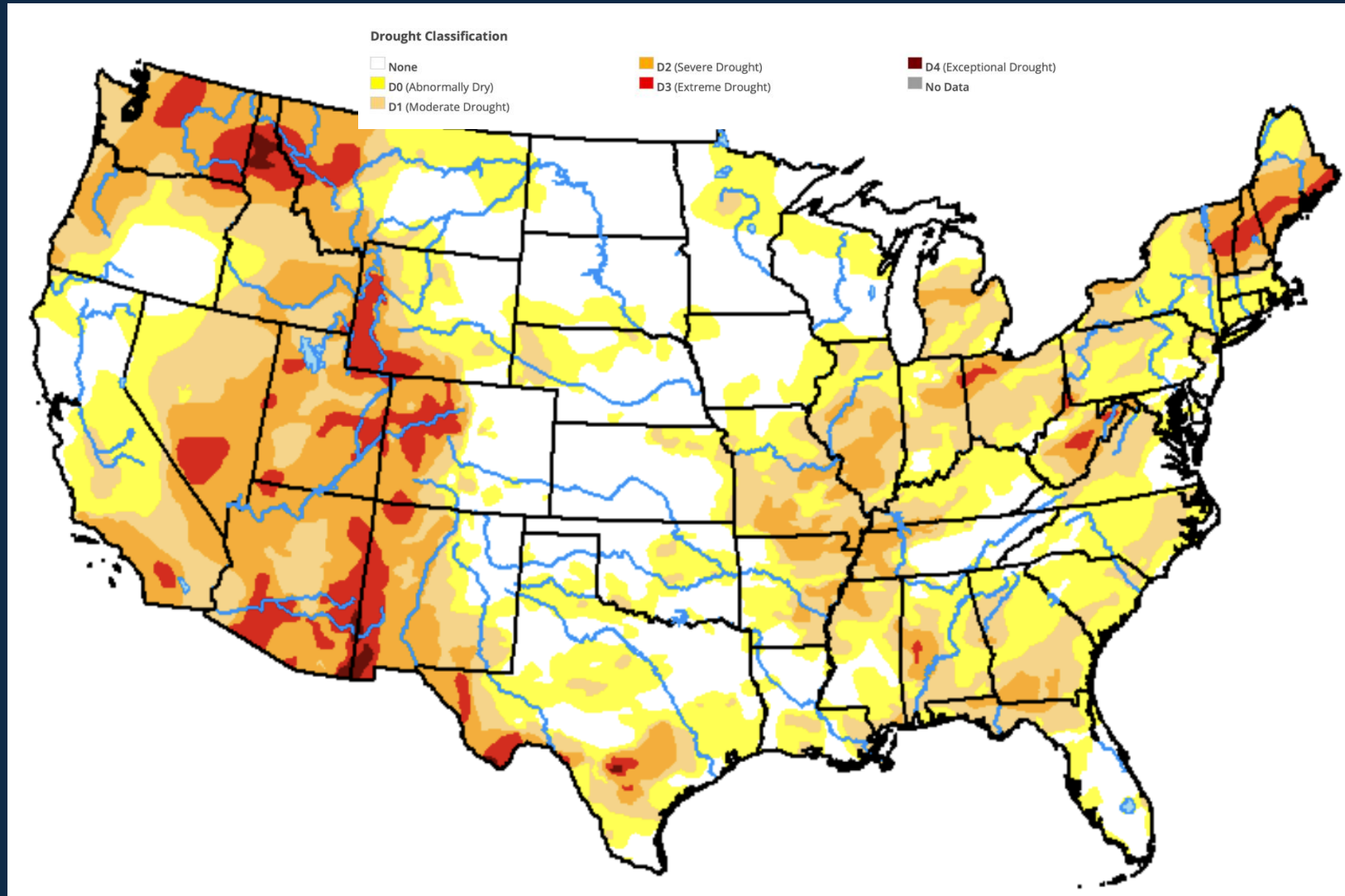
Droughts either expand or contract depending on the prevailing pattern.
Here's how conditions looked as this year's LRC began to set up.

# Drought Conditions December 1, 2025

December Drought expansion remains minimal. Growth is confined mainly to the Deep South, with small increases in northwestern Ohio and northwestern Montana-consistent with Phase 2's drier signals.

Precipitation: The First 60-Days Of This Year's LRC – October 5 to December 4
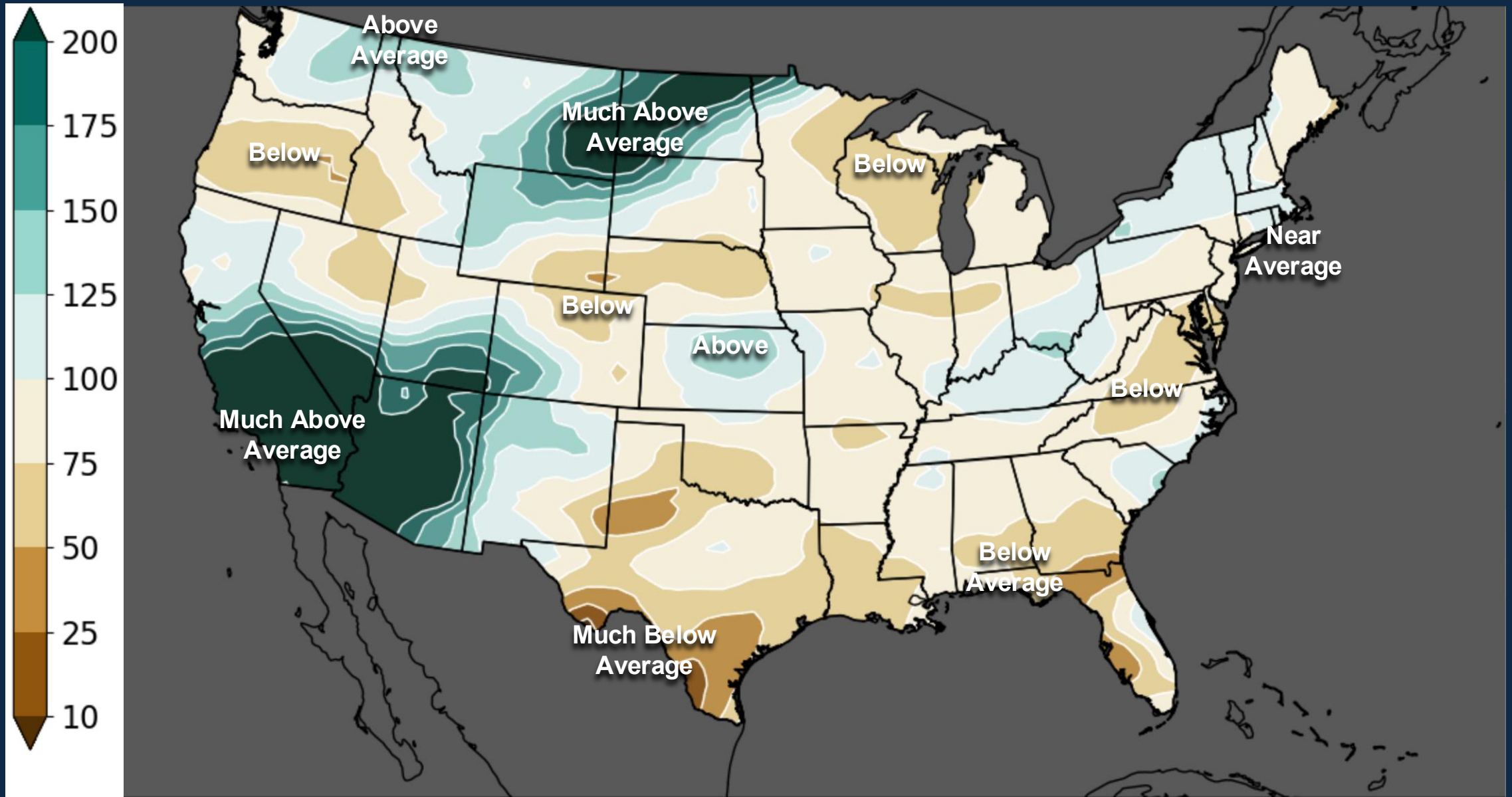
Temperatures: The First 60-Days Of This Year's LRC – October 5-December 4

Impacts On Agriculture
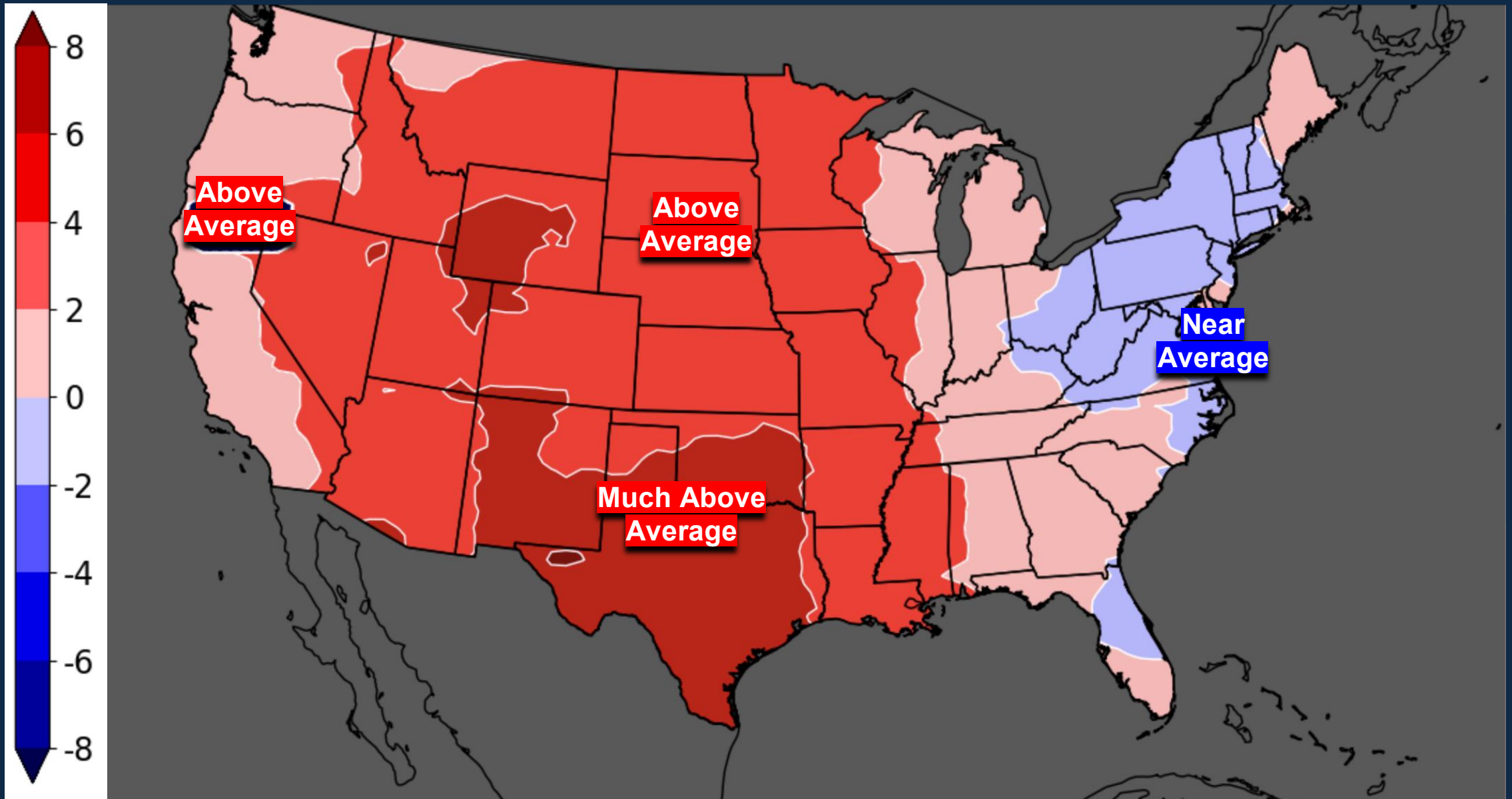
- **Dry periods:**
Planting delays, early-season stress, reduced soil recharge, and increased vulnerability if dryness returns in future cycles

- **Wet periods:**
Field work delays, ponding, elevated disease pressure during recurring wet windows

- **Temperature extremes:**
Freeze risks during key emergent phases, heat stress during pollination, and early/late cold outbreaks that are predictable and repeat

Key LRC-Driven Forecast Windows

Phase 1 of this Year's Pattern
(Colder & Wetter – Snow/Rain, Possible Arctic Blasts)

December 20 – January 14
January 26 – February 10
February 21– March 18
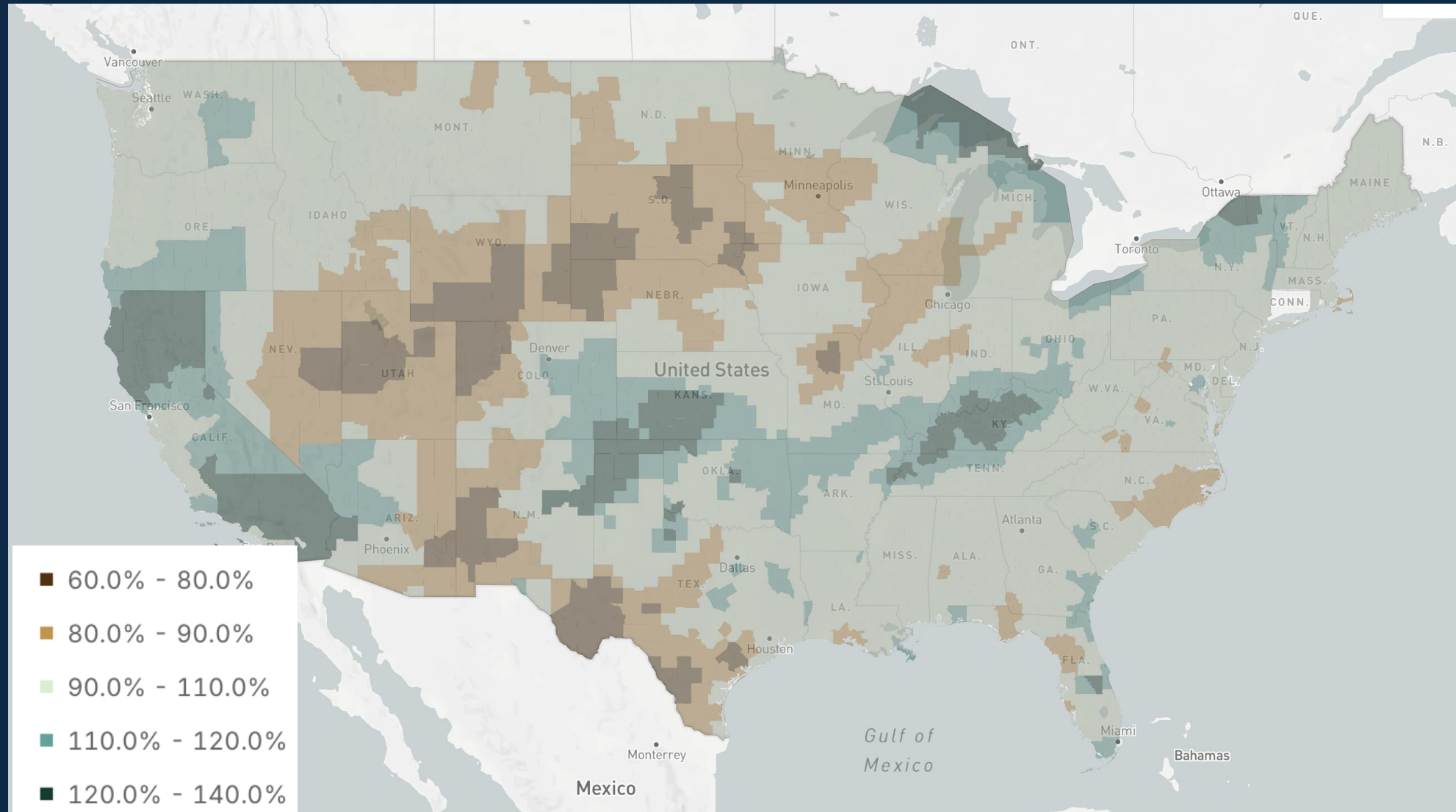March 30 – April 14
April 25 – May 20
June 1 – June 16

Phase 2 of this Year's Pattern
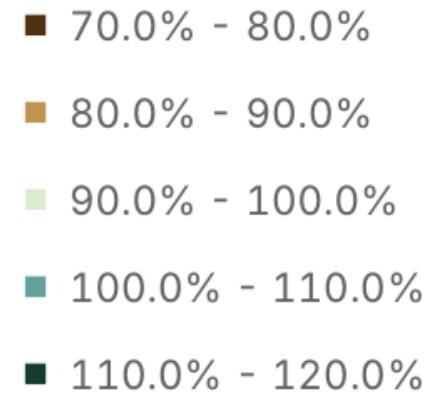**(Warmer/Drier, Major Winter Storm in January or February)**

January 15 – 25
February 11 – 20
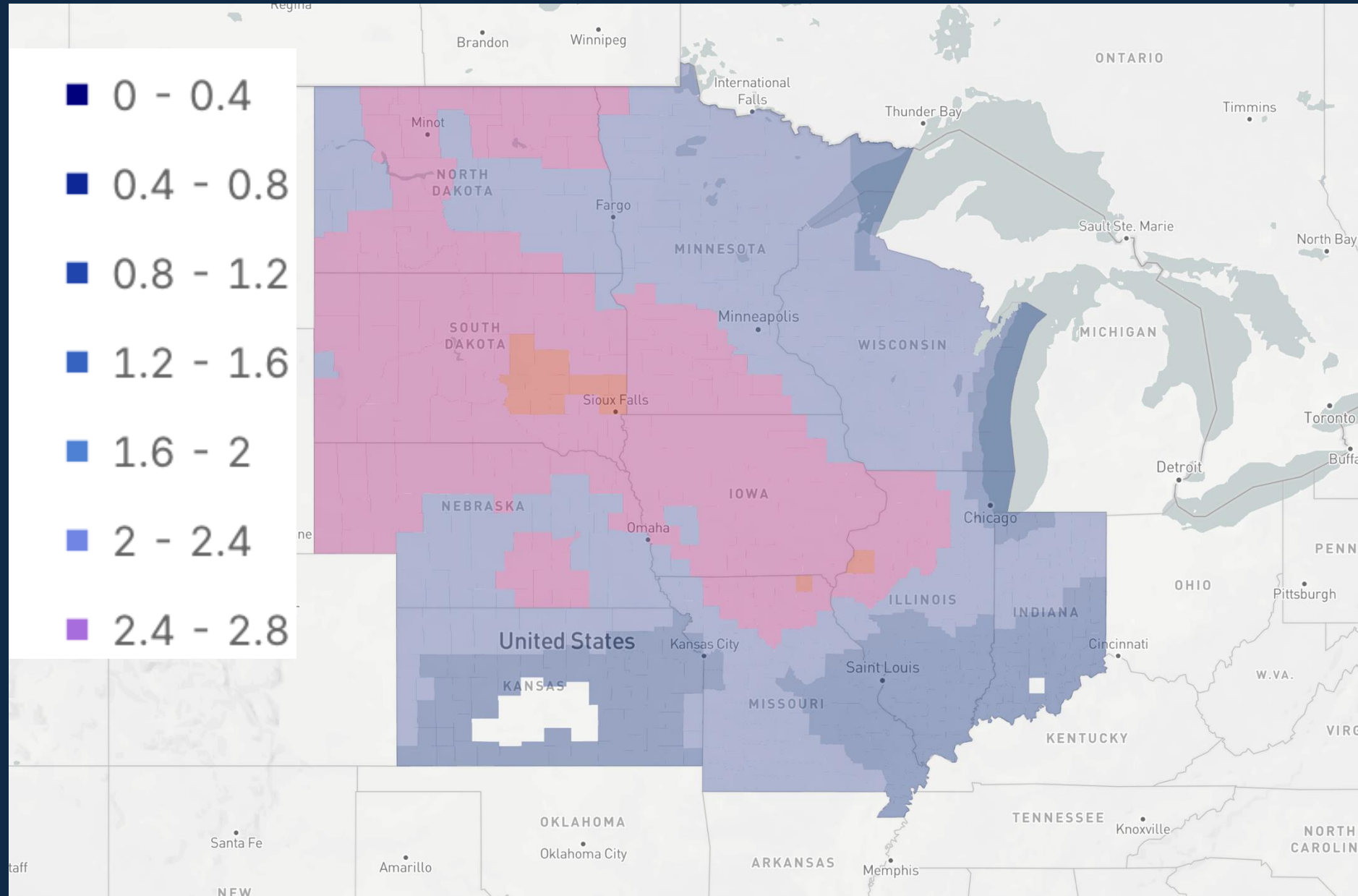March 19 – 29
April 15 – 24
May 21 – May 31
June 17 - 26

LRC Model Forecasts

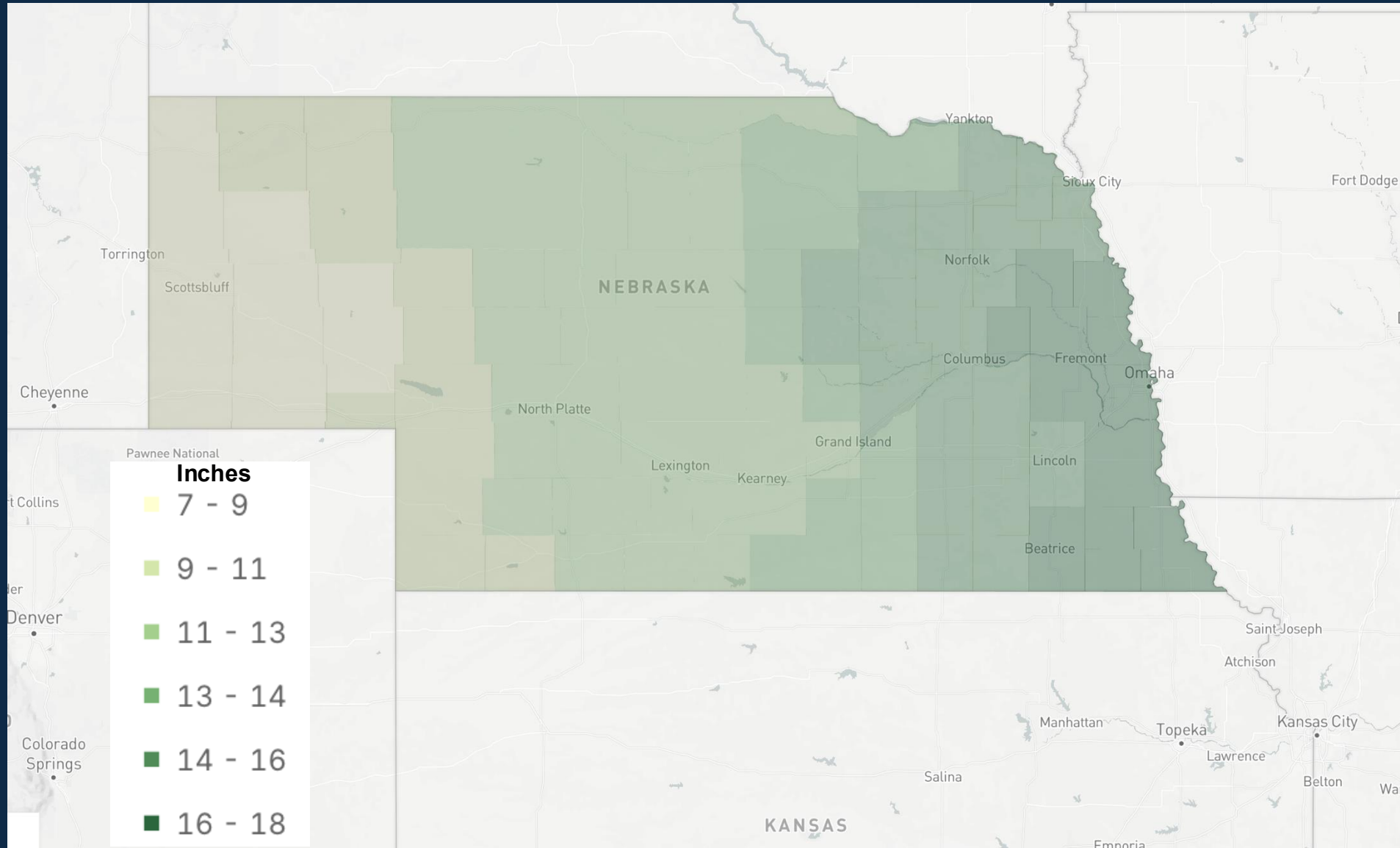# LRC Model % of Average Precipitation: January - June

Legend:
- 60.0% - 80.0%
- 80.0% - 90.0%
- 90.0% - 110.0%
- 110.0% - 120.0%
- 120.0% - 140.0%

Corn Belt % of Average Rainfall Forecast: January through June

Legend:
- 70.0% – 80.0%
- 80.0% – 90.0%
- 90.0% – 100.0%
- 100.0% – 110.0%
- 110.0% – 120.0%

Forecast Departure From Average Temperatures: January-June
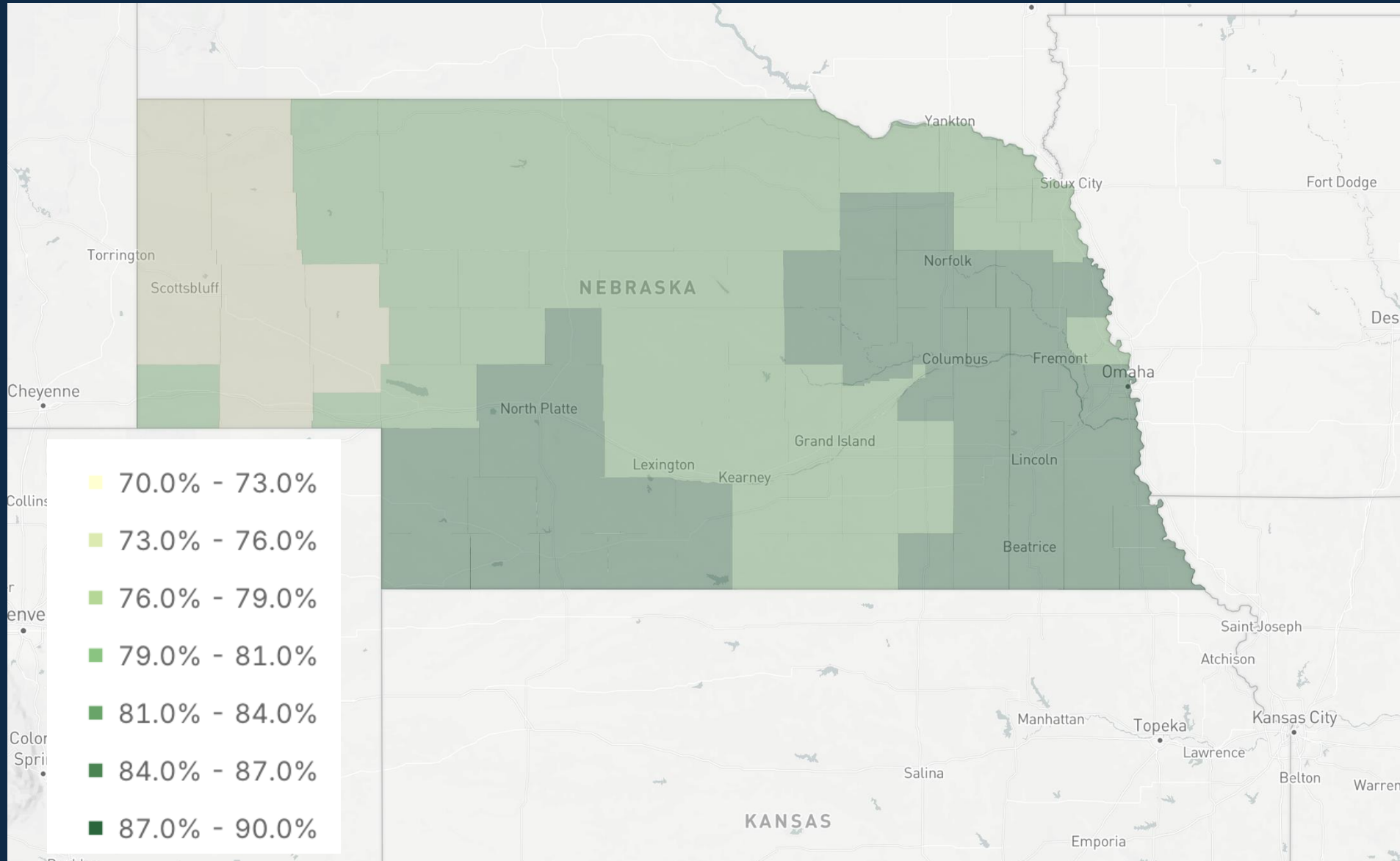
Nebraska

LRC Model Rainfall Forecast (Inches): Nebraska – January - June

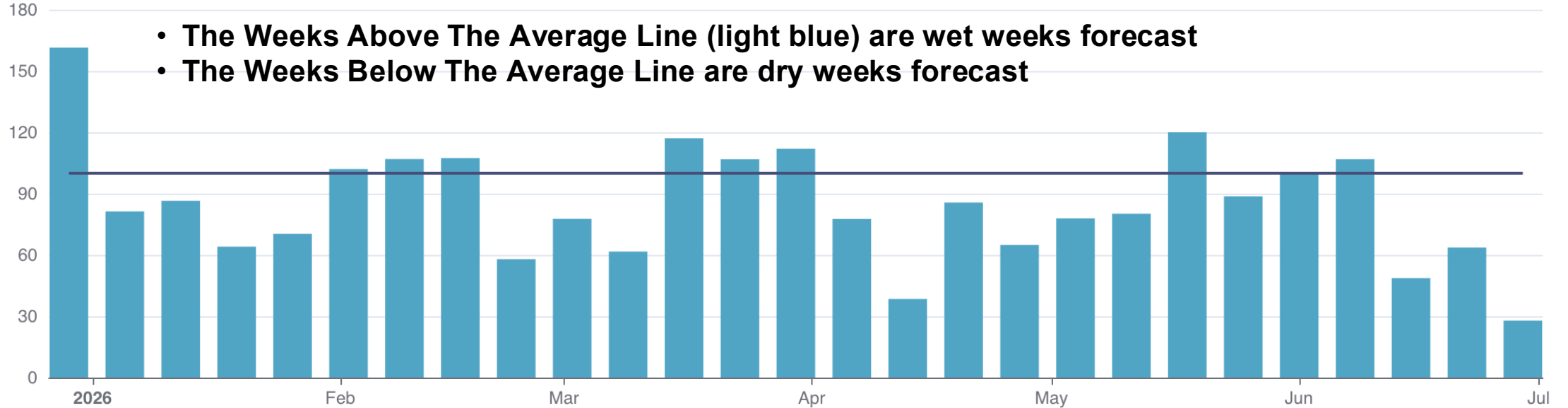LRC Model % of Average Precipitation: Nebraska – January - June

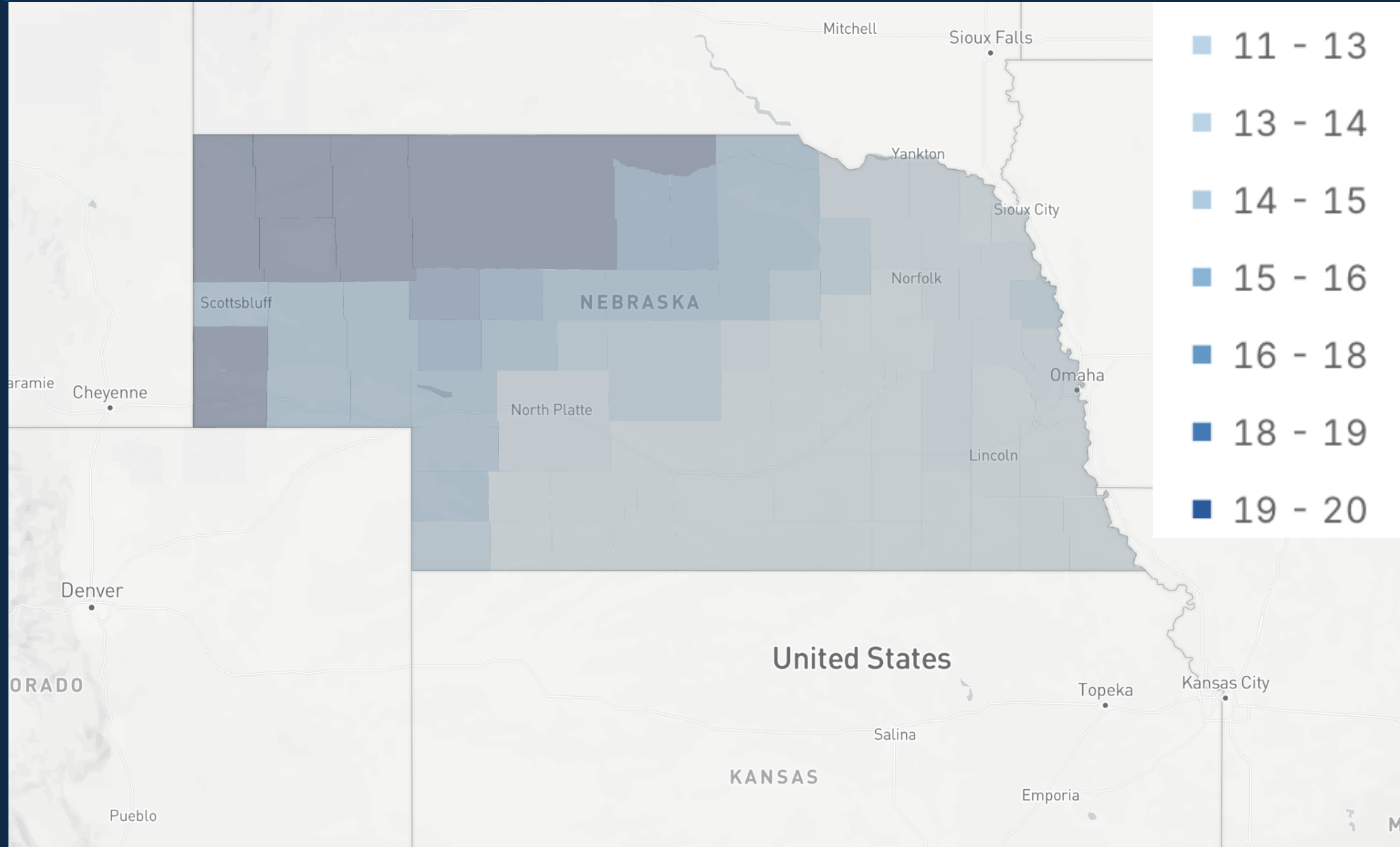# Nebraska: Week-by-Week Forecast For Wet & Dry Weeks
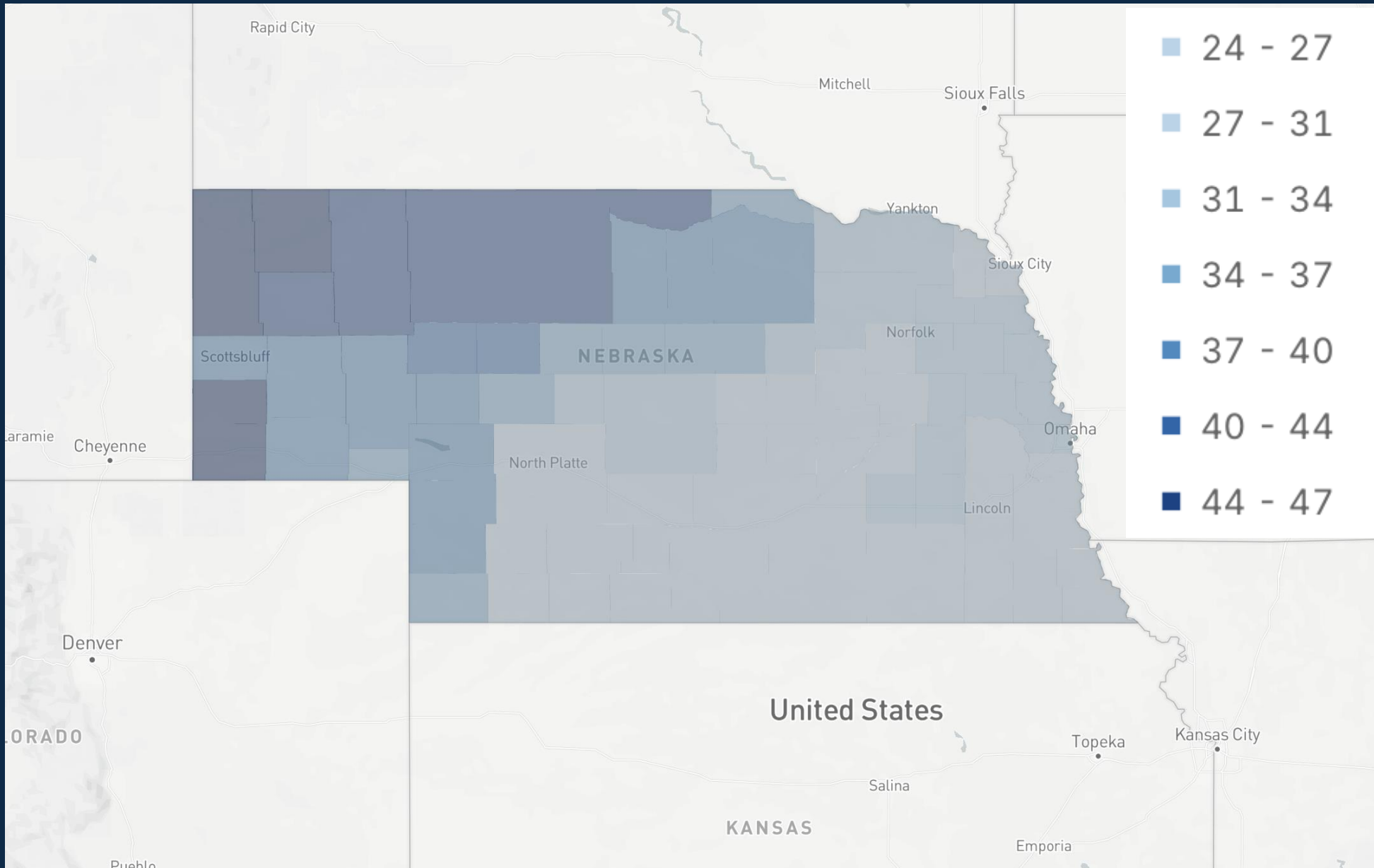

Precipitation Forecast (% of Average)

- **The Weeks Above The Average Line (light blue) are wet weeks forecast**
- **The Weeks Below The Average Line are dry weeks forecast**

Legend: Precipitation Fraction of 30-Year Average — Average Line (All) (Inv)

Nebraska Snow Forecast: January – June

Nebraska – Higher Snow Potential January - June

Conclusions & My Thoughts On This Unique Pattern

- The fact that it took Golden, Boulder, and Denver, CO until December 3rd to record their first inch of snow is a direct symptom of this year's LRC. This will have major implications for fire season if the trend continues.
- Colorado ski resorts have moved through the first cycle with only 30-40% of normal snowpack by this date – a strong indication that the entire season will likely finish below average on snowfall
- The western trough in Phase 2, combined with the potential for jet-stream amplification, raises the risk of a major ice-storm setup during one or two of those repeating windows. This will be monitored closely.

We are still analyzing the cadence and the final cycle length for this year's pattern. We typically lock this in by mid-December, and once confirmed, the LRC model will be updated and much more accurate. Expect refined forecasts and new insights as we move through the next few weeks.