Agricultural Weather Highlights – Friday - March 20, 2015

- In the West, cool conditions are limited to the southern Rockies. Elsewhere, unusually warm weather continues to cause premature melting of mountain snowpack. In addition, warmth in California and the Desert Southwest is boosting early-season irrigation demands.

- On the Plains, rain showers in parts of Oklahoma and Texas are benefiting rangeland, pastures, and winter wheat, but slowing spring fieldwork. Meanwhile, record-setting warmth has returned to the northern half of the hard red winter wheat belt, where today’s high temperatures could reach 80°F as far north as South Dakota.

- In the Corn Belt, mild, dry weather prevails in the upper Midwest. In fact, drought has developed in parts of the upper Midwest, which could lead to a rapid spring planting pace unless heavy precipitation occurs in the next few weeks. Meanwhile, cool, rainy weather lingers across the eastern Corn Belt, particularly in Ohio.

- In the South, warm, dry weather continues to favor spring fieldwork in Florida and environs. In contrast, wet fields continue to hamper fieldwork in many other areas of the South. Currently, rain is falling in several areas, including the mid-South and the southern Mid-Atlantic region.

Outlook: For the remainder of today, precipitation—including some late-season snow—will continue to spread across the Mid-Atlantic States and southern New England. Later today and during the weekend, the focus for heavy rain will return to the South. During the next 3 days, rainfall totals of 2 to 4 inches can be expected from southern and eastern Texas into Georgia and South Carolina. Meanwhile, several pulses of moisture will surge inland across the Northwest, eventually reaching the upper Midwest. Five-day totals could reach 2 to 4 inches in the Pacific Northwest and 1 to 2 inches in the northern Rockies, with amounts mostly less than an inch across the northern Plains and upper Midwest. Elsewhere, record-setting warmth will continue in much of the western U.S., although cooler air will arrive across the Northwest early next week. The NWS 6- to 10-day outlook for March 25 – 29 calls for below-normal temperatures across the eastern half of the U.S., while warmer-than-normal weather will prevail from the Pacific Coast to the Rockies. Meanwhile, near- to below-normal precipitation west of the Mississippi River will contrast with wetter-than-normal conditions across the eastern one-third of the nation.

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The outlook is an interpretation of National Weather Service (NWS) forecasts and products.
The next scheduled noon release of the “Agricultural Weather Highlights” will be Tuesday, March 31. On other weekdays, this product will be posted by 9 am EDT.