



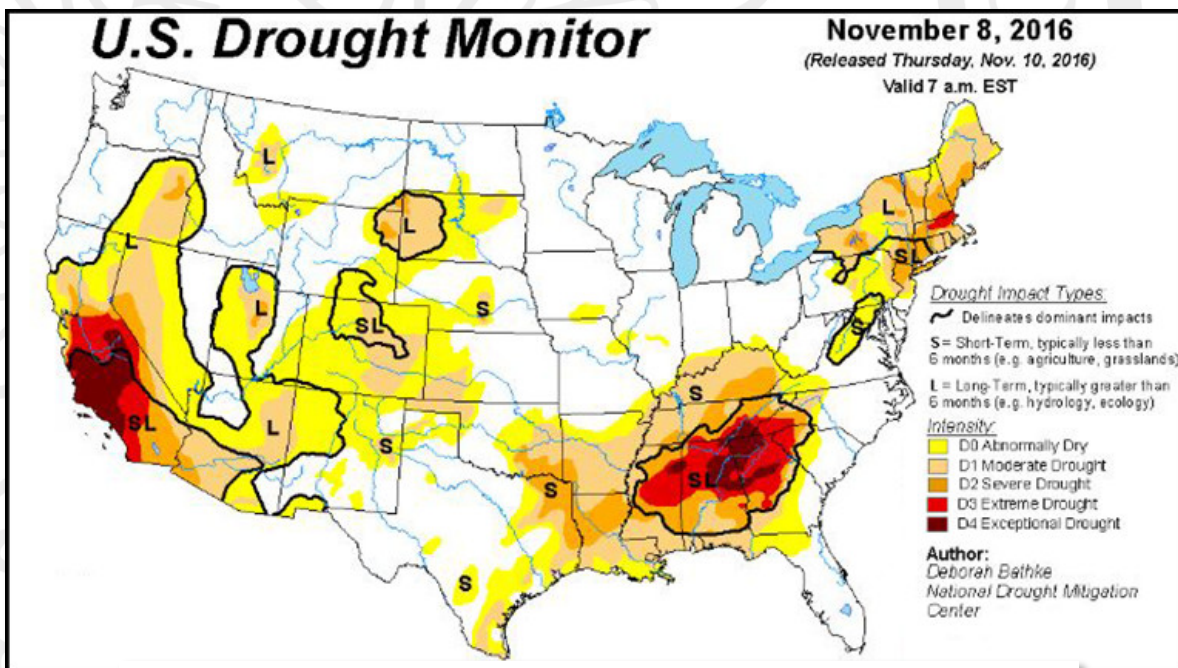
### Fifty-Eight Days And Counting

By Chris Hartwiger, director, Course Consulting Service

**November 18, 2016**

Fifty-eight; this is the number of days with no measurable rainfall in Birmingham, Alabama, as of Nov. 15, 2016. This breaks the previous record of 52 days, set in 1924. The state of Alabama has issued a drought emergency in all 67 counties. Smoke from wildfires in northern Georgia can be seen on satellite radar. The U.S. Drought Monitor map shows well-defined areas of exceptional drought. What does this mean for golf courses in drought-affected areas?

Golfing conditions have been favorable. Golfers have enjoyed the dry, warm fall weather and anecdotal reports suggest an increase in rounds played compared to last fall.



**Exceptional drought in parts of Georgia, Alabama, Tennessee and Mississippi will create challenges for golf course maintenance that will last well into 2017.**

Drought-related turf stress will continue into next spring. Most golf courses have the ability to irrigate, but irrigation is never a perfect substitute for natural rainfall. Drought stress on golf courses generally is greatest along the outer edges of the rough because irrigation coverage does not overlap as well in those areas and tree roots that extend into the rough compete against turf for water. When traffic stress is added to the equation, turf quality in drought-stressed areas will decline much faster than in adequately irrigated areas. With continued winter traffic, expect playing quality during late winter and early spring to be further diminished. In most areas, a complete recovery of drought-stressed turf should not be expected until summer temperatures return.

Water will be a topic among golfers. A drought of this magnitude is unusual and has everyone's attention. Golfers are asking superintendents and course officials questions about the adequacy of their water supply, about water restrictions and about how the drought will affect playing quality. It is important to have answers.

The [USGA Water Resource Center](#) was created to provide information about conserving and protecting water resources to golfers, golf facilities and communities. For facilities interested in developing water management plans and drought management plans, the [USGA Course Consulting Service](#) offers an Irrigation and Water Use Evaluation site visit. Finally, review the article, [Developing a Water Budget](#) to determine how much water your golf course needs each year.

#### **Southeast Region Agronomists:**

Steve Kammerer, regional director – [skammerer@usga.org](mailto:skammerer@usga.org)

Chris Hartwiger, director, USGA Course Consulting Service- [chartwiger@usga.org](mailto:chartwiger@usga.org)

Patrick M O'Brien, agronomist – [patobrien@usga.org](mailto:patobrien@usga.org)

Todd Lowe, agronomist – [tlowe@usga.org](mailto:tlowe@usga.org)

[Information on the USGA's Course Consulting Service](#)

[Contact the Green Section Staff](#)