



## 2025 Quail Season Outlook

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*68% boost to Oklahoma's October surveys brings three regions above long term averages – Five years of consecutive growth brings index up across the state.*

Over thirty-five years ago the Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation (ODWC) began conducting roadside surveys to monitor quail numbers throughout the state. There are 81 twenty-mile routes surveyed in August and October in all counties except Oklahoma and Tulsa counties which are excluded due to urbanization. With low observation numbers these roadside surveys can have a wide degree of variability, but the consistency of the survey methodology over time allows us to interpret the information on a historical scale. August surveys give biologists an idea of breeding success, while October surveys reveal a glimpse of recruitment for the fall hunting season. Typically, August survey numbers are a less reliable hunting season predictor than October's due to the fact that some chicks will not survive through the summer. Long term and year-to-year trends are important for sportsmen and biologists alike. The last decade has seen survey numbers cycle starting at the lowest recorded on these surveys in 2012 and slowly rising to a peak in 2016 that quickly fell back to previous lows. The data are analyzed in two ways: by region (Figure 1/Table 1) and by ecoregion (Figure 2/Table 2). Looking at the data by both groupings can help us better understand the fluctuations in quail numbers. This year the statewide average increase by 68% over 2024.

The August surveys highlighted increases in quail numbers in the southeast, northcentral, and statewide regional breakdowns. October's surveys showed all regions up for the 2025 season (Table 1). Figures 4-10 below show the average survey results for each region for 1990-2025. A rolling 10-year average has been added to these figures to help visualize the changes and relationship over longer periods. 2025 marks 5 consecutive years of increases to our statewide quail index.

When the statewide numbers are broken down by ecoregion, readers can see which areas are producing better or worse year-to-year (Table 2 & Figure 3). All ecoregions saw increases in 2025, other than the Southern High Plains and the Gulf Coastal Plain. By analyzing the data this way, we can also see that there are primarily five of the nine ecoregions driving this year's statewide average: Arkansas Valleys and Ridges, Rolling Red Prairie, Rolling Red Plains, Ouachita Mountains, and the Southern High Plains.

Much like years' past – 2025 has seen the ups and downs that define Oklahoma's weather. The '24-'25 season kicked off with ~80% of the state in some level of drought which improved steadily through the growing season (Figure 13). As the year continued, weather patterns brought timely rains that led to excellent conditions for the nesting season. By June, Oklahoma had become 'drought-free' for the first time in nearly 6 years. July and August started to see drought creep back into the state, however, a milder

summer with only a few areas seeing more than 20 days above 100°F lessened the negative impacts. As of mid-October, only ~5% of the state is now in Severe (D2) or Extreme (D3) Drought conditions and over 70% of the state listed as at least Abnormally Dry (Figures 11-13). Current climate models forecast a shift back to those more neutral El Niño/La Niña patterns by early next spring which could once again help benefit quail and their habitat conditions across the state.

Anecdotal reports of broods seem to show that the nesting season started in early June and continued through much of the growing season. Brood reports continued throughout the summer. Age structure of observed bobwhite in the October surveys show 90.8% full grown and 9.2% ¾ grown birds. This structure tends to relate with a strong early hatch.

No scaled quail were observed during the 2025 October surveys; however, a pair was recorded during the August survey period. There are only a few routes in Oklahoma with the opportunity to observe scaled quail. Therefore, this is not a prediction of scaled quail abundance, strictly an observation. ODWC biologists have received numerous reports of scaled quail broods in the Oklahoma panhandle in 2025.

This year ODWC is once again collecting wings from public lands to better evaluate our quail population. If you harvest a bird from a Wildlife Management Area (WMA) with a wing box, please take the time to place one wing into a provided envelope from each harvested quail (whichever is least damaged as long as only one wing per bird), fill out the envelope, and then place it in the box. The WMAs that will have boxes are Beaver River, Canton, Cimarron Hills, Cimarron Bluffs, Cooper, Cross Timbers, Drummond Flats, Ellis County, Ft. Supply, Hulah, Kaw, Optima, Osage, Packsaddle, Pushmataha, and Sand Hills. Your participation in this data collection effort provides vital information about nesting success and timing and helps improve their overall management.

In summary, hunters taking to the field will likely find several areas of good quail numbers where habitat and weather conditions were most favorable. Hunting may not quite be what it was at the last observed production peak or “boom” in 2016, but we expect hunters to find birds throughout the state. Quail season opens November 8<sup>th</sup>, 2025, and runs until February 15<sup>th</sup>, 2026. Hunters are allowed 10 quail daily. For additional resources and tips check out [www.wildlifedepartment.com/hunting/resources/quail](http://www.wildlifedepartment.com/hunting/resources/quail)

New for 2025: The Oklahoma Wildlife Conservation Commission adopted new rules that require nonresidents accessing certain Oklahoma public hunting and fishing areas to check in and check out of that area via the GoOutdoorsOK app/GoOutdoorsOklahoma.com. Non-resident game bird hunters will also be required to possess a Nonresident Game Bird Permit if hunting any game birds on any WMA in Oklahoma. For more detailed regulations and other information consult the Oklahoma Hunting and Fishing Guide online at <https://www.wildlifedepartment.com/hunting/regs> or in print wherever hunting and fishing licenses are sold.

Ultimately, remember the outdoors are always open!

Work some ground, trust your dogs, and make a memory!

Enjoying the Oklahoma Outdoors!

Figure 1. Regional Map of Oklahoma.

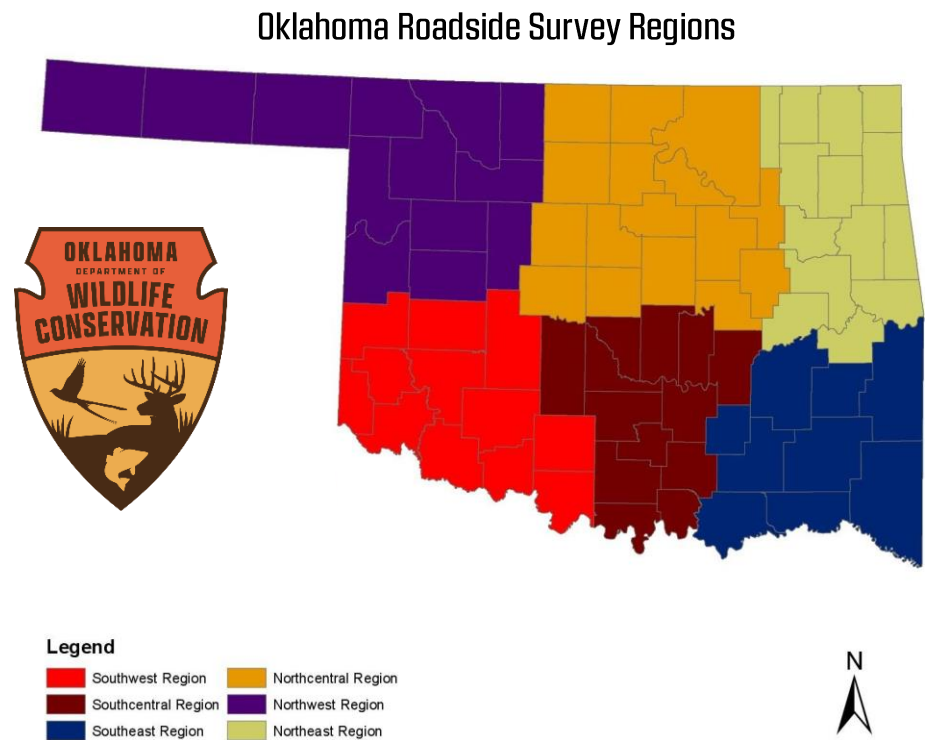


Table 1. Regional Breakdown of Surveys

August				October			
Region	2024	2025			2024	2025	
Northwest	13.31	7.38	↓		7.25	7.94	↑
Northeast	4.71	0.29	↓		0.6	2.07	↑
Southwest	13.42	12.38	↓		5.67	9.42	↑
Southeast	0.18	4.63	↑		1	5.09	↑
Northcentral	4.13	4.93	↑		1.07	2.73	↑
Southcentral	1.85	0	↓		0	0.15	↑
<b>Statewide</b>	<b>6.52</b>	<b>4.98</b>	↓		<b>2.7</b>	<b>4.54</b>	↑

Figure 2. Ecoregion Map of Oklahoma.

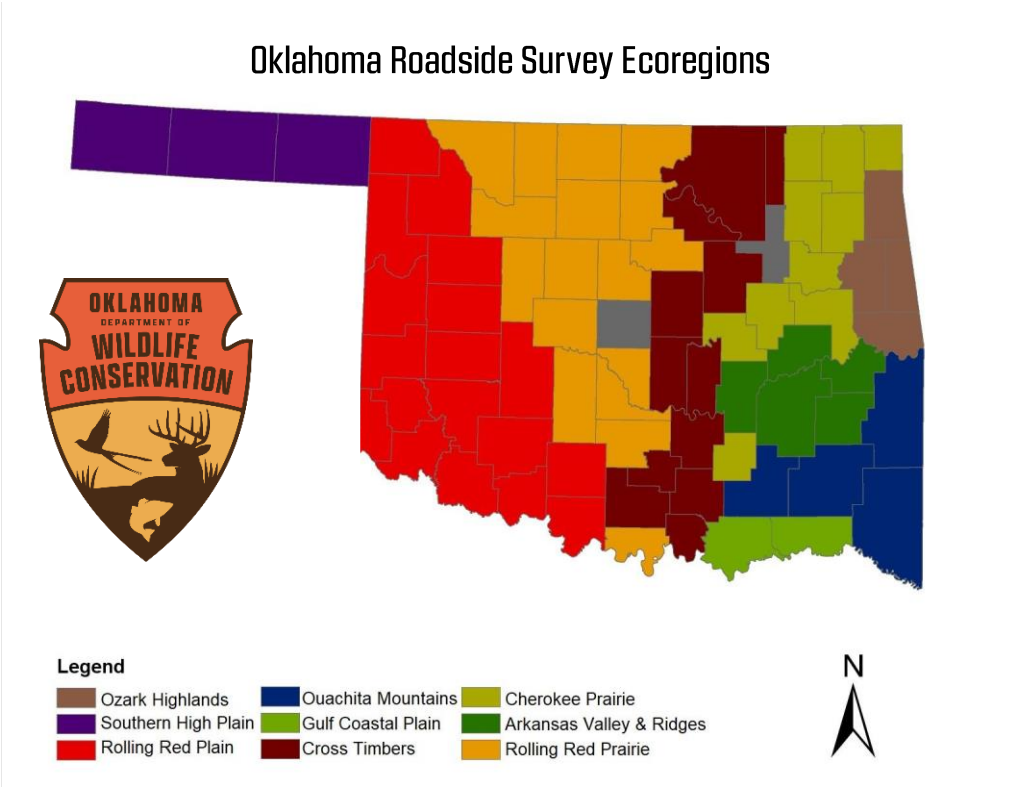


Table 2: Ecoregional Breakdown of Surveys

Ecoregion	August			October		
	2024	2025		2024	2025	
Arkansas Valley & Ridges	3.83	0.83	↓	3.00	4.33	↑
Cherokee Prairie	4.40	0.20	↓	0.00	2.90	↑
Cross Timbers	0.85	1.08	↑	0.00	0.85	↑
Ozark Highlands	0.00	0.50	↑	0.25	1.50	↑
Gulf Coastal Plain	0.00	5.00	↑	0.00	0.00	-
Ouachita Mountains	0.40	7.20	↑	0.00	6.00	↑
Rolling Red Prairie	6.06	4.71	↓	3.06	3.76	↑
Rolling Red Plain	14.80	10.62	↓	6.20	9.35	↑
Southern High Plain	12.25	9.00	↓	6.00	3.75	↓
Statewide	6.52	4.98	↓	2.70	4.54	↑

Figure 3: Quail/Route by ecoregion from 2017-2025

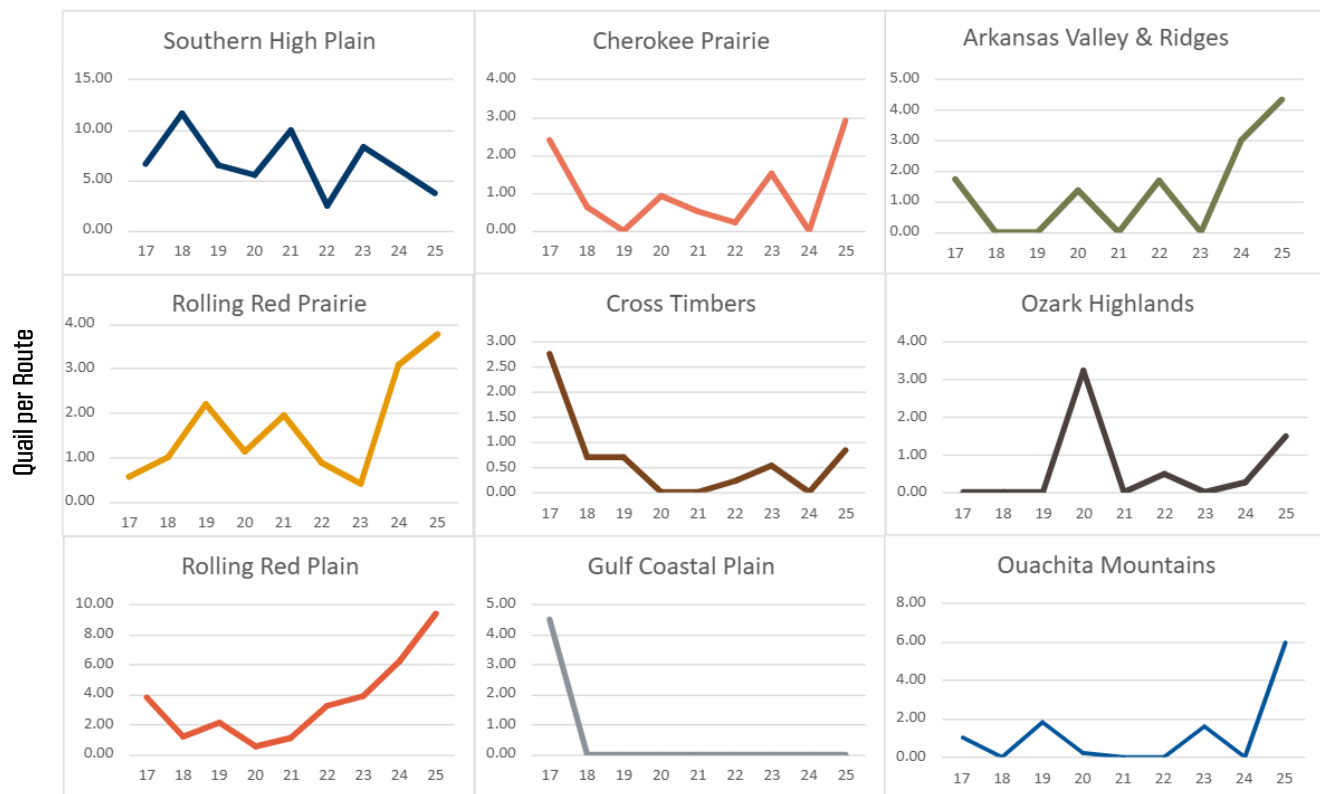


Figure 4: Statewide Long Term Averages

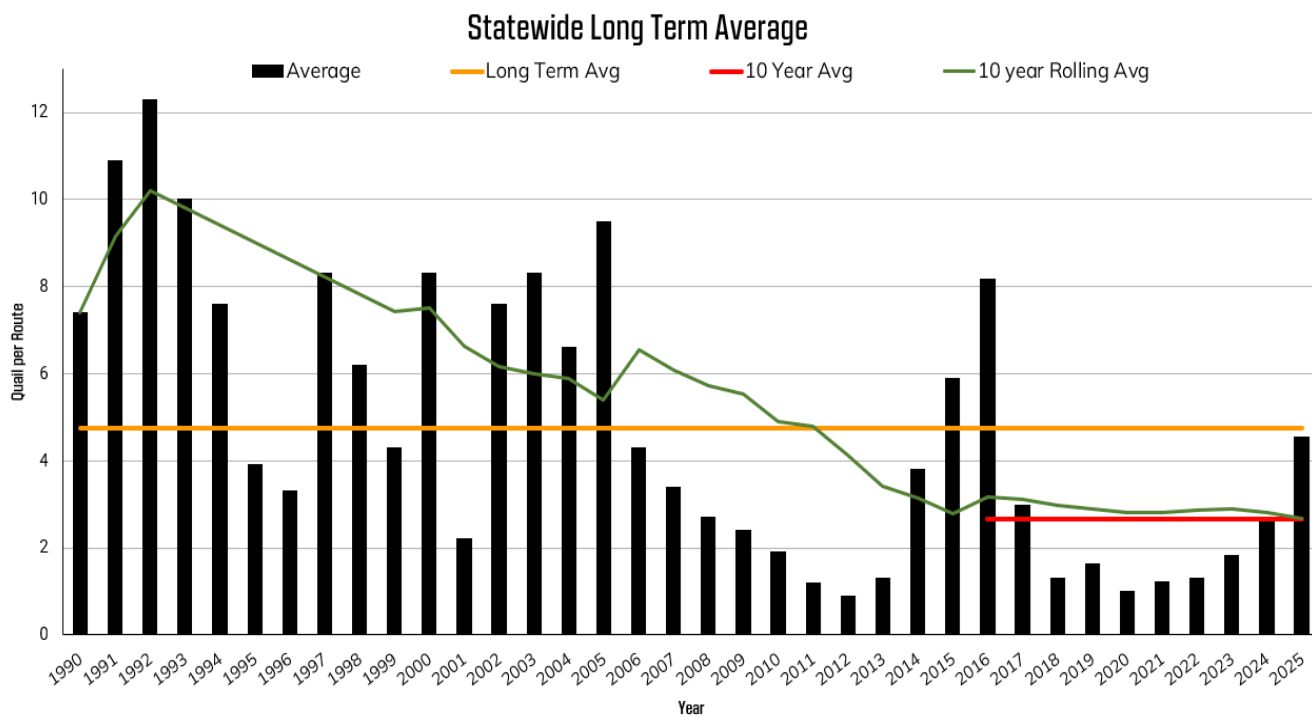


Figure 5: Northwest Long Term Averages

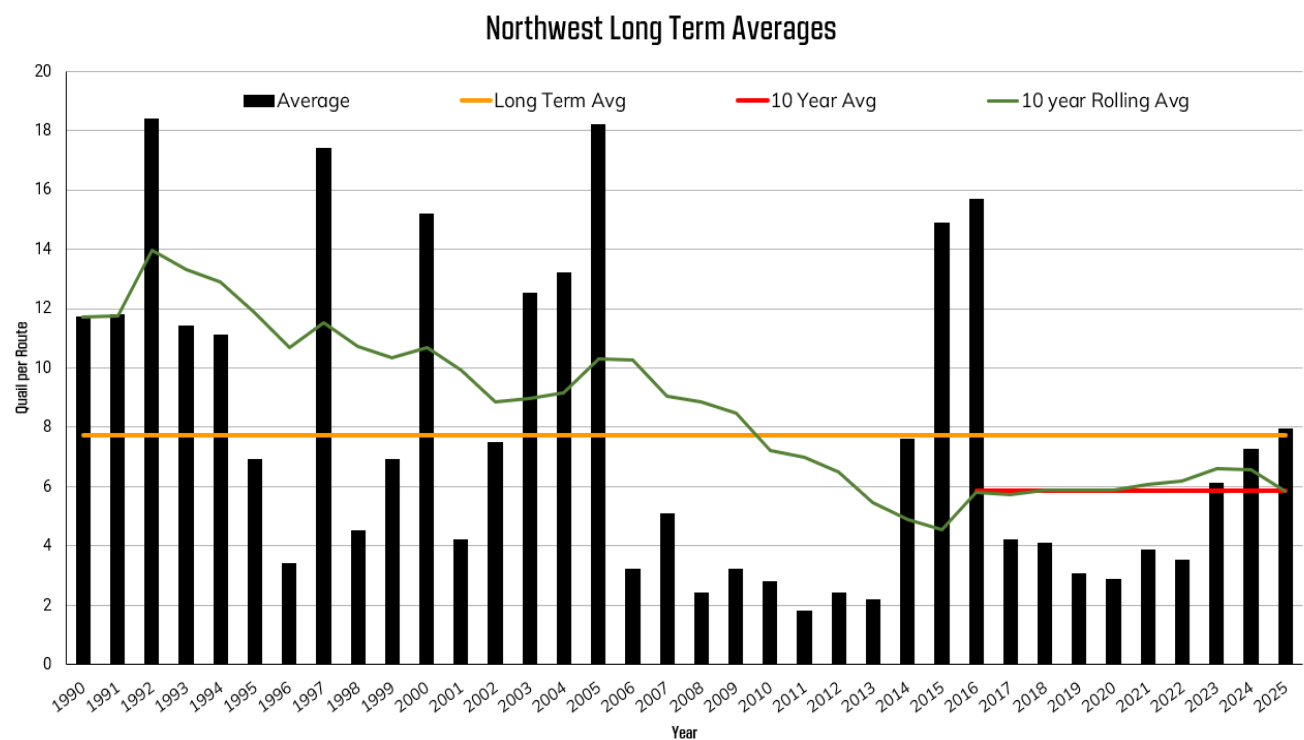


Figure 6: Southwest Long Term Average

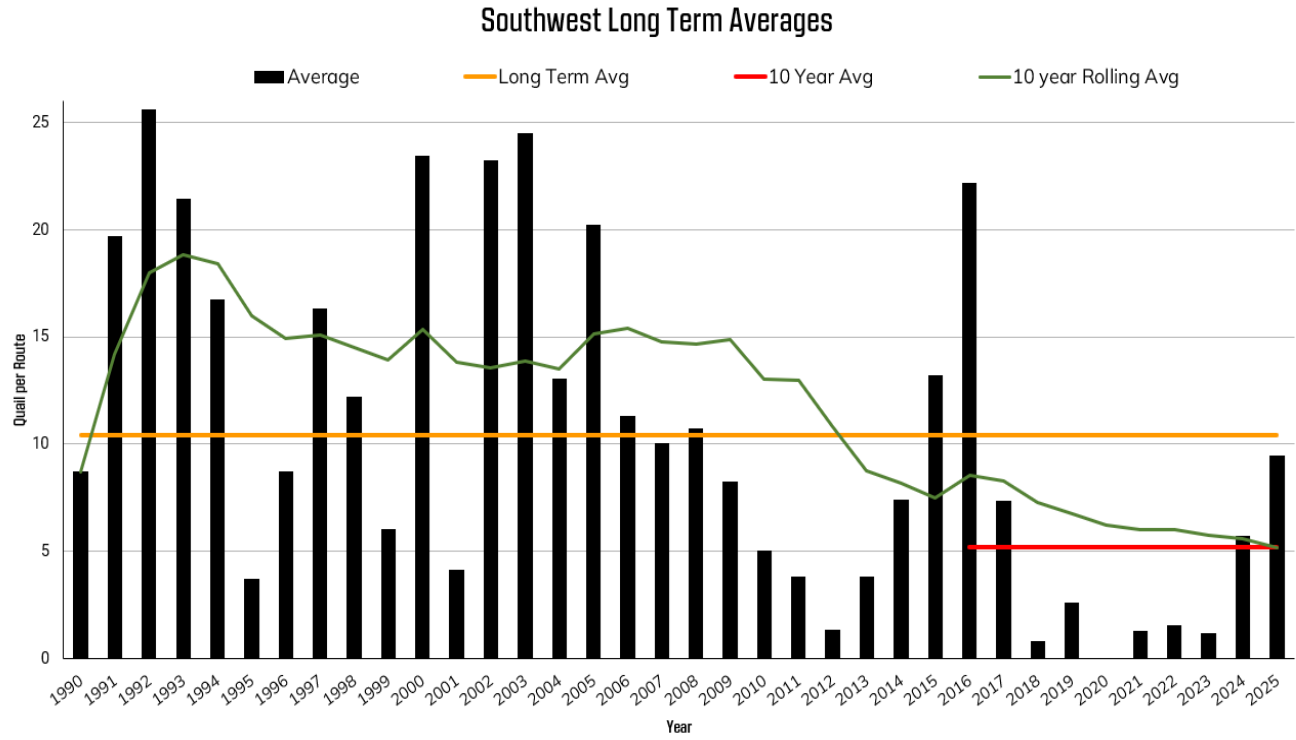


Figure 7: Northcentral Long Term Average

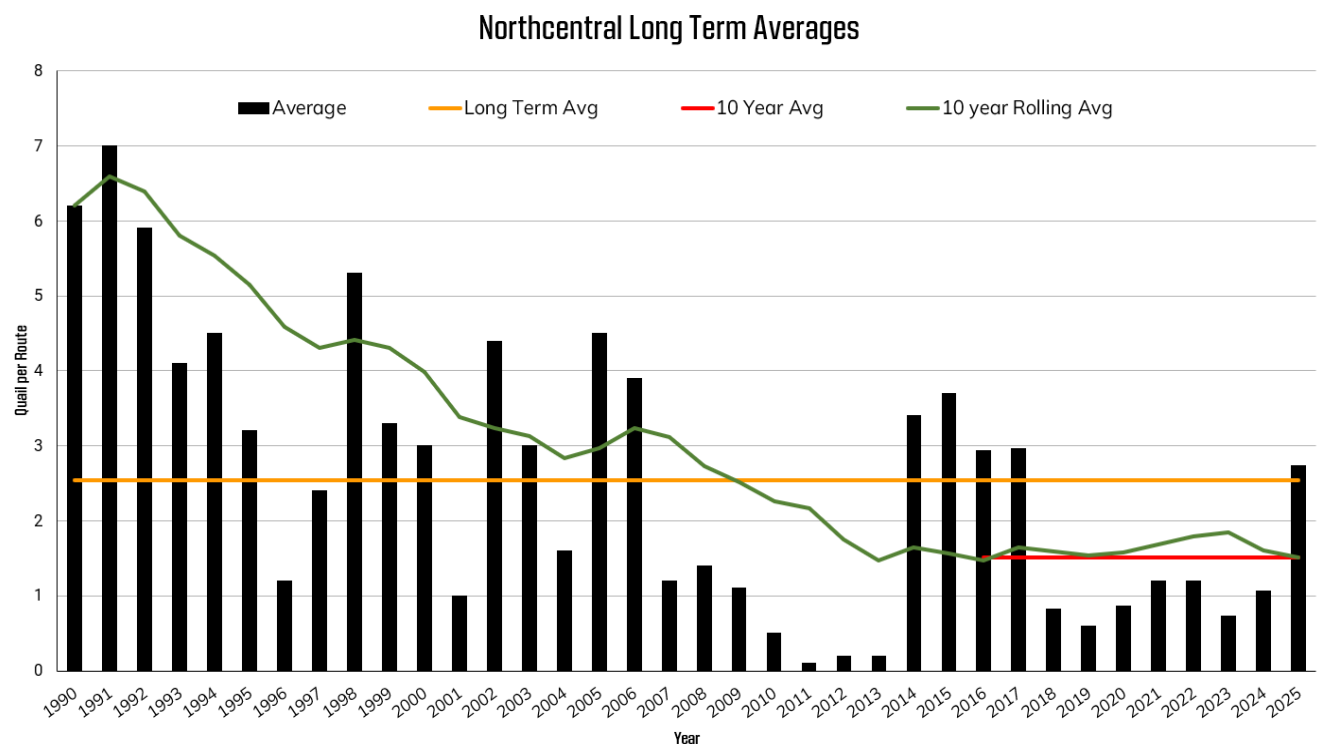


Figure 8: Southcentral Long Term Average

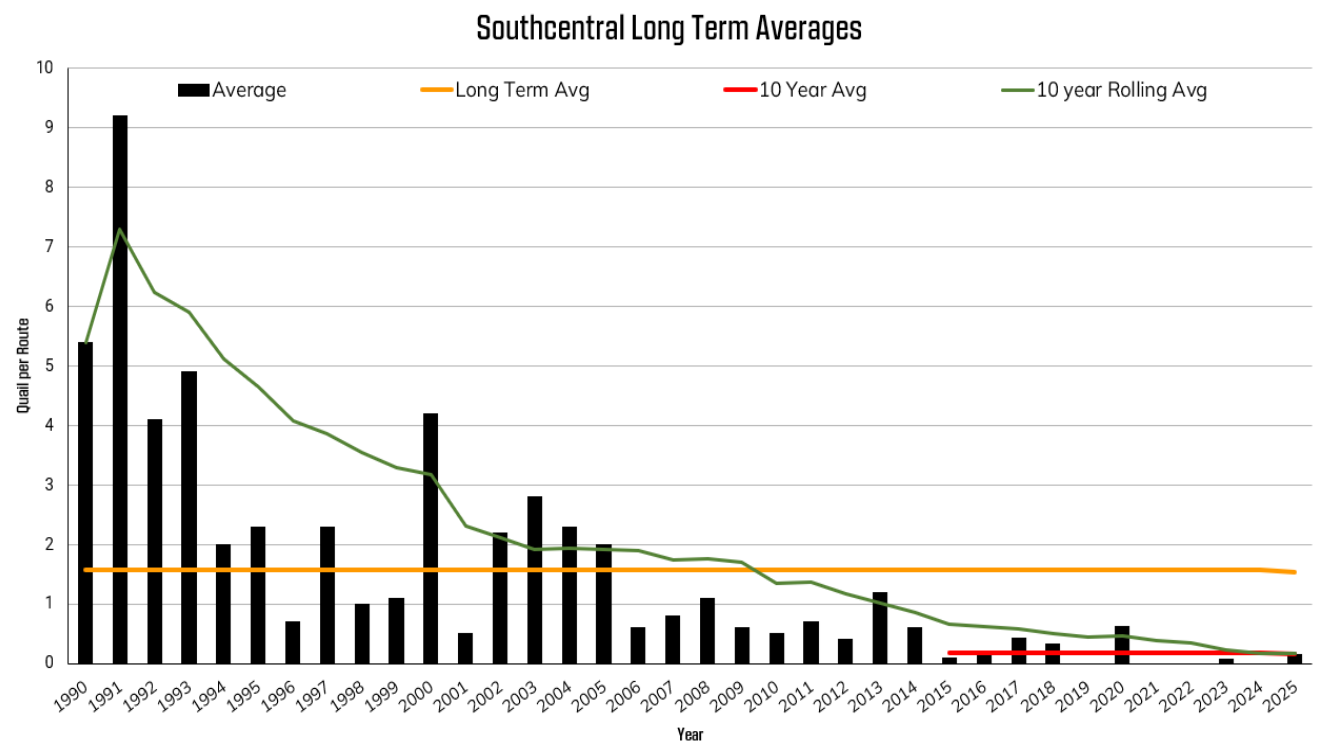


Figure 9: Northeast Long Term Average

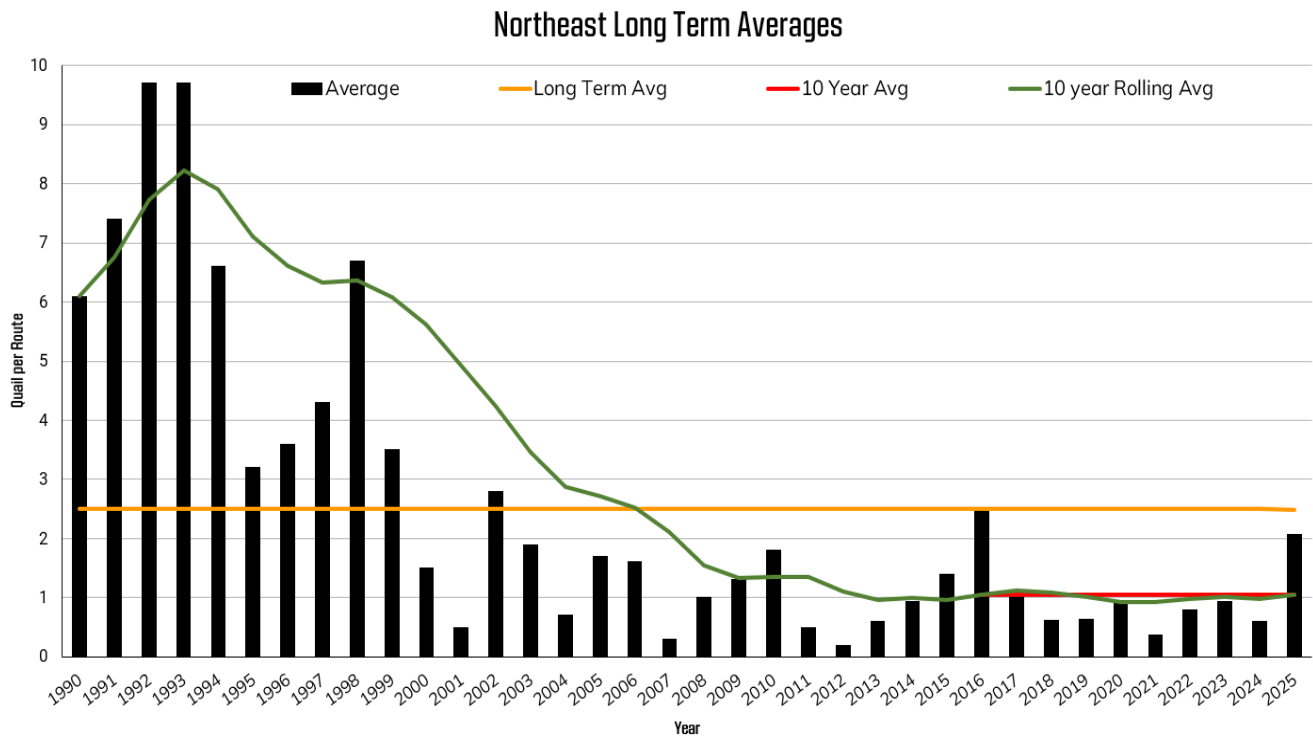


Figure 10: Southeast Long Term Average

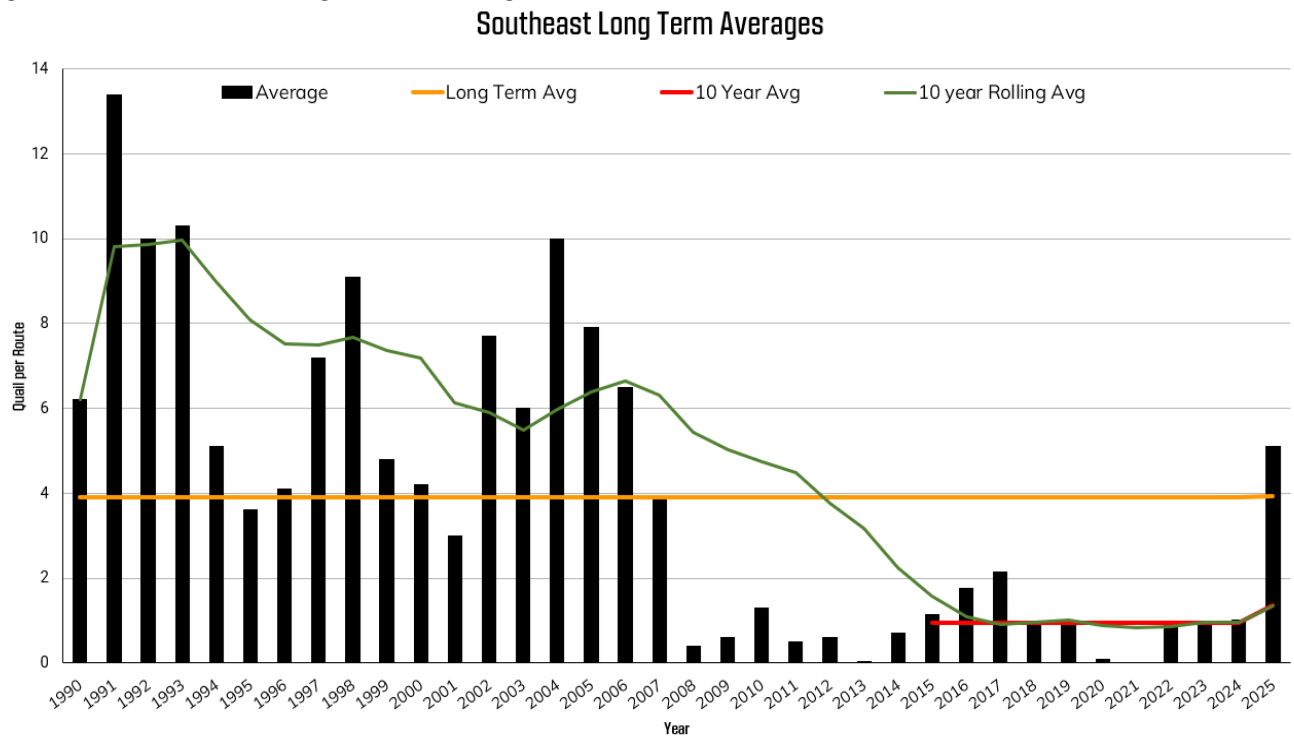




Figure 11: Number of days above 100°F in Oklahoma (Source: Mesonet.org)

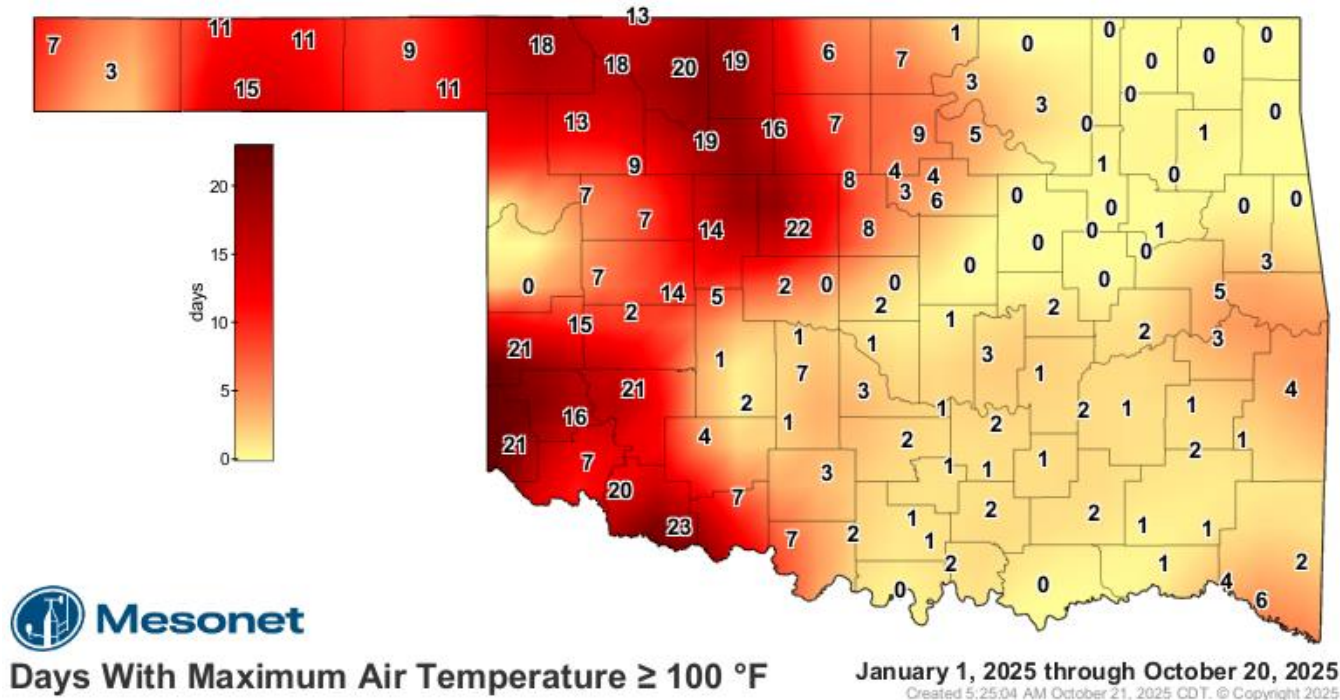


Figure 12: Percentage of Normal Rainfall for the last 120 days in Oklahoma (Source: climate.ok.gov)

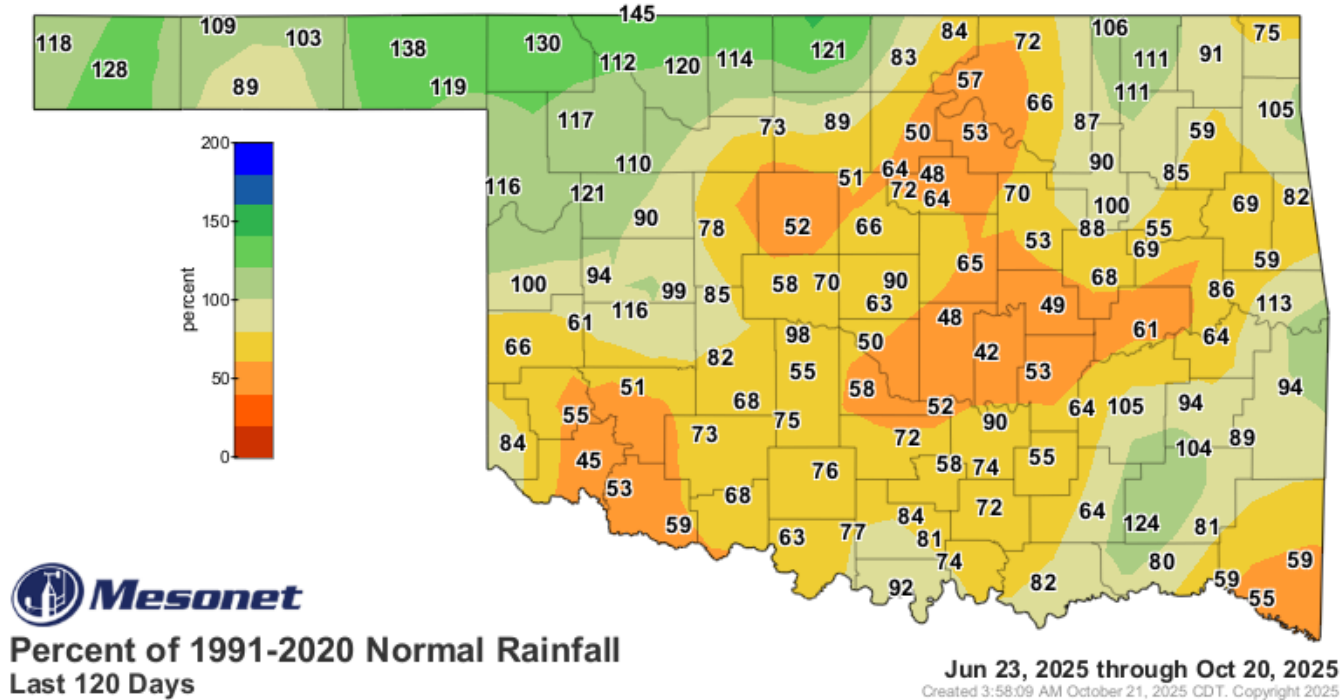


Figure 13: Comparison of Drought Conditions for 2025 (Source: Droughtmonitor.unl.edu)

