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Drought Affects over 1 Million People in Cuba

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The intense drought in Cuba is affecting more than 1 million people, the official Juventud Rebelde newspaper reported Sunday, citing specialists.

The situation is being classified as “critical” in Cuba, where rainfall levels were insufficient in every region at the end of the February-April period, Weather Institute Climate Center researcher Cecilia Fonseca told the newspaper.

The areas most affected by the drought are the provinces of Pinar del Rio, in westernmost Cuba; Cienfuegos, Villa Clara and Sancti Spiritus, located in the central part of the island; and the eastern provinces of Santiago de Cuba, Granma, Camaguey, Ciego de Avila and Las Tunas, Juventud Rebelde said.

Las Tunas is the most affected province, with average annual rainfall of just 1.038 millimeters (0.04 inches) and reservoirs at 25 percent of capacity.

The rainy season, when Cuba gets about 80 percent of its precipitation, is starting, but the forecast for this year “is not currently favorable,” Fonseca said.

National Hydraulic Resources Institute Water Management Department chief Yunior Gonzalez, for his part, said rainfall patterns had been “pretty erratic” this year in terms of their effect on reservoirs.

Water trucks are being used to supply water to some of the people affected by the drought, Gonzalez said.

The government is staging the “Meteoro 2015” exercise this weekend to provide emergency management personnel with training in dealing with hurricanes, powerful earthquakes, tsunamis, forest fires, chemical spills, epidemics and other types of disasters.

