Water Resources Management Authority

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1 Water Situation Summary

This bulletin summarises the status of Zambia's rivers at the end of the 2025/26 hydrological year and the start of 2026/27. It draws on selected strategic stations from WARMA's surface water monitoring networks and on the Zambia Meteorological Department (ZMD) 2026/27 seasonal rainfall outlook. This page gives the overall picture; Sections 2 to 4 give the seasonal outlook, the station-by-station detail and advice to water users.

CURRENT WATER SITUATION AND WHAT TO EXPECT

- **October–December (OND) 2026:** river levels and flows are falling at the end of the dry season as temperatures and evaporation rise. Where the rains start early, flows may rise slightly, but only briefly because of dry spells.
- **November–January (NDJ):** a steady rise in river levels and flows is expected, first in the north (Tanganyika, Chambeshi, Luapula), where above-normal rainfall is forecast. In the Kafue and southern Zambezi catchments, where below-normal rainfall is forecast, flows are likely to stay below normal.
- **December–March (DJF and JFM):** the northern catchments remain wet; rainfall in the central and southern catchments eases to normal to below normal by JFM, and North-Western Zambia (Upper Zambezi, Kabompo) trends to normal to above.
- **Groundwater (general guidance; groundwater monitoring data to follow):** groundwater responds more slowly and usually starts to rise only after several weeks of sustained rainfall.
- **Compared with the reference drought years:** 7 of the 14 stations reported in this bulletin are above the 2023/24 reference drought year, and 6 are above normal (long-term mean) flow.
- **The Kafue is the main concern:** Hook Bridge (34.80 m³/s) is the only station below both reference drought years (39.36 m³/s in 1991/92 and 43.78 m³/s in 2023/24), and Ragland is at about a quarter of normal flow (23%).
- **Advisory:** water users in the Kafue, southern Zambezi and southern Luangwa catchments should plan for reduced river inflows and limited groundwater recharge in 2026/27.

2 Seasonal Rainfall Outlook 2026/27

The Zambia Meteorological Department (ZMD) 2026/27 seasonal forecast indicates a strong north–south contrast. Above-normal rainfall is expected over the Tanganyika, Chambeshi and Luapula catchments and Northern Luangwa throughout the season. The Kafue catchment, the Southern Zambezi catchment and Southern Luangwa are forecast to receive below-normal rainfall from October to February, easing to normal to below normal in January–March 2027. North-Western Zambia (Upper Zambezi and Kabompo) trends from normal-to-below early in the season to normal-to-above by January–March.

The outlook and advice in this bulletin follow the ZMD three-month forecast periods: October–December (OND), November–January (NDJ), December–February (DJF) and January–March (JFM). As the bulletin is published continuously through the season, each edition updates the three-month periods ahead. Figure 1 shows the official ZMD forecast maps with the river gauging stations reported in this bulletin, so that the expected rainfall around each station can be read directly. Table 1 summarises the outlook by catchment and what it means for water resources.

Table 1 Seasonal outlook by catchment and implications for water resources

Catchment	OND	NDJ	DJF	JFM	Implication for water resources
Tanganyika	AN	AN	AN	N-AN	Significant inflows into Lake Tanganyika; monitor flood-prone areas.
Chambeshi	AN	AN	AN	AN	Risk of high flows on the Chambeshi plains.
Luapula	AN	AN	AN	N-AN	Favourable recharge; Lakes Bangweulu and Mweru levels are likely to rise.
Luangwa	N-AN	N-BN	N-BN	N-BN	Average river flows due to the favourable forecast north of the catchment.
Kafue	BN	BN	BN	N-BN	Below-average inflows to Itezhi-Tezhi and Kafue Gorge are likely.
Zambezi	N-BN	BN	BN	N-BN	Reduced local inflows from the southern Zambezi; Kariba inflows will depend largely on Upper Zambezi rainfall.

AN Above Normal **N-AN** Normal to Above **N-BN** Normal to Below **BN** Below Normal

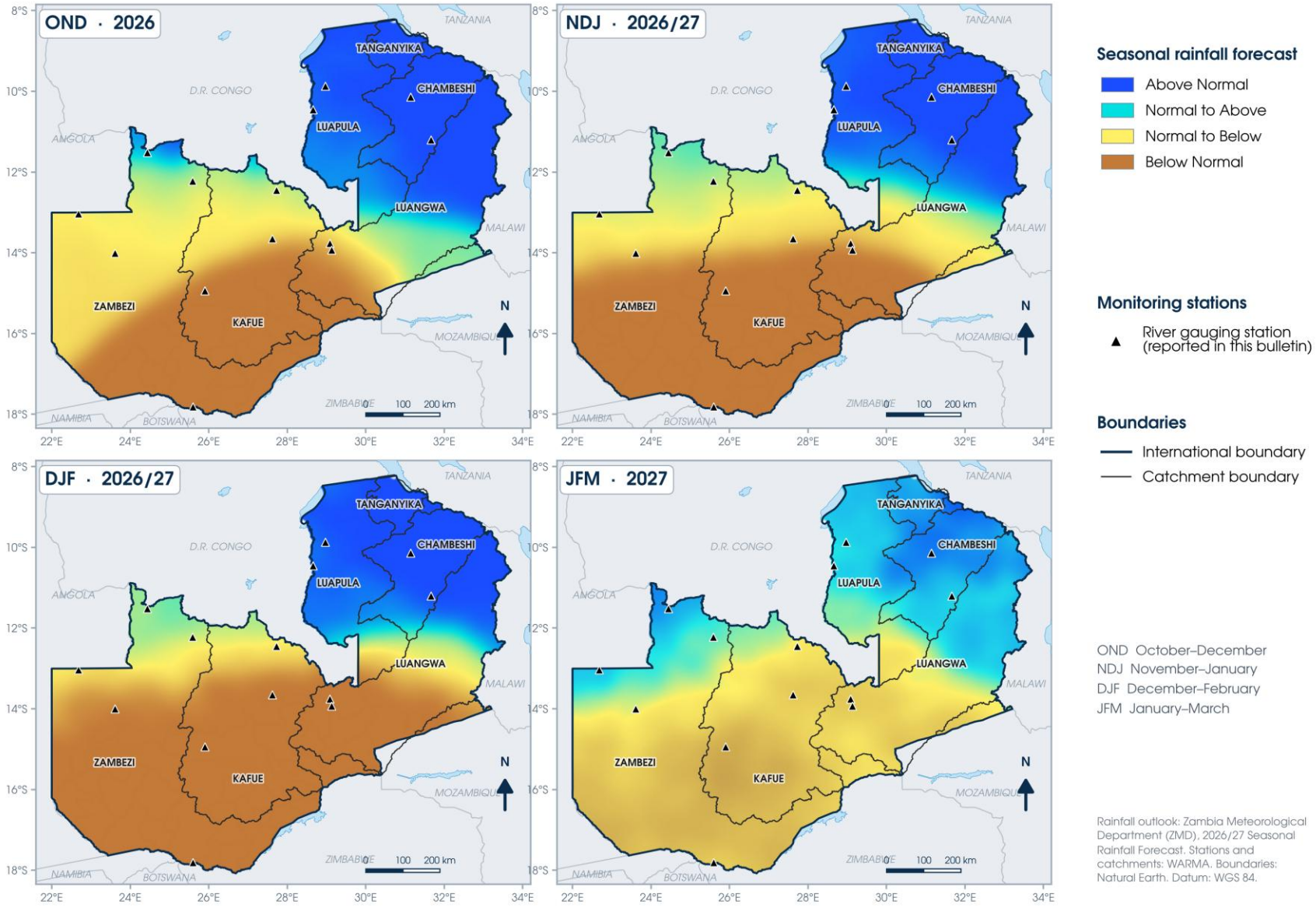
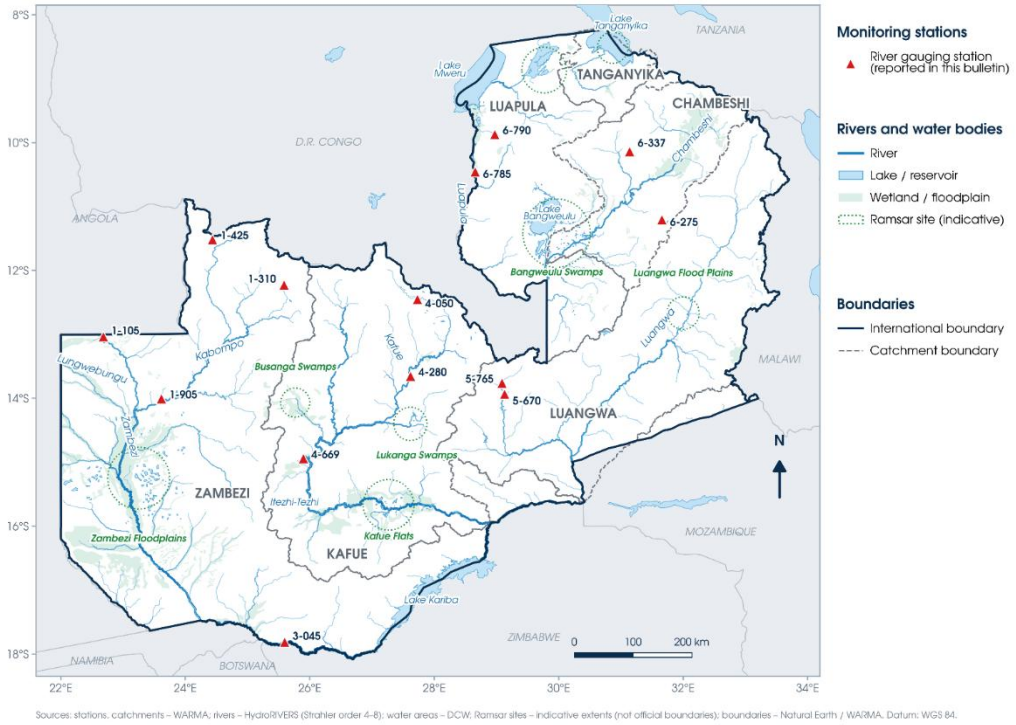


Figure 1 ZMD seasonal rainfall outlook for OND, NDJ, DJF and JFM 2026/27, with the WARMA river gauging stations reported in this bulletin.

3 River Flows

River flow conditions are reported at selected strategic stations drawn from WARMA's network of 167 surface water monitoring stations. Daily discharge for the 2026/27 hydrological year is compared with the same dates in the 1991/92 and 2023/24 reference drought years and with the long-term mean (LTM), which defines normal flow. The observed river flows at these stations are influenced by antecedent conditions from the previous (2025/26) hydrological year, as well as by upstream water use and other catchment factors. For this reason a station can be above a reference drought year even where below-normal rainfall is forecast, and October flows in a drought year can still be high (see Zambezi River at Nanas Farm, Section 3.9). Figure 2 shows the location of all reporting stations.

Reading the station tables. All values are provisional daily discharges for 27 October 2026. % of normal is the current flow divided by the LTM for the same date; the record period used for the LTM at each station will be stated in the Technical Notes. Current trend is the change in flow over the seven days to the reporting date: Rising, more than 5% higher; Stable, within ±5%; Receding, more than 5% lower. Current flows in ***bold italics*** are below normal or below the 2023/24 reference drought year; in the assessments, **red** marks flows below a reference drought year or below normal for the key indicator tables.



Sources: stations, catchments – WARMA; rivers – HydroRIVERS (Strahler order 4–8); water areas – DCW; Ramsar sites – indicative extents (not official boundaries); boundaries – Natural Earth / WARMA. Datum: WGS 84.

Figure 2 WARMA river gauging stations reported in this bulletin, with major rivers, catchments, lakes, wetlands and Ramsar sites.

3.1 Lukupa River at Pump House (6-337) | Chambeshi Catchment

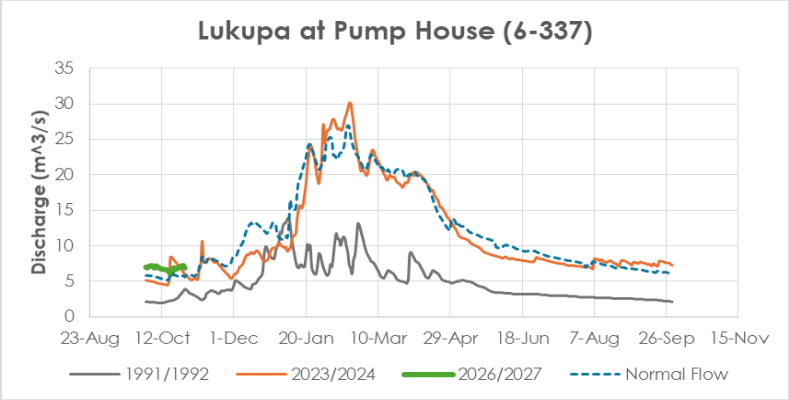


Figure 3 Daily discharge at Lukupa River at Pump House (6-337): 2026/27 compared with the 1991/92 and 2023/24 reference drought years and the long-term mean (Normal flow).

Table 2 Key indicators – 6-337, 27 October 2026

% of Normal	Current flow (m³/s)	1991/92 Reference Drought Year (m³/s)	2023/24 Reference Drought Year (m³/s)	Normal Flow (LTM) (m³/s)	Current Trend
124%	7.21	3.64	6.32	5.81	Stable

ASSESSMENT

As of 27th October 2026, the river flow was 7.21 m³/s, above the 6.32 m³/s of the 2023/24 reference drought year and above the 3.64 m³/s of the 1991/92 reference drought year on the same date. The observed flow for the 2026/27 hydrological year exceeds the normal (long-term mean) flow of 5.81 m³/s.

Flow is about 124% of normal for late October and above both reference drought years.

3.2 Mansha River at Shiwang'andu (6-275) | Chambeshi Catchment

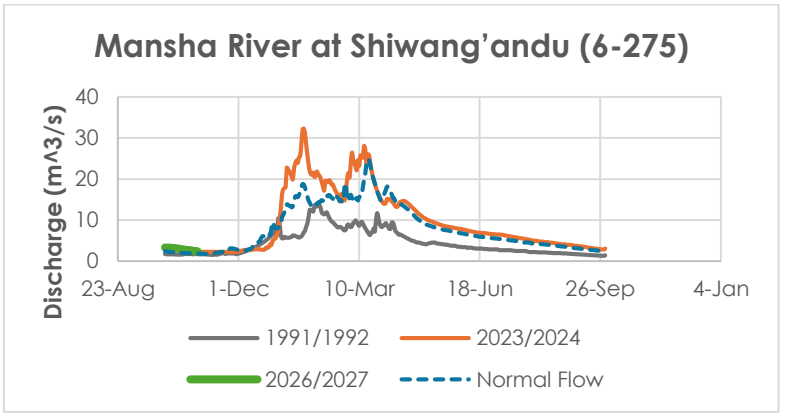


Figure 4 Daily discharge at Mansha River at Shiwang'andu (6-275): 2026/27 compared with the 1991/92 and 2023/24 reference drought years and the long-term mean (Normal flow).

Table 3 Key indicators – 6-275, 27 October 2026

% of Normal	Current flow (m³/s)	1991/92 Reference Drought Year (m³/s)	2023/24 Reference Drought Year (m³/s)	Normal Flow (LTM) (m³/s)	Current Trend
131%	2.44	1.70	2.32	1.86	Receding

ASSESSMENT

As of 27th October 2026, the river flow was 2.44 m³/s, above the 2.32 m³/s of the 2023/24 reference drought year and above the 1.70 m³/s of the 1991/92 reference drought year on the same date. The observed flow for the 2026/27 hydrological year exceeds the normal (long-term mean) flow of 1.86 m³/s.

Flow is about 131% of normal for late October and above both reference drought years.

3.3 Ngona River at Ntumbachushi (6-790) | Luapula Catchment

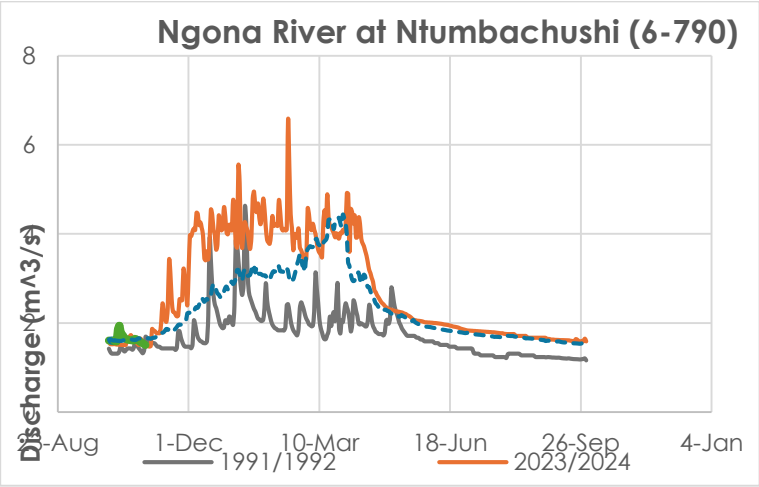


Figure 5 Daily discharge at Ngona River at Ntumbachushi (6-790): 2026/27 compared with the 1991/92 and 2023/24 reference drought years and the long-term mean (Normal flow).

Table 4 Key indicators – 6-790, 27 October 2026

% of Normal	Current flow (m³/s)	1991/92 Reference Drought Year (m³/s)	2023/24 Reference Drought Year (m³/s)	Normal Flow (LTM) (m³/s)	Current Trend
93%	1.54	1.32	1.57	1.65	Stable

ASSESSMENT

As of 27th October 2026, the river flow was ***1.54 m³/s, below the 1.57 m³/s of the 2023/24 reference drought year*** and above the 1.32 m³/s of the 1991/92 reference drought year on the same date. The observed flow for the 2026/27 hydrological year is ***below the normal (long-term mean) flow of 1.65 m³/s.***

Flow is slightly below normal (about 93%) and just below the 2023/24 reference drought year.

3.4 Luapula River at Kashiba (6-785) | Luapula Catchment

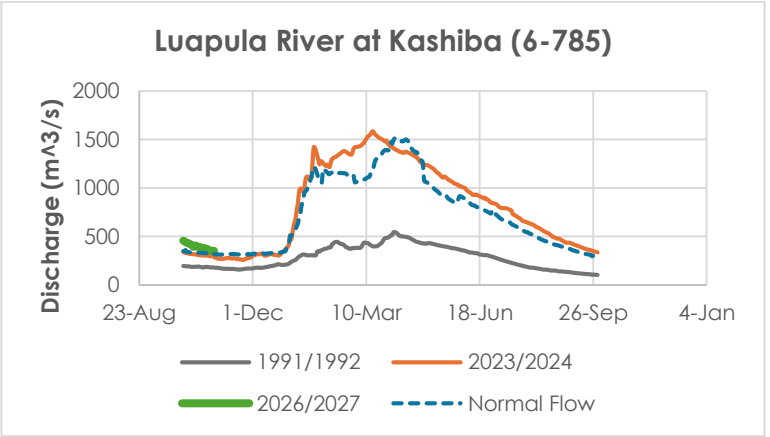


Figure 6 Daily discharge at Luapula River at Kashiba (6-785): 2026/27 compared with the 1991/92 and 2023/24 reference drought years and the long-term mean (Normal flow).

Table 5 Key indicators – 6-785, 27 October 2026

% of Normal	Current flow (m³/s)	1991/92 Reference Drought Year (m³/s)	2023/24 Reference Drought Year (m³/s)	Normal Flow (LTM) (m³/s)	Current Trend
105%	346.81	182.25	336.32	331.76	Receding

ASSESSMENT

As of 27th October 2026, the river flow was 346.81 m³/s, above the 336.32 m³/s of the 2023/24 reference drought year and above the 182.25 m³/s of the 1991/92 reference drought year on the same date. The observed flow for the 2026/27 hydrological year exceeds the normal (long-term mean) flow of 331.76 m³/s.

Flow is close to normal (about 105%) and above both reference drought years.

3.5 Kafue River at Ragland (4-050) | Kafue Catchment

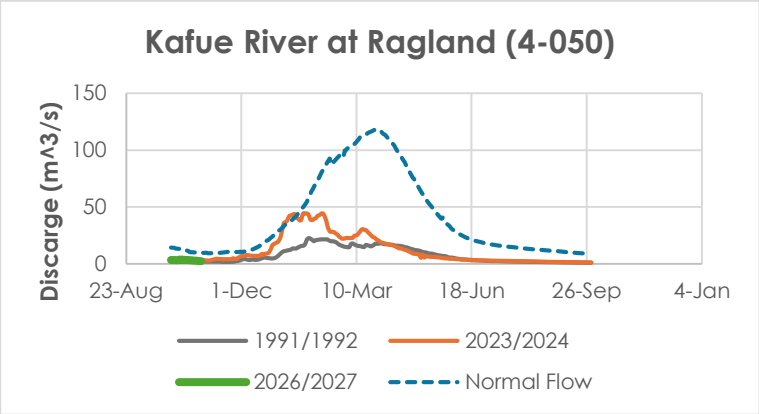


Figure 7 Daily discharge at Kafue River at Ragland (4-050): 2026/27 compared with the 1991/92 and 2023/24 reference drought years and the long-term mean (Normal flow).

Table 6 Key indicators – 4-050, 27 October 2026

% of Normal	Current flow (m³/s)	1991/92 Reference Drought Year (m³/s)	2023/24 Reference Drought Year (m³/s)	Normal Flow (LTM) (m³/s)	Current Trend
23%	2.20	2.01	3.18	9.67	Receding

ASSESSMENT

As of 27th October 2026, the river flow was ***2.20 m³/s, below the 3.18 m³/s of the 2023/24 reference drought year*** and above the 2.01 m³/s of the 1991/92 reference drought year on the same date. The observed flow for the 2026/27 hydrological year is ***below the normal (long-term mean) flow of 9.67 m³/s.***

Flow is only about 23% of normal – roughly a quarter – and close to the 1991/92 reference drought year.

3.6 Kafue River at Hook Bridge (4-669) | Kafue Catchment

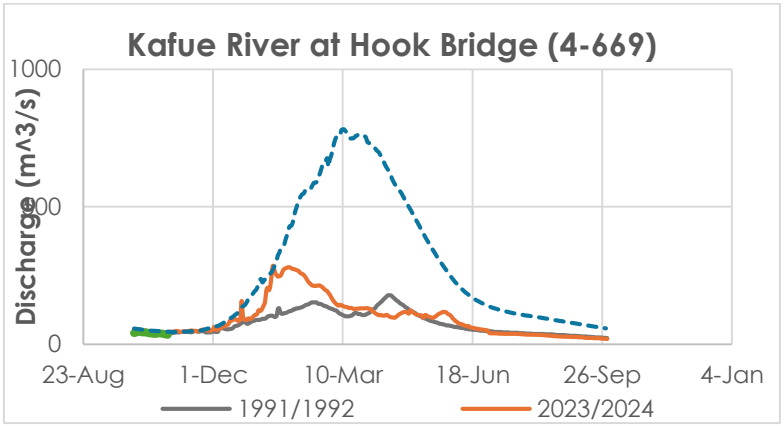


Figure 8 Daily discharge at Kafue River at Hook Bridge (4-669): 2026/27 compared with the 1991/92 and 2023/24 reference drought years and the long-term mean (Normal flow).

Table 7 Key indicators – 4-669, 27 October 2026

% of Normal	Current flow (m³/s)	1991/92 Reference Drought Year (m³/s)	2023/24 Reference Drought Year (m³/s)	Normal Flow (LTM) (m³/s)	Current Trend
76%	34.80	39.36	43.78	45.65	Receding

ASSESSMENT

As of 27th October 2026, the river flow was ***34.80 m³/s, below the 43.78 m³/s of the 2023/24 reference drought year*** and ***below the 39.36 m³/s of the 1991/92 reference drought year*** on the same date. The observed flow for the 2026/27 hydrological year is ***below the normal (long-term mean) flow of 45.65 m³/s.***

Flow is about 76% of normal and is the only station in this bulletin below both reference drought years.

3.7 Kafue River at Machiya Ferry (4-280) | Kafue Catchment

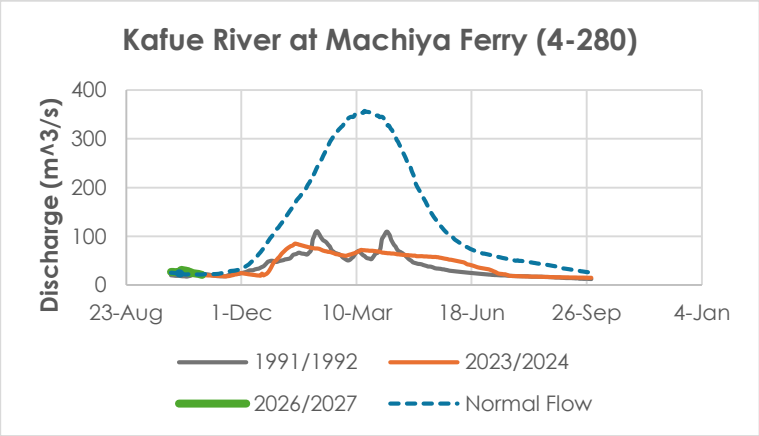


Figure 9 Daily discharge at Kafue River at Machiya Ferry (4-280): 2026/27 compared with the 1991/92 and 2023/24 reference drought years and the long-term mean (Normal flow).

Table 8 Key indicators – 4-280, 27 October 2026

% of Normal	Current flow (m³/s)	1991/92 Reference Drought Year (m³/s)	2023/24 Reference Drought Year (m³/s)	Normal Flow (LTM) (m³/s)	Current Trend
97%	21.23	23.17	20.61	21.83	Receding

ASSESSMENT

As of 27th October 2026, the river flow was 21.23 m³/s, above the 20.61 m³/s of the 2023/24 reference drought year and ***below the 23.17 m³/s of the 1991/92 reference drought year*** on the same date. The observed flow for the 2026/27 hydrological year is ***below the normal (long-term mean) flow of 21.83 m³/s.***

Flow is close to normal (about 97%), above the 2023/24 but below the 1991/92 reference drought year.

3.8 Mwombezhi River at Solwezi-Mwinilunga Rd Bridge (1-310) | Zambezi Catchment

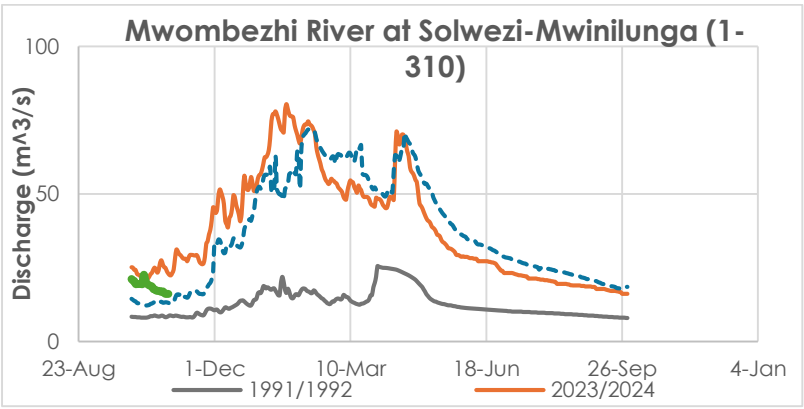


Figure 10 Daily discharge at Mwombezhi River at Solwezi-Mwinilunga Road Bridge (1-310): 2026/27 compared with the 1991/92 and 2023/24 reference drought years and the long-term mean (Normal flow).

Table 9 Key indicators – 1-310, 27 October 2026

% of Normal	Current flow (m³/s)	1991/92 Reference Drought Year (m³/s)	2023/24 Reference Drought Year (m³/s)	Normal Flow (LTM) (m³/s)	Current Trend
122%	16.08	8.24	23.78	13.22	Receding

ASSESSMENT

As of 27th October 2026, the river flow was ***16.08 m³/s, below the 23.78 m³/s of the 2023/24 reference drought year*** and above the 8.24 m³/s of the 1991/92 reference drought year on the same date. The observed flow for the 2026/27 hydrological year exceeds the normal (long-term mean) flow of 13.22 m³/s.

Flow is above normal (about 122%) but below the 2023/24 reference drought year.

3.9 Zambezi River at Nanas Farm (3-045) | Zambezi Catchment

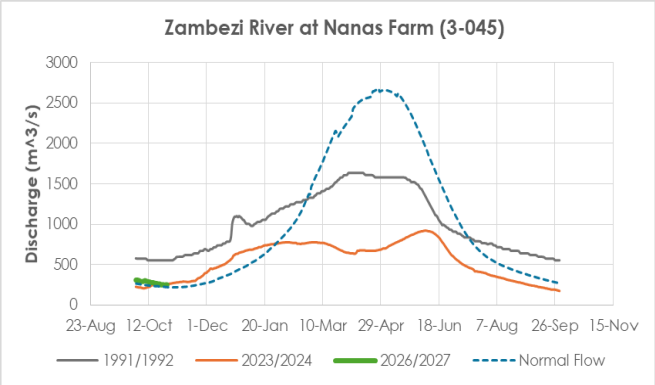


Figure 11 Daily discharge at Zambezi River at Nanas Farm (3-045): 2026/27 compared with the 1991/92 and 2023/24 reference drought years and the long-term mean (Normal flow).

Table 10 Key indicators – 3-045, 27 October 2026

% of Normal	Current flow (m³/s)	1991/92 Reference Drought Year (m³/s)	2023/24 Reference Drought Year (m³/s)	Normal Flow (LTM) (m³/s)	Current Trend
115%	253.09	554.68	252.34	219.63	Receding

ASSESSMENT

As of 27th October 2026, the river flow was 253.09 m³/s, above the 252.34 m³/s of the 2023/24 reference drought year and ***below the 554.68 m³/s of the 1991/92 reference drought year*** on the same date. The observed flow for the 2026/27 hydrological year exceeds the normal (long-term mean) flow of 219.63 m³/s. The high 1991/92 value reflects antecedent conditions: in October 1991 the river was still draining the previous season. The drought shows later, in a flood peak of about 1,600 m³/s against a normal of about 2,650 m³/s (Figure 11).

Flow is about 115% of normal for late October and above the 2023/24 reference drought year.

3.10 Luakela River at Sachibondu (1-425) | Zambezi Catchment

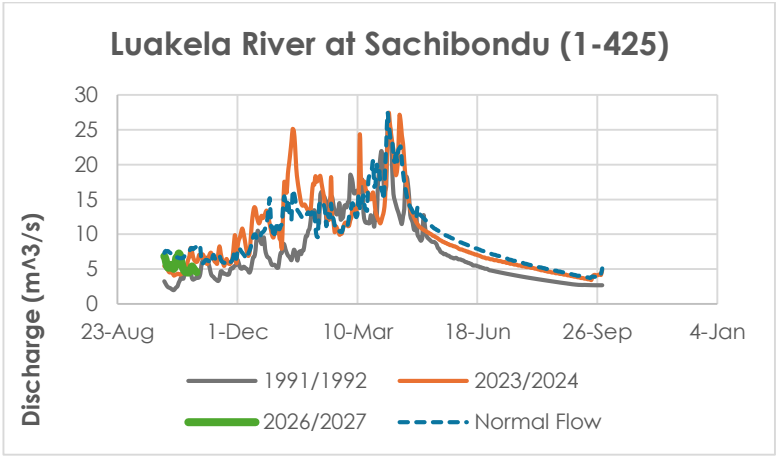


Figure 12 Daily discharge at Luakela River at Sachibondu (1-425): 2026/27 compared with the 1991/92 and 2023/24 reference drought years and the long-term mean (Normal flow).

Table 11 Key indicators – 1-425, 27 October 2026

% of Normal	Current flow (m³/s)	1991/92 Reference Drought Year (m³/s)	2023/24 Reference Drought Year (m³/s)	Normal Flow (LTM) (m³/s)	Current Trend
58%	4.74	3.64	6.08	8.11	Stable

ASSESSMENT

As of 27th October 2026, the river flow was ***4.74 m³/s, below the 6.08 m³/s of the 2023/24 reference drought year*** and above the 3.64 m³/s of the 1991/92 reference drought year on the same date. The observed flow for the 2026/27 hydrological year is ***below the normal (long-term mean) flow of 8.11 m³/s.***

Flow is about 58% of normal and below the 2023/24 reference drought year.

3.11 Kabompo River at Watopa (1-905) | Zambezi Catchment

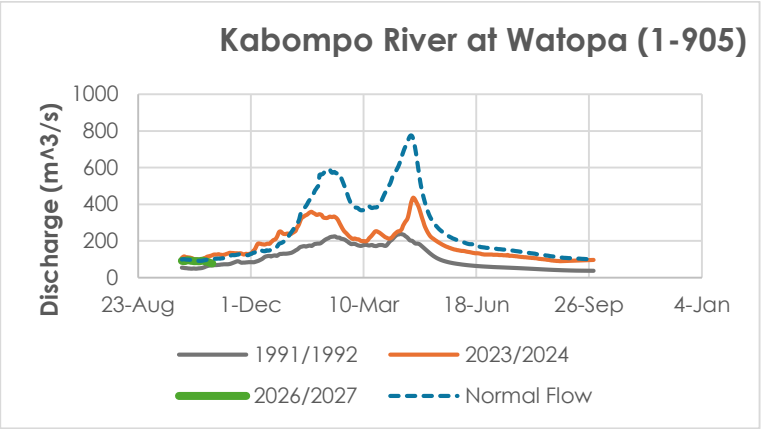


Figure 13 Daily discharge at Kabompo River at Watopa (1-905): 2026/27 compared with the 1991/92 and 2023/24 reference drought years and the long-term mean (Normal flow).

Table 12 Key indicators – 1-905, 27 October 2026

% of Normal	Current flow (m^3/s)	1991/92 Reference Drought Year (m^3/s)	2023/24 Reference Drought Year (m^3/s)	Normal Flow (LTM) (m^3/s)	Current Trend
79%	79.04	65.42	119.42	100.47	Receding

ASSESSMENT

As of 27th October 2026, the river flow was ***79.04 m³/s, below the 119.42 m³/s of the 2023/24 reference drought year*** and above the 65.42 m³/s of the 1991/92 reference drought year on the same date. The observed flow for the 2026/27 hydrological year is ***below the normal (long-term mean) flow of 100.47 m³/s.***

Flow is about 79% of normal and well below the 2023/24 reference drought year.

3.12 Zambezi River at Chavuma (1-105) | Zambezi Catchment

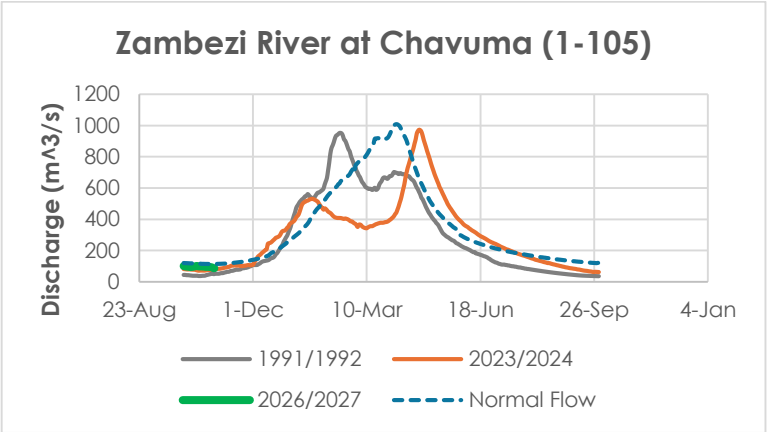


Figure 14 Daily discharge at Zambezi River at Chavuma (1-105): 2026/27 compared with the 1991/92 and 2023/24 reference drought years and the long-term mean (Normal flow).

Table 13 Key indicators – 1-105, 27 October 2026

% of Normal	Current flow (m^3/s)	1991/92 Reference Drought Year (m^3/s)	2023/24 Reference Drought Year (m^3/s)	Normal Flow (LTM) (m^3/s)	Current Trend
77%	88.63	49.33	83.22	114.74	Receding

ASSESSMENT

As of 27th October 2026, the river flow was 88.63 m³/s, above the 83.22 m³/s of the 2023/24 reference drought year and above the 49.33 m³/s of the 1991/92 reference drought year on the same date. The observed flow for the 2026/27 hydrological year is ***below the normal (long-term mean) flow of 114.74 m³/s.***

Flow is about 77% of normal, but above both reference drought years.

3.13 Lunsemfwa River at GNRB (5-765) | Luangwa Catchment

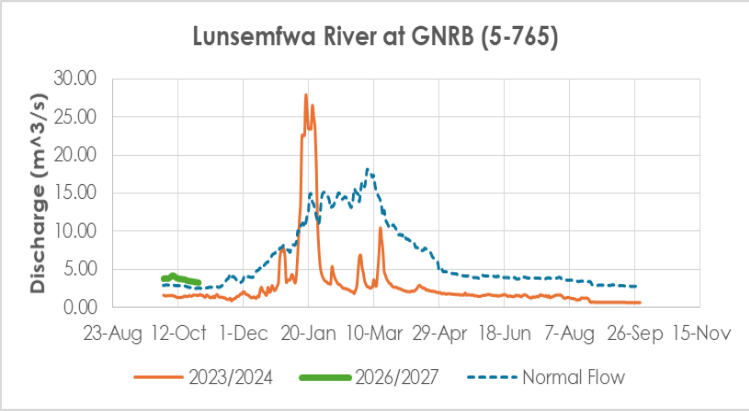


Figure 15 Daily discharge at Lunsemfwa River at GNRB (5-765): 2026/27 compared with the 2023/24 reference drought year (no 1991/92 record) and the long-term mean (Normal flow).

Table 14 Key indicators – 5-765, 27 October 2026

% of Normal	Current flow (m³/s)	1991/92 Reference Drought Year (m³/s)	2023/24 Reference Drought Year (m³/s)	Normal Flow (LTM) (m³/s)	Current Trend
126%	3.24	No record	1.59	2.58	Receding

ASSESSMENT

As of 27th October 2026, the river flow was 3.24 m³/s, above the 1.59 m³/s of the 2023/24 reference drought year on the same date. The observed flow for the 2026/27 hydrological year exceeds the normal (long-term mean) flow of 2.58 m³/s. There is no record for 1991/92 at this station.

Flow is about 126% of normal and about twice the 2023/24 reference drought year flow.

3.14 Lusiwasi River at Masase (5-670) | Luangwa Catchment

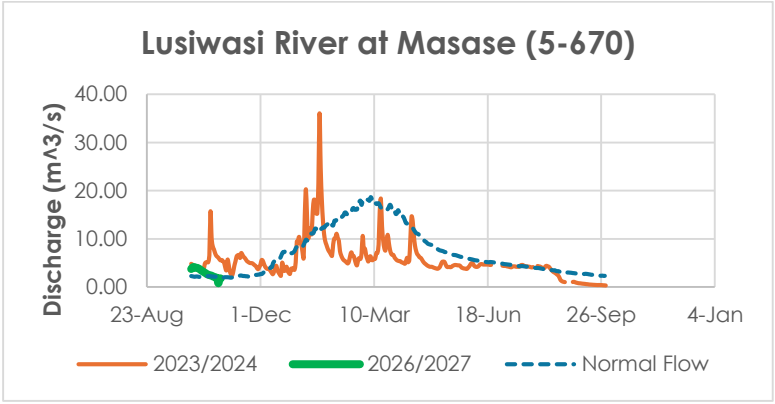


Figure 16 Daily discharge at Lusiwasi River at Masase (5-670): 2026/27 compared with the 2023/24 reference drought year (no 1991/92 record) and the long-term mean (Normal flow).

Table 15 Key indicators – 5-670, 27 October 2026

% of Normal	Current flow (m³/s)	1991/92 Reference Drought Year (m³/s)	2023/24 Reference Drought Year (m³/s)	Normal Flow (LTM) (m³/s)	Current Trend
85%	1.75	No record	5.52	2.07	Receding

ASSESSMENT

As of 27th October 2026, the river flow was ***1.75 m³/s, below the 5.52 m³/s of the 2023/24 reference drought year*** on the same date. The observed flow for the 2026/27 hydrological year is ***below the normal (long-term mean) flow of 2.07 m³/s.*** There is no record for 1991/92 at this station.

Flow is about 85% of normal and only about a third of the 2023/24 reference drought year flow.

4 Outlook and Water User Advisory

River levels and flows will continue to fall until the rains are established, with high temperatures increasing evaporation. The outlook below follows the ZMD three-month forecast periods and will be updated in each edition.

October–December (OND) 2026: where the rains start early, a slight, short-lived rise is likely before levels fall again through evaporation and infiltration into the dry ground. Flows should start a steady rise in the north (Tanganyika, Chambeshi, Luapula and northern Luangwa), where above-normal rainfall is forecast. In the Kafue and southern Zambezi, flows are likely to remain below normal; the Kafue at Hook Bridge and Ragland needs the closest watch.

November–January (NDJ): above-normal rainfall continues in the north, with a risk of high flows on the Chambeshi plains and rising levels in Lakes Bangweulu, Mweru and Tanganyika. Below-normal rainfall over the Kafue and southern Zambezi, and normal to below-normal rainfall over the Luangwa, point to below-average inflows to Itezhi-Tezhi and Kafue Gorge and reduced local inflows from the southern Zambezi.

December–February (DJF) and January–March (JFM) 2027: the northern catchments stay wet; the Kafue, southern Zambezi and southern Luangwa ease to normal to below-normal rainfall by JFM, and the Upper Zambezi and Kabompo trend to normal to above. Kariba inflows will depend largely on Upper Zambezi rainfall.

Groundwater (general guidance; groundwater monitoring data to follow): where below-normal rainfall is forecast, groundwater recharge will be limited and borehole and well levels may stay low into early 2027.

WARMA will continue close monitoring and will issue updates through this bulletin. Technical notes on methods, reference drought years, LTM record periods and data status are available on the WARMA website (www.warma.org.zm).

Advisory to water users

Surface water users

- Use water efficiently and avoid unnecessary abstraction.
- Comply with the conditions of water permits.
- Plan irrigation and storage on the basis of the seasonal outlook for your catchment.
- Report illegal abstraction to WARMA.

Groundwater users (general guidance; groundwater monitoring data to follow)

- Groundwater responds slowly to rainfall. Where below-normal rainfall is forecast (Kafue, southern Zambezi and southern Luangwa catchments), recharge will be limited and water levels in boreholes and wells may stay low into early 2027.
- Shallow and hand-dug wells are most at risk: expect lower yields, and some wells may dry up before the rains are well established.
- Use groundwater sparingly: repair leaks, avoid over-pumping boreholes and spread pumping through the day.
- Obtain a permit from WARMA and use a WARMA-licensed driller before drilling a new borehole.
- Keep latrines, waste pits and livestock away from boreholes and wells, as the first rains can wash pollutants into shallow wells. Boil or chlorinate drinking water from shallow wells.
- In the north, where above-normal rainfall is forecast, groundwater levels should recover after several weeks of sustained rain. Report wells that dry up, or changes in water quality, to WARMA.

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Disclaimer: This bulletin is based on provisional data and the ZMD seasonal forecast available at the time of issue. It is intended for general information and early warning; WARMA accepts no liability for decisions made on the basis of its content.

Groundwater: This edition reports on surface water (rivers) only. Groundwater level information will be added to future editions of this bulletin once groundwater monitoring data have been organised by their respective monitoring stations.