Quarterly Climate Impacts and Outlook

Midwest Region

June 2020

Midwest – *Significant Events for March–May 2020*

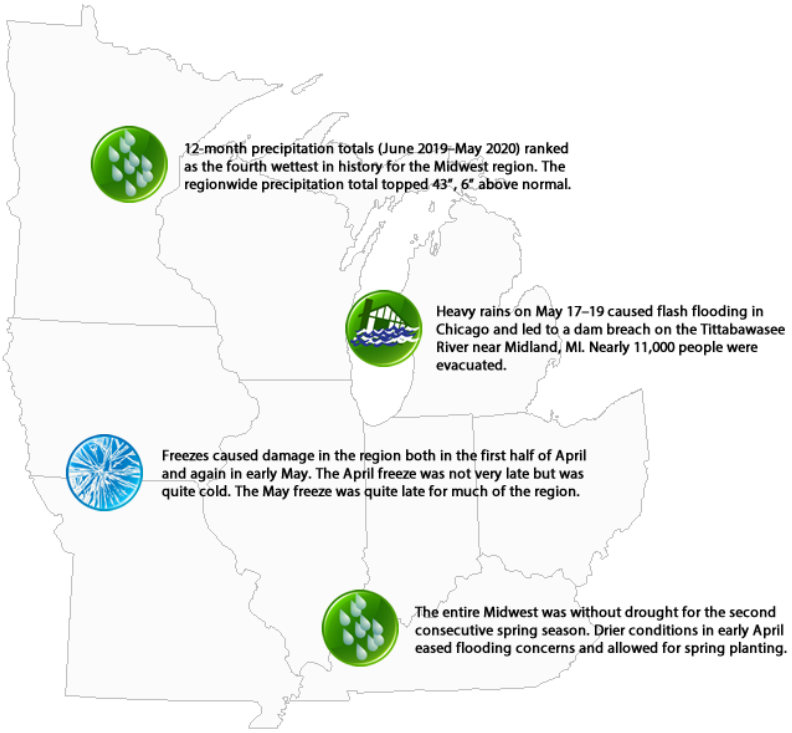
Although a freeze event in April occurred near the median date for the last freeze, damage occurred to vegetation due to the preceding warmth in March. May saw another damaging freeze event across the Midwest.

The 12-month precipitation for the Midwest ranked as the fourth wettest for June to May periods.

There was no drought in the region for the second straight spring. Despite this, drier conditions in the first half of April eased concerns of widespread flooding that had been feared.

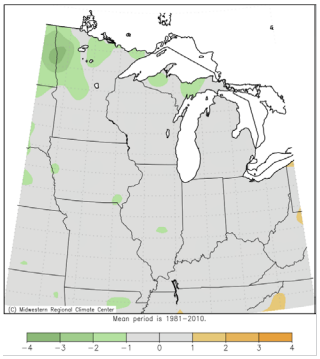
Heavy rains fell May 17–19 causing flash flooding in the Chicago area. The rains led to a dam failure near Midland, MI, where nearly 11,000 people were safely evacuated. A cutoff low that slowly drifted across the Midwest, with lots of clouds and a reduction of incoming solar, also spawned the rain.

Snow fell as late as mid-April in the northern half of the region with flurries at some Kentucky locations. Downwind of the Great Lakes, snow fell into May.

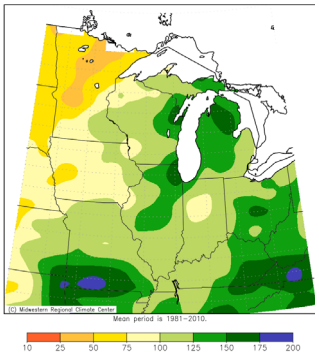


Regional – *Climate Overview for March–May 2020*

Spring Temperature
Departure from Normal



Spring Precipitation
% of Normal

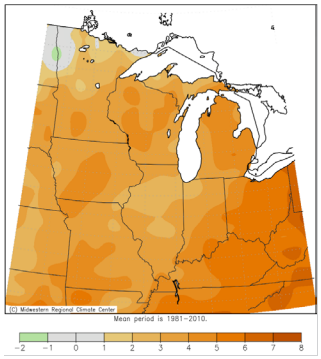


Spring temperatures averaged very close to normal across the Midwest. Temperatures however, were mostly above normal in March, followed by cooler-than-normal conditions in both April and May. There was minimal spatial variation across the region in any of the spring months.

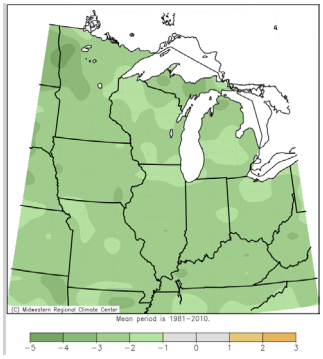
Precipitation was below normal in much of Minnesota and Iowa, and above normal for much of the remainder of the Midwest. The driest areas of Minnesota had less than 50% of normal for the spring while areas with more than 150% of normal were scattered across the southern parts of the region and near the Great Lakes. March was wet for most of the region and April was mainly dry. May was a more even mix of wet and dry conditions. The drier conditions in April were welcome as they allowed for extensive field work and planting and helped to avoid widespread flooding. Concerns for spring flooding were high going into the season due to high amounts of water in soils and waterways.

Chicago, IL, had its third straight record wet May. After setting new records in both 2018 (8.21") and 2019 (8.25"), the wet conditions this May topped those previous records with 14 days left in the month, and finished May with 9.51".

March Temperature
Departure from Normal



April-May Temperature
Departure from Normal



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Regional Impacts – *March–May 2020*

Severe Weather

The incidence of severe weather, including tornadoes, was well below the average of the past 10 Mays. This tracked with the decrease in national reports of severe weather in May, which were the fewest since 2014. In the Midwest, the number of severe weather reports in March and April were near or slightly above normal. Then, in May, when there is usually a steep increase in these reports, there was a drop off from the average number of reports received.

Agriculture

Wet conditions in the early spring, along with cold temperatures in early April, delayed planting in the Midwest. After the deep freeze in mid-April, drier surface conditions allowed planting to rapidly proceed. Due to spotty rains, some fields have had to be replanted. In Minnesota, more-extensive dryness increased fire danger and the need for irrigation.

A hard freeze in April affected nearly all of the Midwest. Temperatures dropped into the lower 20s and teens in many locations. Damage to winter wheat and perennial crops, especially fruits and nuts, was reported from Michigan to Kentucky. Row crops were somewhat less affected as many were not yet planted.

A freeze in early May affected most of the region, except for much of Missouri. This late-season freeze was mild. In the southeastern parts of the region, the freeze came about a month later than the median last freeze. Cool temperatures in April and May had delayed phenological development and thus helped to limit the damage to some degree. Crops that were further along in their development fared the worst.

Photos: May freeze damage to apples (top) and soybeans (bottom).

Photo credit: Mike Reinke, MSU Extenision and Chelsea Harbach, Illinois Exension

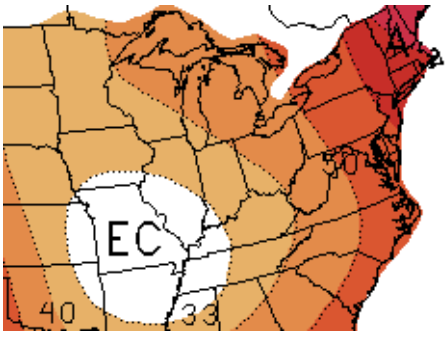
Regional Outlook – *July–September 2020*

The seasonal outlook for July–September temperatures shows equal chances of above-, below-, or near-normal conditions in Missouri and parts of neighboring states; the remainder of the Midwest has an increased chance of above-normal temperatures for the period. The best chance for above-normal temperatures is in Ohio, Michigan, and northeastern Wisconsin.

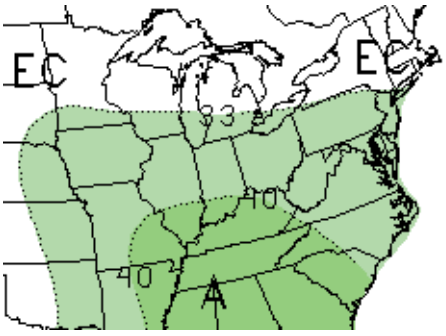
The seasonal outlook for July–September precipitation shows equal chances of above- or below-normal rainfall in much of Minnesota, Wisconsin, and Michigan, while the rest of the Midwest shows an increased chance for above-normal precipitation. The best chance for above-normal precipitation is in southeastern Missouri, southern Illinois, southern Indiana, and much of Kentucky.

Possible warmer-than-average temperatures and existing dry conditions will lead to some worsening of drought conditions in parts of the Midwest during the rest of the growing season.

Temperature



Precipitation



A = Above normal N = Normal
B = Below normal EC = Equal chances

Midwest Region Partners

- Midwestern Regional Climate Center
- American Association of State Climatologists
- National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
- NWS Climate Prediction Center
- National Centers for Environmental Information
- National Weather Service Central Region
- North Central River Forecast Center
- Ohio River Forecast Center
- National Drought Mitigation Center
- National Integrated Drought Information System
- USDA Midwest Climate Hub

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