



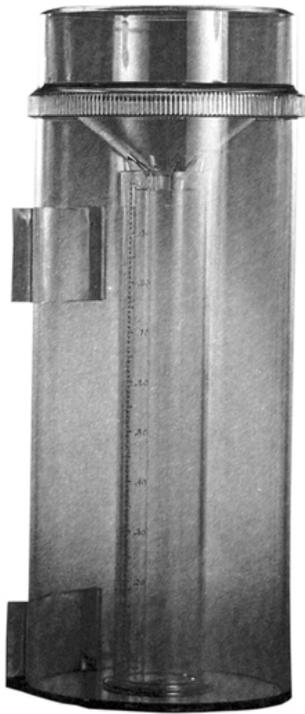
Under the Big Sky E-Letter October 10, 2008

Getting ready for winter driving: With temps in the 80s recently, it's hard to think about winter weather, but we've had raging blizzards in early October, so it's not out of the realm of possibility. It's time to remind yourself and your family to drive slower when the first snow of the year hits. We generally have more accidents with the first snow of the season than we have with heavier snowfalls later in the season. Is your vehicle ready for the season? Here are some hints on getting it ready for the winter:

- Find the **block heater** cord for your vehicle, get one if you don't have one
- Put the **winter survival kit** in your car
- Get the **cooling system** checked – flush and protect the radiator to well below zero
- **Heater, Defroster and Wipers** – get new wipers, make sure heater and defrost work
- **Fuel System** – replace fuel and air filters, keep water out of system by adding additives, keep the fuel tank full
- **Lights** – Check your front and rear lights to make sure they all work
- **Oil** – Use a lighter weight oil
- **Battery** – Make sure the battery terminals are clean
- **Exhaust** – Check for leaks or crimped pipes, CO₂ poisoning is deadly!
- **Tires** – Check that you have proper tread on the tires, and they are inflated properly
- **Brakes** – Check for wear and fluid levels
- **Rear Wheel Drive** vehicles – consider adding a few sandbags to the trunk for traction



Photo of 4" rain gage used in CoCoRaHS program

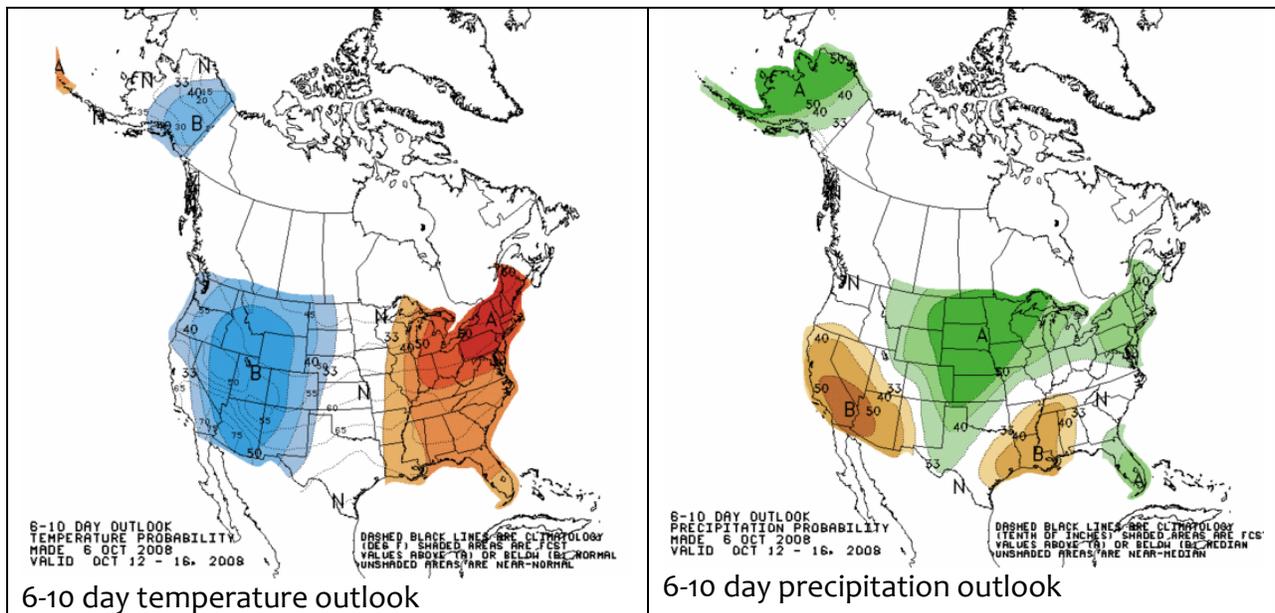


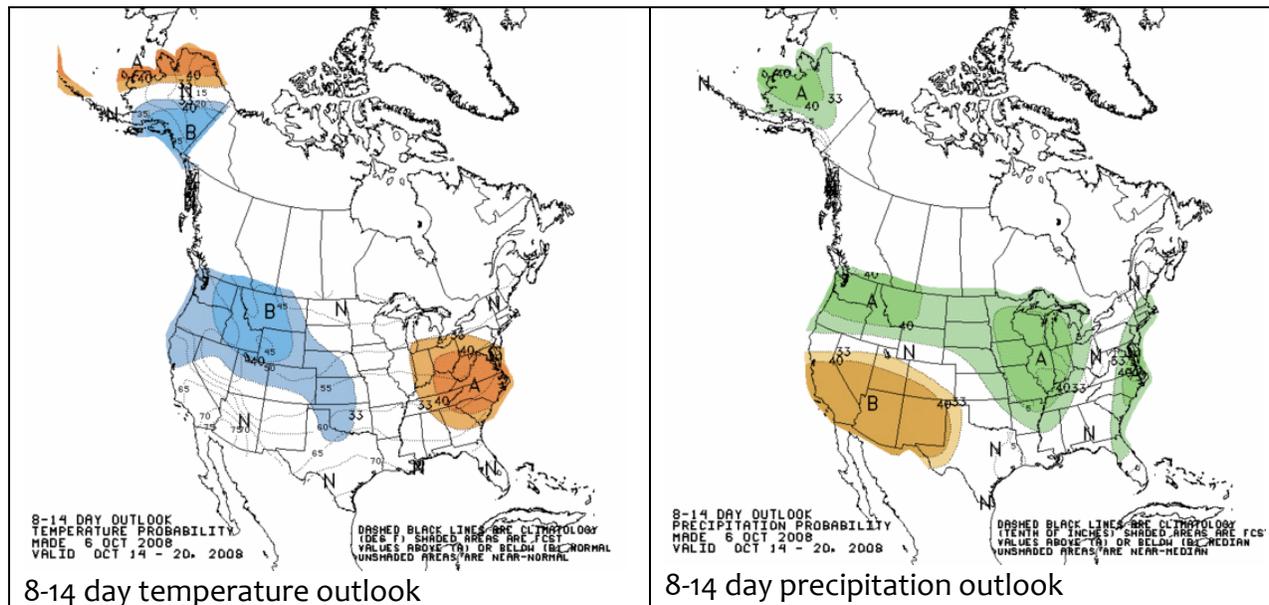
Prepping your 4" rain gage for the winter:

It's time to clean out your rain gauge, and take out the inner tube so that it doesn't freeze and crack. From the national CoCoRaHS team: Dirt will eventually build up on the bottom of your CoCoRaHS rain gauge inner cylinder. If you want to keep your gauge clean and looking like new, do NOT use a firm bottle brush to clean the gauge. Using your automatic dish washer is also not recommended. This will gradually scuff and haze the inside of the gauge. Instead, put warm water and a little gentle liquid hand soap and let it soak for a few minutes. Then twist a thin soft towel and spin it into the cylinder until it reaches the bottom. This will wipe out most of the dirt.

Another method is to take a newspaper, role it to make a tight cylinder, and then rotate the paper on the inside of the tube all the way to the bottom. It will usually clean out the dirt.

Weather Outlook: Hope you enjoyed Indian Summer the last two weeks as it looks like things are taking a turn for the colder! The first widespread frost of the year will occur on Thursday morning this week. We also have colder than normal temperatures and greater than normal precipitation expected in the next 6-10 days (Oct 12-16) and 8-14 days (Oct 14-20). To see the extended outlook (updated daily) visit: <http://www.cpc.ncep.noaa.gov/>





In the weather news:

Salt shortage for roads this winter? USA Today reports that some cities and states are facing road salt shortages this winter. Salt companies sold 20.3 million tons last winter, an increase of 12.3 million pounds from the previous year. While we had a fairly mild winter last year, the majority of the country saw significant events and last year's demand has depleted the supplies out there. To read more go to: http://www.usatoday.com/news/nation/2008-10-05-roadsalt_N.htm?csp=34

Hurricane impacts continue: Impacts from Hurricane Ike continue to ripple through the news, including 33 deaths, several hundred people still missing, a half million gallons of crude oil that spilled into the Gulf, abandoned propane tanks, raw sewage issues, everyday household chemicals washed out from homes and businesses into the bayous and Gulf. Haiti has had over 800 deaths from the four major storms that struck there, and at least 60% of their agricultural crop is lost. They have already been suffering from poor soil management practices over the years, and that has already led to a loss in crop yield. This hurricane season has just aggravated the problems to even worse levels.

Recent weather records:

Water year: The water year is the time from October 1 through September 30 of the following year. It coincides with the agricultural year to show how much water fell on a crop. Surprisingly, Glasgow had the highest 2007-2008 water year total in the state with 14.36" while Miles City had the lowest with 9.42" One of our CoCoRaHS observers north of Frazer reported a total of 11.86" for the water year.

Prairie Winds: September 2008 was also the least windy month on record in Glasgow, with an average speed of 8.1 mph. This broke the previous record for the lowest average wind speed which was 9.0 mph set in 1976.

NOAA and NWS Glasgow happenings: One forecaster arrives, while another leaves. Grant Hicks, the new general forecaster in our office arrived from Oklahoma last week. He'll spend several weeks training, getting up to speed on northeast Montana climate, as well as our software and operations. Matt Ziebell, another of our general forecasters was recently hired at the NWS Lubbock, TX office. Matt is a severe weather enthusiast, who chased our high plains storms on his days off, and will do an incredible job in Texas. He's also been our webmaster for the last 18 months, has helped with Skywarn and outreach events, and did all of our severe weather verification. He'll be heading out in early November, and we hope to have a replacement for him by the end of November. We also only have a few more weeks before Jim Branda, our Hydrometeorological Technician who has also been very involved in the office outreach program heads to Memphis, TN. His replacement will be here hopefully in early to mid November sometime.

Great Divide Workshop: The NWS in Billings and Glasgow are co-hosting the 12th Annual Great Divide Weather Workshop in Billings this week. The conference brings together many people with an interest in weather from across the northern Rockies, High Plains, and Great Basin regions. Over 50 people attend the workshop, including the NWS Western Region Director and Deputy Directors. The agenda covers topics from high impact weather events, to how the computer models are verifying in weather events to new technologies on the horizon. NWS Glasgow had six people who were able to attend the workshop this year. The agenda and other information from the workshop are available at:
http://www.wrh.noaa.gov/byz/local_news/2008/divideo8.php?wfo=ggw

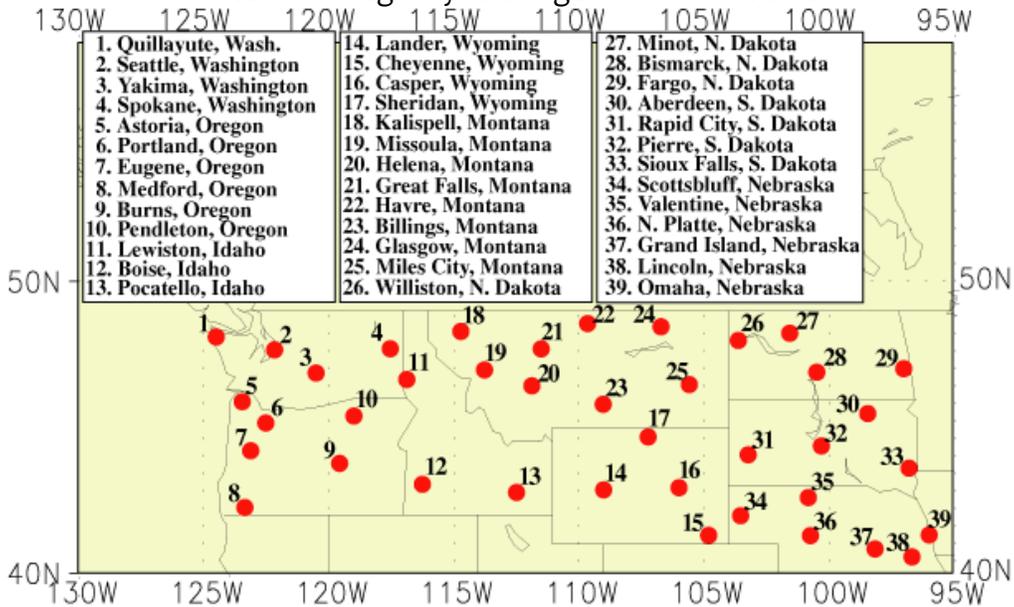
Misc. News:

1,000th Weather Radio Transmitters installed: The NWS recently installed the 1,000th NOAA Weather Radio transmitter in Nenana, Alaska. 95% of the United States population is covered by NOAA Weather Radio broadcasts for weather information 24 hours a day. For more information on NOAA Weather Radio, visit:
<http://www.weather.gov/nwr/>

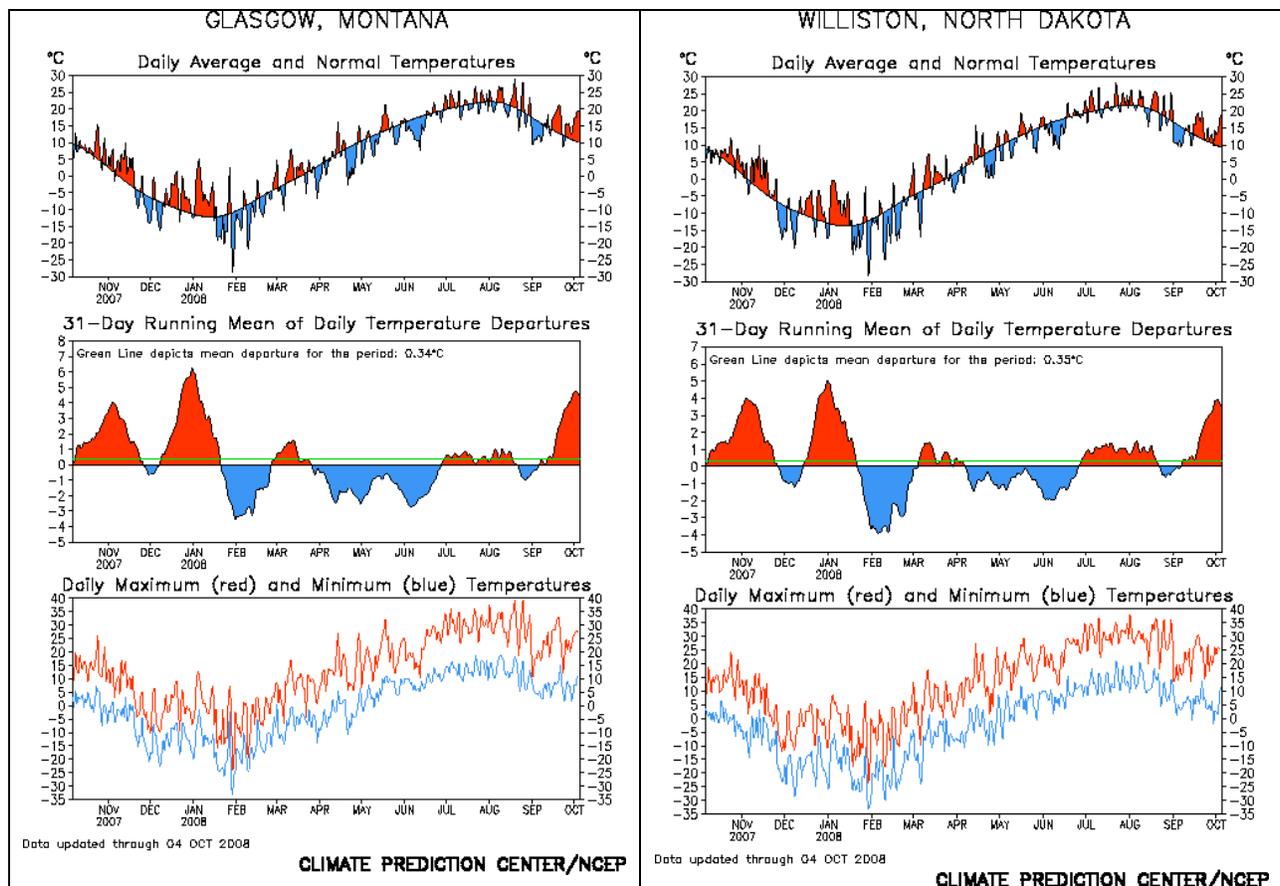
Leaves changing colors: I didn't realize how quickly our trees were changing until my husband brought me the camera with a series of photos from one of our Ash trees from the last few days. The USFS has a great website explaining why and how leaves change their colors: http://www.na.fs.fed.us/spfo/pubs/misc/autumn/autumn_colors.htm

More Temperature and Precipitation data: The Climate Prediction Center has a weblink that allows you to see the precipitation and temperature observed for sites with long term climate data over a 30 day, 90 day and 365 day interval. It is available at:
http://www.cpc.ncep.noaa.gov/products/global_monitoring/precipitation/global_precip_accum.shtml
http://www.cpc.ncep.noaa.gov/products/global_monitoring/temperature/global_temp_accum.shtml

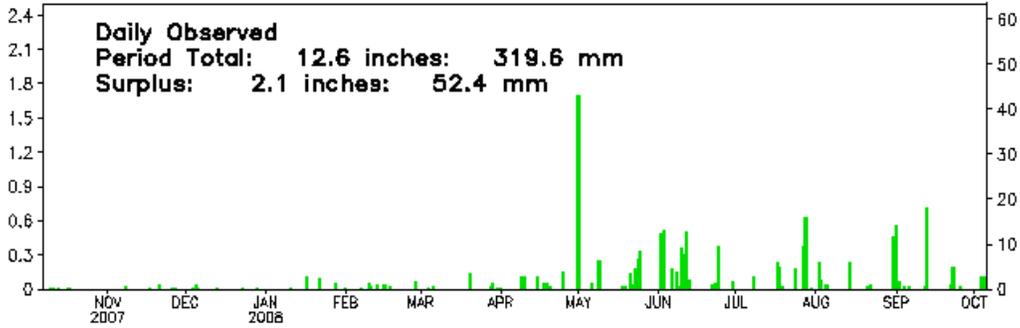
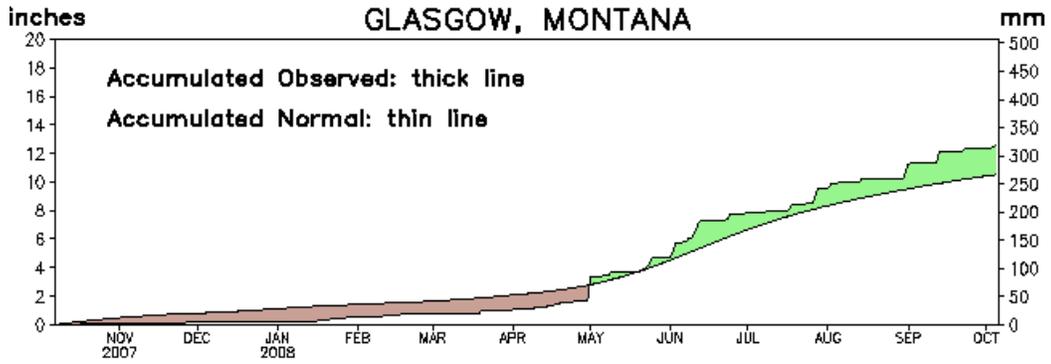
Sites in our region you can get data for include:



Here is a sample of the graphical information you can see (set to the last 365 days):



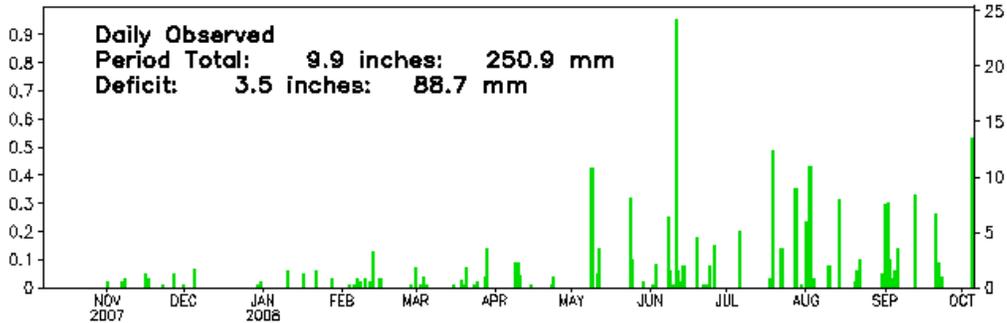
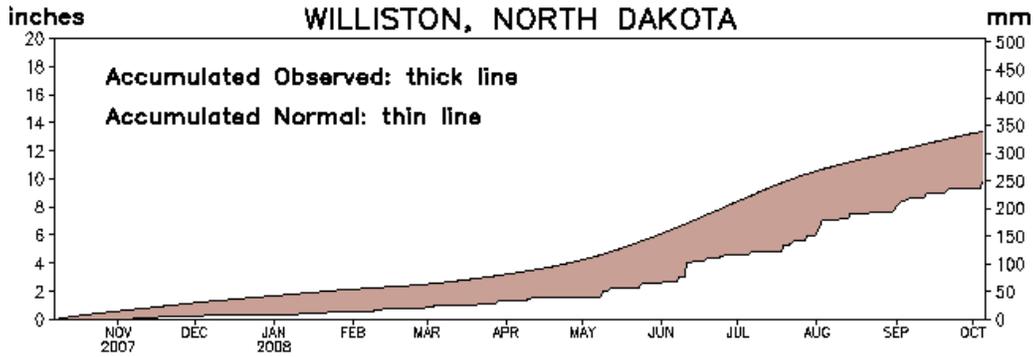
Precipitation
GLASGOW, MONTANA



Data updated through 05 OCT 2008

CLIMATE PREDICTION CENTER/NCEP
Precipitation

WILLISTON, NORTH DAKOTA



Data updated through 05 OCT 2008

CLIMATE PREDICTION CENTER/NCEP