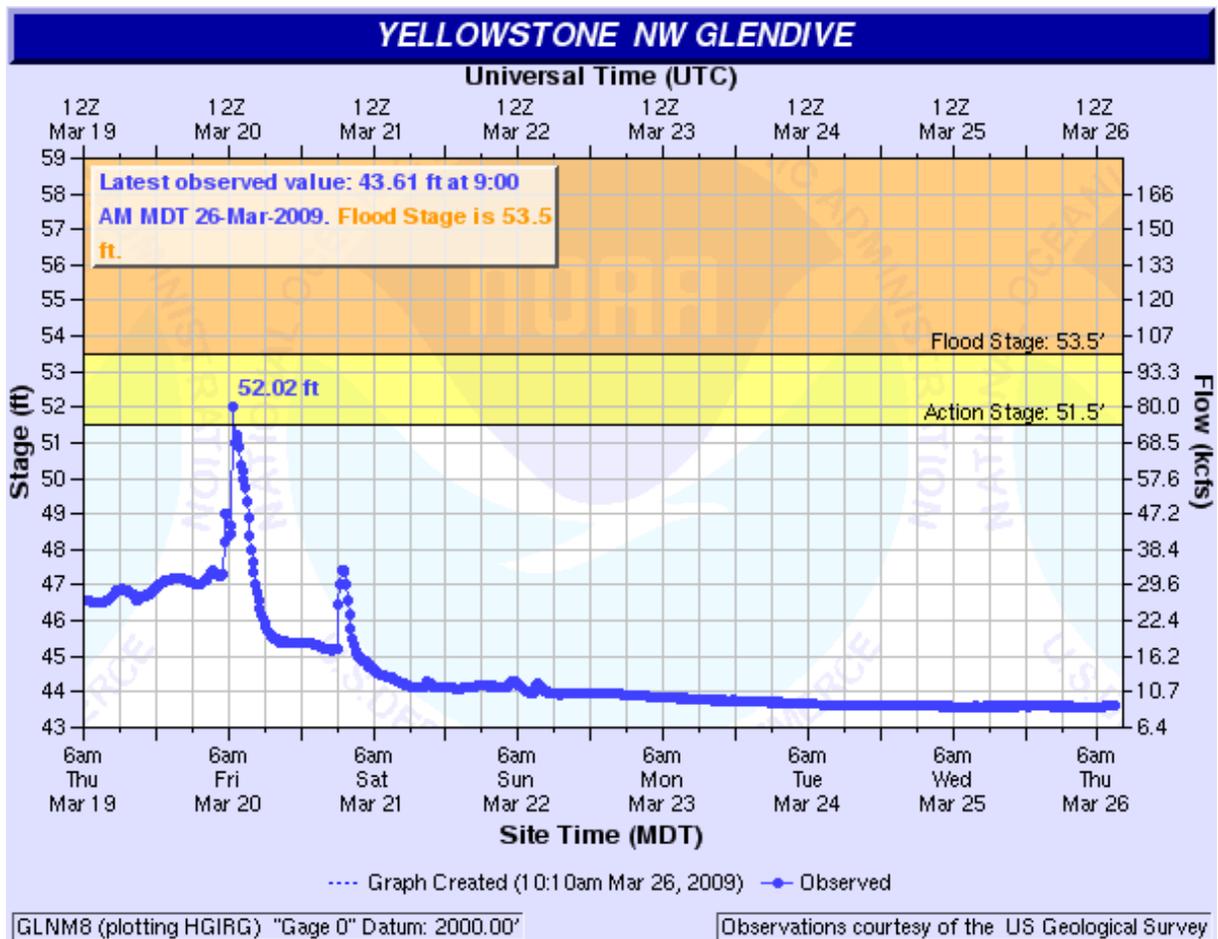




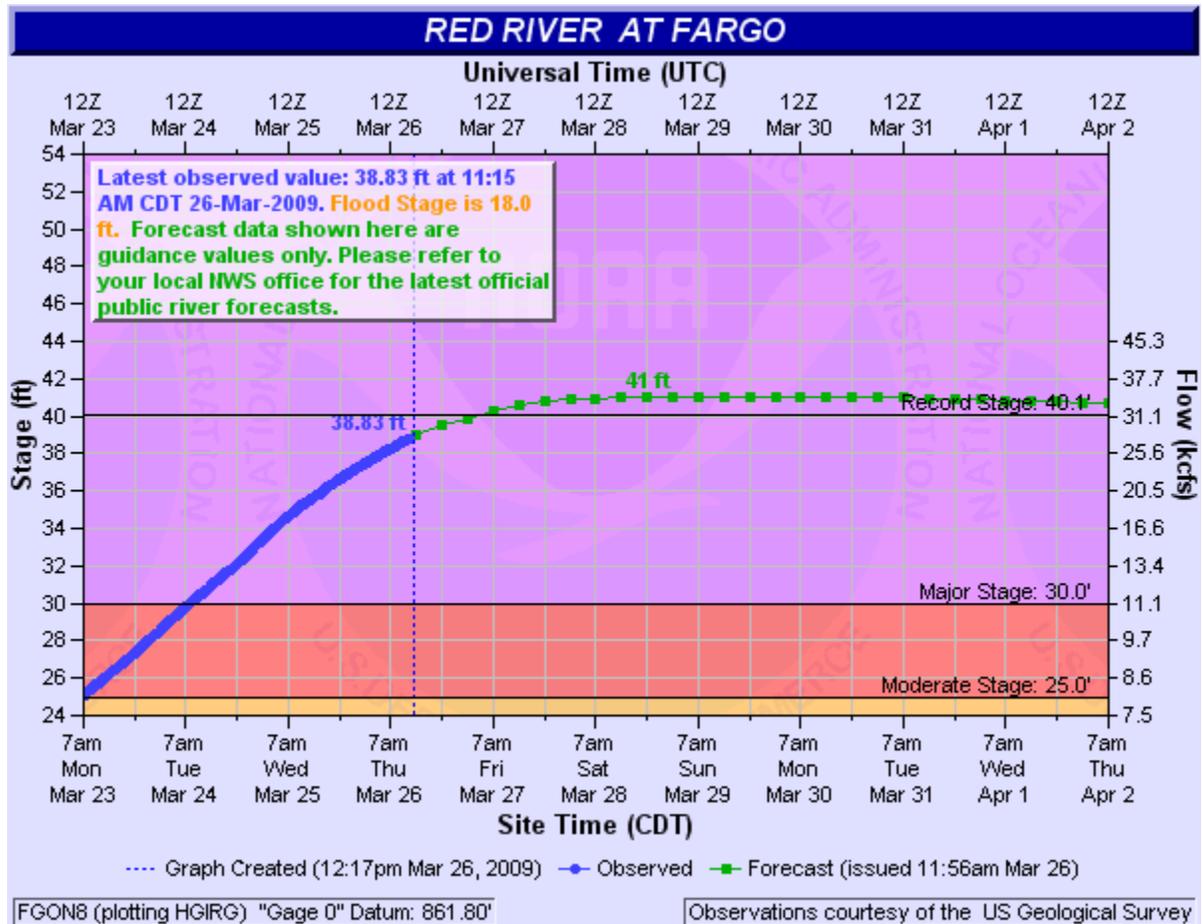
Under the Big Sky Newsletter
March 27, 2009

Spring Flooding: We've been lucky for the most part so far (knock on wood!). In the past week we've had several ice jams work their way lose in the Yellowstone River and it's mostly clear now to the confluence of the Yellowstone. We've had some basements with seepage problems and some decent runoff from coulees across fields and into small streams, but nothing significant yet. There are quite a few low lying areas that are submerged in water, but it's not affecting any roads that we know of. We're keeping an eye on an ice jam near Antelope as well.



(This is a Hydrograph of the Yellowstone River at Glendive. You can see the two instances of ice moving through, around 6 am Friday, and again around 6 am on Saturday.)

ND Flood Fight: Our neighbors to the east are fighting quite the battle this past week or so, and it will continue to be a problem for a bit longer. Two ice jams by Bismarck/Mandan are causing enough problems that the Garrison Dam has totally shut down releases, and they are not generating any hydroelectric power, the first time that has ever happened. The ND Governor has said that they will try and blast the lower ice jam with explosives. Far eastern ND is also preparing in a big way with millions of sand bags having been filled in the last few days. Below is the hydrograph for Fargo, ND, showing the observed values (blue dots) and the forecast stage (green dots). I'd include some articles, but all you really need to do is turn on the major news outlooks to see video and get the latest updates on the work they are doing there. To see the latest river conditions, go to: <http://www.weather.gov/ahps/> Click on your area of interest to get more detailed information.



Skywarn is 50 years old! On March 8, 1959 in Udall, Kansas, the first Skywarn spotter training session was held. We've had weather spotters across the United States for 50 years now! There are 285,000 weather spotters in the United States, and last year, the National Weather Service trained almost 91,000 new and returning spotters. In northeast Montana, we have just over 1,000 weather spotters who have been through the Skywarn training program. There are upcoming training sessions being scheduled, with three on the calendar right now:

Date	Location	Time	Where
April 13	Sidney	2-4 pm and a repeat from 6-8 pm	USDA ARS Facility Conference Room
April 27	Plentywood	6-8 pm	Jubilee Room at the County Building
May 18	Wibaux	6-8 pm	Wibaux Fire Department

Severe Thunderstorm Warning Criteria Change: On June 1st, 2009, the NWS Glasgow office will have new hail criteria for severe thunderstorms. In the past it was 3/4" hail (penny size), but it will be changed to 1" hail after June 1st. The NWS offices in Kansas have been running the Kansas Hail Experiment for about 5 years now to get feedback from the media, emergency management and the public. The feedback has been very positive over the years, and offices in the central United States will be starting this on April 1st, while offices in the western United States (including Montana) will start this on June 1st.



The resulting outcome from this will hopefully be:

1. Reduce the number of warnings that are issued for non-threatening hail
2. Improve public response to warnings for significant threats
3. Reduce the number of alerts that are being received at media outlets (interrupting broadcasting) and through NOAA Weather Radio

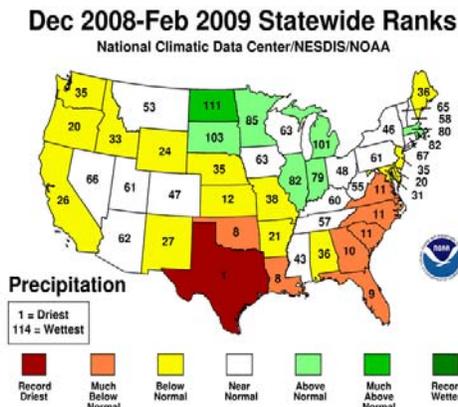
In looking at the hail data from northeast Montana (NWS Glasgow warning area) during the past three summers, we found the following:

- 151 events of hail over 1" in diameter
- 149 events of hail from 3/4" to less than 1" in diameter

14 of the events from 3/4" to less than one inch hail had damages included with them from winds that were greater than 58 mph (severe thunderstorm wind warning criteria). If you have any thoughts or questions on this, please feel free to contact me via phone (406-228-2850) or email (tanja.fransen@noaa.gov) about it.

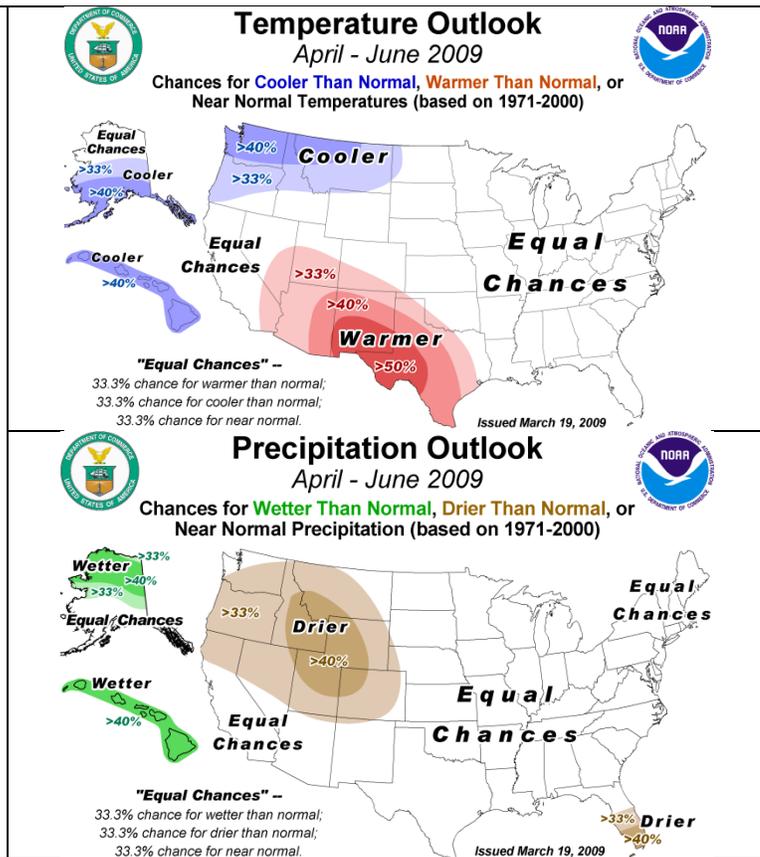
NOAA News: Several news releases have been issued in the last two weeks.

Dec-Feb US Climate Summary: North Dakota had one of the wettest periods on record, while the entire state of Texas came in as the driest on record (114 years!) To read more about the three month period, visit: http://www.noaanews.noaa.gov/stories2009/20090310_winterstats.html



Spring Outlook: The spring outlook was just released by NOAA last week. The flooding potential was the major highlight of the outlook, with big concerns in the Dakotas and Minnesota area. La Nina (colder than normal Pacific Equatorial temperatures) is gradually weakening but the effects of cooler than normal temperatures are expected to last in our area through the spring months. Also drier than normal conditions are possible during that time just west of our area, and that could be problematic for farming, and for fuel dangers and fire potential. To read the spring outlook, go to:

http://www.noaanews.noaa.gov/stories/2009/20090319_springoutlook.html



Climate Literacy: A guide is now available to help individuals of all ages understand how climate influences them -- and how they influence climate. A product of the U.S. Climate Change Science Program, it was compiled by an interagency group led by NOAA. The 17 page guide can be accessed at: http://www.noaanews.noaa.gov/stories/2009/20090318_climateliteracy.html

Cloud photography: I stumbled across this website recently that shows some great cloud photos from around the world. If any of you have great photos you'd like to share, please feel free to send them to me. I can include them in the newsletter! <http://cloudappreciationsociety.org/gallery/>

Recent NWS Glasgow happenings:

IMET Workshop: Patrick Gilchrist, the incident meteorologist at our office, recently spent a week in Boise, ID at training. The training was related to his duties while forecasting from a significant event, mostly wildfires, but some IMETs have been deployed after 9/11, after the shuttle crash in Texas, and after major tornadic events such as the Greensburg, KS tornado. Training included a lot of information including learning how to deploy fire shelters, aviation safety procedures, new computer programs, and getting recertified on the weather balloons they launch. The NWS has about 100 IMET's, with about 80 certified to deploy and another 20 in training. During wildfire season, many of these meteorologists are deployed to the major wildfires around the US.

Pre-Season Fire kickoff meeting: With Patrick in Boise, I filled in for him at the Lewistown BLM/DNRC pre-season fire meeting that was held in Malta. I gave a briefing on weather technologies, and our fire weather website. We also discussed the seasonal outlook which is important in planning for future fire activity and resources. Attendees included the fire wardens and some fire chiefs from Phillips, Valley, and Roosevelt County.

Northeast Montana Ag Expo: John Pulasky and I tag teamed the presentations we gave at the Ag Expo in Plentywood last weekend. With an audience of about 50 to 60 people, we discussed the Cold Advisory for Newborn Livestock (CANL) System, the major weather events of 2008, and the outlook for 2009 and the Community Collaborative Rain, Hail and Snow (CoCoRaHS) program in Montana. It's a great event, and I appreciate the invitation each year. It was also a good opportunity to drive through a good portion of northeast Montana and see where the water was and wasn't running yet.

Space Tidbit: The International Space Station (ISS) and the Space Shuttle Discovery will fly over the Glasgow zip code tonight with a rise time around 8:05 P.M. Hopefully clearing skies will allow us to see it. Look to the WNW with a max elevation of 45 degrees. The two spacecraft will be close together with the brightest being the ISS. If you miss it try again at 9:40 P.M. looking in the same direction with a max elevation of 33 degrees. To see when it will come through your area, swap out the 59230 below with your zip code instead!

<http://www.spaceweather.com/flybys/flybys.php?zip=59230>

Humor for the week:

