YOUR NATIONAL WEATHER SERVICE SPOKANE QUARTERLY REPORT

VOL XIX, ISSUE 2
JUNE 2014

The Weather Watcher

of the Inland Northwest

www.weather.gov/Spokane

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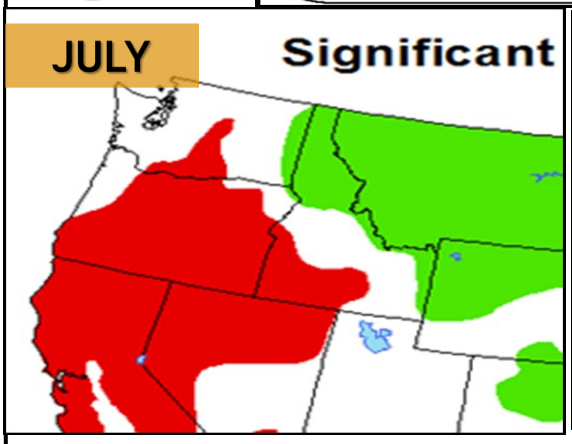
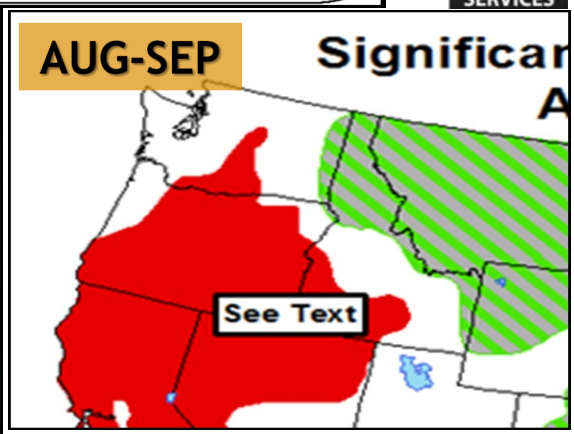
Fire Season Outlook 2014

While precipitation for February-April was above normal, the precipitation for May was normal to well below normal. For the water year that began October 1st, the percentage of normal precipitation ranged from 50-90 percent of normal. The exception was north Idaho where the precipitation amounts were 90-120 percent of normal. Snow was coming off the mountains at about the normal rate for eastern Washington and slightly slower than normal for north Idaho. For late May, the larger fuel moisture, such as trees and timber or the 1000 hour fuels, were drier than normal for eastern Washington and about normal for north Idaho.

The outlook for June is for warmer than normal temperatures and about normal precipitation. For July and August, the outlook is for a continuation of the warmer than normal temperatures and near normal precipitation. With near normal precipitation, we can anticipate about the normal number of thunderstorms across the region. As we have seen the past few years, it only takes one good thunderstorm event after a dry spell to get numerous fires started across the region.

So what's the forecast? For eastern Washington, expect an early start to the fire season with above normal fire potential through September. For north Idaho, expect a later than normal start but about the normal number of starts and normal acres burned. The areas of most concern will be the Cascade Mountains and east across the Columbia Basin and the Okanogan Highlands. For more info on the 2014 wild fire seasonal outlook, see http://www.predictiveservices.nifc.gov/outlooks/monthly_seasonal_outlook.pdf ☼ *Bob Tobin*





Don't Forget Your Zeros—They really DO matter!

Nothing in the CoCoRaHS rain gauge this morning? Don't forget to report it. Zeros are important too! Summertime in the Inland Northwest brings many days of hot and dry weather, but a few thunderstorms are possible. Knowing how much rain falls from a thunderstorm is important. Sometimes the rainfall can be a downpour or maybe just a sprinkle. Our spring precipitation totals have been running below normal, with signs of drought conditions persisting. So as we enter our typically "drier" time of year, any precipitation information will be very useful for weather forecasters. ☼ *Robin Fox*

Editor's Notes

What will our summer be like? A typical question for this time of year. The Climate Prediction Center shows that the Inland Northwest can expect a better chance of above normal temperatures in addition to the typical drier summer conditions. There is still a chance of thunderstorms, more so during late June through mid July, which may help alleviate the dry conditions. The National Lightning Safety Awareness Week runs from June 22-28.

We are always looking for new ideas, pictures and stories for our publication. If you have any to share, please contact us by phone at (509) 244-0110 or email nws.spokane@ noaa.gov.

This newsletter and past issues are available online on weather.gov/Spokane.

The main purpose of this publication is to keep our readers informed about NWS services and programs, and recognize those who help us with our mission, including weather spotters, observers, media, emergency managers, and government agencies.

All articles are written by the NWS staff. Special thanks to Ron Miller, Bob Tobin, and Mark Turner for their help.

Spring in Review

Although the winter was very dry, there was still hope that a wet spring could make up for some of our precipitation deficit. The wet weather pattern from February continued into **March**. The entire Inland Northwest was wetter and cooler than normal for March. The month began with cold and stormy weather. Temperatures were about 20° below average. A number of locations failed to reach a high of 20° on the 1st or 2nd. A snow storm on the 1st brought widespread snow to most locations. Clark Fork received 7" of snow on the 1st while Hayden picked up 8". Another storm on the 2nd brought heavy snow to the mountains, with some locations in the Cascades and northern mountains receiving nearly 2 feet of snow. The following day saw more snow in the Idaho Panhandle, with a few inches falling in just a couple of hours.

But then the weather pattern changed significantly. Much warmer air moved into the area as temperatures warmed into the 50s and 60s, melting the newly fallen snow. Normally this would not have caused problems, but the ground was still frozen solid from our early December cold snap. As such, the rain and melted snow couldn't soak into the ground like it normally would. The result was flooding in areas that typically don't experience flood problems. The town of Colfax saw water running down their main street and into some businesses. Several roads were closed by the high water. The flooding was somewhat repeated in the middle of March as a widespread rain event moved through the area. A line of thunderstorms on the 14th blew down trees and power lines in the Spokane and Palouse area. Quieter weather took over for the 2nd half of the month. Republic did pick up 6" of snow on the night of the 26th.

The quiet weather pattern continued into the month of **April**. Temperatures on the 8th warmed into the 70s in many locations, with even a few readings in the lower 80s. Wetter weather returned to the area on the 17th of April as a wet cold front moved through the region. A similar front brought more rain on the 24th. The month ended on a warm note with temperatures in the 70s to mid-80s. But with the lack of thunderstorms, wind storms, or lowland snow, the weather for April was decidedly tranquil.

May saw little change to this somewhat boring weather pattern. The month started on a warm note with temperatures 10° to 15° above normal. The 85° temperature in Wenatchee on the 2nd was a record for that date. A wet and windy cold front brought much needed rain to the area on the 9th. Most areas received a quarter to a half inch of rain, but the Deer Park area picked up nearly ¾" of precipitation. Warm weather returned a few days later as many locations saw their first 80° day of the spring on the 15th. Melting snow from this warmth caused a few rivers to rise to flood stage, including the Okanogan River. Temperatures returned to more normal readings as a cold front brought more rain to the region. But this was short-lived as year another warm spell arrived by the 23rd. As the month finished out, it was clear that nearly all of the precipitation surplus of February and March was offset by a dry April and May. Some areas in central Washington had received less that 50% of their normal precipitation for the winter and spring. ☼ *Ron Miller*

Spring Weather Statistics

Wenatchee Water Plant	Mar	Apr	May	Total
Avg High Temp	53.6	64.2	75.3	64.4
Departure from Norm	-1.5	0.0	+2.4	+0.3
Avg Low Temp	32.5	40.3	50.4	41.1
Departure from Norm	-1.8	-0.4	+1.6	-0.2
Total Precip	0.78	0.17	0.22	1.17
Departure from Norm	+0.17	-0.36	-0.47	-0.66
Total Snowfall	0.7	0.0	0.0	0.7
Departure from Norm	+0.3	0.0	0.0	+0.3
Lewiston Airport	**Mar**	**Apr**	**May**	**Total**
Avg High Temp	55.3	62.6	74.8	64.2
Departure from Norm	+0.4	+0.3	+3.9	+1.5
Avg Low Temp	35.7	39.9	48.2	41.3
Departure from Norm	+0.1	-0.4	+1.3	+0.3
Total Precip	1.35	1.00	0.52	2.87
Departure from Norm	+0.20	-0.32	-1.09	-1.21
Total Snowfall	0.6	0.0	0.0	0.6
Departure from Norm	+0.1	0.0	0.0	+0.1
Spokane Airport	**Mar**	**Apr**	**May**	**Total**
Avg High Temp	48.5	57.5	69.2	58.4
Departure from Norm	-0.4	+0.3	+2.8	+0.9
Avg Low Temp	30.7	36.2	46.2	37.7
Departure from Norm	-0.9	-0.6	+2.4	+0.3
Total Precip	2.88	1.14	0.56	4.58
Departure from Norm	+1.27	-0.14	-1.06	+0.07
Total snowfall	5.8	T	0.0	5.8
Departure from Norm	+2.3	-1.0	-0.1	+1.2

High water in Kootenai Co. closing Prairie Ave—3/11/2014

Spotter News

The staff at NWS Spokane has been busy with spotter training in the last several weeks, including seminars in Moscow, Pomeroy, St. Maries, Coeur d'Alene, Spokane and Newport. Over 65 weather spotters have been newly trained or recertified. This pushes our weather spotter count to well over 1000 across eastern Washington and north Idaho.

If you are interested in attending a weather spotter seminar in your area, please let us know and we will try to set one up. If not, remember you can receive free training online. Check out the MetEd site for additional training at https://www.meted.ucar.edu/training_course.php?id=23.

We appreciate your spotter reports. Feel free to send us your reports any time of the day or night. ☼ *Robin Fox*

Downed tree in Spokane due to thunderstorm winds—3/14/14

Coop Corner

Recognizing 50 years of service to America, the National Weather Service presented 50 Year Honored Institution Awards to the **City of St. John** and the **City of Wenatchee** in Washington. The Waste Water Treatment Plant staff of each station have taken an unbroken string of daily weather observations since July of 1963. The National Weather Service extends it's sincere thanks and gratitude to these volunteers for the valuable data they provide. ☼ *Mark Turner*

City of St. John (SJNW1) Roger Bly—observer

City of Wentachee (WENW1) Katie Lander—observer, Frank Kuntz—Mayer, Mark Turner—NWS

Answer: Estimated to be 54,000°F or 6x hotter than the sun!

Haboob on Highway 17 near Othello, WA—9/15/2013

What is a Haboob?

There are plenty of very interesting and fascinating weather terms and phenomena. For example, how about haboob? A haboob is an intense wind and dust storm that is created by strong outflow winds from thunderstorms. All thunderstorms produce gusty winds, but for a haboob to develop, the storm needs access to dirt and sand from a dry land or desert area. We have seen a couple of these events each year, especially across the Columbia Basin, where dry land farming is plentiful.

Haboobs are a danger to motorists, since visibilities can drop to near zero in a matter of seconds due to the blowing dust. Also the wind gusts with a haboob can damage trees and power lines. The term haboob comes from the Middle East and is derived from the Arabic word habb, which mean wind. ☼ *Robin Fox*

Coop Weather Stats

	St. John	Wenatchee
Highest Temp	107 (7/22/1994)	110 (7/18/1941)
Lowest Temp	-28 (1/6/1982)	-19 (12/30/1968)
Wettest Day	1.62 (7/7/1978)	2.72 (8/18/1975)
Snowiest Day	12.0 (12/18/2008)	17.7 (12/9/1971)

Want to report precipitation? Check out CoCoRaHS at www.cocorahs.org

Remember your Summer Spotter Checklist

Tornado or **Funnel Cloud**

Hail: pea size or larger

Strong Winds:
30mph+ or damage

Reduced Visibility:
under a mile due to dust, rain...

Heavy Rain:
Showery: 1/2" + in 1 hr
Steady Rain: 1"+ in 12 hrs
or 1.5"+ in 24 hrs

Any Flooding

Travel Problems or
Any Damage: due to severe or hazardous weather.

Lightning Safety!

Summer is the peak season for one of the nation's deadliest weather phenomena—lightning! The 30 year national average of lightning deaths is 51 per year; it's based on the 1984-2013 period. Over the last 8 years, the total number of lightning deaths has been substantially reduced. In fact in 2013, there were only 23 known lightning deaths, less than half of normal. Only about 10% of people who are struck by lightning are killed, leaving 90% with various degrees of disability. Knowing and understanding how to be safe during a thunderstorm is key.

Many lightning victims say they were "caught" outside in the storm and couldn't get to a safe place. It's important to have a plan in mind before a storm hits. Others say they waited too long before finding shelter. If they headed to shelter 5-10 minutes sooner, they could have been safe. Some say they were struck because they went back outside too soon. Stay inside for at least 30 minutes after you hear the last thunder clap.

Lightning is a serious danger. Remember, stay safe when you hear thunder and see lightning. Don't be the tallest object around. Go indoors or inside a vehicle. Avoid open fields or open water. Stay clear of tall isolated trees or poles. If caught outside, never lie flat on the ground or use a rocky cliff for shelter. For more on lightning safety, see http://www.lightningsafety.noaa.gov/. ☼ *Robin Fox*

SAVE the DATE
NWS Open House

Saturday
September 20th

Watch : Conditions are favorable for severe or hazardous weather around the watch area.
CAUTION—Watch the Sky!

Warning : Severe or hazardous weather is likely or is occurring in the warned area.
DANGER—ACT NOW!

The Weather Watcher
Of the Inland Northwest

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Trivia: How hot is lightning?