

Montana Drought/Precipitation Summary

January 2006 By NOAA's National Weather Service Great Falls Montana

January 2006 continued the warm pattern with strong westerly flow that started in December. Many record high temperatures were set throughout the month. Fort Benton warmed to 69°F on the 25th, for the state's highest temperature. The strong westerly flow brought continued heavy snowfall to mountain locations. Higher elevations over northwest and southwest Montana accumulated over 3 feet of snow in the first 10 days of the month. Snow depths were over 8 feet at some locations by the 10th, with near 100 inches common at higher elevations of western and southwestern Montana. West Yellowstone recorded the lowest temperature at -19° on the 16th. Logan Pass recorded the peak wind gust at 94 mph on the 11th. On the 10th, Livingston had a peak gust of 84 mph - with an average daily wind speed of 43.6 mph! Several trucks were blown over during these strong winds.

Some highlights for January include that it was one of the warmest on record across the state. Several locations did record their warmest January of record. Temperatures were from 5 to 20 degrees above normal. This was the warmest January on record in the state (since 1866) with an average temperature of 33.4°F. This edged out 1986 (average 30.1°F) and 1981 (28.5°F). Winds also returned. It was the windiest Januarys since 1990. Precipitation was variable in amount. Higher elevations in the west received very heavy snowfall, while plains locations and mountain valleys east of the divide were much below average. Preliminary numbers show Flattop Mountain with 20.40" of water equivalent for the month. If this number holds, this would be a new January monthly precipitation record. The old January record was set at Black Bear in 1997, at 18.60". January at Miles City and Billings were among the 10 driest Januarys of record. Statewide, it was the 40th wettest, with an average of 0.97". Also, the water year is now the 8th wettest of record, and the wettest through January since 1997.

**Historical Rank of Precipitation (inches)
for the Current Month and Water Year to Date**

Location	Jan	% of Norm	Rank	Pcntl	Oct 1 – Jan 31	% of norm	Rank	Pcntl	Years
Baker	0.09	48%			2.45	114%			8
Billings	0.05	6%	7	7	3.85	110%	78	80	97
Belgrade	0.44	73%	27	41	4.17	135%	56	86	65
Butte	0.48	91%	56	50	3.21	131%	79	71	112
Cut Bank	0.05	13%	13	13	1.01	63%	32	32	99
Dillon	0.19	73%	28	42	2.08	140%	51	77	66
Glasgow	0.30	86%	47	43	1.85	102%	49	45	108
Great Falls	0.71	104%	69	61	3.38	118%	80	70	114
Havre	0.32	68%	49	39	2.42	118%	78	62	126
Helena	0.22	42%	23	18	2.56	121%	69	54	128
Jordan	0.31	127%			2.75	157%			9
Kalispell	2.29	156%	99	77	6.24	113%	27	21	128
Lewistown	0.30	34%	13	12	4.01	114%	80	73	110
Livingston	0.53	98%	60	57	4.12	115%	85	83	103
Miles City	0.03	6%	2	2	3.04	117%	96	74	129
Missoula	1.23	116%	84	65	5.47	137%	100	79	126
Mullan Pass	11.07	338%	60	94	23.93	156%	53	82	65
Wolf Point	0.18	82%			1.16	76%			8
Glendive	0.22	55%	35	32	4.02	177%	101	94	107
Sidney	0.21	51%	20	30	3.53	138%	58	89	65
BZN-MSU	1.11	132%	97	75	7.12	164%	120	94	127

Rankings and Percentiles are 1=driest, higher numbers=wetter.

For an automated version of this chart, updated daily, go to <http://www.wrh.noaa.gov/tx/dx.php?wfo=tx&type=&loc=products&fx=PCPNTOTALS>

For a state map of % of normal water year precipitation (updated around the 7th of each month), go to:
http://www.wrh.noaa.gov/tfx/image.php?wfo=tfx&type=data&loc=hydro&fx=watyr_pcbtnorm.png

For the latest information on mountain snow pack from the NRCS, go to:
<http://www.mt.nrcs.usda.gov/snow/index.html>

For the latest U.S. Drought Monitor, issued weekly by the Climate Prediction Center (CPC), go to:
<http://www.drought.unl.edu/dm/monitor.html>

All reported data is preliminary. Further inquiries about the moisture conditions can be directed to Dave Bernhardt or Gina Loss at (406) 453-2081. Many more links can be found on the Drought Information Page of the NWS Great Falls web site at
<http://www.wrh.noaa.gov/tfx/main/drought.php?wfo=tfx>