

Montana Drought/Precipitation Summary

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

February brought a change in weather to most of Montana. Temperatures were cooler than average over the west, but remained above normal over the east. The month had more cool air intrusions. The coldest air with the highest pressure to visit Montana since 1989 brought a low of -54°F to Gates Park on the 17th and -50°F at Elk Park on the 18th. Though the upper level flow switched from westerly to more northwesterly by mid-month, precipitation was on the light side at most lower elevation points. The Bridger Mountains picked up over 30 inches of snow on the 20th and 21st. Snow pack remained at high values at the higher elevations throughout the month. The early part of the month continued the warmth that the state experienced in January. A warm period early in the month brought 65°F to Huntley on the 9th. After the coldest period in mid month, a period of more normal, changeable conditions prevailed to month's end. During this cold period, ice jams formed on some southwest rivers, which brought river stages to near flood stage for a few days. Not until the last few days of the month did very warm air return. High temperatures in the lower 70s were observed in southeastern Montana. Huntley rose to 73°F on the 28th for the warmest of the month. Logan Pass recorded a peak wind gust of 106 mph on the 23rd. A windy period earlier in the month produced a peak gust of 89 mph at Choteau on the 1st. Average winds for the month tapered off a bit from January. Even so, it was the windiest February since 1999 at many locations. The month's temperature range of 127°F was the widest monthly range since February 1988. Rare February thunderstorms moved across western Montana on the 28th. A thunderstorm gust of 67 mph was recorded near Helena.

Temperatures averaged from 4 degrees below normal in the southwest to 2 degrees above normal in the northeast and Helena area. Precipitation was generally below normal. Other than high elevations of the southwest, the northeast and northwest were above normal for the month. Bozeman saw their driest February of record, Butte and Dillon all ranked among the 5 driest Februaries of record. Glasgow had one of their wettest Februaries of record. For the water year, all but the area along the northern Rocky Mountain Front remained near to above normal.

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

Location	Feb	% of Norm	Rank	Pcntl	Oct 1 – Feb 28	% of norm	Rank	Pcntl	Years
Baker	0.14	44%			2.59	105%			8
Billings	0.11	19%	12	12	3.96	97%	71	73	97
Belgrade	0.08	15%	1	2	4.25	117%	50	77	65
Butte	0.16	34%	18	16	3.37	115%	73	65	112
Cut Bank	0.16	57%	34	34	1.17	62%	28	28	99
Dillon	0.01	5%	5	7	2.09	124%	46	70	66
Glasgow	0.97	373%	103	94	2.82	136%	79	74	107
Great Falls	0.44	86%	52	46	3.82	113%	73	64	114
Havre	0.36	100%	65	51	2.78	115%	74	59	126
Helena	0.24	63%	38	29	2.80	112%	52	41	128
Jordan	0.28	80%			3.03	144%			7
Kalispell	1.21	105%	80	62	7.45	112%	16	13	128
Lewistown	0.48	84%	42	38	4.49	110%	75	68	110
Livingston	0.46	66%	60	57	4.58	107%	83	81	103
Miles City	0.26	76%	42	33	3.30	112%	87	67	129
Missoula	0.37	48%	31	24	5.84	122%	91	72	126
Mullan Pass	4.28	117%	41	64	28.21	148%	53	82	65
Wolf Point	0.33	283%			1.49	90%			8
Glendive	0.10	27%	20	18	4.12	156%	99	93	107
Sidney	0.55	153%	57	85	4.08	141%	60	92	65
BZN-MSU	0.13	19%	5	4	7.25	144%	116	91	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/tfx/dx.php?wfo=tfx&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_pcntnorm.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>