



Weekly Weather and Crop Bulletin

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National Weather Summary December 5 - 11, 2010

Highlights: A late-week storm blanketed the upper Midwest with heavy snow and produced widespread, generally light precipitation elsewhere from the Mississippi Valley to the East Coast. By week's end, bitterly cold weather and 1- to 2-foot snow depths curtailed travel and stressed livestock in the upper Mississippi Valley. Meanwhile, a substantial snow cover continued to protect winter grains from weather extremes across the northern Plains and the Northwest. Additional precipitation fell during the week in the latter region. In contrast, developing drought and rapid temperature fluctuations maintained stress on the poorly established portion of the winter wheat crop on the Central and Southern Plains. Dry weather also continued in the Southwest, consistent with an evolving La Niña. In Arizona, cotton harvesting and other late-season fieldwork advanced under a mild, dry weather regime. Elsewhere, a period of cold, dry weather preceded late-week precipitation in the Southeast, while wind-driven snow squalls plagued areas downwind of the Great Lakes. In fact, very cold conditions dominated northern Plains and areas from the Mississippi Valley to the East Coast. Weekly temperatures averaged more than 15 degrees F below normal in parts of the Southeast. Freezes struck parts of Florida's peninsula on December 7-8, sparing citrus but requiring protective measures for some fruit and vegetable crops. The cold weather caused local damage to tender vegetables, including beans and sweet corn, in the northern Everglades.

Early in the week, light snow spread from the Ohio Valley into the southern Mid-Atlantic States. On December 5, Elizabeth City, NC (0.2 inch), received a daily-record snowfall. Meanwhile, major snow squalls developed downwind of the Great Lakes, with local totals in excess of 4 feet noted near Lakes Erie and Ontario. Syracuse, NY, received 45.1 inches of snow from December 5-9, including daily-record amounts on December 6, 7, and 8 (12.2, 9.3, and 14.9 inches, respectively). During the second half of the week, heavy precipitation returned to the Northwest, while a major winter storm unfolded across the upper Midwest. Northwestern daily-record totals included 1.42 inches (on December 9) in Portland, OR, and 2.17 inches (on December 11) in Quillayute, WA. During the 7-day period from December 6-12, Quillayute received 9.23 inches of rain. Farther east, Williston, ND (14.3 inches), reported a daily-record snowfall for December 10. The following day, Rochester, MN (15.0 inches), experienced its snowiest December day on record. Rochester's previous mark of 10.3 inches was established on December 25, 1955. Other daily-record snowfall amounts for December 11 included 16.3 inches in Minneapolis-St. Paul, MN; 13.9 inches in La Crosse, WI; 7.6 inches in Sioux Falls, SD; and 5.9 inches in Yakima, WA. On December 10-11, Minneapolis-St. Paul set a 2-day snowfall record for December with 17.1 inches (previously, 16.5 inches on December 27-28, 1982). With 16.0 inches on December 10-11, Rochester, MN, experienced its snowiest 2-day period since March 18-19, 2005, when 20.1 inches fell. Blizzard conditions accompanied the storm in the western Corn Belt, where Sioux Falls clocked a northerly wind gust to 53 mph.

Very cold air settled across the Southeast for much of the week. Greenwood, MS (20 degrees F), posted a daily-record low for December 6. The following day in Florida, daily-record lows for December 7 included 31 degrees F in Vero Beach and 36 degrees F in West Palm Beach. In the northern Everglades, Belle Glade, FL (30 degrees F on December 7), tied a record for its earliest sub-freezing temperature on record (previously, 31 degrees F on December 7, 1937). The record-setting chill persisted in Florida through December 8, when lows dipped to 21 degrees F in Tallahassee and 31 degrees F in Orlando and Melbourne. Farther north, Southeastern daily-record lows for December 8 dipped to 9 degrees F in Lynchburg, VA; 13 degrees F in Florence, SC; and 16 degrees F in Athens, GA. In a final flurry of records on December 9, lows included 5 degrees F in Beckley, WV; 16 degrees F in Anniston, AL; and 19 degrees F in Hattiesburg, MS. In contrast, consistent warmth prevailed in the Southwest, where Douglas, AZ, notched a daily-record high of 80 degrees F on December 6. Later in Texas, daily-record highs reached 73 degrees F (on December 10) in El Paso and 90 degrees F (on December 11) in McAllen.

Mild weather in southeastern Alaska contrasted with bitterly cold conditions (as much as 20 degrees F below normal) across interior sections of the State. Nome reported its first sub-zero reading of the season (-9 degrees F) on December 9, compared to the normal date of November 15. Temperatures remained below 0 degrees F for the entire week in Fairbanks, with a minimum reading of -30 degrees F on December 9. Farther south, periods of heavy rain affected Hawaii, which continued to gradually emerge from a serious drought. The most impressive rain fell across the western and central Hawaiian islands on December 9-10, when 24-hour totals topped 6 inches in several locations on Kauai. Kahului, Maui, netted a daily-record sum of 1.52 inches on December 10.

*National Weather Summary provided by USDA's World Agricultural Outlook Board.
For more information, call (202) 720-2397.*

Agricultural Summary December 6 – December 12, 2010

Highlights: Extreme cold temperatures plagued much of the eastern half of the country, with a heavy snow storm hitting the upper Midwest late in the week. Weekly temperatures averaged more than 15 degrees below normal in some areas of the Southeast. Meanwhile, dry weather prevailed in the Southwest.

Florida experienced drought and freezing temperatures during the week with temperatures 12 to 14 degrees below normal and lows in the 20s and 30s. According to the U.S. drought monitor as of December 7, 2010, drought conditions were present in all parts of the State with the most severe areas in the northeast portions of the State. Overall, conditions were extreme compared to the moisture conditions the prior year. The effect of the low temperatures on sugarcane was still being assessed. In the Panhandle, some wheat and oats were being planted. Statewide, cotton harvest was nearly complete by week's end. Farmers were protecting vegetable crops from the frost during the week. Highway truck restrictions in the State were eased to allow vulnerable vegetable crops to be transported quickly to processors.

Temperatures in Arizona were mostly above average and no precipitation was recorded during the week. Cotton harvest advanced to 80 percent complete, well behind both last year and the 5-year average. Alfalfa producers were busy cutting hay during the week, as harvest was active on over half of the State's acreage. Growers in both central and western portions of the State shipped a variety of vegetables, including broccoli, cabbage, cilantro, kale greens, cantaloupes, lettuce, and spinach.

In California, the start of the week saw widespread precipitation across the State. Cotton harvest was mostly complete, with some cotton fields being picked a second time before plow down. Harvested cotton fields continued to be shredded and disked to meet pink bollworm requirements. Winter wheat, oats, barley, and other winter forage crops continued to emerge due to good soil moisture levels. Rainfall continued to slow winter crop ground preparation and planting, with operators proceeding with field operations as conditions allowed. Pruning and other maintenance continued in orchards and vineyards as conditions allowed due to the ongoing wet weather.

Information Contacts

Listed below are the commodity statisticians in the Crops Branch of the National Agricultural Statistics Service to contact for additional information. E-mail inquiries may be sent to nass@nass.usda.gov

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