IOWA DNR
DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

WATER SUMMARY UPDATE

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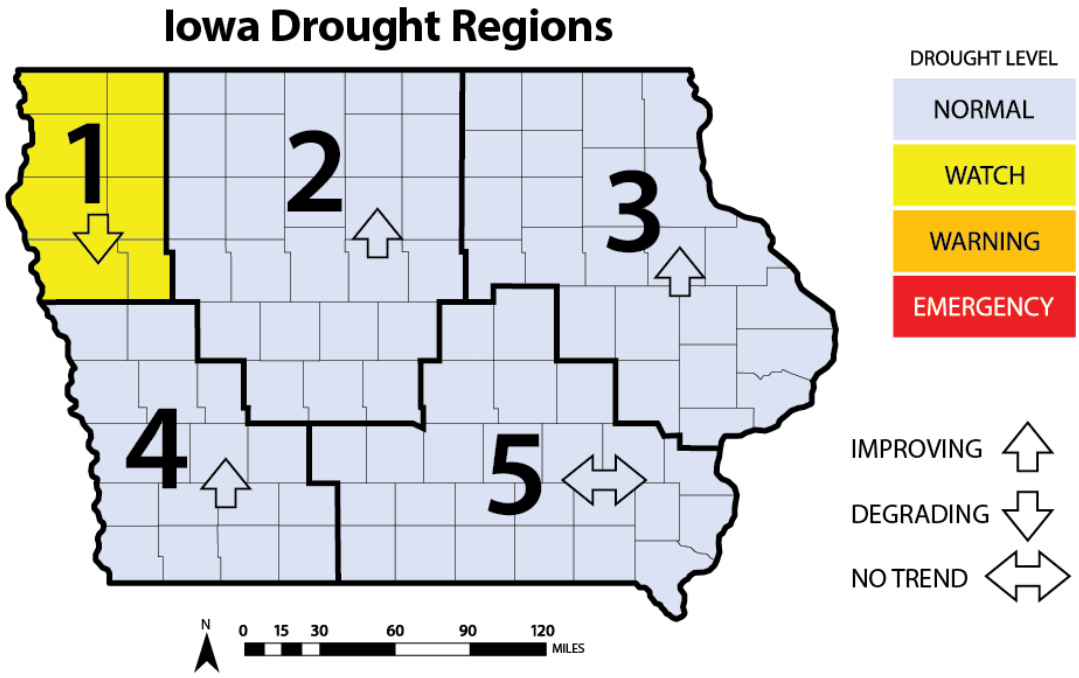
A snapshot of water resource trends for March 2026

IOWA DROUGHT CONDITIONS



CONDITION SUMMARY - MARCH PRECIPITATION BRINGS SOME RELIEF

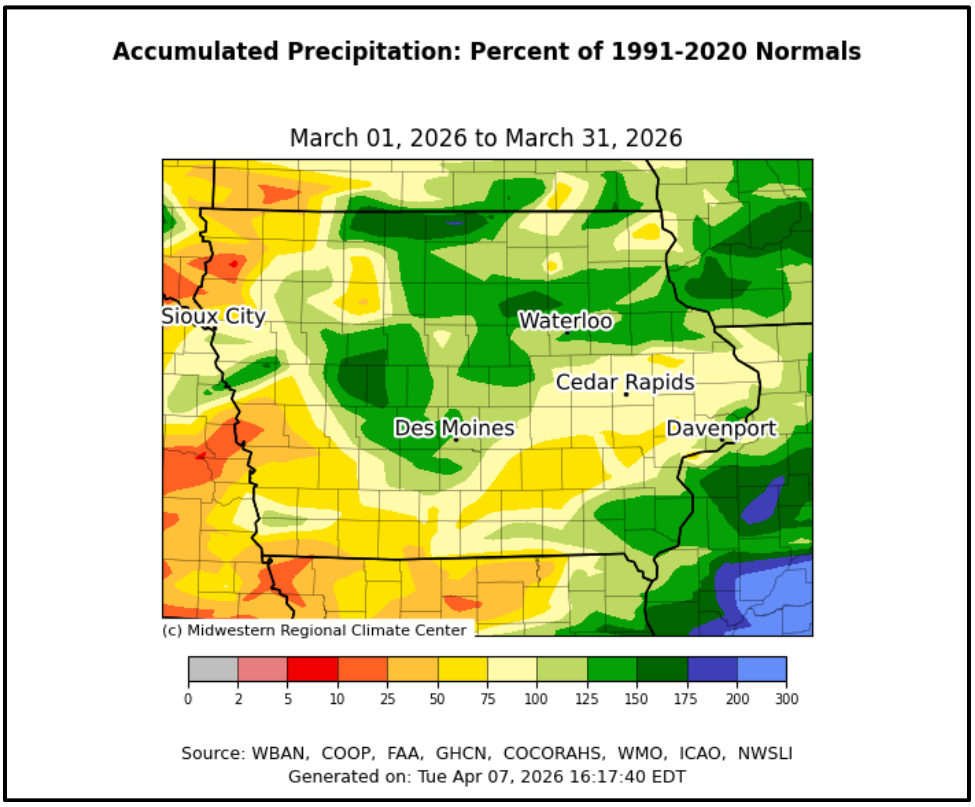
Recent rain in southeast Iowa has ended the drought watch for that area. However, the drought watch for the northwest part of the state remains as conditions continue to be dry. Roughly half of the state is now classified as D0 - Abnormally Dry classification or worse, mainly in southeastern, southwestern, and northwestern Iowa. Conditions in northwestern Iowa have deteriorated as D1 - Moderate Drought areas returned, and a pocket of D2 - Severe Drought has developed. The Climate Prediction Center's (CPC) Seasonal Drought Outlook suggests that the current area of drought in northwest Iowa will likely persist through June. However, the remainder of the state shows no signs of new drought development during this period. For April, the outlook points toward a wetter and milder month, with above-normal precipitation expected across Iowa and warmer-than-normal temperatures predicted statewide.

March Precipitation and Temperature

Iowa's statewide precipitation totaled 1.97 inches, or 0.02 inches below normal. This ranks as the 67th wettest/88th driest March in 154 years of statewide records. The western periphery, along with portions of southern and eastern Iowa, had precipitation deficits of over an inch. Much of the rest of Iowa saw near-normal to slightly wetter conditions. Monthly precipitation totals ranged from 0.37 inches at a Community Collaborative Rain, Hail and Snow (CoCoRaHS) network gauge in Le Mars to 3.96 inches at a CoCoRaHS gauge in Corydon.

The statewide average temperature was 42.6 degrees, 6.2 degrees above normal, tying 1921 as the 12th warmest March on record. Little Sioux reported the month's high temperature of 97 degrees on the 21st, 46 degrees above normal. This reading sets the new March statewide record high temperature, which was set on March 25th, 1907, in Clarinda and

Massena and tied on March 29, 1986, at Glenwood. Spencer Municipal Airport recorded the month's low temperature of -5 degrees on the 17th, 30 degrees below normal.



Standardized Precipitation Index (SPI)

The SPI is an index based on accumulated precipitation for various time scales. SPI is the most commonly used indicator worldwide for detecting and characterizing meteorological droughts. The SPI indicator measures precipitation differences based on a comparison of observed total precipitation amounts over the period of interest with the long-term historical precipitation record for that period. Droughts are characterized by negative SPI values, while positive SPI values indicate wet periods. The range of SPI values is between -3 and +3, denoting "extremely dry" to "extremely wet".

Ninety-day SPI values for all drought regions in March (comparing January, February, and March precipitation) range from 1.76 to -0.9, with four of the five values above zero. Drought Region 3 180-day SPI value had the largest increase, and most values remain below zero.

Drought Region	3-month SPI	6-month SPI	IDP Classification ↑ = improving ↓ = degrading ↔ = no trend
1	-0.1	-0.4	Watch ↓
2	1.7	0.7	Normal ↑
3	1.8	0.6	Normal ↑
4	0.4	-0.4	Normal ↑
5	0.5	-0.0	Normal ↔

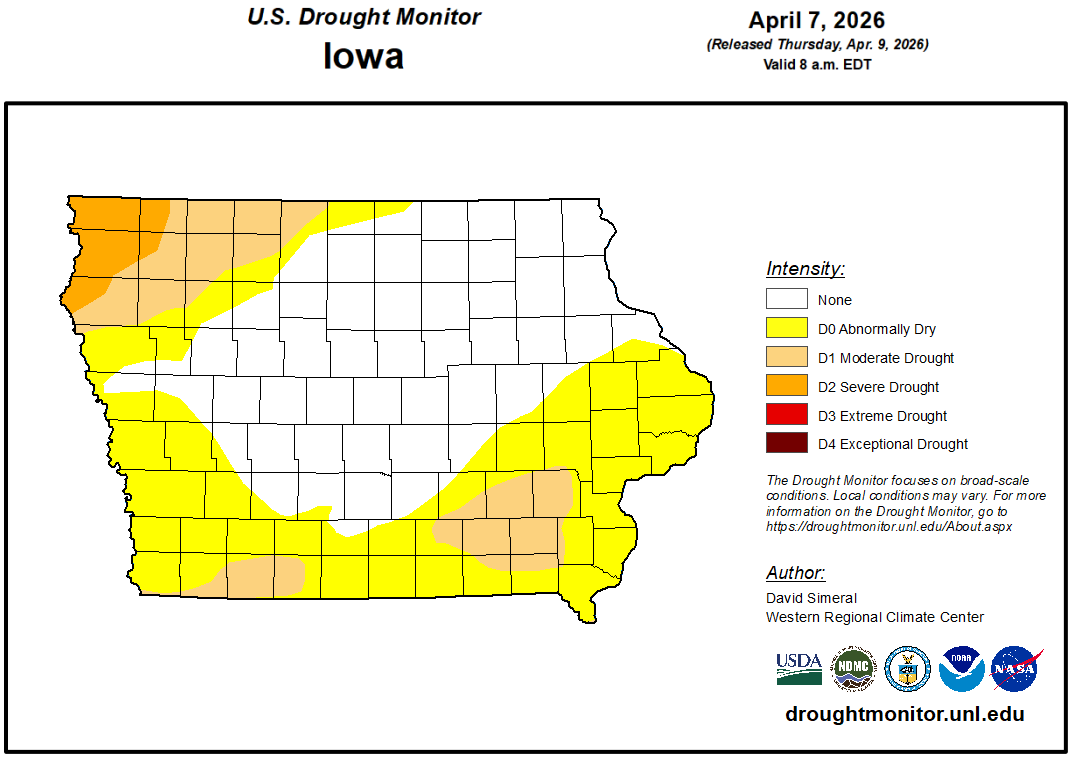
Standardized Streamflow Index (SSI) and Streamflow

SSI is a metric that compares current streamflow against the historical record to determine how far away the current streamflow value is from the river's historical mean observed on the same date. SSI values in four of the five drought regions have decreased, with Drought Region 1 having the largest 30-day SSI decrease in March compared to February. Drought Region 3 remained largely the same in 30-day SSI values relative to the previous month.

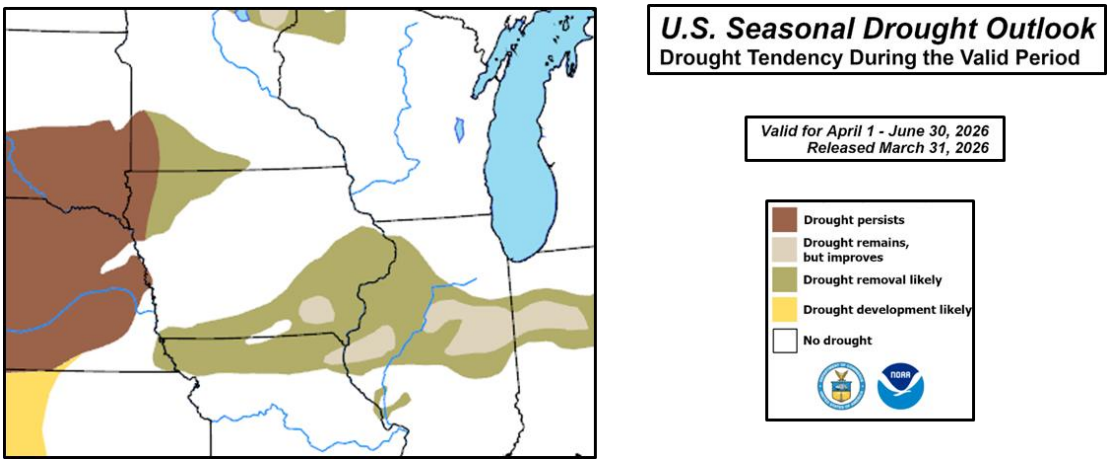
According to the US Geological Survey, in March, streamflow levels returned to largely normal and above normal conditions across much of Iowa. Currently, the Rock River in northwest Iowa is classified as below normal, and the Chariton River in southern Iowa is extremely below normal.

US Drought Monitor and Drought Conditions

The latest US Drought Monitor (USDM), released on April 9, shows continued declining conditions in northwest Iowa and improved conditions in the southeast. Throughout the winter months, much of the state experienced DO - Abnormally Dry and D1 - Moderate Drought conditions. Between early March and early April, conditions deteriorated as D2 - Severe Drought designations were introduced in southeastern and northwestern Iowa. Currently, just over half of the state is experiencing some level of dryness, and nearly 17 percent is designated as some level of drought.



The Seasonal Drought Outlook, released by the CPC on March 31, 2026, is valid through June 30, 2026, and indicates a drought-free or drought removal likelihood forecast for most of the state. The only exception is far northwestern Iowa, where existing drought conditions are expected to persist. While the Seasonal Precipitation and Temperature Outlook offers no clear signal for precipitation and a chance of above-normal temperatures across the state, the outlook for April indicates potential for above-normal precipitation and temperatures. The Seasonal Drought Outlook considers the impacts of recent precipitation as well as seasonal precipitation outlooks.



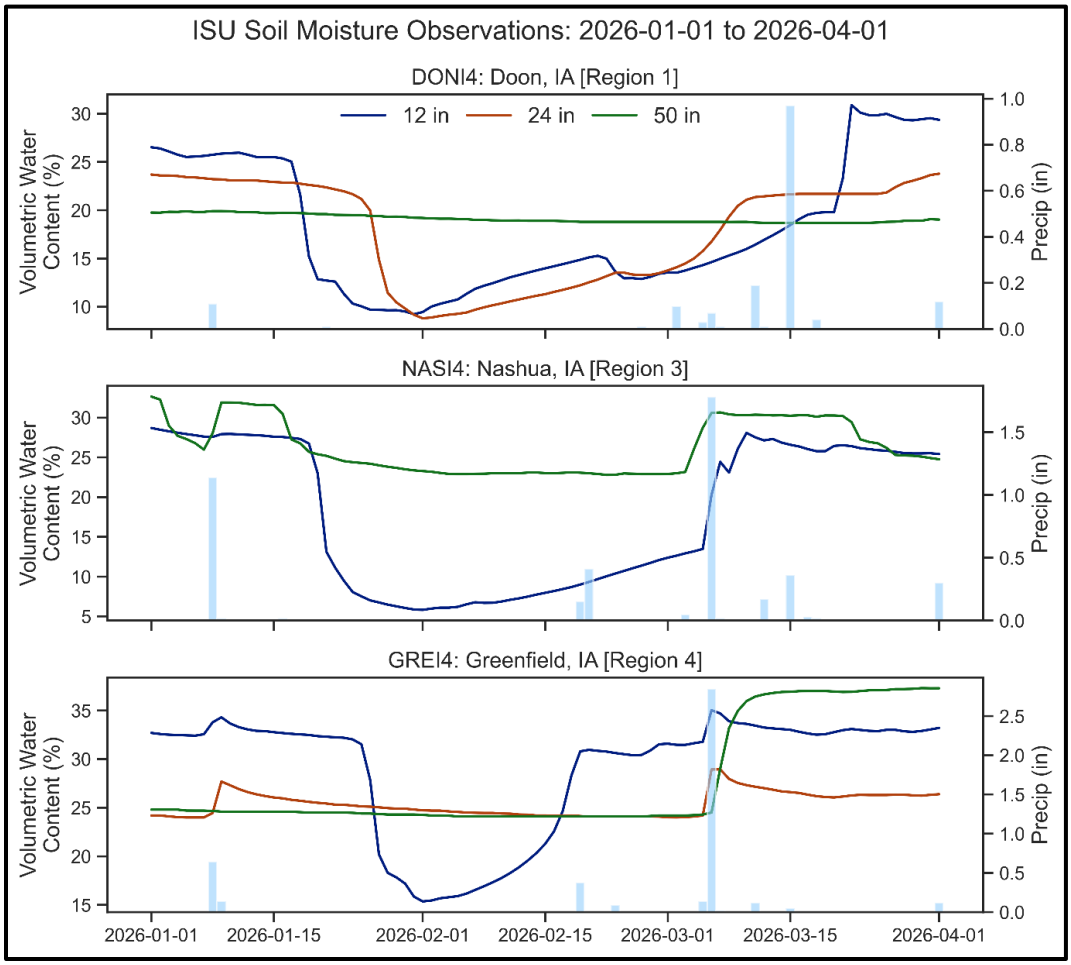
Other Water Resource Information

Border River Conditions

In their monthly update of Missouri River conditions dated April 6, 2026, the Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) indicates that the volume of water stored in the system of reservoirs is 49.5 Million Acre-Feet (MAF), which is nearly the same volume as last month. The updated annual runoff forecast for the upper Missouri River Basin above Sioux City is 17.8 MAF or 69% of the average annual runoff. The mountain snowpack in the upper Missouri River Basin is accumulating below-average levels, having typically reached about 96% of its total accumulation by April 1st, which normally peaks in mid-April. “Runoff into the reservoir system was below average for the month of March and conditions across most of the basin remain dry,” said John Remus, chief of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers’ Missouri River Basin Water Management Division. “Mountain snowpack has decreased as well and is currently below the 30-year minimum accumulation. We are forecasting a below-average runoff year for the basin.”

March Soil Moisture

The saturation of the upper layer of soil is in average, between 50 and 60 percent in most of the state. Some areas in north central and south eastern Iowa currently show saturation values above 65 percent. At lower layers of soil, soil seems to be slightly more saturated than in the surface layer, with extensive areas of central Iowa showing 70 percent saturation. Drier areas with around 40 percent saturation show in northwestern, northeastern, and south-central Iowa.



Additional Information

This edition of the Water Summary Update continues to reflect use of the 2023 Iowa Drought Plan (IDP), which was developed as a collaborative effort between the Department of Natural Resources, the Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship, and the Department of Homeland Security and Emergency Management. The IDP can be seen in its entirety on the DNR’s website: The Iowa Drought Plan.

For additional information on the information in this Water Summary Update please contact any of the following:

General Information, Jessica Reese McIntyre, Iowa DNR.....Jessica.ReeseMcIntyre@dnr.iowa.gov, 515-725-9547
State Climatologist & Drought Coordinator, Justin Glisan, IDALS.....Justin.Glisan@iowaagriculture.gov, 515-281-8981
Standardized Streamflow Index (SSI), Elliot Anderson, IGS ..... elliot-anderson@uiowa.edu, 319-335-1575
Stream Flow, Padraic O'Shea, USGS ..... poshea@usgs.gov, 319-358-3653
Stream Flow, Mike Anderson, Iowa DNR..... Michael.Anderson@dnr.iowa.gov, 515-725-0336
Soil Moisture, Filipe Quintero Duque, Iowa Flood Center.....felipe-quintero@uiowa.edu, 319-384-1727