IOWA DNR
DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

WATER SUMMARY UPDATE

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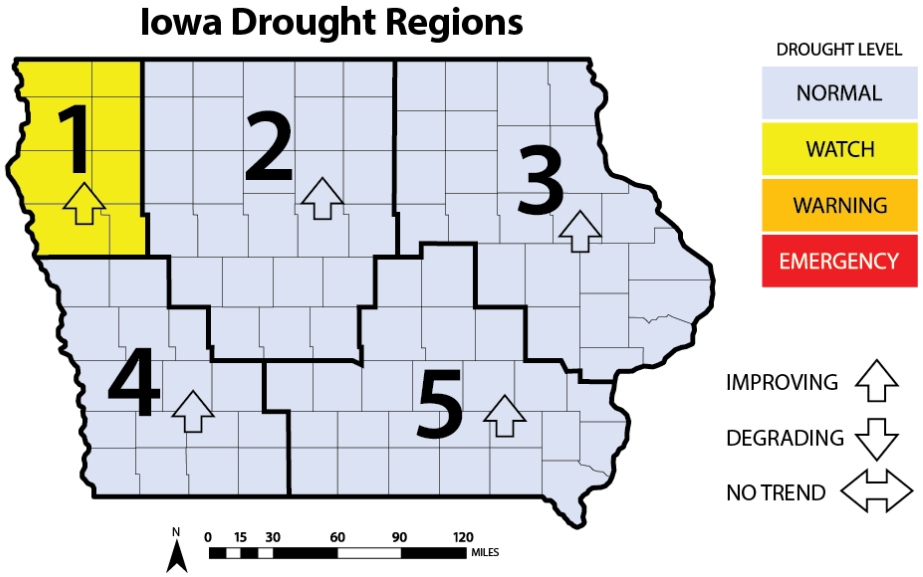
A snapshot of water resource trends for April 2026

IOWA DROUGHT CONDITIONS



CONDITION SUMMARY - CONTINUED RELIEF IN APRIL

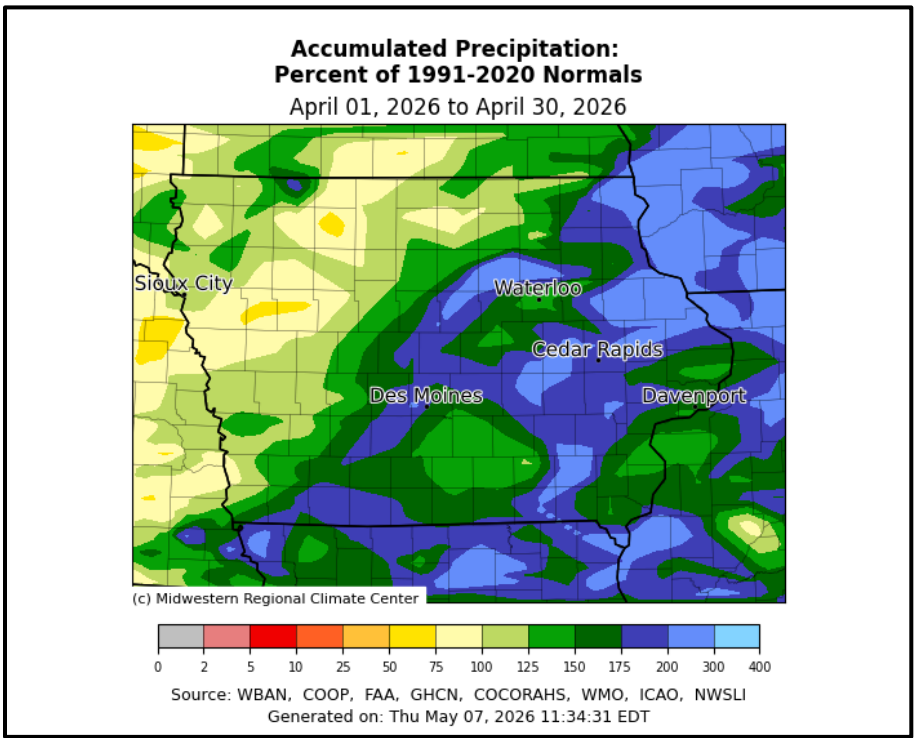
A particularly wet April brought improved conditions across the state. However, the drought watch for the northwest part of the state remains as conditions continue to be dry. Roughly 10 percent of the state is now classified as D0 - Abnormally Dry or worse, mainly in northwestern Iowa. Beginning in March, conditions in northwestern Iowa had deteriorated as D1 - Moderate Drought areas returned, and small areas of D2 - Severe Drought had developed. The Climate Prediction Center's (CPC) Seasonal Drought Outlook suggests that the current area of drought in northwest Iowa will likely persist through July. However, the remainder of the state shows no signs of new drought development during this period. For May, the outlook points toward a drier month, with below-normal precipitation expected across Iowa and typical temperatures predicted statewide.

April Precipitation and Temperature

Iowa's preliminary statewide precipitation totaled 5.66 inches, or 1.99 inches above normal. Compared to 154 years of statewide observations, April 2026 will preliminarily rank as the 6th wettest April on record. Most of Iowa's southeastern half reported at least five inches of precipitation through April, which was generally two to four inches above the 30-year climatological average. Only a swath of northwestern Iowa reported below normal precipitation. Precipitation totals ranged from 2.25 inches at Spencer Municipal Airport to 10.08 inches in Allison.

The preliminary statewide average temperature was 52.3 degrees, 3.7 degrees above normal, ranking around the 25th warmest on record. Temperatures for the month were above average statewide, with the warmest conditions over southern Iowa; portions of western Iowa were closer to normal, though still one to two degrees above average. Three stations reported the month's high temperature of 89 degrees on two dates - Lamoni reported this reading on the 15th, which was 26 degrees above normal. Mapleton and Sioux City Airport also registered these temperatures on the 21st, on

average, 26 degrees above normal. Estherville's National Weather Service station and Municipal Airport, along with Lake Park, reported the month's low temperature of 16 degrees on the 7th, on average 15 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 April (comparing February, March, and April precipitation) range from 1.5 to -0.3, with four of the five values above zero. Drought Regions 3 and 5 180-day SPI value had the largest increase, and most values remain above zero.

Drought Region	3-month SPI	6-month SPI	IDP Classification ↑ = improving ↓ = degrading ↔ = no trend
1	-0.3	-0.5	Watch ↑
2	0.7	0.7	Normal ↑
3	1.5	1.3	Normal ↑
4	0.4	0.1	Normal ↑
5	1.0	0.7	Normal ↑

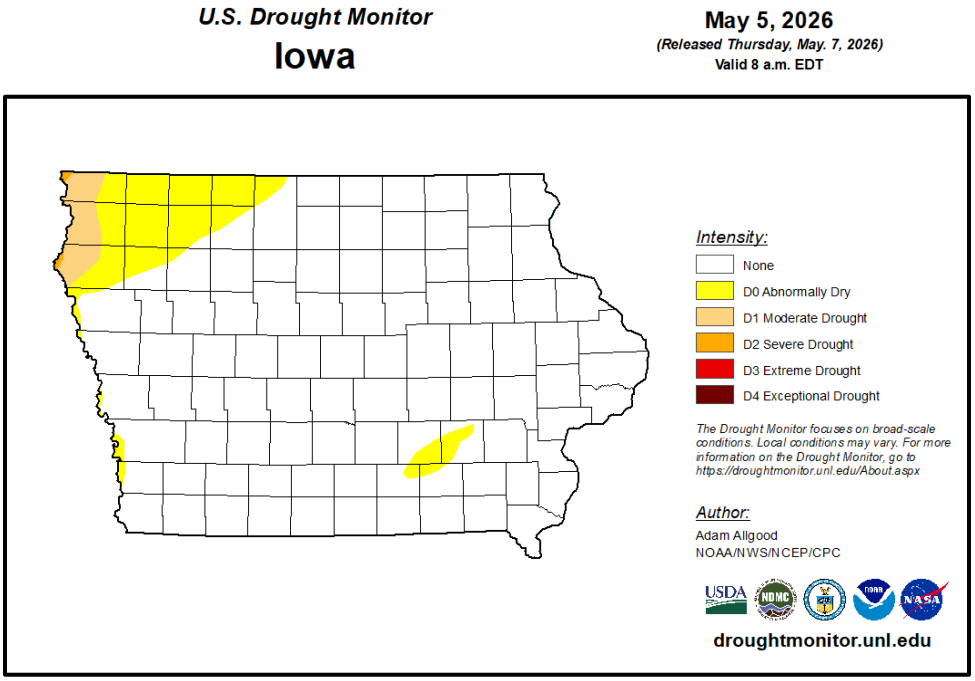
Standardized Streamflow Index (SSI) and Streamflow

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 all five drought regions have increased, with Drought Region 5 having the largest 30-day SSI increase in April compared to March. Drought Region 2 had the smallest increase in 30-day SSI values relative to the previous month.

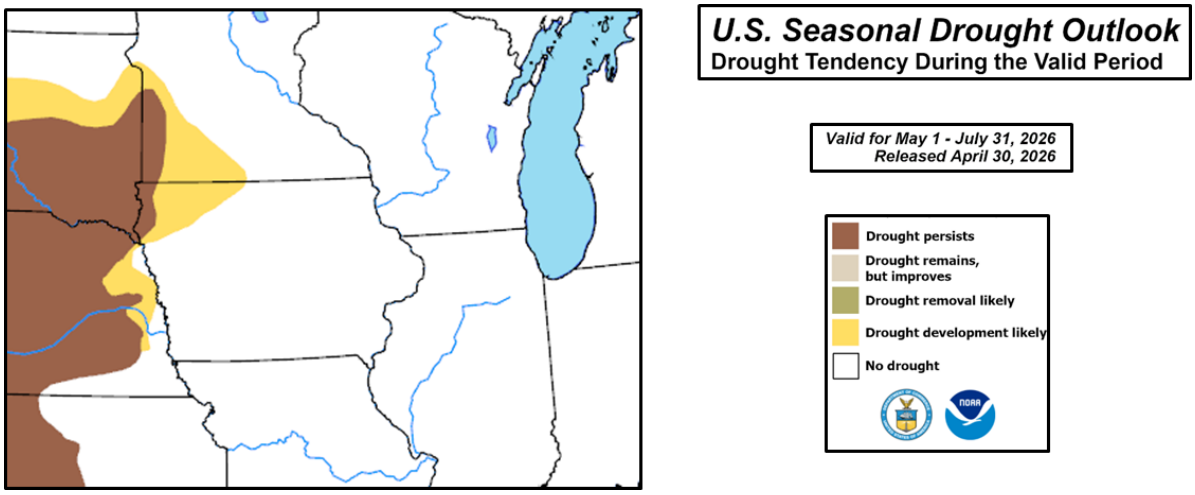
According to the US Geological Survey, in April, streamflow levels returned to largely normal and above normal conditions across much of Iowa. Currently, the number of gages in eastern and southern Iowa, and one in northwest Iowa, is classified as below normal. The Big Creek North gage near Mount Pleasant is much below, and the East Fork 102 River near Bedford in southern Iowa is extremely below normal.

US Drought Monitor and Drought Conditions

The latest US Drought Monitor (USDM), released on May 7, indicates a continuing trend of improvement across Iowa. While southeastern Iowa saw significant improvement in April, dry conditions are still lingering in the northwestern part of the state. Currently, just over 10 percent of the state is experiencing some level of dryness, and nearly 2 percent is designated as some level of drought.



The Seasonal Drought Outlook, released by the CPC on April 30, 2026, is valid through July 31, 2026, and indicates that most of Iowa is expected to remain drought-free or see existing drought conditions disappear through July 31, 2026. The notable exception is the far northwestern corner of the state, where current drought conditions are likely to persist or worsen. The Seasonal Precipitation and Temperature Outlook offers no clear signal for precipitation and a chance of above-normal temperatures across western and southern Iowa. The outlook for May indicates potential for below-normal precipitation and no clear signal for temperatures. The Seasonal Drought Outlook considers the impacts of recent precipitation as well as seasonal precipitation outlooks.



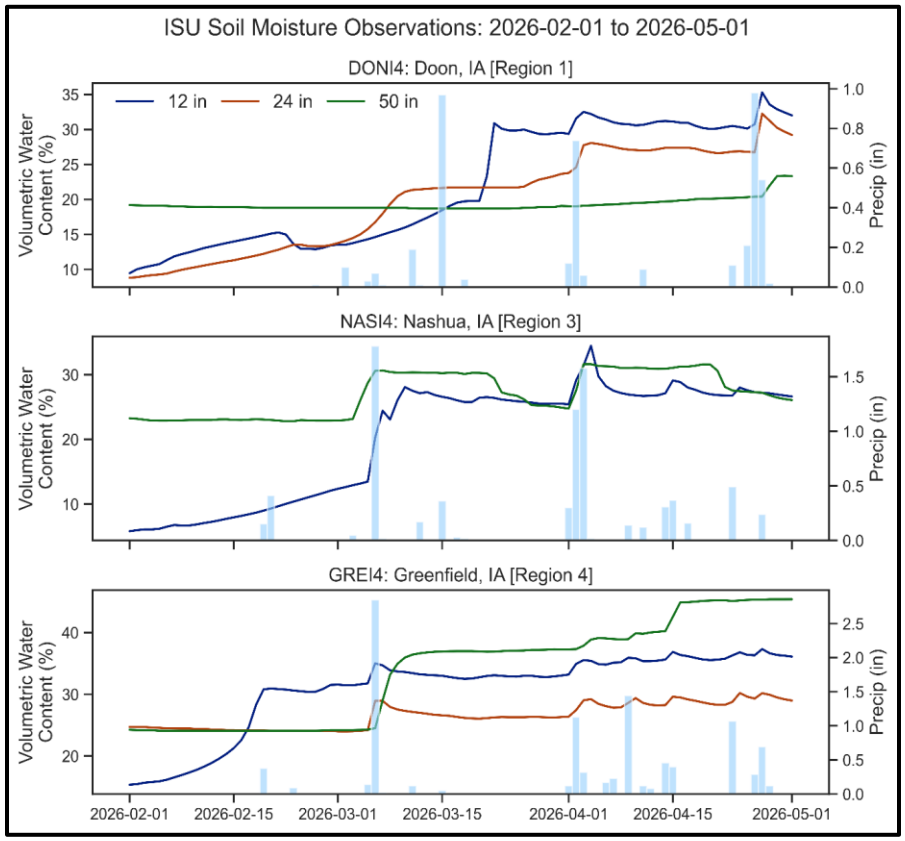
Other Water Resource Information

Border River Conditions

In their monthly update of Missouri River conditions dated May 6, 2026, the Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) indicates that the volume of water stored in the system of reservoirs is 49.2 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 17.1 MAF or 67% of the average annual runoff. The mountain snowpack was below normal and peaked approximately a month earlier than normal. “Runoff into the reservoir system was below average for the month of April due to lack of plains snowpack and precipitation,” said John Remus, chief of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers’ Missouri River Basin Water Management Division. “Dry conditions are present in 74% of the basin, and drought conditions are expected to persist through July with some expansion likely in Montana and South Dakota. As a result, the runoff forecast was lowered by 0.7 MAF from last month.”

April Soil Moisture

Precipitation during April increased the saturation of the upper layer of soil on average between 50% and 70% in most of the state, except in northwestern Iowa, which reported values below 50%. 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% saturation. Drier areas with around 40% saturation show in western and eastern 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.

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