IOWA DNR
DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

WATER SUMMARY UPDATE

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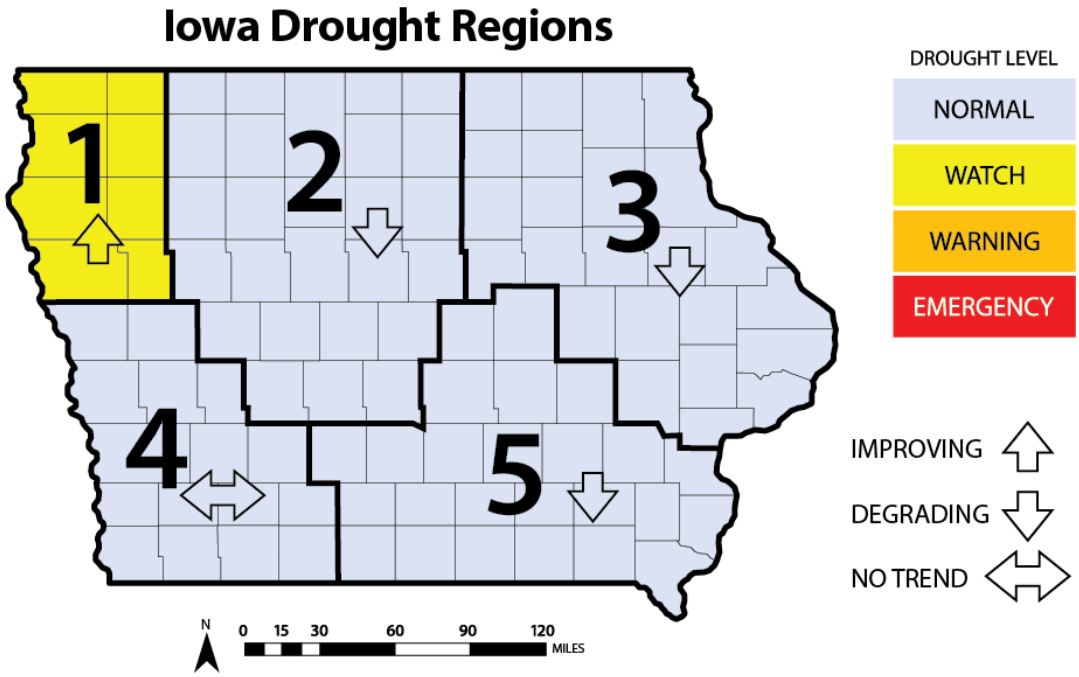
A snapshot of water resource trends for May 2026

IOWA DROUGHT CONDITIONS



CONDITION SUMMARY - DRY CONDITIONS EXPAND IN MAY

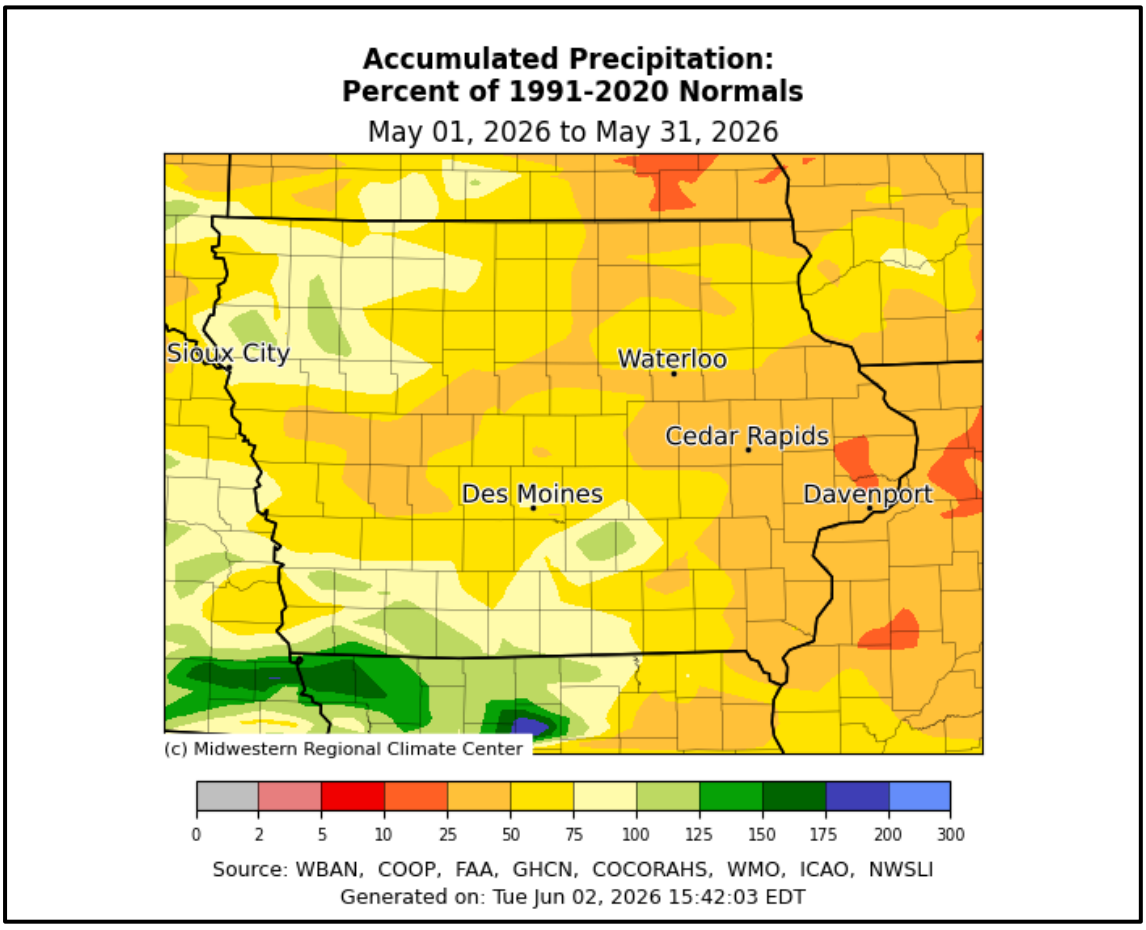
Dry conditions in late May resulted in degraded conditions across much of the state. The drought watch for the northwest part of the state remains as drought and dry conditions persist. Roughly three-quarters of the state is now classified as D0 - Abnormally Dry or worse, mainly in northern and eastern Iowa. While deteriorating spring conditions led to areas of D2 - Severe Drought in northwestern Iowa, recent rainfall has driven improved conditions, successfully eliminating the state's remaining D2 - Severe Drought pockets. The Climate Prediction Center's (CPC) Seasonal Drought Outlook suggests that the current area of drought in northwest Iowa will likely persist and new areas of drought will likely develop in northern and eastern Iowa through August. For June, the outlook points toward a warmer month with no clear signal for precipitation statewide.

May Precipitation and Temperature

Iowa's preliminary statewide precipitation totaled 2.78 inches, or 2.06 inches below normal. A vast majority of Iowa's National Weather Service co-op stations reported precipitation deficits during the month. The driest conditions were found across portions of eastern Iowa, where deficits were in the 3.00-to-4.00-inch range. Monthly precipitation totals ranged from 0.97 inches in Calamus to 12.60 inches in Mount Ayr.

The preliminary statewide average temperature was 60.9 degrees, 1.0 degrees above normal. Temperatures across Iowa were near to slightly above normal through the month, with the warmest conditions across central to northern Iowa. However, much of the state experienced near-normal temperatures.

Temperatures for the three spring months of March, April, and May averaged 52.1 degrees, 3.8 degrees above normal. Precipitation totaled 10.13 inches, or 0.37 inches 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 May (comparing March, April, and May precipitation) range from -0.7 to 0.8, with two of the five values above zero. Drought Regions 1 and 4 180-day SPI value had the largest increase, and the remaining values have dropped below zero.

Drought Region	3-month SPI	6-month SPI	IDP Classification ↑ = improving ↓ = degrading ↔ = no trend
1	0.1	-0.4	Watch ↑
2	0.3	0.1	Normal ↓
3	0.8	0.5	Normal ↓
4	0.7	0.3	Normal ↔
5	0.8	0.4	Normal ↓

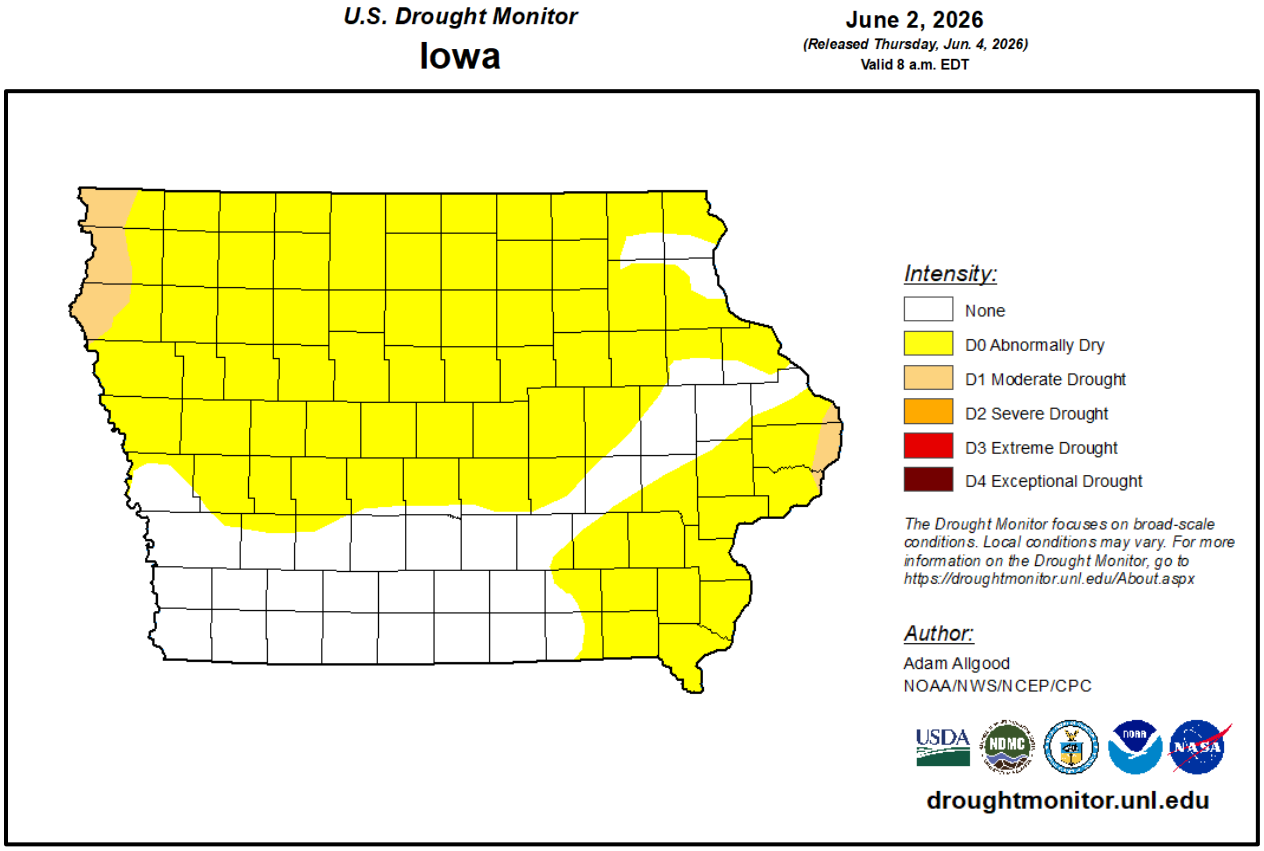
Standardized Streamflow Index (SSI) and Streamflow

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 3 having the largest 30-day SSI decrease in May compared to April. Drought Region 1 is the only region with an increase in 30-day SSI values relative to the previous month.

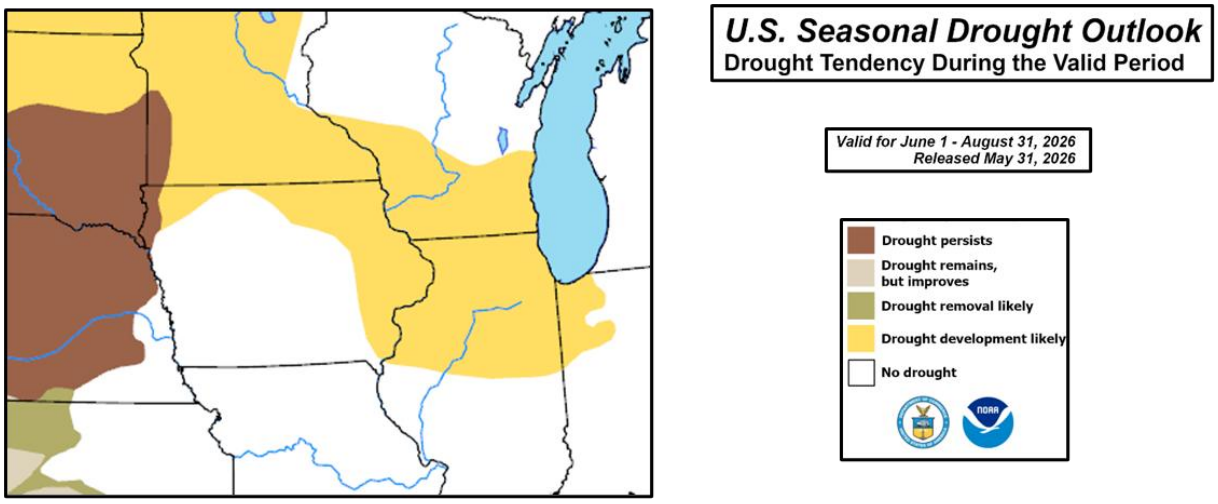
According to the US Geological Survey, in May, streamflow levels were largely classified as normal conditions across much of Iowa. Currently, the number of gages around Iowa are classified as extremely below, much below, and below normal. The Big Creek North gage near Mount Pleasant, the East Fork 102 River near Bedford in southern Iowa, and the Rock River below Tom Creek near Rock Rapids, IA are extremely below normal.

US Drought Monitor and Drought Conditions

The latest US Drought Monitor (USDM), released on June 4, indicates a degrading trend across much of Iowa. While the small areas of D2 - Severe Drought in northwest Iowa have been removed, much of the state is now under D0 - Abnormally Dry conditions. Additionally, the area of D1 - Moderate Drought have persisted in northwest Iowa and another area in the eastern part of the state has reemerged. Currently, just over 70 percent of the state is experiencing some level of dryness, and nearly 3 percent is designated as some level of drought.



The Seasonal Drought Outlook, released by the CPC on May 31, 2026, is valid through August 31, 2026, and indicates that much of Iowa is projected to remain drought-free through August. However, exceptions linger: existing drought in the far northwest is expected to persist, while new drought development is likely across northern and eastern portions of the state. The Seasonal Precipitation and Temperature Outlook offers no clear signal for temperatures across Iowa, and a chance for below normal precipitation in the northwest half of the state. The outlook for June indicates potential for above-normal temperatures and no clear signal for precipitation. The Seasonal Drought Outlook considers the impacts of recent precipitation as well as seasonal precipitation outlooks.



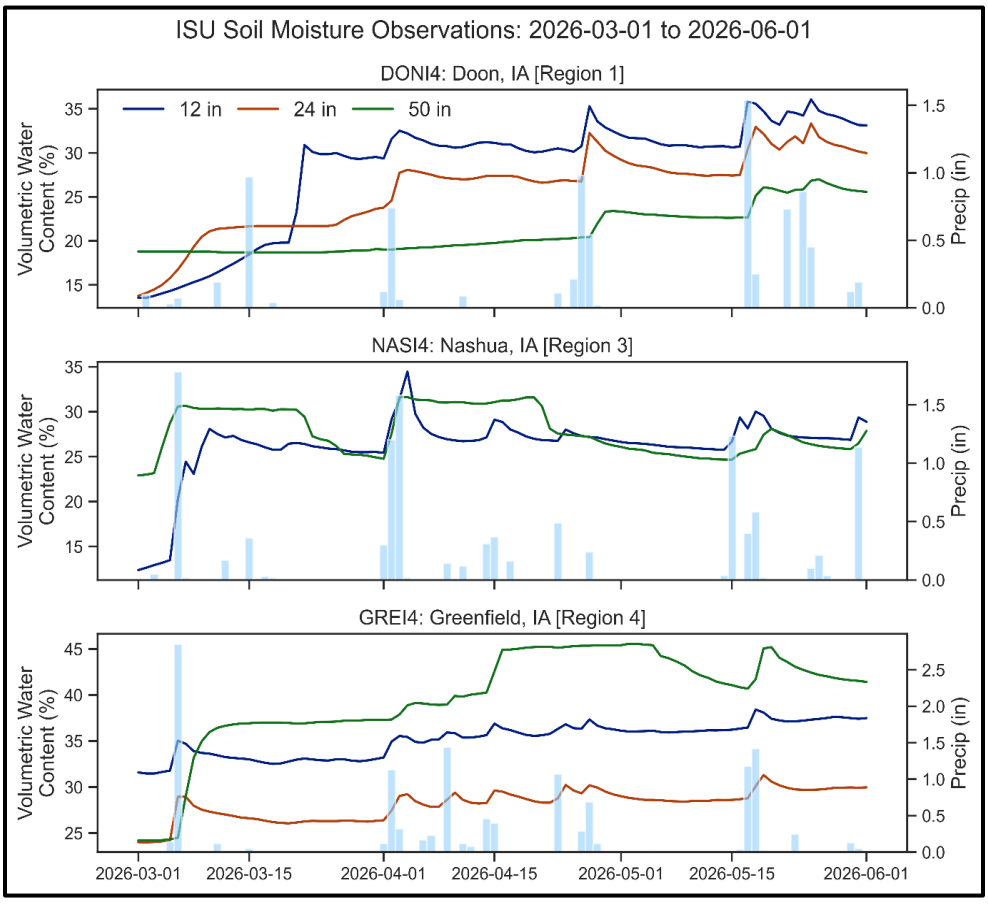
Other Water Resource Information

Border River Conditions

In their weekly update of Missouri River conditions dated May 26, 2026, the Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) indicates that the volume of water stored in the system of reservoirs is 48.8 Million Acre-Feet (MAF), which is nearly the same volume as last month. US Army Corps of Engineers reports that the mountain snowpack is still below average in both reaches, and the outlook expects warmer-than-normal temperatures for the Missouri River Basin for the next two weeks.

May Soil Moisture

Low precipitation during May reduced soil moisture across the state. The saturation of the upper layer of soil averages between 40% and 50%, with dry areas in eastern Iowa where saturation is around 20%. At lower layers of soil, average saturation ranges from 50 to 70 %. Drier areas are located in northwestern Iowa, with saturation around 30 to 40%.



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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