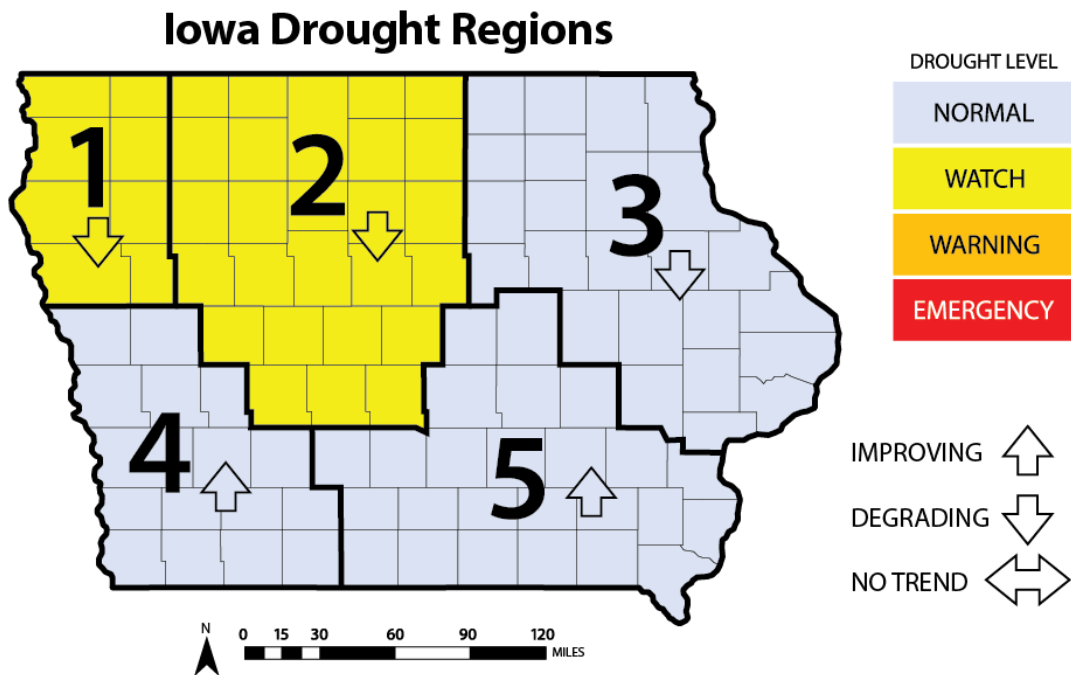


WATER SUMMARY UPDATE

Published Date September 10, 2026 | Issue 183

A snapshot of water resource trends for August 2026

IOWA DROUGHT CONDITIONS



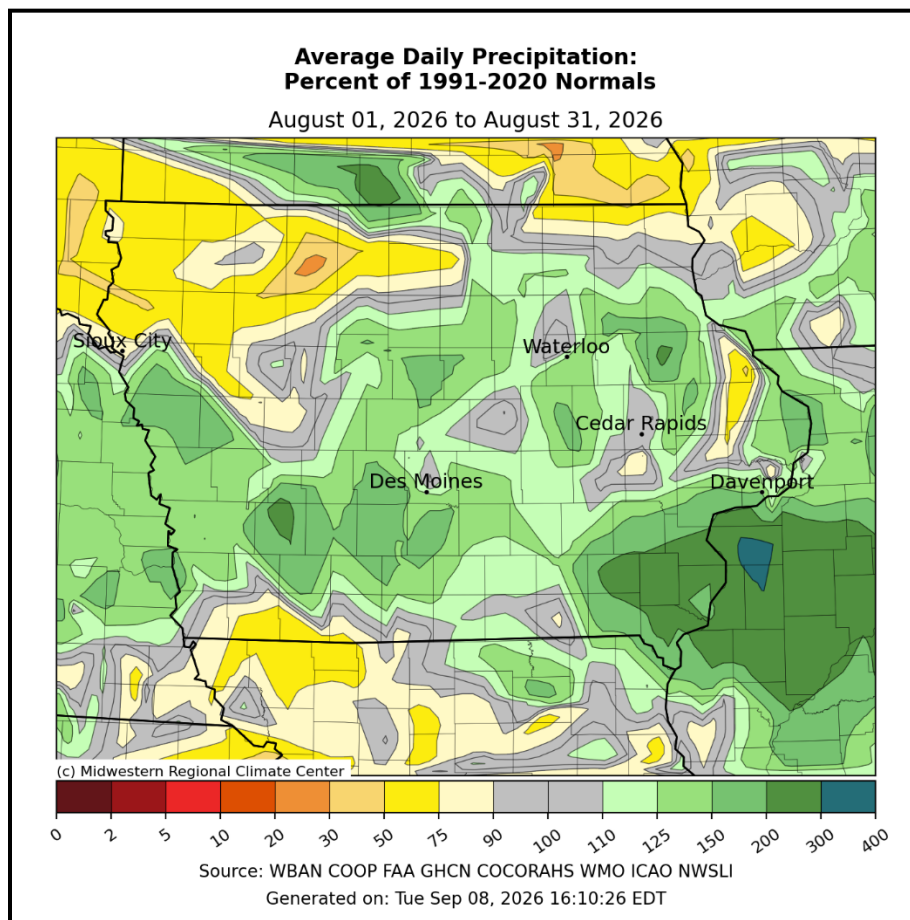
CONDITION SUMMARY — DROUGHT PERSISTS IN THE NORTH AND WEST IN AUGUST

Iowa experienced a wetter than average August and summer overall, marked by significant regional contrasts ranging from sizeable rainfall deficits in the northwest to heavy accumulation in west-central and southeast areas. Recent rainfall has improved conditions, and nearly a quarter of the state is now designated as D0 – Abnormally Dry or worse, primarily spanning northern and western portions of the state. The emergence of D2 – Severe Drought conditions in western Iowa during August has kept the northwestern drought watch active and triggered a new watch for central Iowa. The Climate Prediction Center’s (CPC) Seasonal Drought Outlook indicates that the existing drought in the northwest will likely persist through November. For September, the statewide outlook indicates an increased chance of above-normal temperatures and equal chances of above-, below-, or near-normal precipitation statewide.

August Precipitation and Temperature

Iowa’s statewide precipitation totaled 4.79 inches, or 0.66 inches above normal. While the statewide average rainfall was above normal, a majority of the state had near- to below-normal amounts. Northwest Iowa was the driest area, facing deficits between 1.00 and 3.00 inches, whereas stations in west-central and southeast Iowa recorded totals reaching 200 to 300 percent of normal. Precipitation for the three summer months of June, July, and August totaled 14.32 inches, or 0.76 inches above normal. This makes it the 39th wettest summer in 154 years of records, though notably less wet than the 2025 summer season.

Statewide temperatures in August were above average across most of Iowa, with the warmest conditions found in pockets spanning from central to northwest Iowa; the overall statewide average was 71.9 degrees, or 0.9 degrees above normal. August 2026 ties 1921 and 2020 as the 75th warmest in 154 years of statewide records. A warmer August last occurred in 2023. Across the entire three-month summer season, temperatures averaged 72.7 degrees, which is 1.3 degrees above normal. This ties 1940 and 1984 as the 54th warmest summer on record, though it remained cooler than the summer of 2021.



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 August (comparing June, July, and August precipitation) range from 0.6 to 1.0, with all of the five values above zero. Drought Region 3 180-day SPI value had the largest decrease, and was the only Drought Region to have a decreased trend.

Drought Region	3-month SPI	6-month SPI	IDP Classification ↑ = improving ↓ = degrading ↔ = no trend
1	0.6	0.3	Watch ↓
2	1.0	0.7	Watch ↓
3	1.0	1.4	Normal ↓
4	0.6	0.7	Normal ↑
5	0.9	1.1	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. The 30-day SSI values in two of the five drought regions have increased, and three drought regions have decreased. Comparing August to July data, Drought Region 5 demonstrated the greatest 30-day SSI improvement, while Drought Region 1 showed the largest decrease.

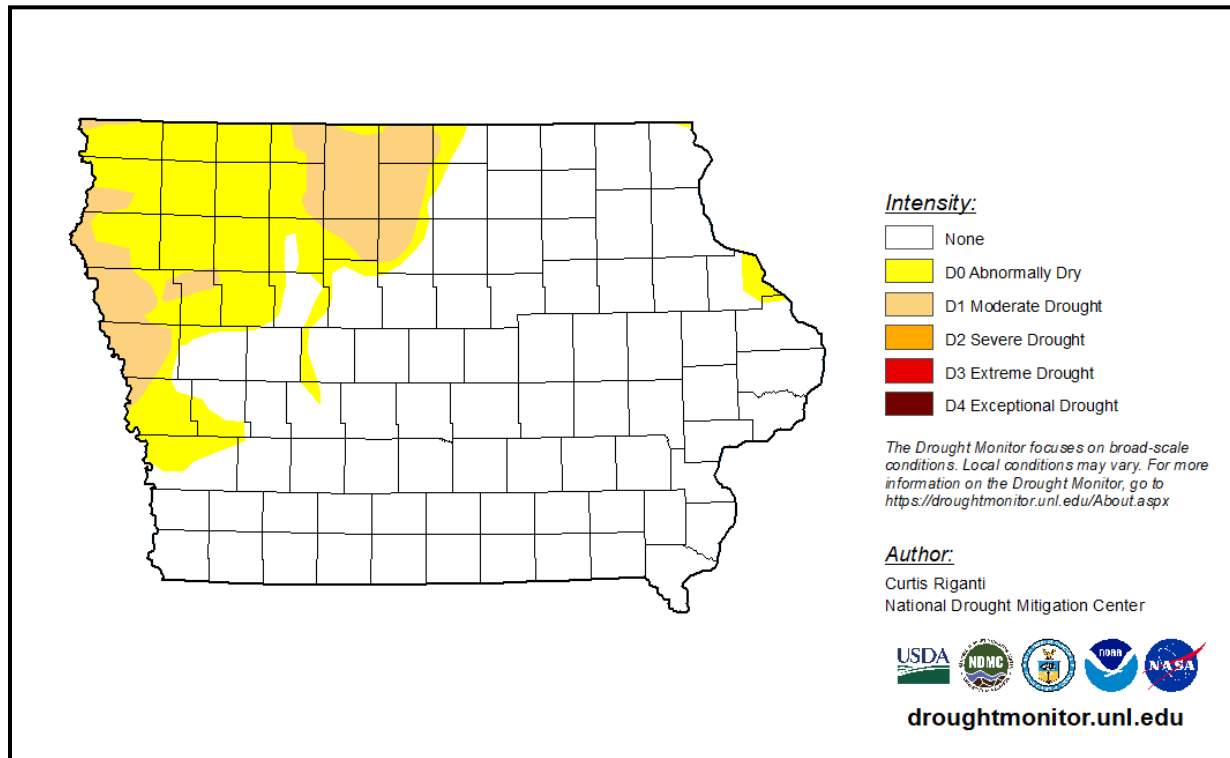
According to the US Geological Survey, streamflow levels in August were largely classified as normal conditions across much of Iowa. Currently, two stream gages are classified as below normal, and thirteen stream gages are classified as extremely above normal. Most gages across the state indicate normal, above-normal, much-above, and extremely-above flows. No gages in Iowa are classified as extremely below normal.

US DROUGHT MONITOR AND DROUGHT CONDITIONS

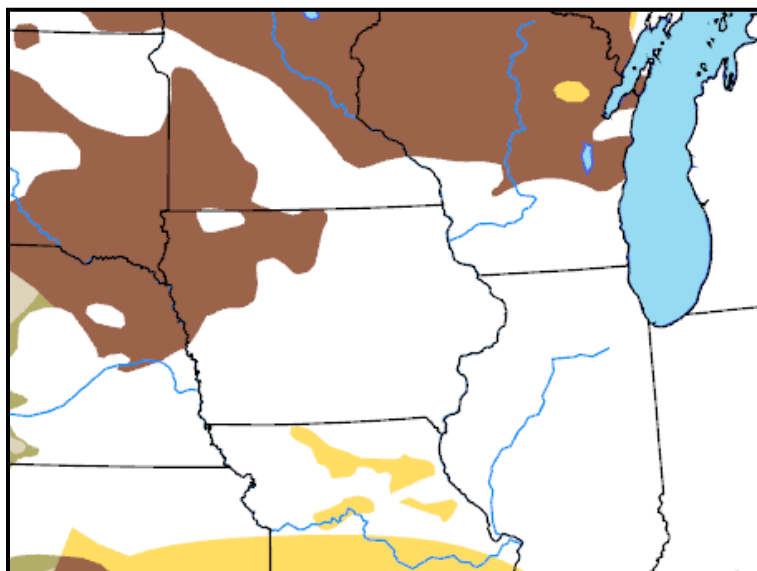
The latest US Drought Monitor (USDM), released on September 10, indicates improving but continued dry trend across northern and western Iowa. In August, an area of D2 – Severe Drought developed in western Iowa. Additionally, the northern and western regions remain largely categorized under D0 – Abnormally Dry status, with areas of D1 – Moderate Drought persisting. Currently, nearly 26 percent of the state is experiencing some level of dryness, and nearly nine percent is designated as some level of drought.

U.S. Drought Monitor
Iowa

September 8, 2026
(Released Thursday, Sep. 10, 2026)
Valid 8 a.m. EDT

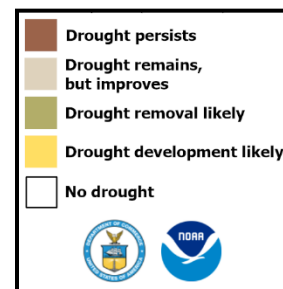


The Seasonal Drought Outlook, released by the CPC on August 31, 2026, valid through November 30, 2026, indicates that much of Iowa is projected to remain drought-free through November. However, drought conditions in the northwest portion of the state are expected to persist. The Seasonal Precipitation and Temperature Outlook offers no clear signal for precipitation. The majority of the state, outside of far southeast Iowa, has a chance of above-normal temperatures. The outlook for September has no clear signal for precipitation, and a likely chance for above-normal temperatures across the state. The Seasonal Drought Outlook considers the impacts of recent precipitation as well as seasonal precipitation outlooks.



U.S. Seasonal Drought Outlook
Drought Tendency During the Valid Period

Valid for September 1 - November 30, 2026
Released August 31, 2026



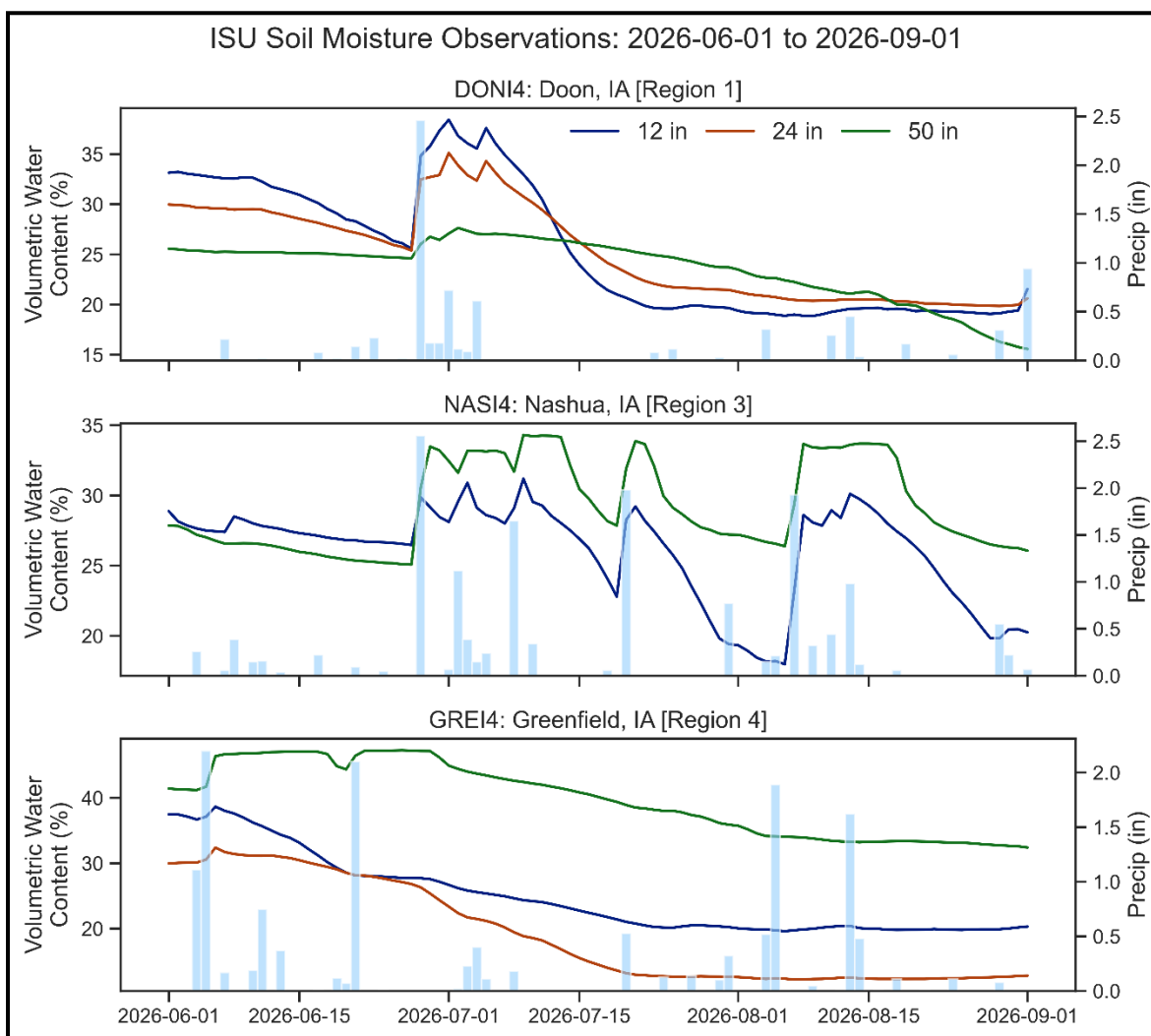
OTHER WATER RESOURCE INFORMATION

Border River Conditions

In its monthly update of Missouri River conditions dated September 4, 2026, the Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) indicates that the volume of water stored in the system of reservoirs is 47.2 Million Acre-Feet (MAF), which is down 1.3 MAF during August. The updated annual runoff forecast for the upper Missouri River Basin above Sioux City is 15.4 MAF or 60% of the average annual runoff. Water releases will be maintained at 7,000 cfs at Fort Peck through fall and early winter, while Garrison releases will decrease from 17,000 cfs to 13,000 cfs beginning September 14. "August runoff was higher than forecast in the lower reaches of the upper Missouri River Basin above Sioux City due to late summer rainfall. In addition, rainfall below Gavins Point allowed the System reservoirs to maintain lower release rates while meeting the reduced navigation flow targets at all downstream locations," said John Remus, chief of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' Missouri River Basin Water Management Division. "Runoff in the Fort Peck and Fort Peck to Garrison reaches continue to be well-below average due to long-term precipitation deficits and dry soil conditions in the upper Basin. The levels of the three upper reservoirs, Fort Peck, Garrison, and Oahe dropped about 1 to 2 feet in August, and System storage will continue to decline this fall."

August Soil Moisture

Surface soil moisture saturation is low in areas of western and eastern Iowa, ranging from 30 to 50%, whereas the center of the state has wetter conditions ranging from 50 to 70%. At lower levels of the soil profile, saturation in northwestern Iowa ranges between 35 and 45%, whereas for the rest of the state it ranges from 50 to 80%.



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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