

WATER SUMMARY UPDATE

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A snapshot of water resource trends for the 2026 Water Year 2026 Water Year Summary

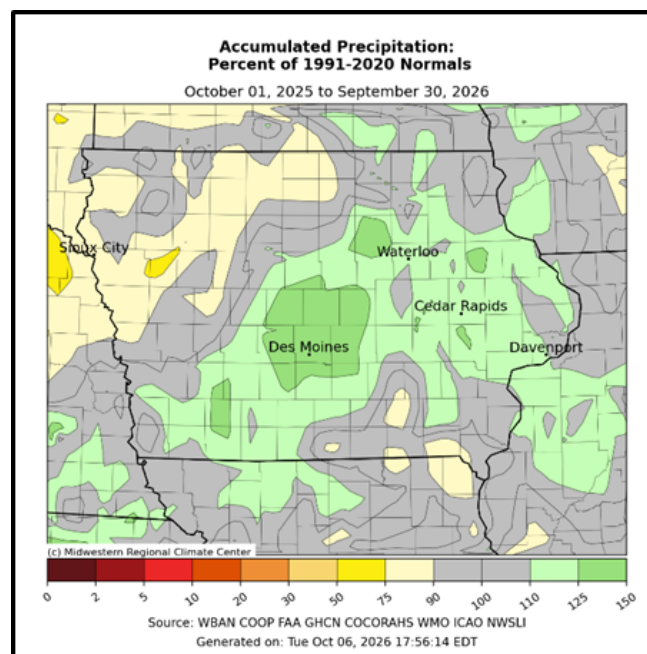
OVERVIEW – FOR THE THIRD CONSECUTIVE YEAR, WATER YEAR 2026 ENDED WITH A STATEWIDE SURPLUS.

The “Water Year” is defined as the period from October 1-September 30. After October 1, precipitation benefits the upcoming growing season, and winter snow can be the primary source of water runoff into streams during the next calendar year for many parts of the United States. The 2026 Water Year (WY) ended on September 30th, 2026, and was boosted by the 4th wettest September on record. For the current WY, the state ended with a surplus of precipitation on the order of 2.82 inches. Drought conditions were at their lowest levels since last October, with recent wetness removing the remaining Moderate Drought (D1) from northwest Iowa. The Iowa Drought Plan also showed a return to “Normal” with improving conditions across the five Drought Regions.

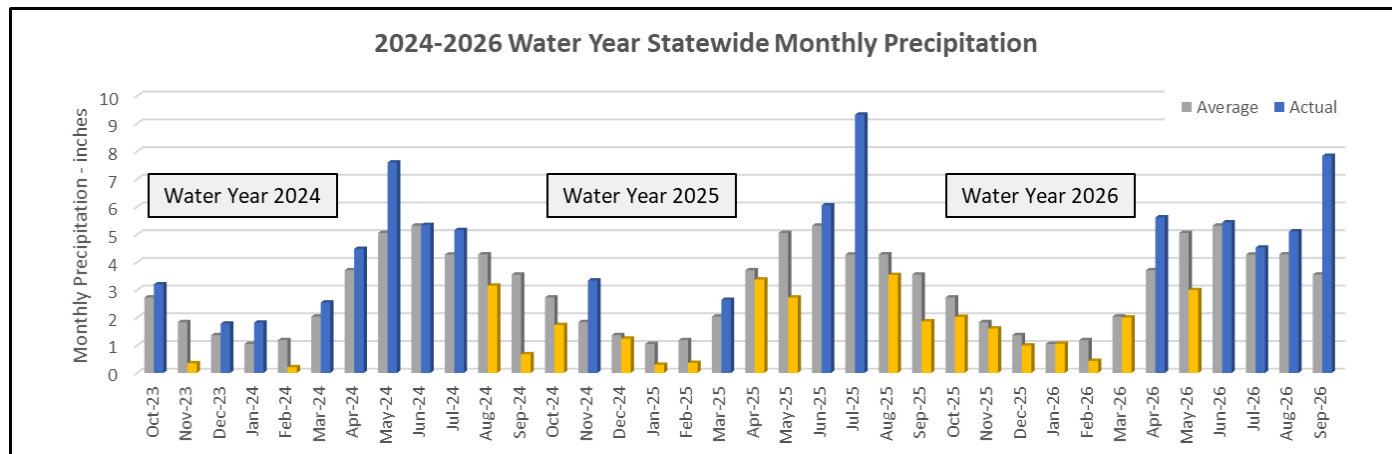
WATER YEAR PRECIPITATION AND TEMPERATURE

Water Year 2026 ended on September 30th, 2026, and was the third consecutive wetter than normal water year. For the 12 months encompassing WY 2026, precipitation totaled 38.37 inches, or 2.82 inches above normal, ranking as the 20th wettest on record. Temperatures averaged 51.3 degrees, which is 3.1 degrees above the 1991-2020 climatological normal for Iowa and ranking as the 5th warmest.

Much of the southeastern two-thirds of the state experienced near to wetter than normal conditions with pockets from southwest, central and eastern Iowa receiving up to 150% of normal precipitation. Northwestern Iowa was the driest part of the state and ended WY 2026 with 75-90% of normal precipitation.

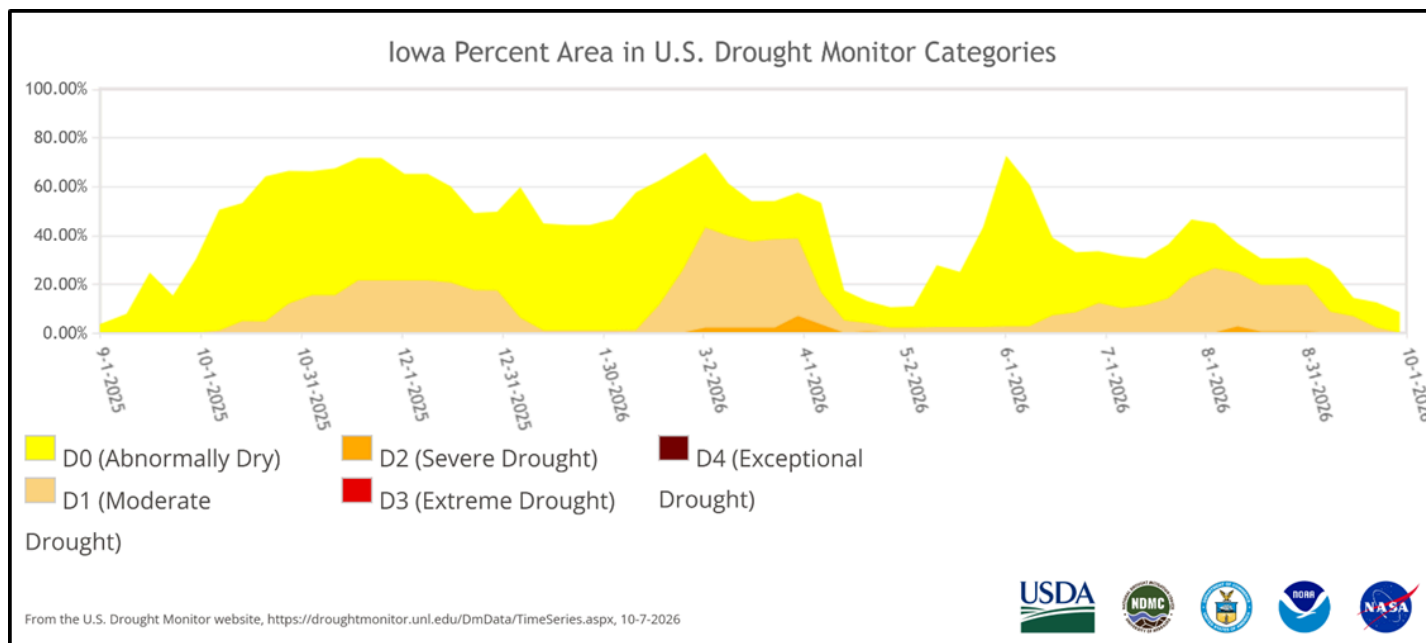


The graph below shows the monthly rainfall of the last three water years. Blue bars are above normal monthly rainfall, and orange bars are below normal monthly rainfall. While there were more months in which deficits were reported statewide over the three-year period, months in which surpluses occurred had significant statewide averages, allowing for overall surplus moisture for Iowa.

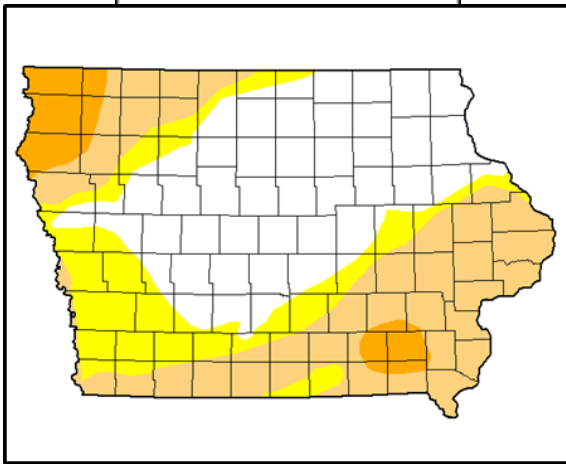


DROUGHT MONITOR

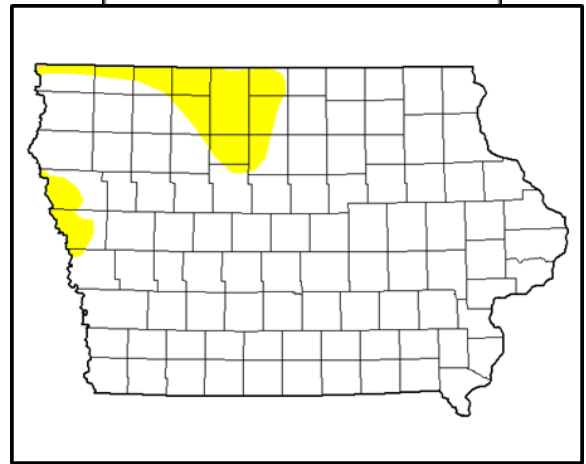
The US Drought Monitor (USDM) provides a simplified way to look at regional and statewide trends in drought conditions. Over the course of the WY, Iowa experienced cyclical fluctuations in drought severity, with the most pronounced deterioration occurring in March and April. However, overall conditions improved compared to the previous year. Currently, D2 – Severe Drought has been eliminated, leaving only a minimal area of D1 – Moderate Drought in the far northwest corner of the state.



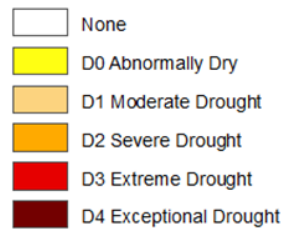
USDM – March 31, 2026



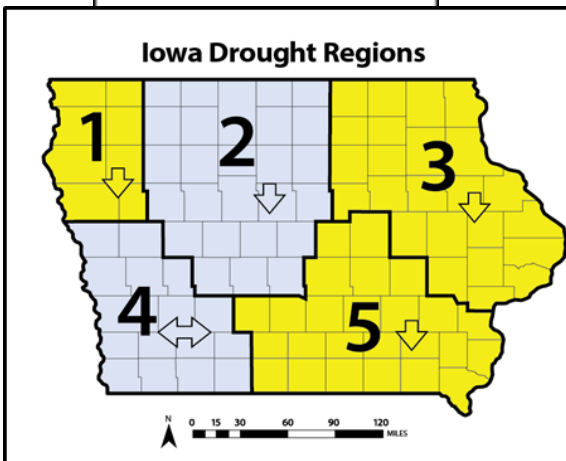
USDM – September 30, 2026



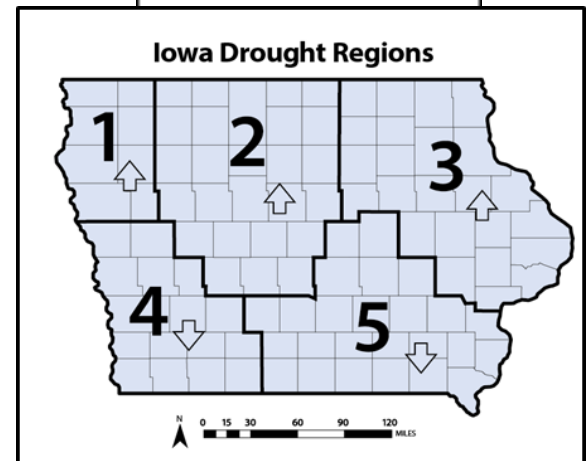
Intensity:



IDP – December 2025

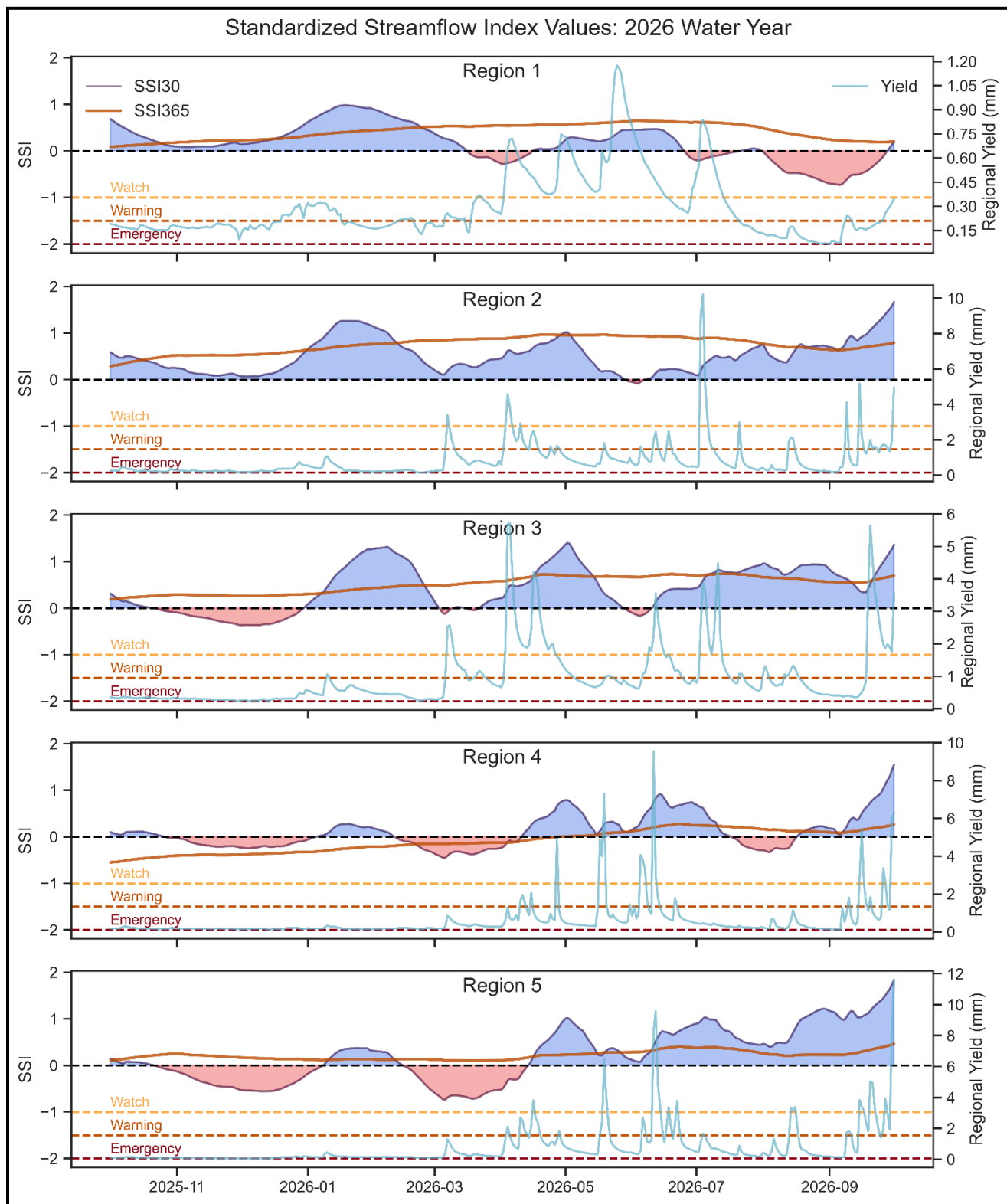


IDP – February 2026



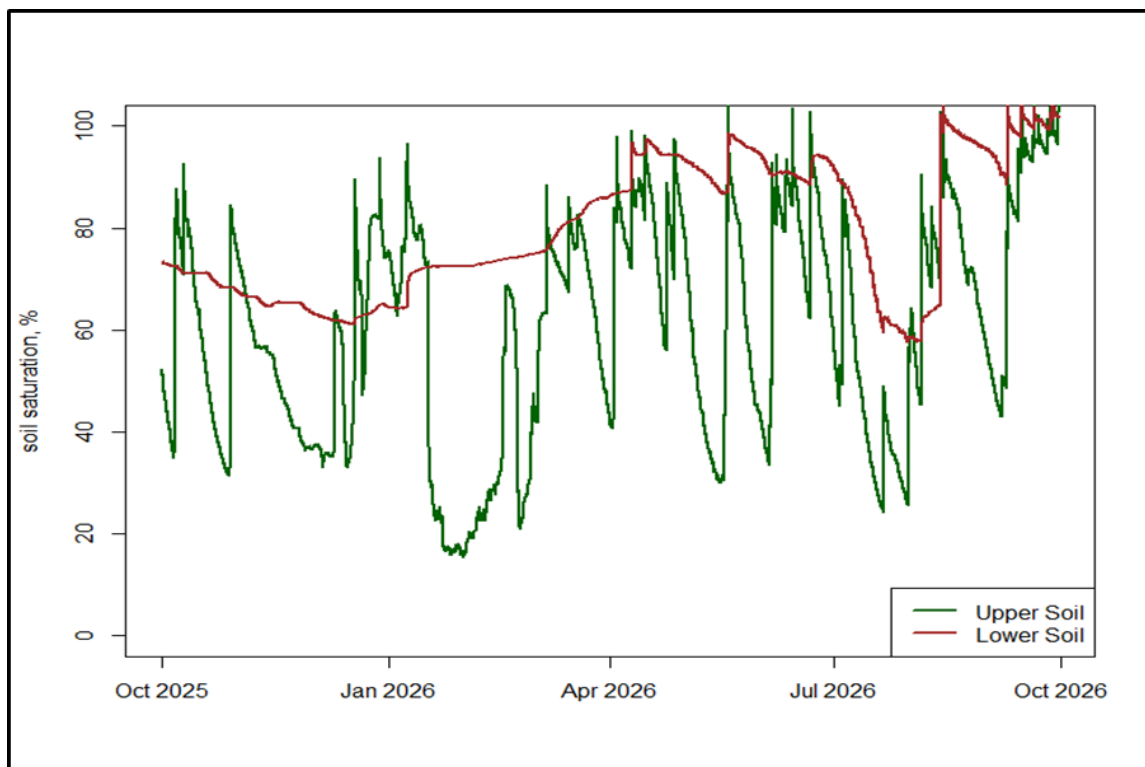
STREAMFLOW

The U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) standardized streamflow index (SSI) is a measure of how anomalous overall streamflow conditions are at any given time. This index provides a concise way of describing how relatively wet or dry Iowa's rivers have been in each drought region. Values above 0 are considered wetter than average, and values below -1 generally indicate drought concerns. The following plot summarizes Iowa's SSI values for the 2026 water year. From Oct 2025 through April 2026, streamflow levels remained near their historical averages, but flows were largely wetter than normal throughout the remainder of the year. These flow rates resulted in there being no instances of streamflow drought during the 2026 water year.



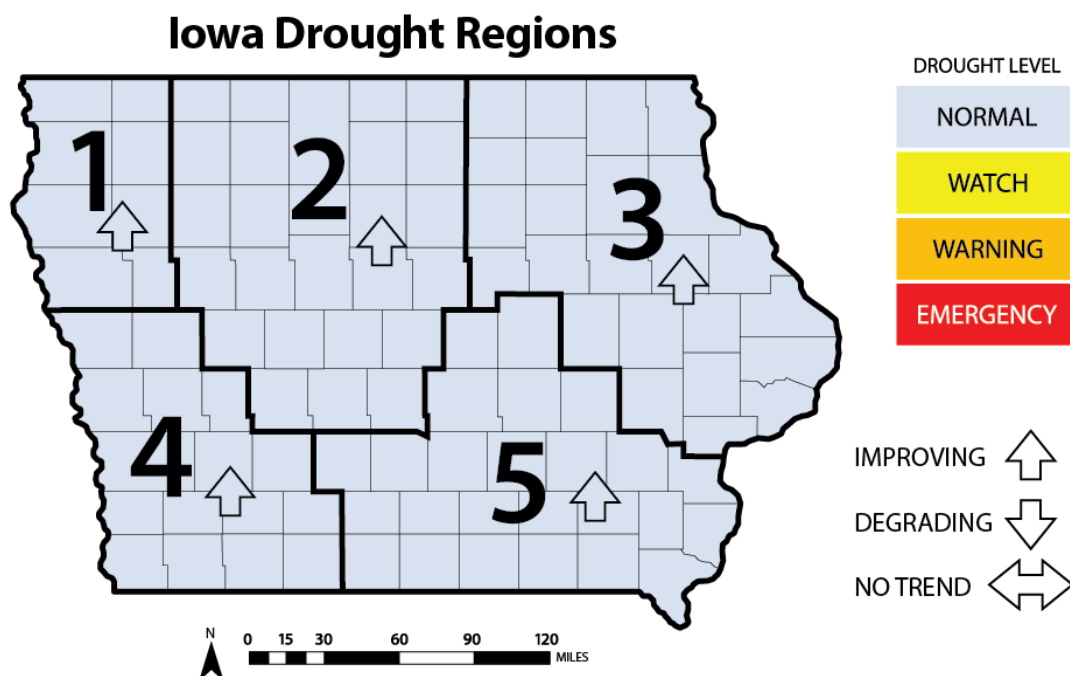
SOIL MOISTURE

Soil moisture levels improved notably across the state over the WY. After widespread deficits during the winter—when nearly all of Iowa experienced topsoil moisture below the 20th percentile—and a late-summer drop in lower soil moisture, spring and early fall precipitation spurred significant recovery. Consequently, soil moisture conditions have continued to strengthen statewide.



A snapshot of water resource trends for September 2026

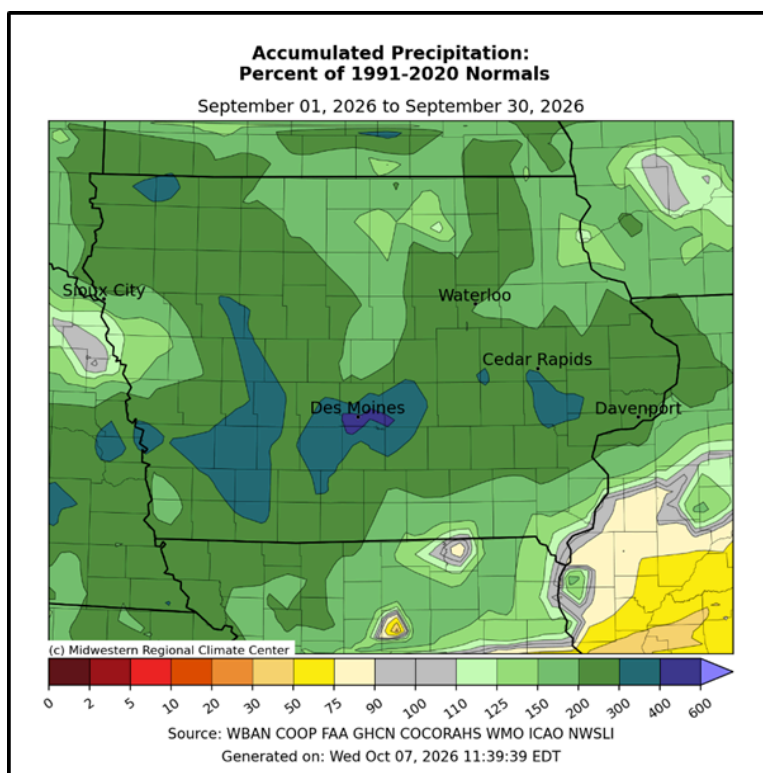
IOWA DROUGHT CONDITIONS



PRECIPITATION AND TEMPERATURE – SEPTEMBER 2026

Iowa's statewide average precipitation totaled 7.83", or 4.35 inches above normal, ranking as the 4th wettest September in 154 years of statewide records. Statewide temperatures came in at 68.3 degrees, 4.6 degrees above normal, ranking as

the 9th warmest on record. A wetter September last occurred in 2018 (3rd wettest) while 2015 was warmer (10th warmest).



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”.

The 90-day and 180-day SPI values for all Drought Regions in September are positive – reflecting the recent wet stretch in Iowa. These values maintain all drought regions in normal conditions for this indicator, and conditions are improving for all drought regions.

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 are steady or improving, reflecting recent wet conditions across the state.

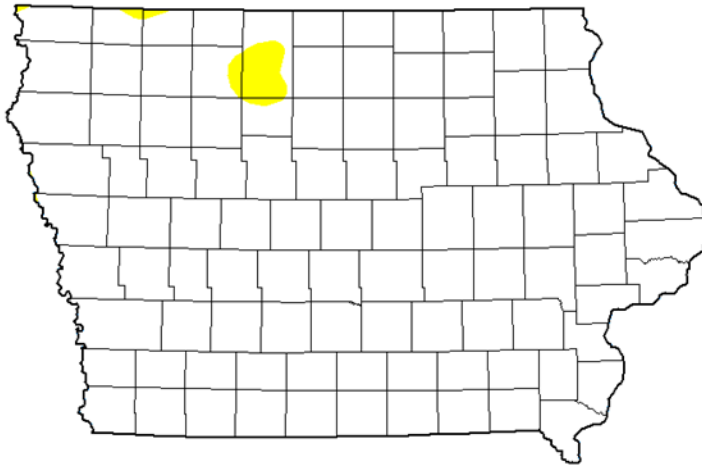
Although recent streamflow levels range from normal to well above normal across the state, flows naturally begin to decline during the fall months. Consequently, the U.S. Geological Survey reports that current streamflows across Iowa remain largely within normal ranges.

US DROUGHT MONITOR AND DROUGHT CONDITIONS

The current US Drought Monitor (USDM) reflects the continued improvement in conditions that started in August of this year. At the start of October, nearly the entire state was free from abnormal dryness or drought, with just over one percent of Iowa classified as D0 – Abnormally Dry. This reflects a substantial improvement from early September, marked most notably by the complete removal of all D2 – Severe Drought and D1 – Moderate Drought areas.

U.S. Drought Monitor Iowa

October 6, 2026
(Released Thursday, Oct. 8, 2026)
Valid 8 a.m. EDT



Intensity:

- None
- D0 Abnormally Dry
- D1 Moderate Drought
- D2 Severe Drought
- D3 Extreme Drought
- D4 Exceptional Drought

The Drought Monitor focuses on broad-scale conditions. Local conditions may vary. For more information on the Drought Monitor, go to <https://droughtmonitor.unl.edu/About.aspx>

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CPC/NOAA/NWS/NCEP



droughtmonitor.unl.edu

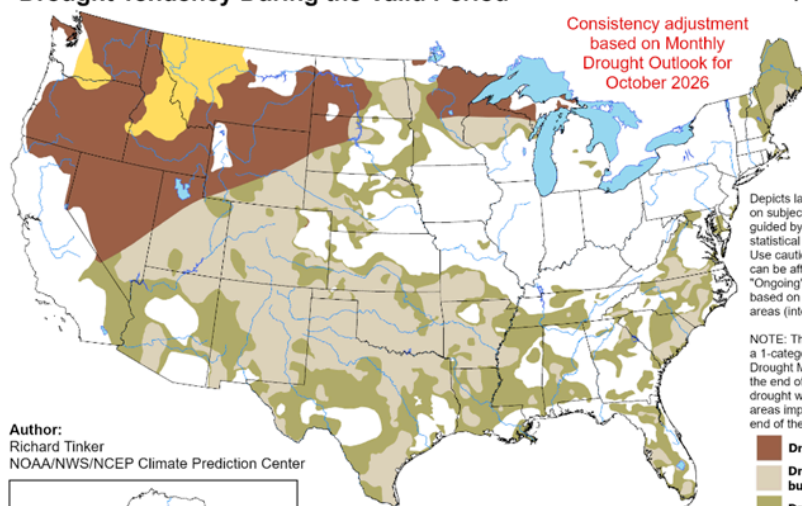
On a national scale, about 65 percent of the United States has some form of dryness or drought. The largest area that is free from drought or dryness is in the central Midwest and lower Northeast states that have been impacted by recent rain.

The Seasonal Drought Outlook issued on September 30 by the Climate Prediction Center (CPC), valid through December 31, forecasts that drought conditions in western Iowa are likely to be removed by December 31, suggesting that the entire state will be drought-free. Additionally, the outlook projects improving drought conditions across parts of Nebraska and the Dakotas over the same period.

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

Valid for October 1 - December 31, 2026
Released September 30, 2026

Consistency adjustment
based on Monthly
Drought Outlook for
October 2026



Author:
Richard Tinker
NOAA/NWS/NCEP Climate Prediction Center

Depicts large-scale trends based on subjectively derived probabilities guided by short- and long-range statistical and dynamical forecasts. Use caution for applications that can be affected by short lived events. "Ongoing" drought areas are based on the U.S. Drought Monitor areas (intensities of D1 to D4).

NOTE: The tan areas imply at least a 1-category improvement in the Drought Monitor intensity levels by the end of the period, although drought will remain. The green areas imply drought removal by the end of the period (D0 or none).

- Drought persists
- Drought remains, but improves
- Drought removal likely
- Drought development likely
- No drought



<https://go.usa.gov/3eZ73>

OTHER WATER RESOURCE INFORMATION

Border River Conditions

For the Missouri River, the US Army Corps of Engineers reported on October 7 that the volume of water stored in the reservoir system is 46.1 million acre feet (MAF), which is 10 MAF below the base of the System's flood control zone. Precipitation over the last month has been above normal for most of the Basin. Despite dry upper basin conditions resulting in below-average runoff, heavy downstream rainfall increased tributary flows, allowing Gavins Point Dam releases to be reduced while sustaining downstream navigation support. Recent above-normal rainfall in the central Midwest helped to increase the flow in the Upper Mississippi.

September Soil Moisture

Soil moisture saturation increased substantially during September compared to August, due to anomalous rainfall amounts. At the upper layer of soil, soil saturation in central Iowa ranged from 50 to 70%. In Eastern Iowa, values were lower than the rest of the state due to dry conditions during most of the month, although rainfall during the last day of September increased saturation to around 50 to 60%. At lower layers of soil, high saturation between 70 and 80% was observed in the southern part of the state. The rest of the state has saturation values ranging from 30 to 70%.

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:

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