

ALASKA REGION

DECEMBER–FEBRUARY 2016

Quarterly Climate Impacts and Outlook



This was the second warmest winter of record for Alaska as a whole. Only the winter of 2000–01 was warmer.

NORTHERN

Barrow: Blizzard Feb 12–13 with 40–50 mph winds produced near-zero visibility and huge snow drifts. Schools closed on the 12th and there were no flights in or out on either day. Despite the blizzard, Barrow also had the warmest winter of record.

Lowest temperature reported from any community in Alaska was -47°F at **Arctic Village** Dec 24–25 — the highest statewide minimum temperature for any winter in the past century.

BERING SEA & ALEUTIANS

Sea ice coverage around Alaska at end of Feb was lowest since 2001. Bering Sea ice edge Feb 28 was not far south of **St. Matthew** and **Nunivak Islands**. Virtually no ice in Bristol Bay and Cook Inlet.

One of the strongest storms of record battered central Aleutians Dec 12–13, producing wind gusts >100 mph and damaging buildings and power lines in **Adak**. Homes in **Atka** were also damaged.



INTERIOR

Parts of Interior and western Alaska had the driest winter of record. Lack of snow and gusty winds caused rare mid-winter wildfire Feb 22 near **Fort Greely**.

SOUTHCENTRAL & KENAI PENINSULA

Strong chinook winds, in places gusting to near 100 mph, caused power outages across Southcentral Dec 29–30.

Freezing rain in **Palmer** and **Wasilla** areas Feb 11 was substantial enough to cause poor driving conditions and close most Mat-Su schools.

Anchorage received just 7.9" snow during mid-winter, with the ground bare or nearly so for part of the season, impacting local skiing. Alyeska Ski Resort reported >650" snow through end of Feb at 2700'.

Melting snow and rain flooded Anchor River north of **Homer** Dec 30–31. Old Sterling Highway was impassable at Anchor River bridge.

Snowstorm Feb 20–21 dropped 15–30" heavy wet snow in **Homer** and the Caribou Hills.



CLIMATE SUMMARY: YUKON AND THE MACKENZIE VALLEY, NORTHWEST TERRITORIES, CANADA

Winter 2015–16 has been considerably warmer and drier than normal for many communities in the Yukon and Western NWT. Whitehorse had a mean temperature of -8.5°C, 4.9°C warmer than the normal mean. Dawson City recorded its warmest winter on record since 1900. Mean temperature during January and February 2016 was -15.7°C, 8°C above normal.

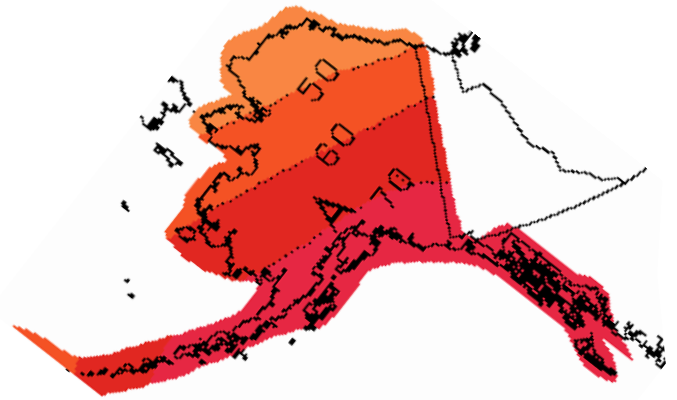
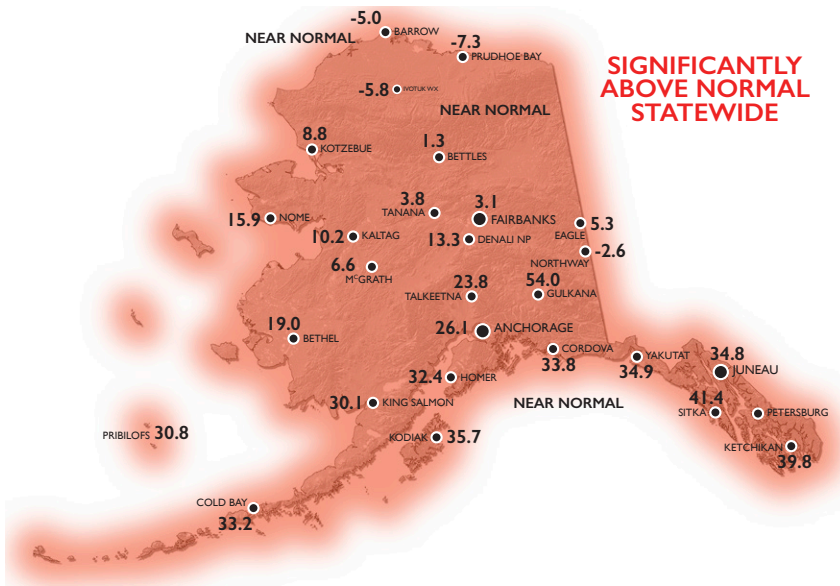
Precipitation at Whitehorse Airport totaled 71.7 mm compared to a normal of 45.9 mm. Yukon Government sources suggest that the percentage of normal precipitation for the months of January and February ranged from 6% of normal in Burwash to 98% of normal in Mayo. Dry anomalies have been observed over Western and Southwestern Yukon and portions of the Mackenzie Valley.

Winter in the Mackenzie Valley, NWT has also been very warm, with highly variable precipitation from west to east. Communities in the delta and southwest have been very dry, while those in the east have been wetter. The warmth has led to fewer transportation closures along the Dempster Highway truck route into the Mackenzie valley, but this "benefit" has been offset by difficulties in building and using winter ice roads.

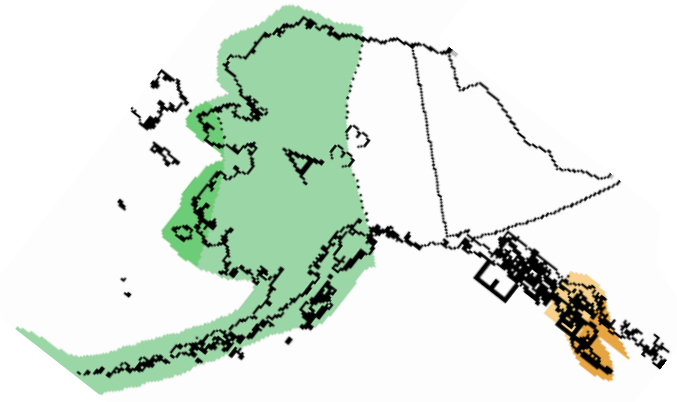
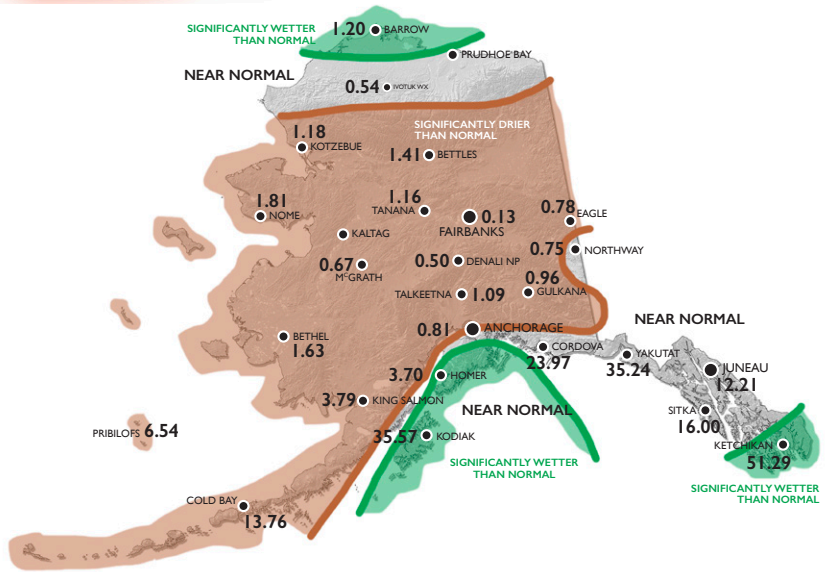
The consequence of these warm and dry conditions is that our territorial partners are anticipating another very active forest fire season, especially in the southwest.

TEMPERATURE & PRECIPITATION ANOMALIES

OUTLOOKS: APRIL-JUNE 2016



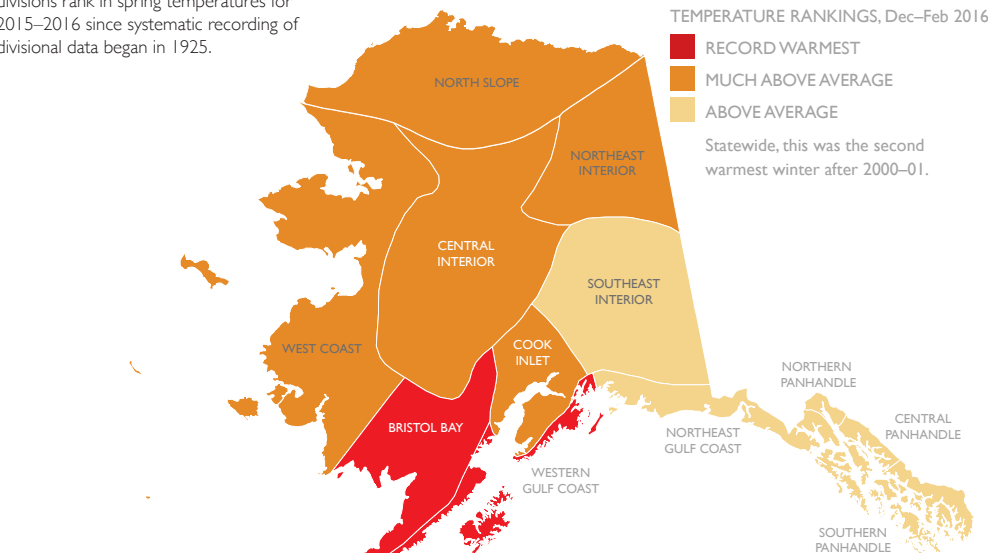
TEMPERATURE The April-June outlook from the Climate Prediction Center shows dramatically increased chances for significantly above-normal temperatures over most of Alaska, as the lingering effect of El Niño, above-normal sea surface temperatures and unusually low sea ice conspire to boost the chances of warmer than normal temperatures.



PRECIPITATION The same factors influence the precipitation outlook. With showers becoming the typical kind of precipitation over most of the state during May and June, there is much less confidence with precipitation outlooks.

CLIMATE DIVISIONS HIGHLIGHT

Here we show how Alaska's climate divisions rank in spring temperatures for 2015-2016 since systematic recording of divisional data began in 1925.



ABOUT ALASKA'S NEW CLIMATE DIVISIONS
 Encompassing more than 660,000 square miles, with more than 6,600 miles of coastline and a wide range of topography, Alaska has many different climates. New divisional data will help scientists better understand the various climates in Alaska as well as how they are changing over time.

Content and graphics prepared in partnership with the Alaska Center for Climate Assessment and Policy and the NOAA National Weather Service Alaska Region.

ALASKA REGION PARTNERS

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