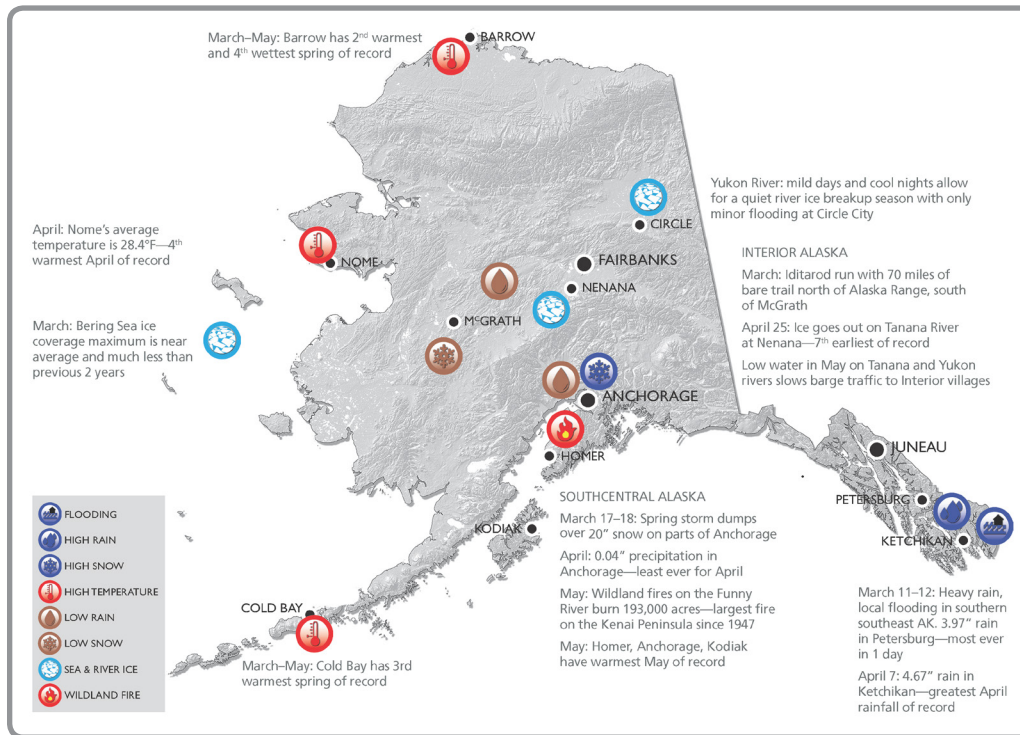


Alaska - Weather and Climate Highlights for March 2014–May 2014



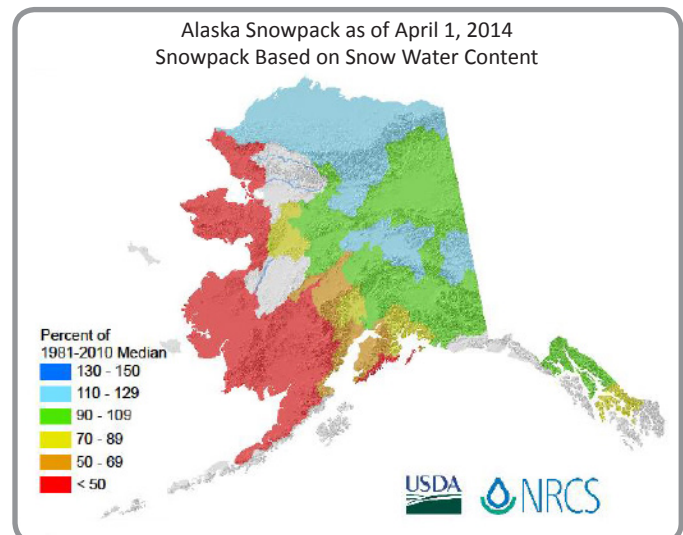
Significant Regional Impacts - for March 2014–May 2014

Overall, dry and mild weather left the Kenai Peninsula with little snow left to melt by April, and as a result, it was primed for wildfires. The Funny River Wildfire was a human caused fire that began May 19 southeast of Soldotna and grew to over 193,000 acres (300 square miles) by the end of May, making this the largest fire on the Kenai Peninsula since 1947. The fire largely burned on Kenai National Wildlife Refuge lands and, thanks to the efforts of nearly 500 firefighters, no permanently inhabited buildings were lost, but several precautionary evacuations took place. The fire brought unusually dense smoke to the Anchorage area on several days, and was the worst wildfire smoke in Anchorage since 2005. On May 27, dense smoke spread to the Interior, some 300 miles north of the fire.

Much of Southeast Alaska was quite dry during the spring. At Yakutat, total spring precipitation was less than half of normal, and as a result, rivers that do not drain the mountains were exceptionally low. The Situk River, an important fisheries stream, had the lowest late-May water levels in 25 years of gauge records. Southern Southeast Alaska actually finished up with above normal precipitation for the spring, but a lack of higher elevation snow in winter and early spring threatens some hydropower operations.

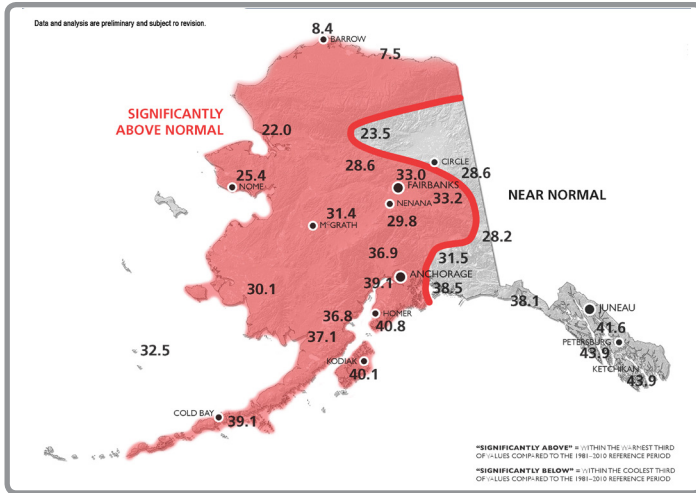
Early spring snow cover was near normal over much of the Interior, but persistent mild days and cool nights allowed for a quiet river ice break-up season. The Tanana River ice went out at Nenana on April 25, a week earlier than normal. This was in dramatic contrast to 2013, when break-up was about a month later and brought major ice jam flooding to several Interior communities. Following break-up, water levels were quite low on the Yukon and Tanana Rivers, slowing barges carrying supplies for Interior communities off the road system.

The 2014 Iditarod Sled Dog Race followed on the heels of a mild and dry late winter and early spring, and as a result, some 70 miles of trail south of Takotna was just bare ground during the race. The long trek across bare ground was tough on mushers and sleds but the canine athletes fared much better.

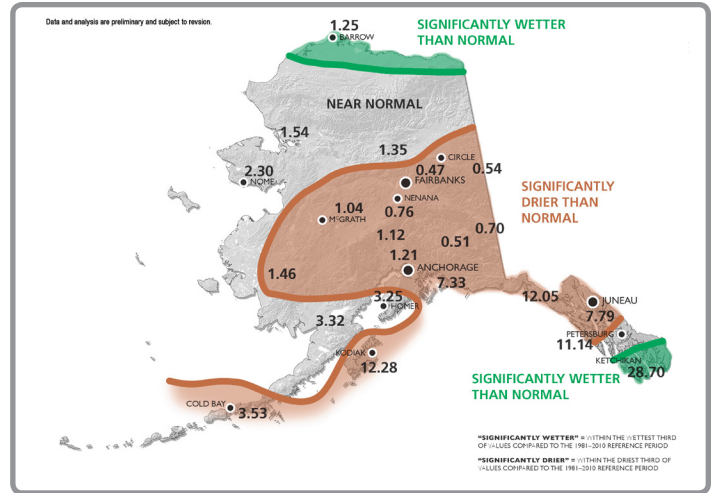


Regional Highlight - Temperature Above Normal and Precipitation Below Normal

Alaska Temperatures °F March–May 2014

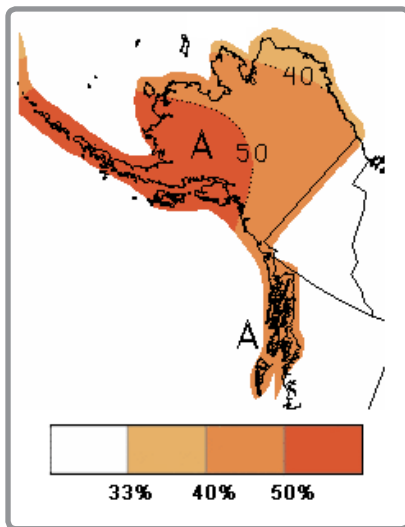


Alaska Precipitation in Inches March–May 2014



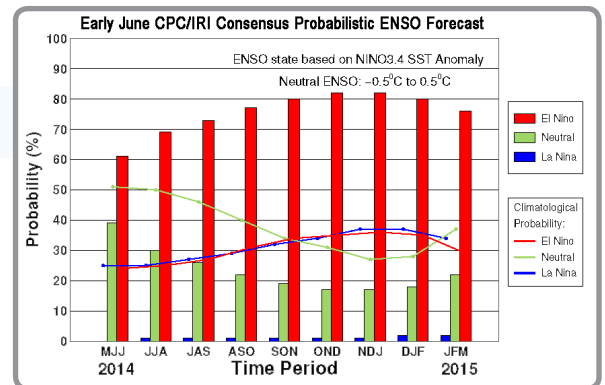
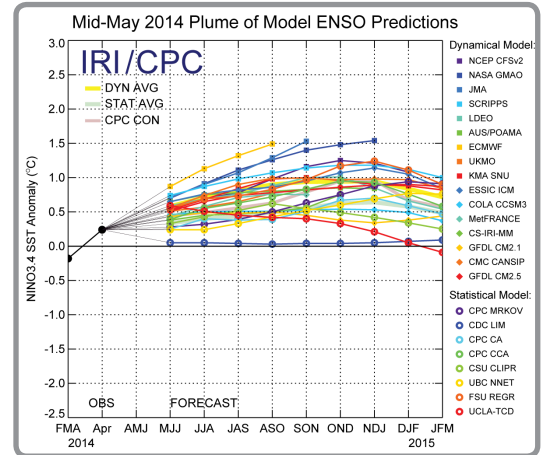
Regional Outlook for July–September 2014

The CPC Outlook for July–September calls for increased chances of significantly above normal temperatures across all of Alaska. A warm late summer season has the potential to bring a prolonged wildfire season if there is significant fire activity in July. However, there are no significant climate indicators for precipitation across Alaska for the upcoming late summer and an active fire season into the late summer typically is accompanied by significantly below average precipitation in the fire-prone areas of Alaska.



Note on Interpreting Model Forecasts

The graph (right) shows forecasts made by dynamical and statistical models for sea surface temperature (SST) in the Niño 3.4 region for nine overlapping three-month periods. Note that the expected skills of the models, based on historical performance, are not equal to one another. The skills also generally decrease as the lead time increases. Differences among the forecasts of the models reflect both differences in model design and actual uncertainty in the forecast of the possible SST scenario.



During April and May, the observed El Niño–Southern Oscillation (ENSO) conditions moved from warm-neutral to the borderline of a weak El Niño. Most of the ENSO prediction models indicate a continued warming trend, with a transition to sustained El Niño conditions by the early Northern Hemisphere summer.

Alaska Region Partners

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