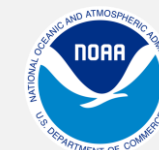


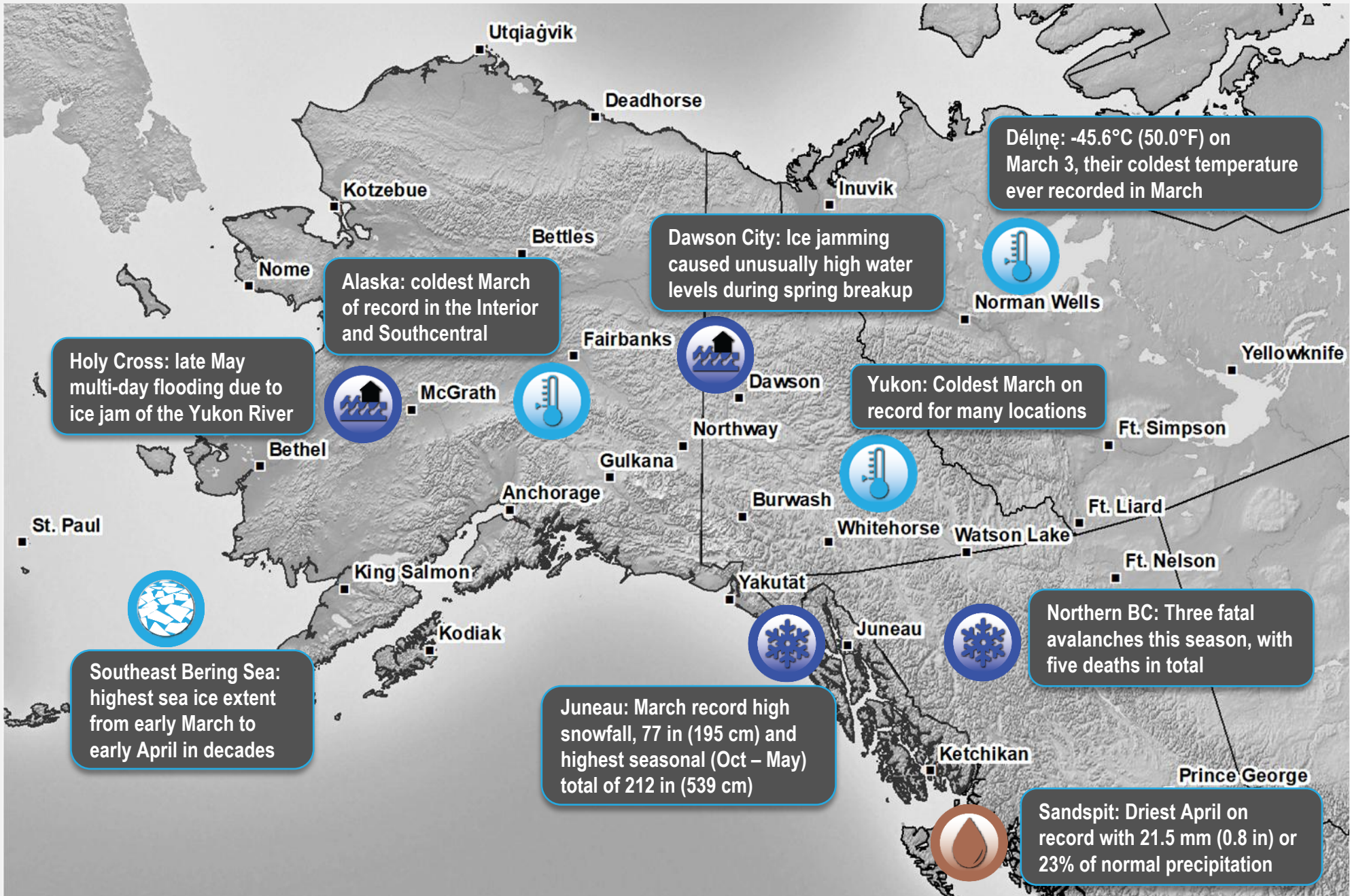
ALASKA and NORTHWESTERN CANADA

Weather and Climate Highlights and Impacts, March 2026 to May 2026
Climate Outlook, July 2026 to September 2026

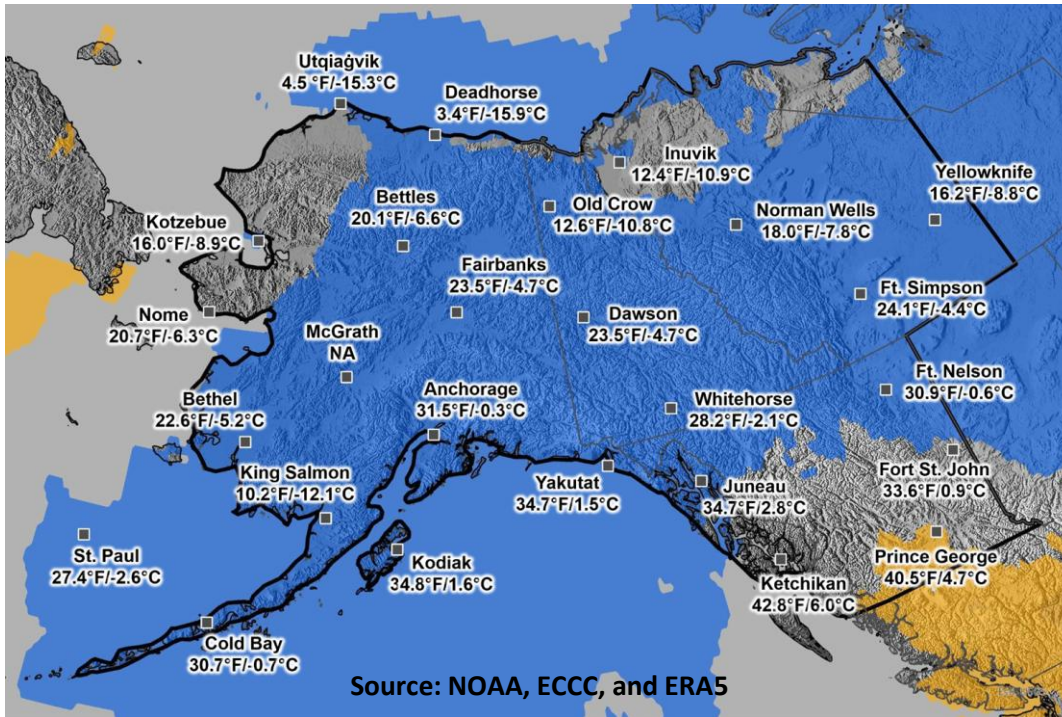


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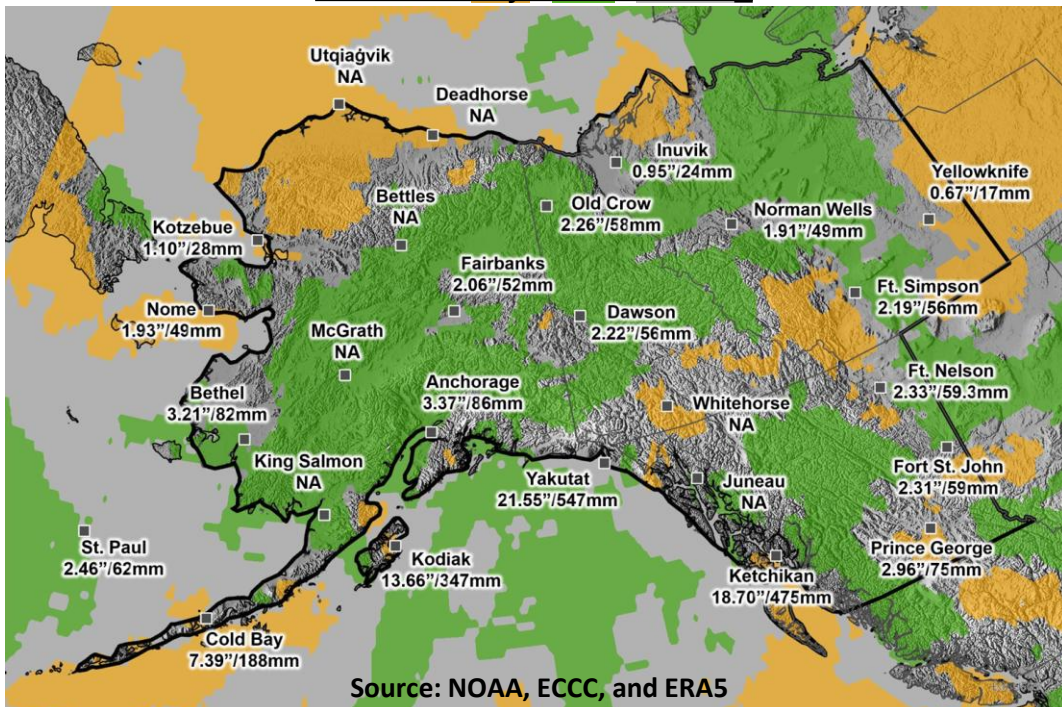


March to May 2026 Temperature Averages (°F/°C) & Anomalies Below / Above / Normal



Source: NOAA, ECCC, and ERA5

March to May 2026 Precipitation Totals (inches/mm) & Anomalies - Dry / Wet / Normal



Source: NOAA, ECCC, and ERA5

High Snowpack and Dynamic Spring Breakup



Ice jam on the Klondike River (Tr'ondëk) near Henderson Corner, Yukon, causing minor flooding along the North Klondike Hwy, May 6, 2026. Credit Benoit Turcott

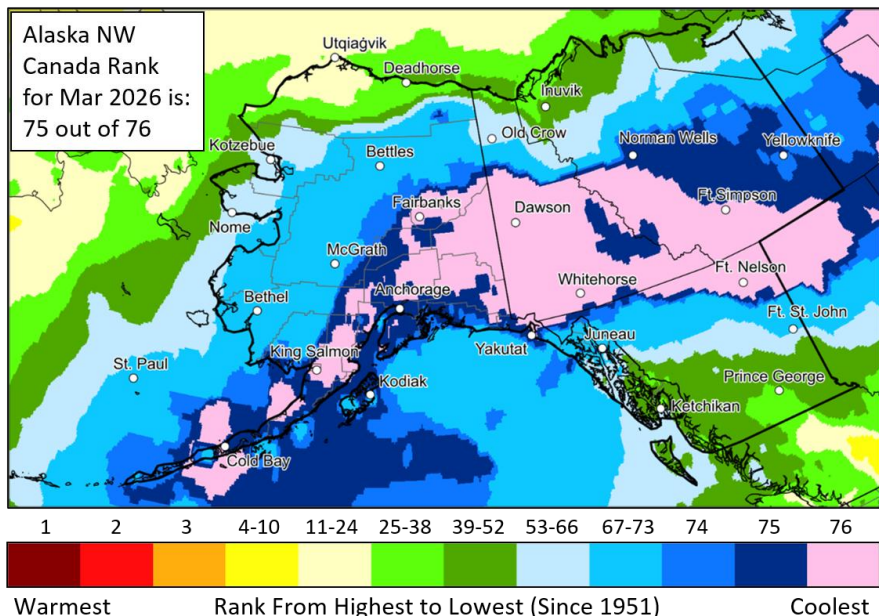
Spring breakup was unusually intense across the Yukon and Alaska this season. This was largely due to high snowpack following a cold and snowy winter, combined with cold temperatures in March and a warm start to May. In the Yukon, Pelly Crossing saw its highest ice jam level since 1991, Dawson City since 1979, and Ross River since 2013. Impacts from breakup included minor ice jam flooding in Ross River and Old Crow. Evacuation alerts were issued in Old Crow and Dawson, where one couple was extracted via helicopter from their home. Overflow flooding caused several road closures across the Yukon, including the Alaska Highway at Beaver Creek.

In Alaska, Holy Cross observed river breakup flooding that was more severe than in most years, resulting in a loss of power and flooding of the airport, though no disaster declaration was issued for the community. Elsewhere across the state, river breakup was dynamic, but significant impacts were largely avoided. Only a minor difference in timing would have resulted in very severe flooding in multiple locations, leading the Alaska-Pacific River Forecast Center to note that the region effectively “dodged a bullet”.

In Juneau, March’s record snowfall was notable, though the most significant impacts occurred earlier in the winter during the record December snowfall. A lack of warm spells as river ice broke up meant that the high snowpack did not cause significant impacts during the breakup period, as might have been expected. The high snowpack also seen in the Northwest Territories did not cause flooding but instead provides a positive outlook for drought and wildfire conditions this summer after years of moisture deficits.

A Bitterly Cold End to Winter in March 2026

Temperature Ranking for March 2026



Temperature ranking for March 2026 over Alaska and northwestern Canada

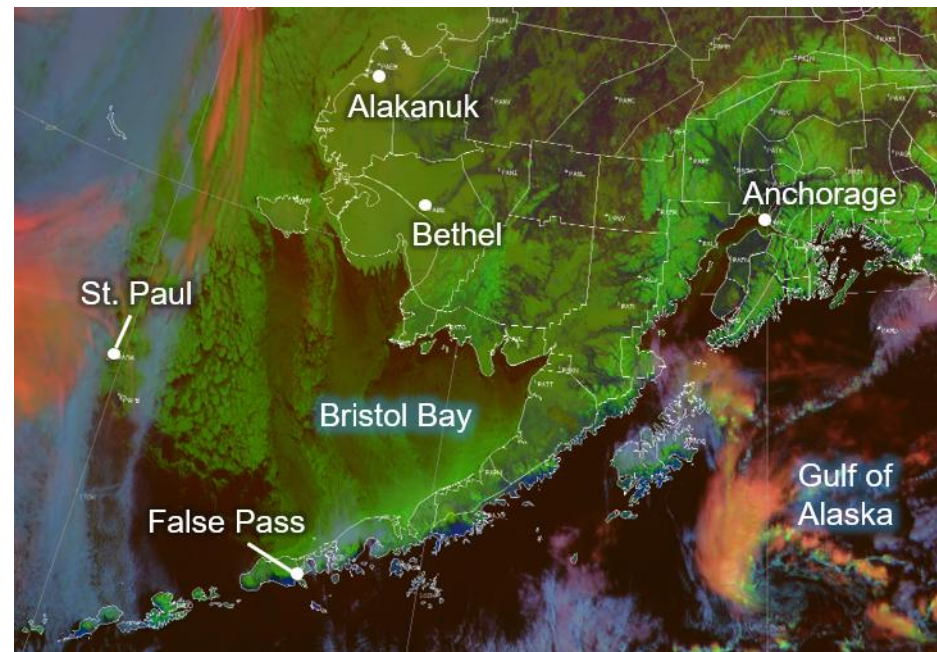
Map by: Brian Brettschneider; Source: ERA5 Reanalysis.

March was historically cold across much of Alaska and the Yukon, bringing a remarkably cold 2025 – 26 winter season to a close in many areas. Monthly mean temperatures were 10 – 20°F (6 – 11°C) below normal over a large area south of the Brooks Range, with the Yukon experiencing similar conditions, exceeding 10°C (18°F) below normal. Anchorage, Fairbanks, Glennallen, and Haines in Alaska all had their coldest March on record, with similar records set across the Yukon; Watson Lake, Whitehorse, Burwash Landing, Faro, Mayo, and Dawson City also recorded their coldest March mean temperatures.

Only a few Marchs during the past 120 years have been even approximately this cold in Alaska, and notably none of those extreme cold Marchs occurred before 1950. Based on the NOAA/NCEI analyses, four of the five coldest March records statewide since 1925 have occurred since 1971. There was an absence of mild weather during the month over mainland Alaska, with Fairbanks recording its first March since 1918 without temperature rising above freezing.

With the continuation of cold temperatures into March, ice road seasons were longer than usual in the Yukon, not record breaking but notable after several recent short seasons. These cold temperatures also led to frozen waterlines and other local impacts, and in Alaska led to higher heating costs for homes and businesses at a time of year when temperatures typically begin to moderate. In contrast, these temperatures created favorable late season conditions for outdoor activities, including Fairbank's Mush-for-Kids event on April 1.

Unusually Expansive Sea Ice in Eastern Bering Sea



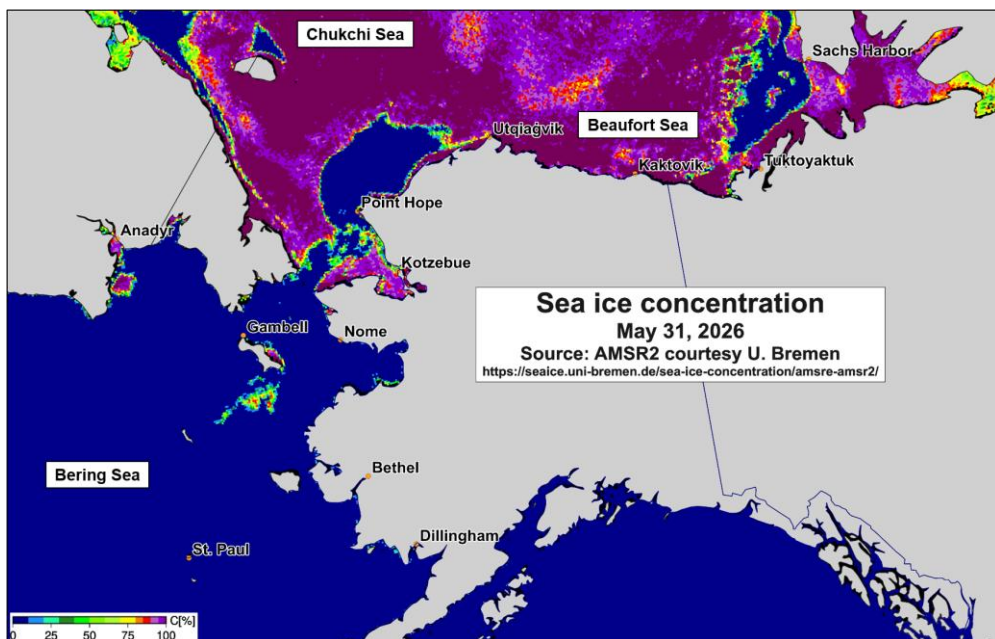
Satellite image from March 26, 2026, showing extensive sea ice (green) in the eastern Bering Sea and along the Alaska Peninsula coast.

Source: NOAA GOES-18

The northern hemisphere's March maximum sea ice extent was the lowest in the satellite era (1979-present). Across most sub-basins, winter sea ice conditions in early 2026 were unusually low, with many regions saw near record or record low extent, while the eastern Bering Sea was a notable exception to this pattern. A persistent ridge of high pressure centered over eastern Siberia and the western Bering Sea resulted in a prolonged period of northerly – cold – flow. The persistent flow of cold air enabled sea ice to grow and expand southward in the eastern Bering Sea to an extent not observed in decades. Long-term residents of the region noted that sea ice coverage along the north side of the Alaska Peninsula was the greatest observed since 1976.

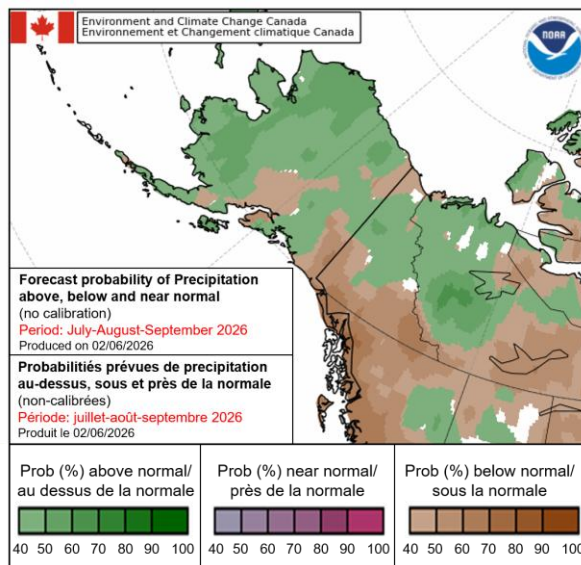
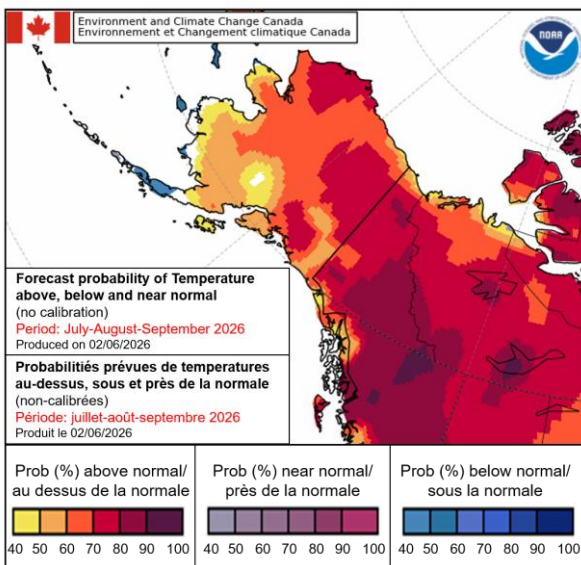
The impacts of this unusual ice expansion were significant for local communities and industries. These conditions disrupted marine and fisheries activities across the region, including fishing vessels stranded at False Pass Harbor for over a week, the cancellation of the National Marine Fisheries Survey Bristol Bay crab survey, and extended closure of the ports of St. Paul and St. George. Even as sea ice loss continues at a global scale as the Earth warms, local weather patterns can still create extreme conditions that temporarily resemble those typical of the mid-20th century.

Sea Ice Concentration Conditions on 31 May 2026 in the Bering, Chukchi and Beaufort Seas



There was a surge of sea ice coverage in the Bering Sea in early March this year, with rapid development due to an extended period of persistent, cold north winds. By the last week of March, ice extent in the Alaskan portion of the Bering was the highest recorded since 2012. A change in weather patterns in early April brought stormier and milder conditions to the region, and the ice quickly melted back. By late May, the ice extent had fallen below the long-term average. The Chukchi Sea remains primarily covered, however, in May a large area of open water developed west of the North Slope coast, representing the most open water since 2022. In the Beaufort Sea this spring, outside of the consolidated ice edge, there is a mix of first-year ice in the southeast, old and first-year ice in the western half, and mostly old ice in the northeast. Breakup along the consolidated ice edge in the extreme eastern Beaufort occurred about two weeks earlier than normal due to southeasterly winds, and resulted in areas of bergy water, grey-white ice, and first-year ice in the region west of Banks Island. During this past winter, persistent circulation patterns transported the thickest and oldest Arctic ice into the northeastern Beaufort Sea, leaving the northwestern Beaufort much thinner than normal, with predominantly first-year ice in an area once dominated by old ice. In contrast, the Amundsen Gulf developed unusually extensive consolidated ice, due partly to below normal temperatures seen over this portion of the Arctic from January through March, with the ice persisting into the spring.

Temperature Outlook: July to Sept 2026 Precipitation Outlook: July to Sept 2026



From July to September 2026, southeastern Yukon, northern British Columbia, and parts of eastern Northwest Territories have the highest probability of above normal temperatures at 80 – 100%. Western Yukon, eastern and northern parts of Alaska, and much of the Northwest Territories also shows a strong chance of warmer conditions. The rest of Alaska and coastal areas near the Beaufort Sea have a 40 – 70% probability of above normal temperatures, while the Aleutian Islands have a slight chance of below normal conditions.

The precipitation outlook suggests a 40 – 70% chance of drier than normal conditions across southern and eastern portions of Alaska and the Northwest Territories, as well as parts of southern Yukon and northern British Columbia. Meanwhile, a broad region from western Alaska through central and northern Yukon into western Northwest Territories, including the Peace River region in British Columbia, shows a 40 – 70% probability of wetter than normal conditions.

Content and graphics prepared by NOAA's National Weather Service and National Center for Environmental Information; the Alaska Center for Climate Assessment and Policy at the University of Alaska; and Environment and Climate Change Canada, as well as our regional partners: Alaska Climate Research Center, Alaska Climate Science Center, National Snow and Ice Data Center, and Scenarios Network for Alaska + Arctic Planning.

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