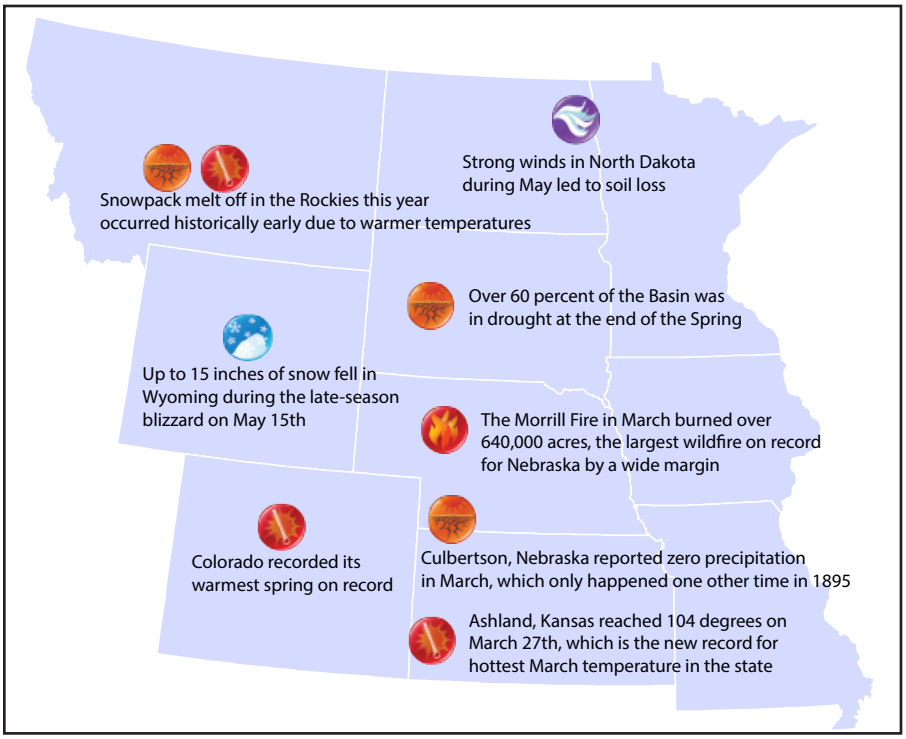
Quarterly Climate Impacts and Outlook

Missouri River Basin

June 2026

Regional – *Significant Events for March - May 2026*



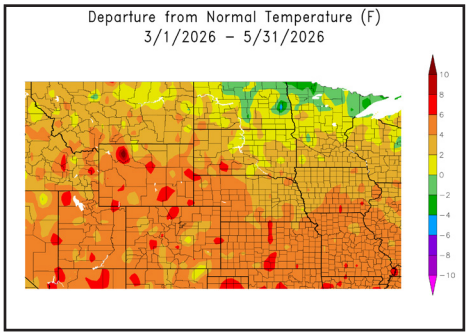
Highlights for the Basin

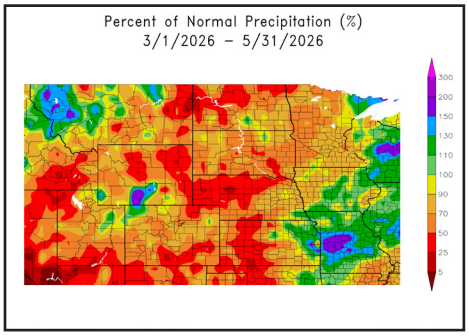
Temperatures in March were historically warm, with records shattered across the region. In Wyoming, Redbird and Lingle hit 90 degrees F for the first time in state history, and the average high was up to 20 degrees F above normal. The story was similar in Colorado, where seven out of the top ten warmest daily March temperatures were recorded this year, and 208 stations tied or broke their monthly record. Meanwhile, the statewide average maximum temperature beat the previous record set back in 1910 by nearly 5 degrees F. Across the border in Kansas, it had been 119 years since Kansas reached 100 degrees F in March, and it happened multiple times this year. For some within the Basin, these were the warmest temperatures they experienced all spring.

Regional – *Climate Overview for March - May 2026*

Temperature and Precipitation Anomalies

Departure from Normal Temperature (°F) (left) and Percent of Normal Precipitation (right) for Spring 2026



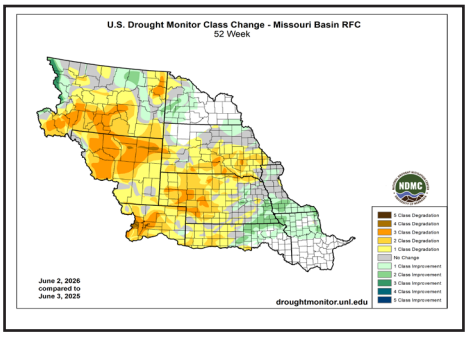


Driven by the historic warmth in March, this spring ranked as the third warmest on record for the Basin. This trend continued into April, with Colorado recording its warmest March-April and Kansas, Nebraska, and Wyoming ranking in the top five. Despite temperatures in May being near-normal across the Basin, several locations in Wyoming set their all-time warmest temperature for the month.

This spring was dry, particularly in Kansas and Nebraska, with 22 counties ranking in the top five driest. Minimal precipitation fell across the western half of both states in March and April, with 14 counties ranking driest. In May, precipitation was scattered across the Basin.

Changes in Drought Conditions

June 3, 2025 to June 2, 2026



The map above shows the areas of increasing (yellow shading) and decreasing (green shading) categories of drought. Drought conditions are significantly worse this year compared to 2025, with parts of Wyoming up to four classes lower than last year due to record dryness. The worst conditions are found in western Nebraska, with two separate areas of D4.

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Regional – *Impacts for March - May 2026*

Wildfires

March was a historical month for wildfires in Nebraska, with nearly double the acres burned compared to the previous record year of 2012. The Morrill Fire surpassed that by itself, while the Cottonwood Fire burned another 130,000 acres. Numerous evacuation orders were issued, and the Morrill Fire led to one fatality. Several other larger fires took place this spring in the state, with over a million acres total burned in Nebraska.

Water Resources

The rapid snowpack melt-off, below-normal precipitation, and warmer temperatures have led the USACE to project runoff at 60 percent of average. At the end of May, soil moisture across drought-stricken Wyoming and western Nebraska was well below normal. Streamflow, which has been poor for several years, is near or at record lows. Irrigation has commenced, and the amount of water available is expected to be lower than normal this summer.

Agriculture

Winter wheat headed out much earlier this year, while the number of acres being abandoned is close to the highest percentage since the Dust Bowl. Yields are expected to be down 40 percent in Colorado and Nebraska compared to last year and 31 percent lower in Kansas. Drought conditions this spring have led to a sharp increase in the number of cattle being sold off. The strong winds in North Dakota led to soil loss and forced some to replant crops.

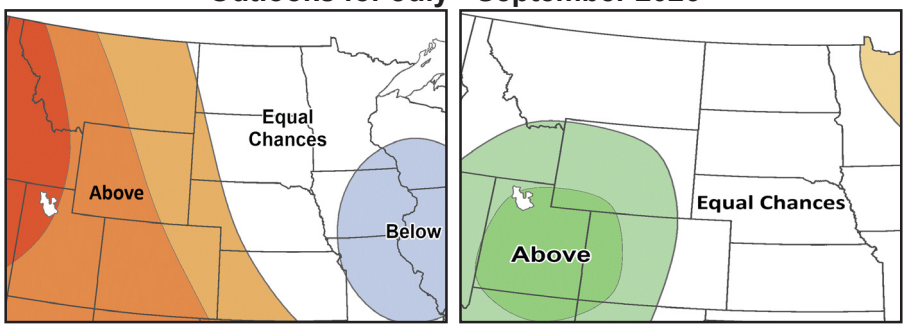
Above: Hail damage in Missouri, credit Kevin Rush (left); Dry soils in Nebraska, credit Travis Connot (center); Winter wheat in poor condition near Martin, South Dakota, credit Clarence Winter (right)

Regional – *Outlook for July - September 2026*

Temperature

Precipitation

Outlooks for July - September 2026



EC: Equal chances of above, near, or below normal

A: Above normal, B: Below normal

According to NOAA's Climate Prediction Center, the outlook for the upcoming season indicates increased chances of above-normal temperatures across the western portions of the Basin. Increased chances of above-normal precipitation are present across Colorado and Wyoming, hinting at the possibility of an active monsoon season. The rest of the basin has equal chances of above-, below-, or near-normal precipitation.

El Niño has emerged in early June and is likely to strengthen over the coming months. Wildfire potential is expected to be elevated this summer in parts of Colorado, the Dakotas, and Wyoming. Due to drought and a late freeze this spring, pasture and hay yields will likely be below average.

MO River Basin Partners

- High Plains Regional Climate Center
- National Drought Mitigation Center
- National Integrated Drought Information System
- National Centers for Environmental Information
- National Weather Service- Central Region
- NOAA Climate Prediction Center
- NWS Missouri Basin River Forecast Center
- American Association of State Climatologists
- U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
- U.S. Bureau of Reclamation
- USDA Northern Plains Climate Hub
- Bureau of Indian Affairs – Great Plains Region

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