

Winter Warmth

Persistent winter warmth had far-reaching impacts—some positive and some negative. Energy costs were lower than usual for Midwestern households due to [reduced heating demand](#). Tourism and recreation had a difficult season, with [ski resorts](#) closed early, [snowmobile trails](#) shuttered, [unsafe ice fishing](#) conditions, and canceled [festivals](#). Record and near-record early ice out and short ice season length were reported in [Minnesota](#) and [Wisconsin](#).



Lack of snow cover (credit: Minnesota State Climatology Office)

Agriculture and Natural Resources

Farmers had an early start to the maple syrup season, with reports of tapping several weeks ahead of normal in [Wisconsin](#), [Indiana](#), and [Michigan](#). In Ohio, unfrozen ground contributed to rutting and root damage during syrup collection. Across the lower Midwest, many locations had unfrozen ground all winter. This allowed for water infiltration in January in areas where rainfall was abundant, but it also enabled evaporation in February. A lack of deep soil moisture was reported in Indiana, Iowa, Illinois, and Missouri. [Pollen season](#) was weeks ahead of schedule across the lower Midwest as the warmth quickly advanced plant phenology, and early-blooming flowers were spotted even in the upper Midwest.



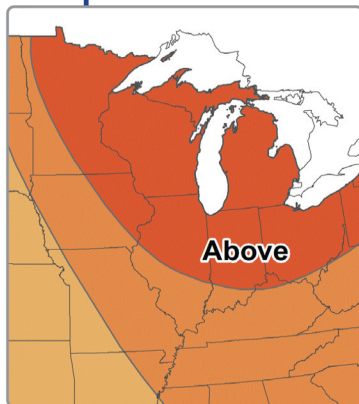
Kankakee River ice jam near Wilmington, IL (credit: Will County Emergency Management Agency)

January Arctic Blast

Numerous [injuries](#) and fatalities from cold exposure were reported during the January cold snap in Missouri, Illinois, and Indiana. Rapid freezing caused navigation issues as barges froze on the Kankakee River and river flooding from [ice jams](#). [Peach](#) crop damage was reported in southern Illinois, and the full extent of the damage will be unknown until later in the growing season.

Regional Outlook – April - June 2024

Temperature Outlook

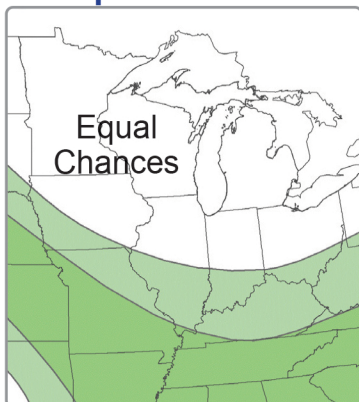


NOAA forecasters [are predicting](#) increased chances of above-normal temperatures for the entire Midwest. The precipitation outlook shows a slight chance of above-normal precipitation across the southern Midwest, with equal chances of above-, below-, or near-normal precipitation in the north.

[Strong El Niño conditions](#) have started to weaken, and a transition to ENSO-neutral conditions are expected during spring.

The continuation of long-term drought around and west of the Mississippi River threatens trees, ecosystem health, reservoir levels, recreation, and agriculture. Some locations have multi-year precipitation deficits over 30 inches. Dry soils, especially a foot or two below the surface, are a concern for river baseflows and water supply. Normal to slightly above-normal spring precipitation will do little to alleviate long-term dryness.

Precipitation Outlook



Plants and crops entered spring weeks ahead of schedule, particularly across the lower Midwest. Advanced phenology puts fruit crops at risk of damage as normal freezes can occur throughout April and May.

Spring flood potential is below normal in the Upper Mississippi River Basin due to historically low snow depth and snow water equivalent. Spring flood potential is normal to below normal in the Ohio River Basin.

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