

IOWA PRELIMINARY MONTHLY WEATHER SUMMARY – APRIL 2011

General Summary. Iowa temperatures averaged 48.2° or 0.3° below normal while precipitation totaled 3.83 inches or 0.50 inches above normal. This ranks as the 58th coolest and 32nd wettest April among 139 years of state records. This was also the fifth consecutive cooler than normal month and seventh consecutive wetter than normal April.

Temperatures. The first two weeks of the month averaged 6.5 degrees above normal with temperatures soaring to 89° at Osceola on the 3rd, 87° at Shenandoah on the 9th and 90° at Des Moines on the 10th. However, the next two weeks averaged 7.1° below normal and saw no readings exceed 77°. Atlantic reported the lowest temperature of the month with a 19° reading on the morning of the 5th. However, late month temperatures fell to 24° at Sheldon on the 24th and 25° at Waterloo on the 29th.

Heating Degree Day Totals. Home heating requirements, as estimated by heating degree day totals, averaged 62% greater than last April and 1% more than normal. Degree day totals so far this heating season (since July 1, 2010) are running 1% less than last year and normal.

Precipitation. Precipitation was evenly distributed throughout the month and across the state. Monthly totals varied from 2.59 inches at Carroll to 5.61 inches at Cascade. Relatively dry and unseasonably warm weather from the 8th through the 14th allowed 2% of the state's corn crop to be planted. However, widespread rain on the 15th, followed by frequent rain and persistent cool weather prevented any additional planting until the very end of the month when Iowa Agricultural Statistics reported that an additional 6% of the intended corn acreage was planted. This is about two weeks behind the normal planting pace and is similar to the progress made by late April in 2008. Snow was reported on twelve days during the month with by far the greatest accumulations coming on the 19th when several inches fell over the northern one-third of Iowa. Dorchester reported the most snow with this storm with 6.5 inches. Overall this was the most widespread snowfall Iowa has seen for so late in the season since April 20-21, 1992.

Severe Weather. There were two outbreaks of severe weather in Iowa during April. The first event on the evening of the 3rd, produced reports of large hail from 16 counties, mostly in east central Iowa, with hail up to three inches in diameter in Dubuque. The second event came on the evening of the 9th with the National Weather Service reporting at least 15 tornadoes over northwestern Iowa (along a line from Mapleton to near Algona). Many of these tornadoes were very strong ones with four rated EF-3 with one resulting in considerable damage in Mapleton. The severe weather season, as is often the case following mature La Nina events, has been a very active one in Iowa and points to the south and east with the same general weather pattern of colder than usual weather to the north and warmer than normal to the south expected to continue well into May.

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