



The High Plains Drifter

Spring 2016 Edition

National Weather Service
5250 E Lee Bird Drive
North Platte, NE 69101

The Spring Season Has Arrived!

By Cory Martin, Meteorologist

March 20th marked the Spring Equinox and the official first day of astronomical spring. Spring is a season of growth and new life, but in Nebraska it can also be a season of dramatic and extreme weather. Strong storm systems cross the Plains, bringing anything from powerful severe thunderstorms to crippling blizzards and blasts of cold air as winter stubbornly fades away.

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This spring, remember to place the funnel and tube back into your standard 8” rain gauge. The funnel and tube are the preferred method for collecting liquid precipitation. However, if winter weather is expected please remove the funnel and tube and allow the snow to collect in the aluminum can. Soon the summer months will be here and wintry precipitation measurements will cease for a while! Please notify us if the funnel or tube for your rain gauge is damaged, or if you need a new precipitation measurement stick.

Lead Forecaster Retires After 41 Years

By NWS North Platte Staff

National Weather Service North Platte Lead Forecaster John Springer retired on February 19, 2016 after 41 years of civilian federal service. John began his career in 1975 with the Naval Weather Service Environmental Detachment in Meridian, Mississippi. After several other moves, John spent the last 20 years of his career serving western and north central Nebraska at our office here in North Platte. We thank John for his years of dedication to our local weather and wish him nothing but the best in his retirement years!



John Springer retired from the National Weather Service in February.

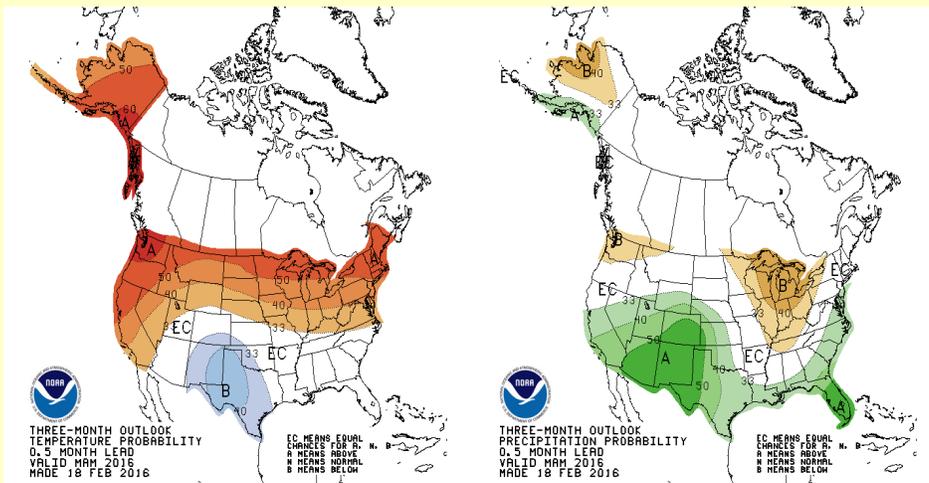


Winter Recap and Spring Outlook

By Chris Buttler, Lead Meteorologist

Precipitation this winter was generally near to slightly above normal. There were a couple of pockets of slightly below normal precipitation. The first was over the central Sandhills in the vicinity of Logan and eastern McPherson counties. The second area of slightly below normal precipitation was over portions of Holt and Boyd counties. Snowfall for the months of December 2015 through February 2016 was generally near to above normal across most of western and north central Nebraska. Snowfall was the heaviest across north central Nebraska and into the Panhandle, with slightly lower amounts to the south and east.

Temperatures for the winter were generally above to much above normal across most of western and north central Nebraska. Temperatures were 2 to 4 degrees above normal east of a line from Ogallala to Ainsworth. West of this line, temperatures were near normal up to two degrees above normal. Slightly below normal temperatures were seen across portions of Cherry and Sheridan counties where persistent snow cover was present during most of December and January. This persistent snow cover held temperatures down until the snow melted in February.



Spring climatological outlooks for temperature (left) and precipitation (right). Courtesy of CPC.

Going forward, the latest outlook for spring including March, April and May calls for above normal temperatures and above normal precipitation. For locations over north central Nebraska, there are equal chances for above, below or near normal precipitation. Visit the Climate Prediction Center at cpc.ncep.noaa.gov for more seasonal outlook information.

Winter Extremes

Our COOP network consists of 56 sites across western and north central Nebraska. Which sites experienced the harshest winter this season?

Most Snowfall

1. Newport

34.1"

2. Arthur: 33.8"

3. Crescent Lake: 29.5"

Coldest Average

1. Ewing

26.3°

2. Lynch: 26.5°

3. Gordon 6 N: 26.9°

Coldest Observed

1. Lynch

-18°

2. Oconto: -17°

3. Broken Bow 2 W: -16°

***The winter season is defined meteorologically as December 1 through February 28/29.



More Flooding Possible This Spring

By Kenny Roberg, Lead Meteorologist

Recent Flooding

Significant flooding has occurred on either the North or South Platte River in 3 of the last 5 years. Below is a list of the observed crests at the city of North Platte and their historical ranking.

South Platte River

- 1. 14.40 ft – 9/23/2013*
- 2. 14.02 ft – 6/3/1935
- 3. 13.30 ft – 5/18/2015*
- 4. 12.99 ft – 6/7/1995

**Preliminary values*

North Platte River

- 1. 7.73 ft – 6/21/2011
- 2. 6.71 ft – 6/10/1971
- 3. 6.67 ft – 6/28/1983
- 4. 6.63 ft – 8/23/1983

Visit water.weather.gov for more historical river crest information.

The probability of spring flooding through May is generally above average across most of central and western Nebraska due to abnormally wet soil moisture conditions and a better chance for above normal spring precipitation.

Upstream reservoir levels on the North Platte River are averaging above normal with current mountain snowpack near normal levels. Inflows into Lake McConaughy tend to be above normal around strong El Nino years. Seven out of the top nine annual Lake McConaughy inflows are associated with the three strongest El Nino events and the current event is tied for the strongest historic event.



The United States Geological Survey takes manual streamflow observations near Roscoe, Nebraska during the South Platte River flood of September 2013. – NWS Photo

Snowpack across the South Platte River Basin is running slightly above normal with the latest climate outlook calling for above normal precipitation through May, especially along the South Platte River basin. Therefore, generally expect a higher likelihood of above normal flows and possible flooding this spring on the South Platte and Platte River in southwest Nebraska.

For the latest flood outlook information give us a call or visit our webpage at weather.gov/northplatte.



Severe Weather – We Need Your Reports!

By Cory Martin, Meteorologist

Reporting severe weather in your area can provide vital information to help our ability to warn the public. Reports from our COOP observers in our coverage area are especially important due to our low population density, which means we sometimes go great lengths of time without having reports from the ground during a severe weather event. While our forecast office will always have highly trained eyes tracking and analyzing storms on radar, reports from our observers go a long way toward helping us attain our goal of keeping the public safe. Below is a list of what is typically reported to our office:

1. Hail and/or Hail Damage
 - Measure the diameter of the hail or reference it size. (Penny, quarter, golf ball, etc.)
2. Strong Wind Gusts and Wind Damage
 - Estimate wind speed or provide exact measurement, if possible.
 - Report wind damage such as downed branches, uprooted trees, and damage to buildings or other infrastructure.
3. Funnel Clouds and Tornadoes
 - If it is safe to do so, please CALL our office immediately with funnel cloud or tornado reports! Pictures are appreciated to confirm the report. Remember, your safety comes first!
4. Flooding
 - In the event of excessively heavy rainfall, please report ponding of water or flood waters running over local roadways.

Always include what you saw, when you saw it, and your location. Below is a list of contact information for our office. Feel free to find us on social media or give us a call!



Reports of severe weather from our network of spotters and observers are a vital component of our severe weather operations.



Search: NWSNorthPlatte



@NWSNorthPlatte



Call us! 1-308-532-0921



2016 Annual COOP Station Visits

By NWS North Platte Staff

Meteorologists from NWS North Platte will be visiting all 56 of our COOP stations in western and north central Nebraska this calendar year. The purpose of the visit will be to thoroughly inspect your equipment and update our site survey information.

A handful of COOP sites have already been visited so far, and more visits will be completed in the near future as time and Mother Nature allows. If possible, we would like our observers to be present for the site visits so we can answer any questions you may have and to express our appreciation for your hard work and dedication. We will contact you in advance to arrange a visit time and date.

If you have any obvious equipment issues please let us know as soon as possible so we can plan ahead and be prepared to correct the problem during your site visit.



National Weather Service North Platte, Nebraska



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