

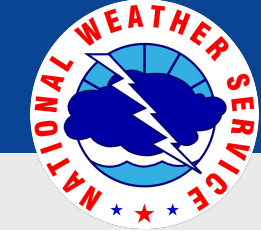


2026 Spring Flood and Water Resources Outlook

National Weather Service
Bismarck, ND

March 12, 2026





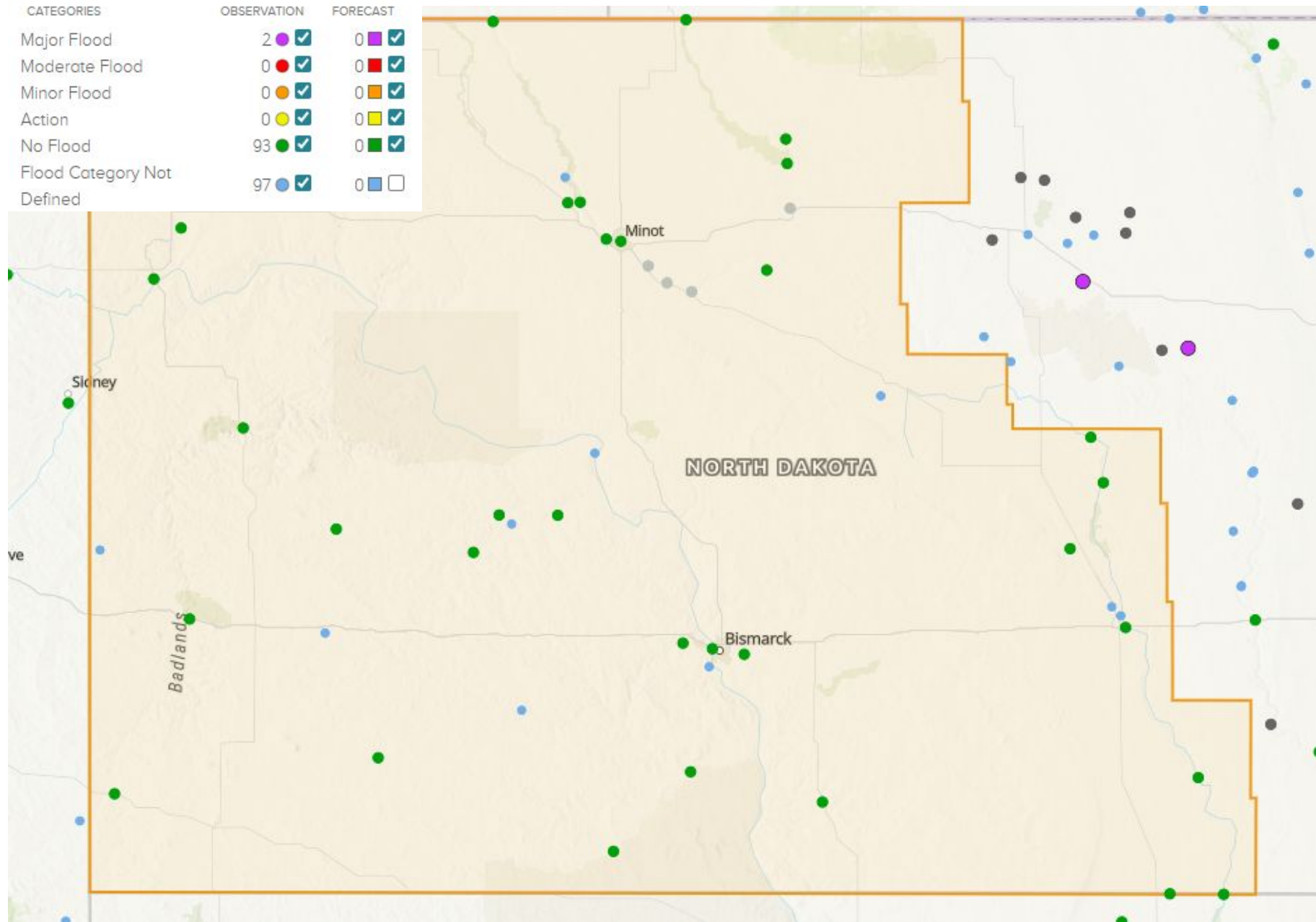
Spring Flood & Water Resources Outlook

March 12, 2026
3:34 PM CDT

March 12, 2026 Update

Key Messages

- Overlapping areas of remaining snow water equivalent values greater than 2 inches and frost depths down to 39 inches present the highest flood risk in the Souris River Basin.
- Outside of the above, flood risk is generally below normal.
- Below normal runoff is expected on the Missouri River mainstem.
- There is a moderate chance of drought conditions rapidly deteriorating after the spring melt season.





Spring Flood Outlook

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Key Ingredients	Antecedent Conditions	Impact to Spring Flooding
Winter Precipitation /Temperatures	Above normal temperatures, near normal precipitation	Lesser Risk
River Levels	Near normal	Normal Risk
River Ice Conditions	Below normal	Lesser Risk
Soil Moisture	Above normal	Greater Risk
Frost Depth	Above normal	Greater Risk
Snow Conditions / Water Equivalent	Below normal	Lesser Risk
Spring Weather Outlook	Near normal	Normal Risk

Overall Risk of Spring Flooding:

Geographically Isolated Locations of Higher Risk

- Overlapping areas of remaining SWE values greater than 2 inches and frost depths down to 39 inches present the highest flood risk in the Souris River Basin.
- Outside of the above, flood risk generally is below normal.

Risk Potential: Lesser Risk Normal Risk Greater Risk To Be Determined



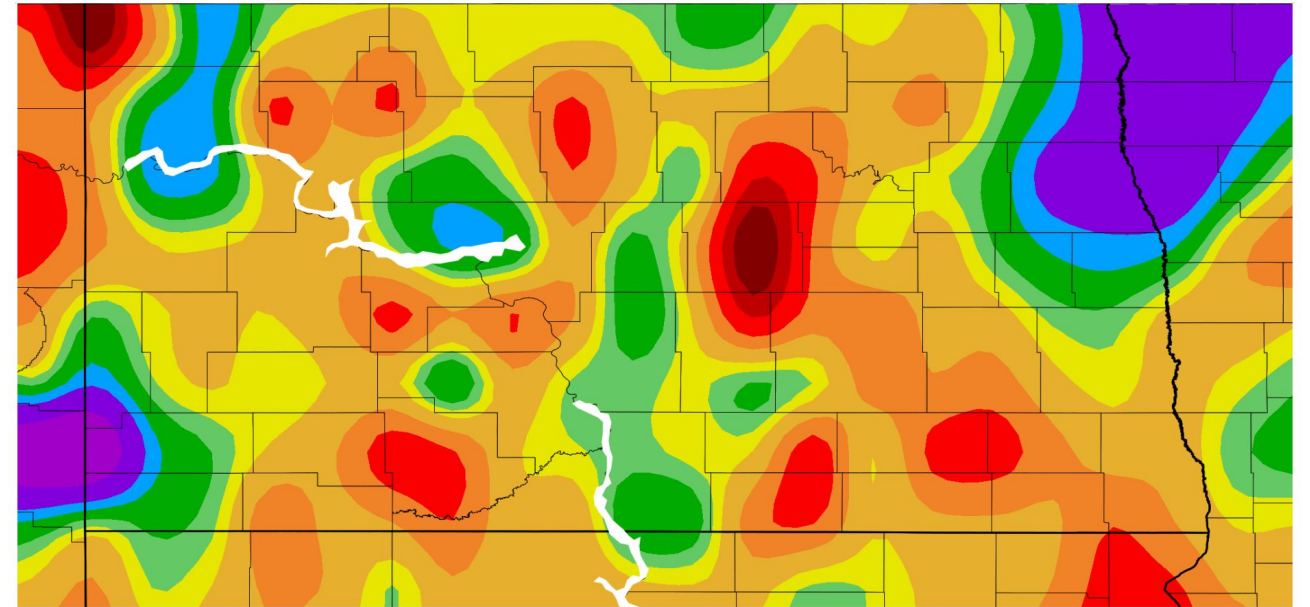
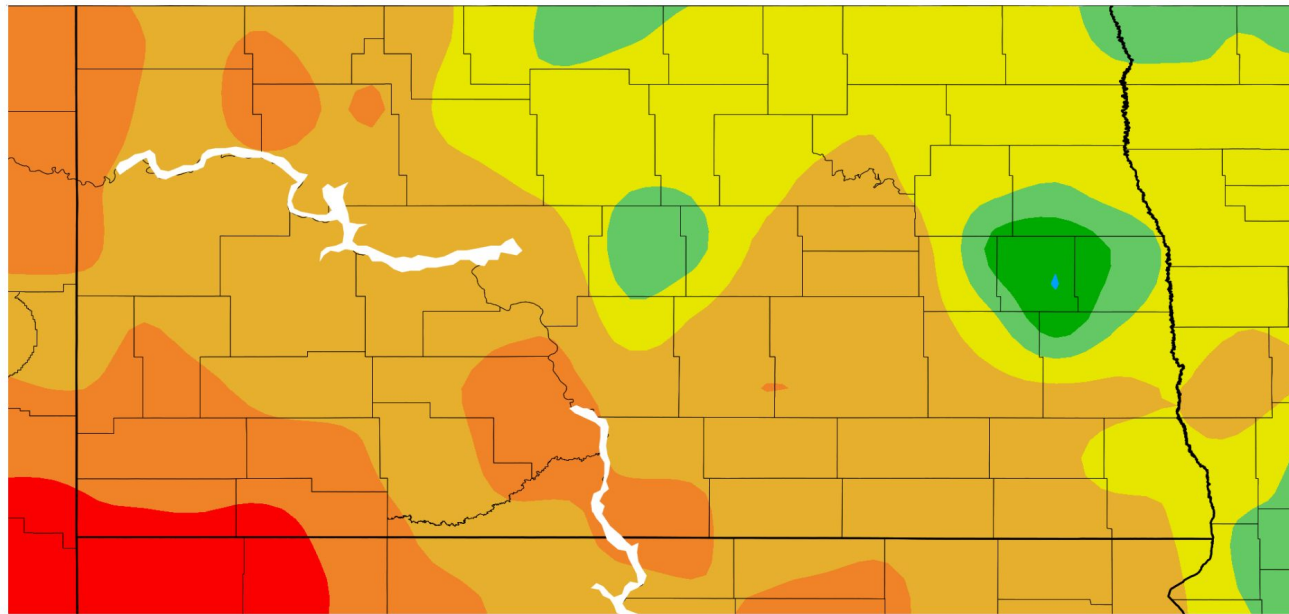
Winter Precipitation and Temperature

March 12, 2026
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Maps shows temperature and precipitation departures during meteorological winter

Departure from Normal Temperature (F)
12/1/2025 - 2/28/2026

Percent of Normal Precipitation (%)
12/1/2025 - 2/28/2026



- Above average temperatures were observed across most of western and central North Dakota this winter, while precipitation was varied across the area.
- Those warm temperatures has led to warming soil temperatures and no appreciable snowpack.

Source: [High Plains Regional Climate Center](#)



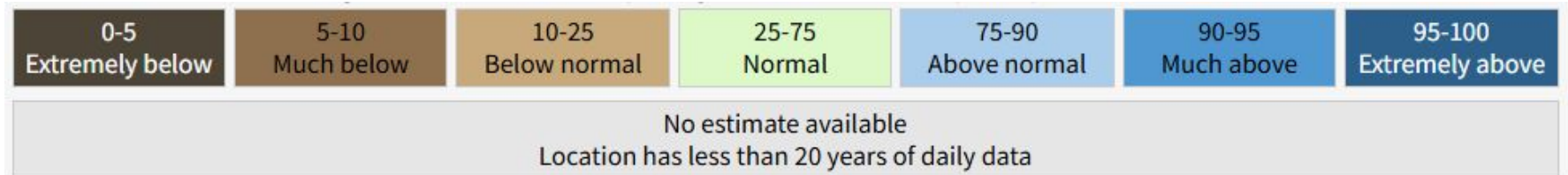
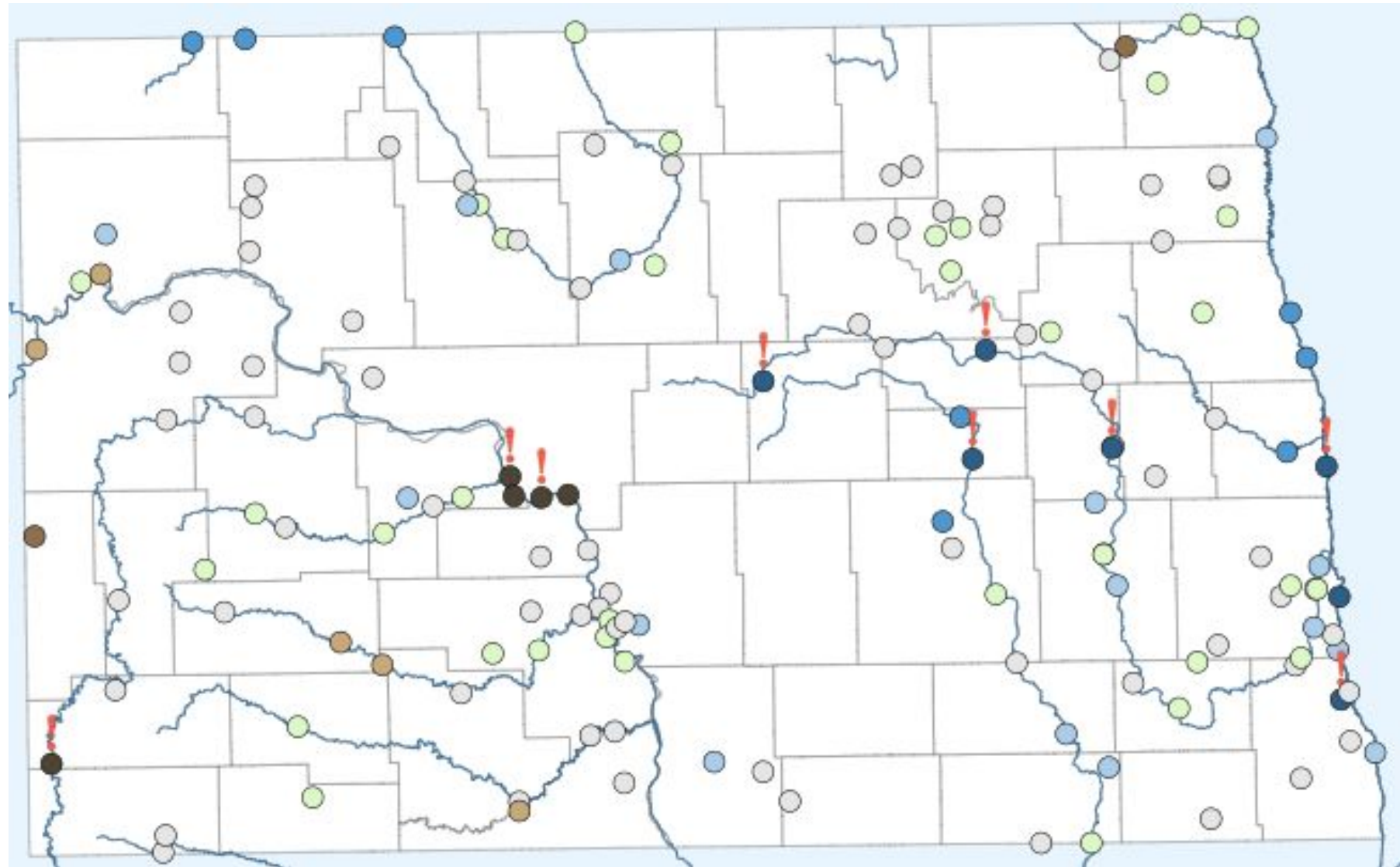


River Levels and River Ice

March 12, 2026
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Map shows river level percentiles for this day in history

- While currently entering spring melt season, there is nothing unusual about river stages across western and central North Dakota.
- Rivers north of Interstate 94 remain ice covered in general, but are ready to lose their ice.
- This gentle and steady degradation of ice leads to lower risk of ice related problems.



Source: [USGS](https://www.usgs.gov/)



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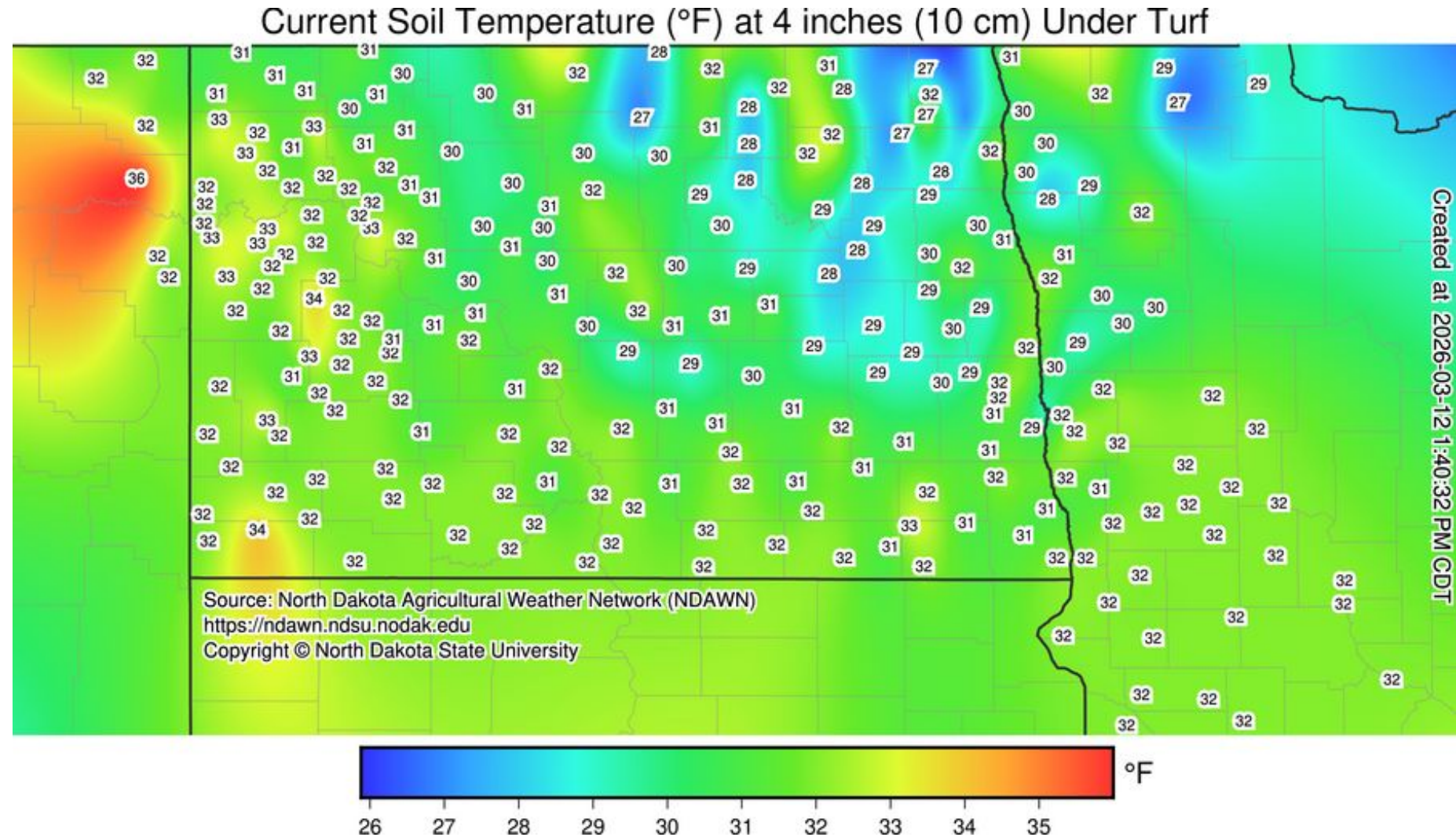


Soil Moisture and Frost Depth

March 12, 2026
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Map shows ground surface temperatures

- Soils in southwestern and south central North Dakota are beginning to thaw, while soils in northern tier counties remain well frozen.
- Soil temperatures are roughly normal for this time of year, but highly varied from one corner of the state to the next.
- Locations with wet, frozen soils remain susceptible to flooding from early spring rains, until such time as they begin to thaw.



Source: [NDAWN](https://ndawn.ndsu.nodak.edu)



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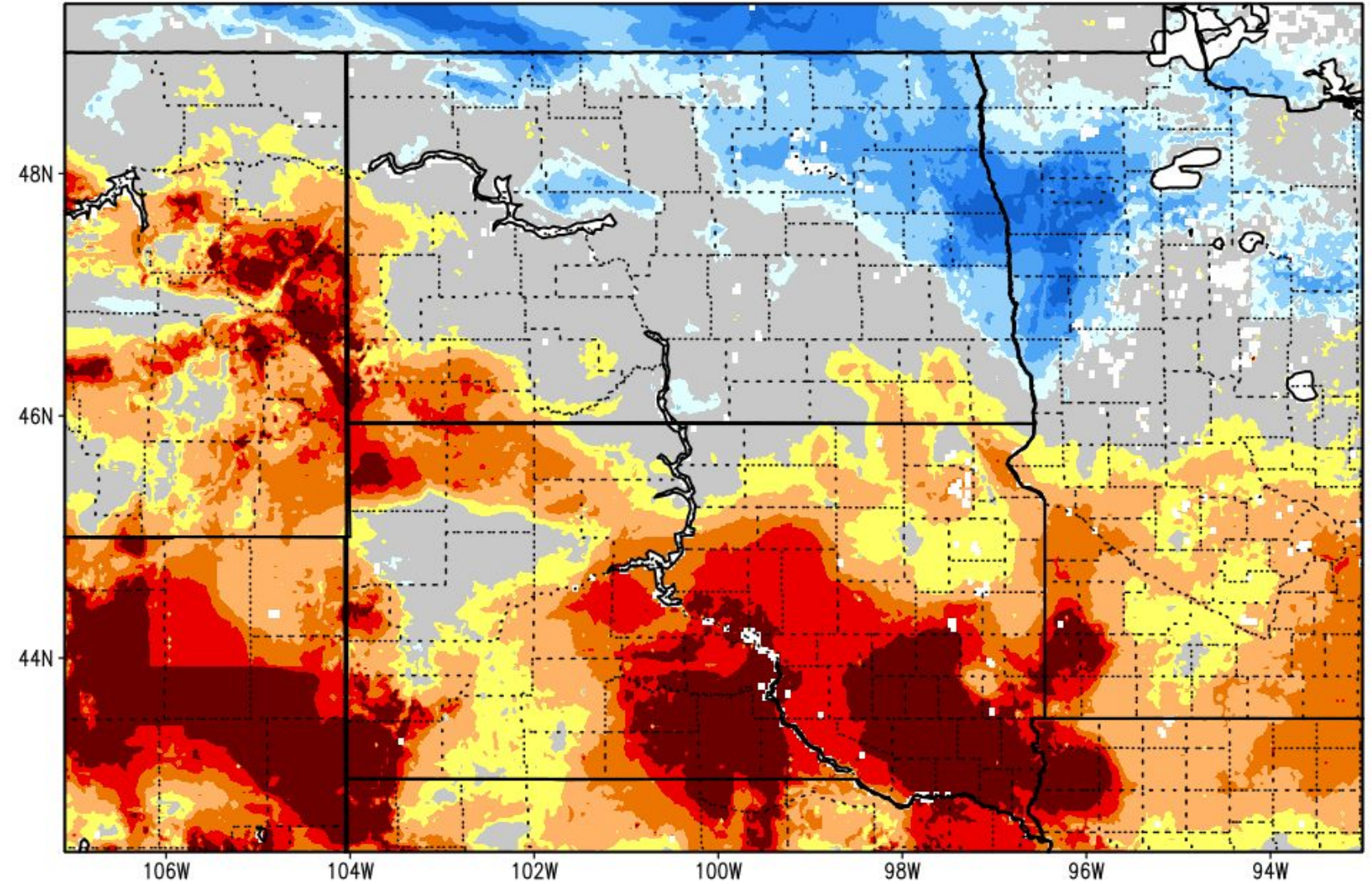
Soil Moisture and Frost Depth

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Map shows soil moisture percentiles down to 10 centimeters

SPoRT-LIS 0-10 cm Soil Moisture percentile valid 12 Mar 2026

- Soils across much of western, central, and northern North Dakota remain wet, frozen, and nearly impermeable to infiltration of meltwater or rainfall.
- These soil conditions are expected to enhance runoff from a given snowpack or rainfall event.



NOTE
Experimental



Source: [NASA SPoRT](https://spport.jpl.nasa.gov/)



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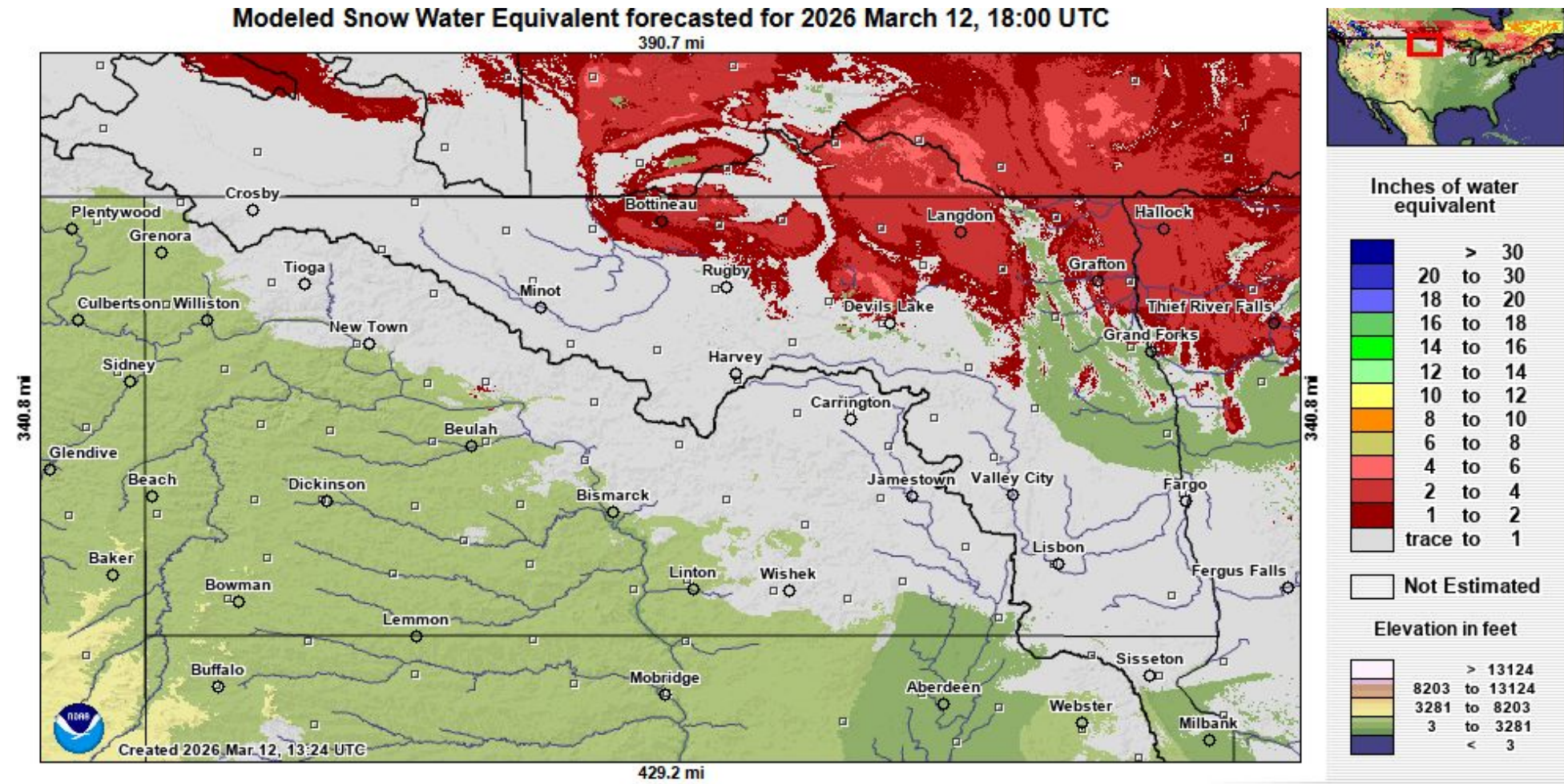


Snow Water Equivalent

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Map shows modeled snow water equivalent

- Much of the area is largely snow-free, with only the Turtle Mountain area having an excess of 2.5 inches of snow water equivalent (SWE).
- In general, existing SWE is well below normal, but this is only true because of recent warm weather that cleared snow off a large portion of North Dakota.
- A lack of significant SWE results in near to well below normal risk of widespread flooding.



Source: [NOHRSC](https://www.nohrsc.org/)



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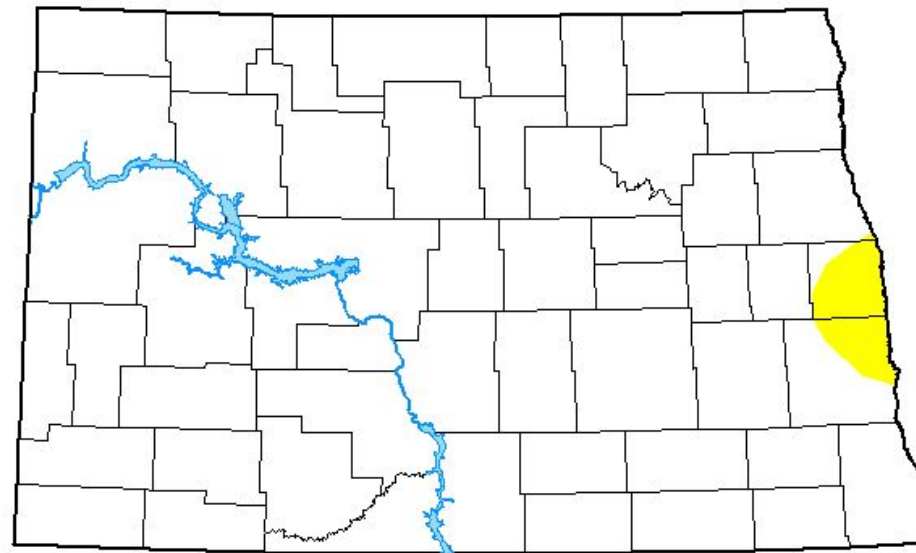
Latest Drought Conditions

March 12, 2026
3:34 PM CDT

Map shows latest Drought Monitor for North Dakota

- While conditions are currently quite favorable, concerns over extreme southwest North Dakota are starting to arise.

U.S. Drought Monitor North Dakota



March 10, 2026
(Released Thursday, Mar. 12, 2026)
Valid 8 a.m. EDT

Drought Conditions (Percent Area)

	None	D0-D4	D1-D4	D2-D4	D3-D4	D4
Current	98.22	1.78	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Last Week <small>03-03-2026</small>	98.22	1.78	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
3 Months Ago <small>12-09-2025</small>	98.04	1.96	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Start of Calendar Year <small>01-06-2026</small>	98.04	1.96	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Start of Water Year <small>09-30-2025</small>	94.92	5.08	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
One Year Ago <small>03-11-2025</small>	32.87	67.13	54.92	26.86	4.58	0.00

Intensity:

None	D2 Severe Drought
D0 Abnormally Dry	D3 Extreme Drought
D1 Moderate Drought	D4 Exceptional Drought

The Drought Monitor focuses on broad-scale conditions. Local conditions may vary. For more information on the Drought Monitor, go to <https://droughtmonitor.unl.edu/About.aspx>

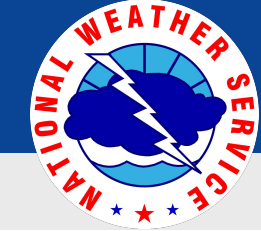
Author:

Brad Pugh
CPC/NOAA



droughtmonitor.unl.edu

Source: [US Drought Monitor](https://droughtmonitor.unl.edu)

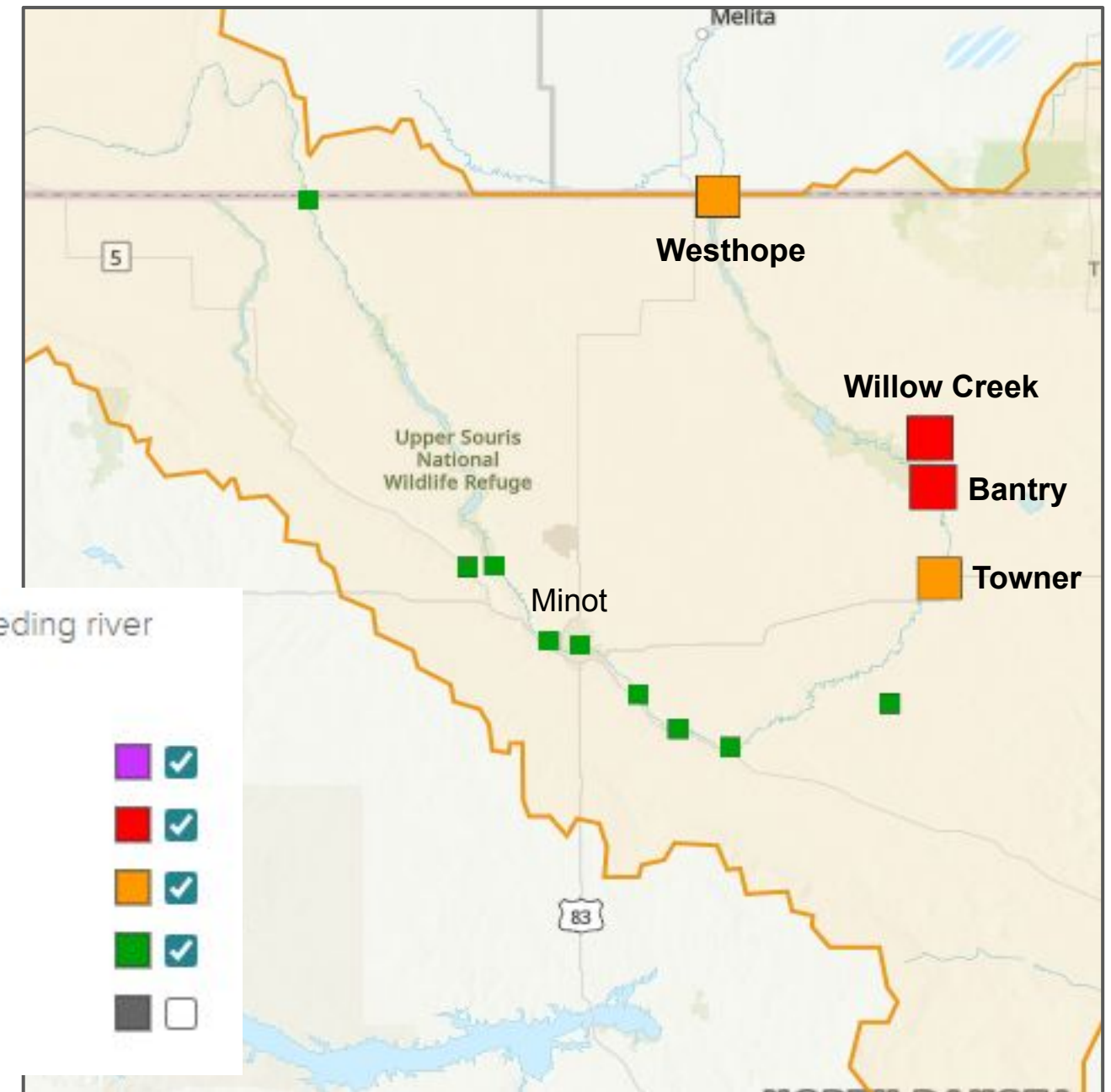


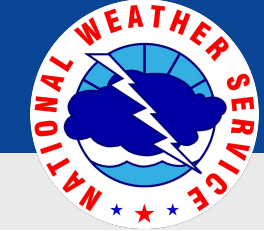
Long Range Flood Outlook

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Probability of exceeding minor to moderate flood stage

- Only the Souris River near Towner, Bantry, and Westhope, along with Willow Creek, are at above normal risk for flooding.





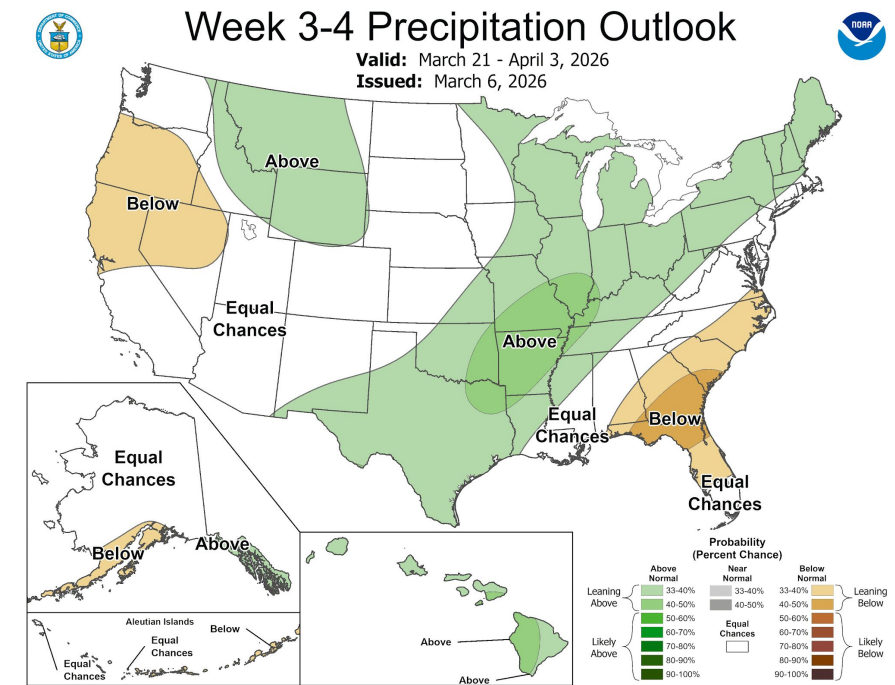
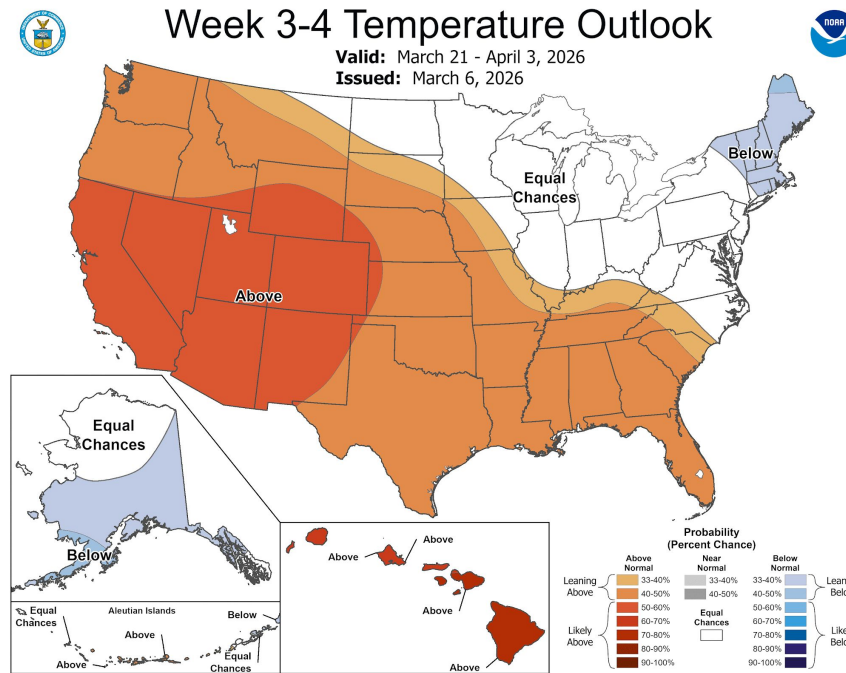
Spring Weather Outlook

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These are general outlooks that depict broad trends for the weeks and months ahead

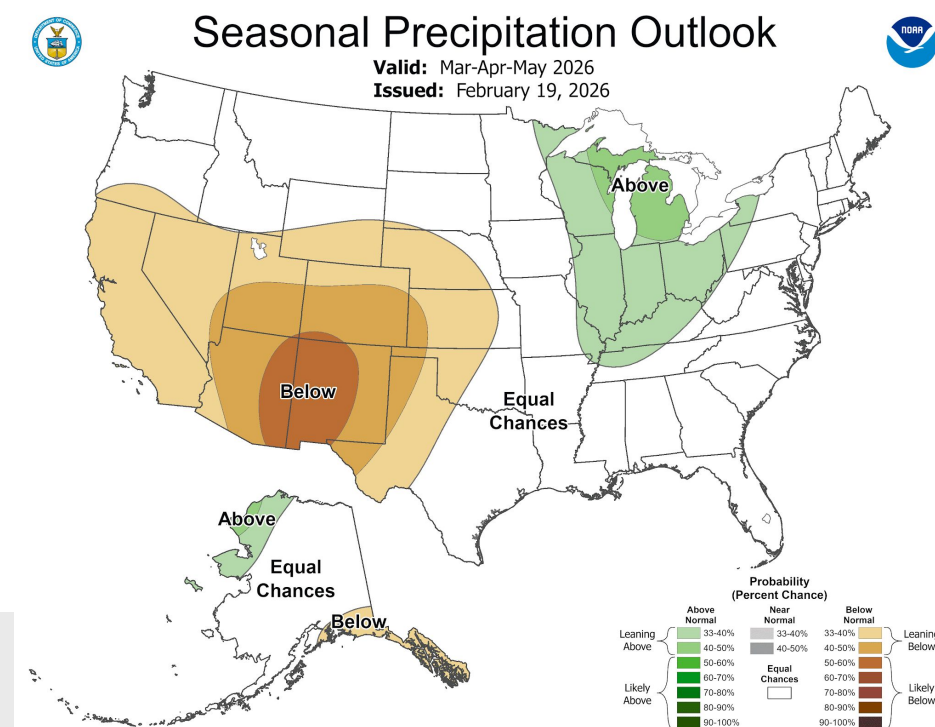
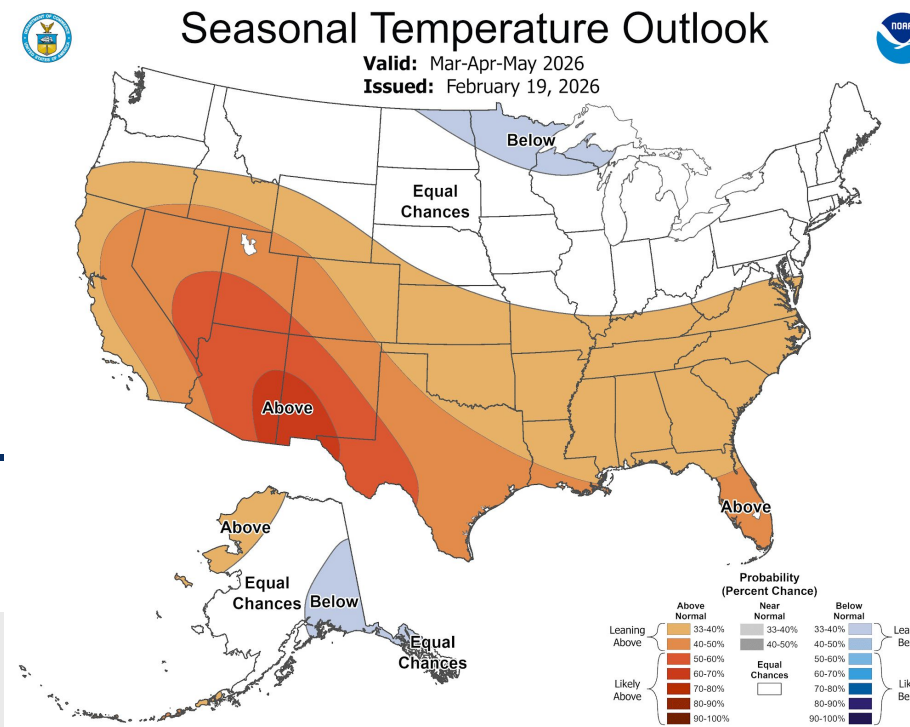
Weeks 3-4 Outlook

- There are generally equal chances for above, below, or near normal temperatures and precipitation from the end of March into the start of April.
- Impact to Spring Flooding: Neutral to negative, due to the majority of the spring melt already underway.



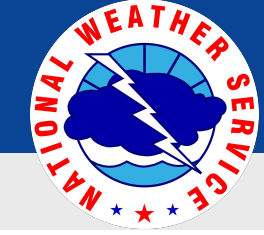
Seasonal Outlook

- There is a slight tilt towards below normal temperatures in northeast North Dakota, but otherwise equal chances for above, below, or near normal temperatures and precipitation for March through May.
- Impact to Spring Flooding: Neutral



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Key Messages

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- Outside of the above, flood risk is generally below normal.
- Below normal runoff is expected on the Missouri River mainstem.
- There is a moderate chance of drought conditions rapidly deteriorating after the spring melt season.

[Spring Flood Outlook for the Missouri and James River Basins](#)

[Spring Flood Outlook for the Souris River Basin](#)

Additional Resources

[NWS Bismarck Website](#)

[North Central River Forecast Center](#)

[Missouri Basin River Forecast Center](#)

[NWS Bismarck on Facebook](#)

[NWS Bismarck on Twitter](#)

[Forecast Points \(Hourly Details\)](#)

[River Observations and Forecasts for ND](#)

[Flood Safety Information](#)

[USGS National Water Dashboard](#)

