
...Spring Rises Arrive on the Mississippi and Atchafalaya Late in March...

Following near normal rainfall in January and a dry February, March rains were welcomed across the Mid Gulf South. An average of 8 to 10 inches of rain were recorded over the Lake Pontchartrain drainage during the month. Most smaller basins in the drainage area saw rains two to four inches above the monthly normal. Since flow in all the smaller streams was below normal, run off rises were sharp but below flood producing levels. Conversely, the Mississippi, the Atchafalaya and the Lower Pearl went into minor flood but only at isolated gauging points along the river courses. Lack of snow pack over the northern states this winter caused the spring rise on the Mississippi system to be a bit late and below normal this year arriving at Red River Landing on the last day of March.

Major rivers experienced steady moderate rises from low flow in late February to near bank full by the end of March. The Mississippi and the Atchafalaya, leveed throughout their basins, experienced minor flooding that presented industrial, commercial, and navigational problems common with increased flow. The river services industry and agricultural interests on the river side of the levees were impacted to some degree , though not more than during any other normal spring rise.

The coastal regions and wetlands of south central and southeast Louisiana continue running a rainfall deficit. The lower Atchafalaya basin year to date rainfall is about two inches below normal. The area south of Lake Pontchartrain from Timbalier Bay east to the Pearl River has a year to date deficit of nearly 4.5 inches. Ground water in those areas is fed by streams and bayous whose headwaters have been replenished by near normal to above normal rain. However, the fact remains that for the past several months coastal Louisiana has been in a protracted dry spell that could create problems should it continue into early summer.