
MONTHLY REPORT OF RIVER AND FLOOD CONDITIONS

MONTH: **MAY** YEAR : **2002**

...May Rainfall, Like April, Below Normal - Drought Remains a Threat...

The extended dry spell over south Louisiana and south Mississippi continued into late May with prospects of extended drought continuing into summer. Rainfall was sparse and spotty across the Mid Gulf South in May. Except for a pocket of three to five inch rains over the metropolitan area of New Orleans, rainfall from Lake Pontchartrain south to the Gulf of Mexico and east along the immediate gulf coast of Mississippi was less than one inch. With an average of only 3 rain days during the month.

The Atchafalaya Basin had one to three inches of rain during the month; about four inches below the monthly normal amount. The area north of Lake Pontchartrain into southwest Mississippi fared a bit better with an average near normal of four to six inches over about four to six rain days in May.

The ground water supply has been adequate for a normal vegetative growth in the area this spring. Should the extended dry spell continue into summer however, the area will slip into drought quite quickly. Jay Grymes, Louisiana State Climatologist reports, "After a slightly drier-than-normal first quarter of 2002, an exceptionally dry weather pattern [has] settled over the state with the last seven weeks being marked by near-record low rainfall for this time of year..." Jay goes on to say that, "The most critical areas...are located in southeastern and south-central Louisiana." That statement can be applied to southwest and coastal Mississippi as well.

Major rivers in the area, The Mississippi, Atchafalaya, and lower Pearl continue in their annual spring rises running from near bank full to minor flood during the month of May. All other rivers in the area remained at below normal flow.