2026 Spring Flood and Water Resources Outlook

National Weather Service
Milwaukee

March 12, 2026

Final Update

Spring Flood & Water Resources Outlook

March 12, 2026
12:30 PM CDT

Key Messages

- Spring flood risk is near to below average for most of southern Wisconsin
- Spring flood risk is below average for the lower Wisconsin River
    - This risk pertains to the underlying risk for the 3 month season of March 16 - May 14 as a whole. Flood risk for individual rain or snow melt events may be higher.
- Factors related to this risk: Below average snowpack, near average soil moisture, near average streamflow, and mostly thawed soils
- **The greatest risk of flooding occurs with a rapid snowmelt or rain, especially on a frozen ground**.

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Spring Flood Outlook

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Key Ingredients	Antecedent Conditions	Impact to Spring Flooding
Winter Precipitation	Near Normal	Normal Risk
River Levels	Near Normal	Normal Risk
River Ice Conditions	N/A	N/A
Soil Moisture	Near Normal	Normal Risk
Frost Depth	Normal	Normal to Lower Risk
Snow Conditions / Water Equivalent	Near to Below Normal	Lesser Risk
Rate of Snowmelt	TBD	TBD
Spring Weather Outlook	Slight Chances for Above Normal	Slightly Increases Risk

Overall Risk of Spring Flooding:

Normal Risk

The risk is dominated by lack of a snowpack but offset by somewhat elevated rivers due to recent rain. Other factors have a neutral effect. There is the potential for heavy precipitation over the next few days so runoff from any rain and melting snow will result in elevated river levels and a flood risk early in the outlook period.

The spring outlook has slightly increased odds for above average precipitation.

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

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Winter Precipitation and Temperature

March 12, 2026
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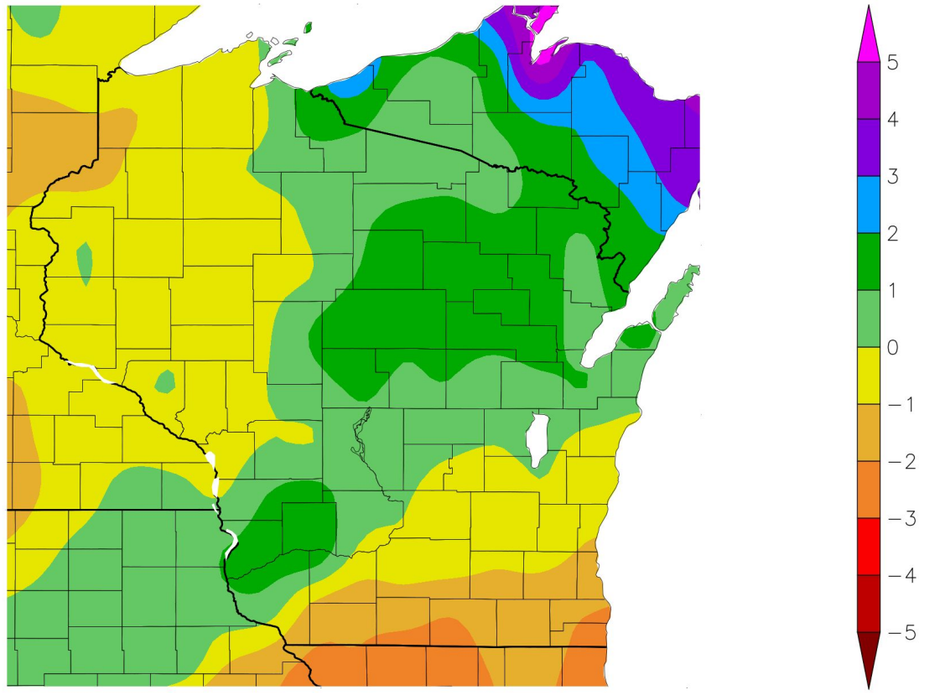
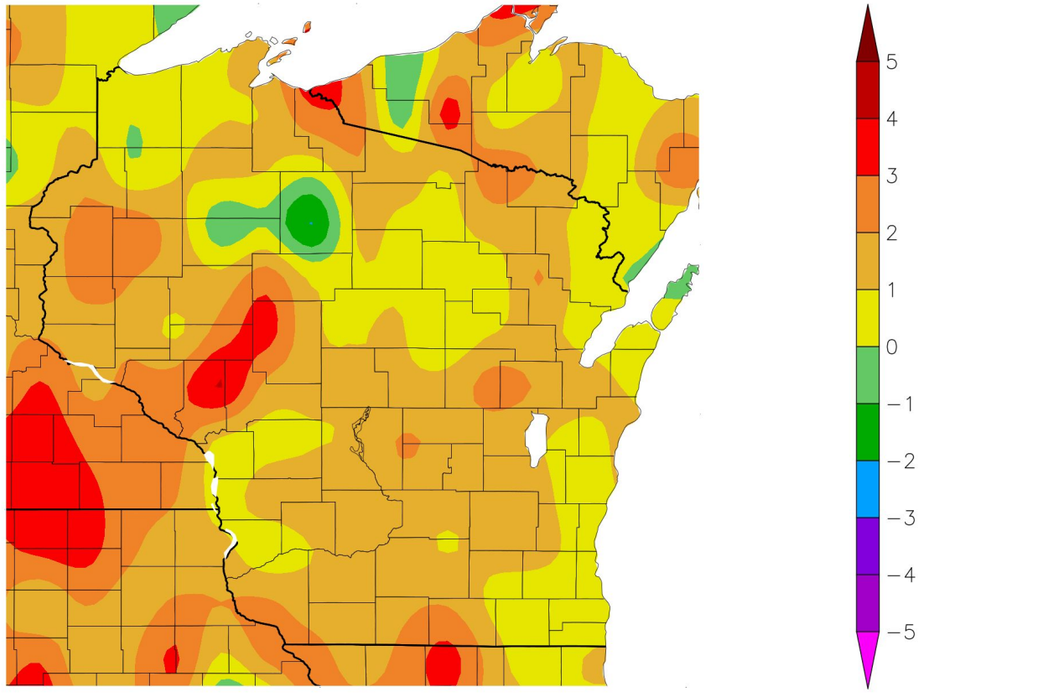
Departure from Normal Precipitation (in)
12/11/2025 – 3/10/2026



Generated 3/11/2026 using provisional data.

ACIS Web Services

Departure from Normal Temperature (F)
12/11/2025 – 3/10/2026



Generated 3/11/2026 using provisional data.

ACIS Web Services

- Winter precipitation was 1 to 2 inches below normal across far southern Wisconsin and within 1 inch of normal across the remainder of southern Wisconsin.
- Temperatures were 1 to 2 degrees above normal.

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Snow Water Equivalent

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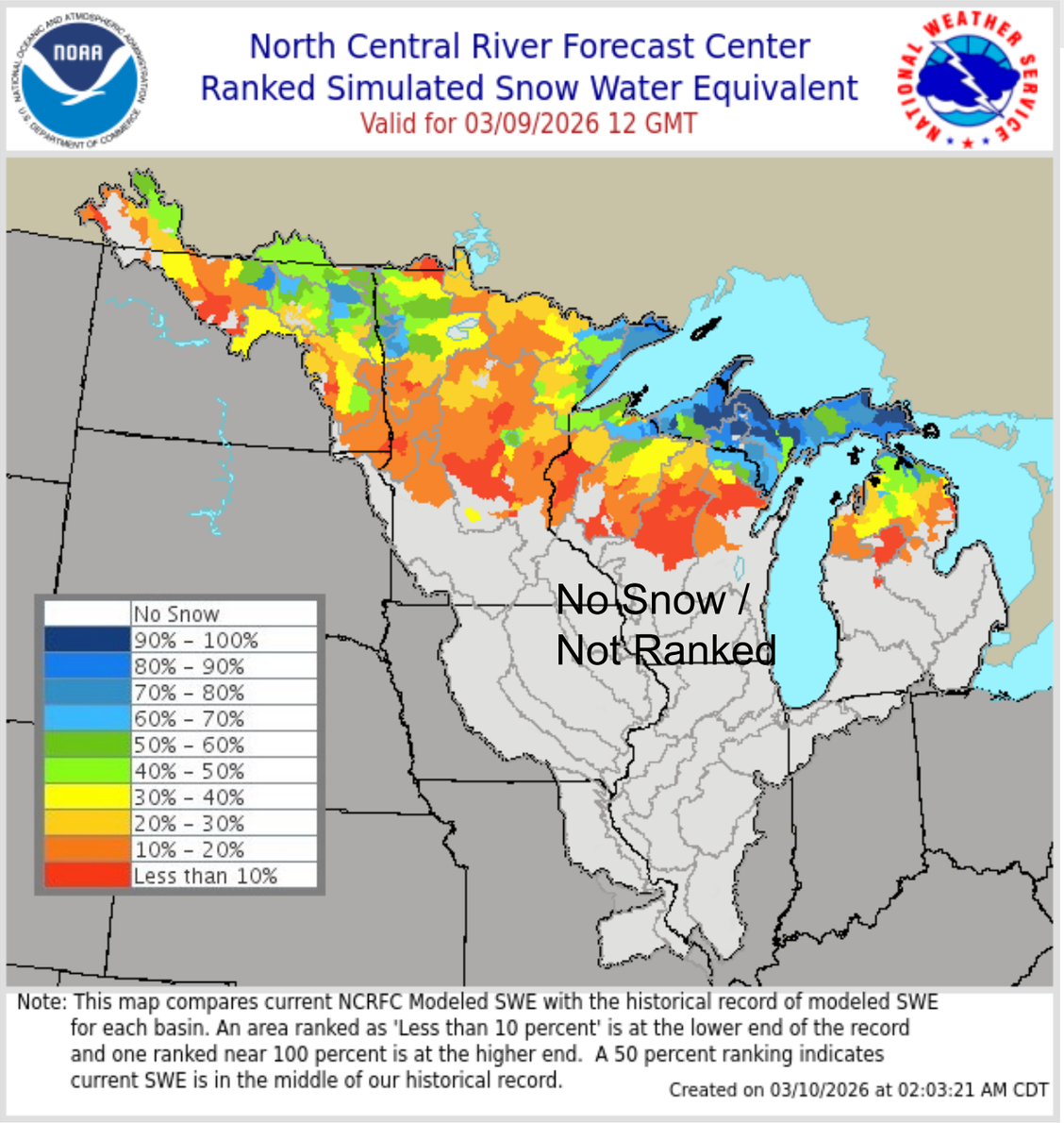
- There is no snow on the ground across southern Wisconsin, which is common for this time of year.
- There is about 3 inches of water content in the snowpack across the headwaters of the Wisconsin River (not shown). This ranks in the <10 - 30th percentile (image on right), meaning below average. This is a large factor in the reduced flood risk for the lower Wisconsin River.



River Levels

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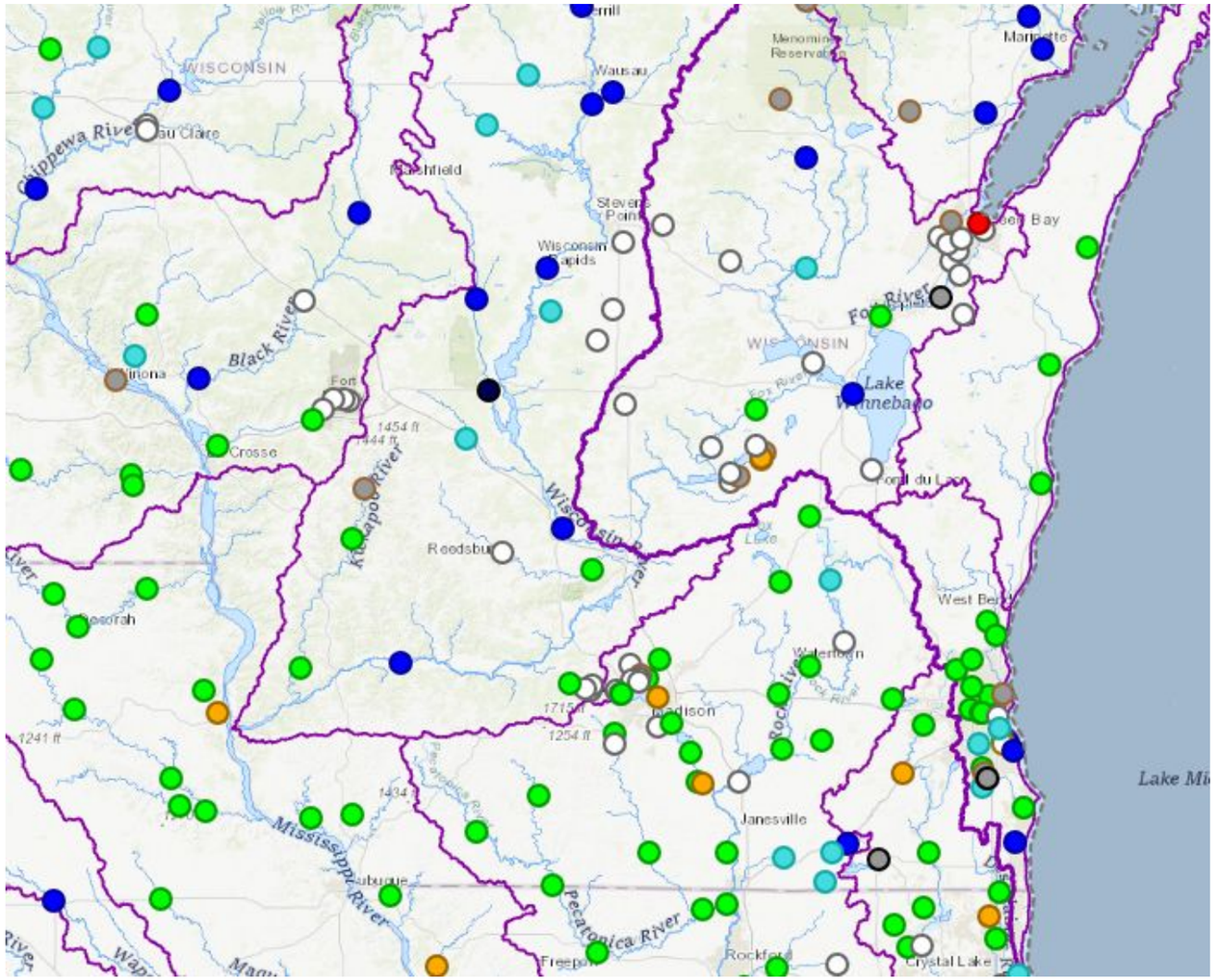
Map shows USGS Streamflow Percentile from 3/11/26

- Streamflow is near average across most of southern Wisconsin
- Streamflow in far southeast Wisconsin is above average due to recent rainfall. These rivers typically rise and fall quickly and are anticipated to fall before the next rain and/or snowmelt.
- Rivers are ice free
- There is some room in the rivers to contain precipitation and runoff



https://dashboard.waterdata.usgs.gov/app/nwd/en/?region=lower48

Frost Depth

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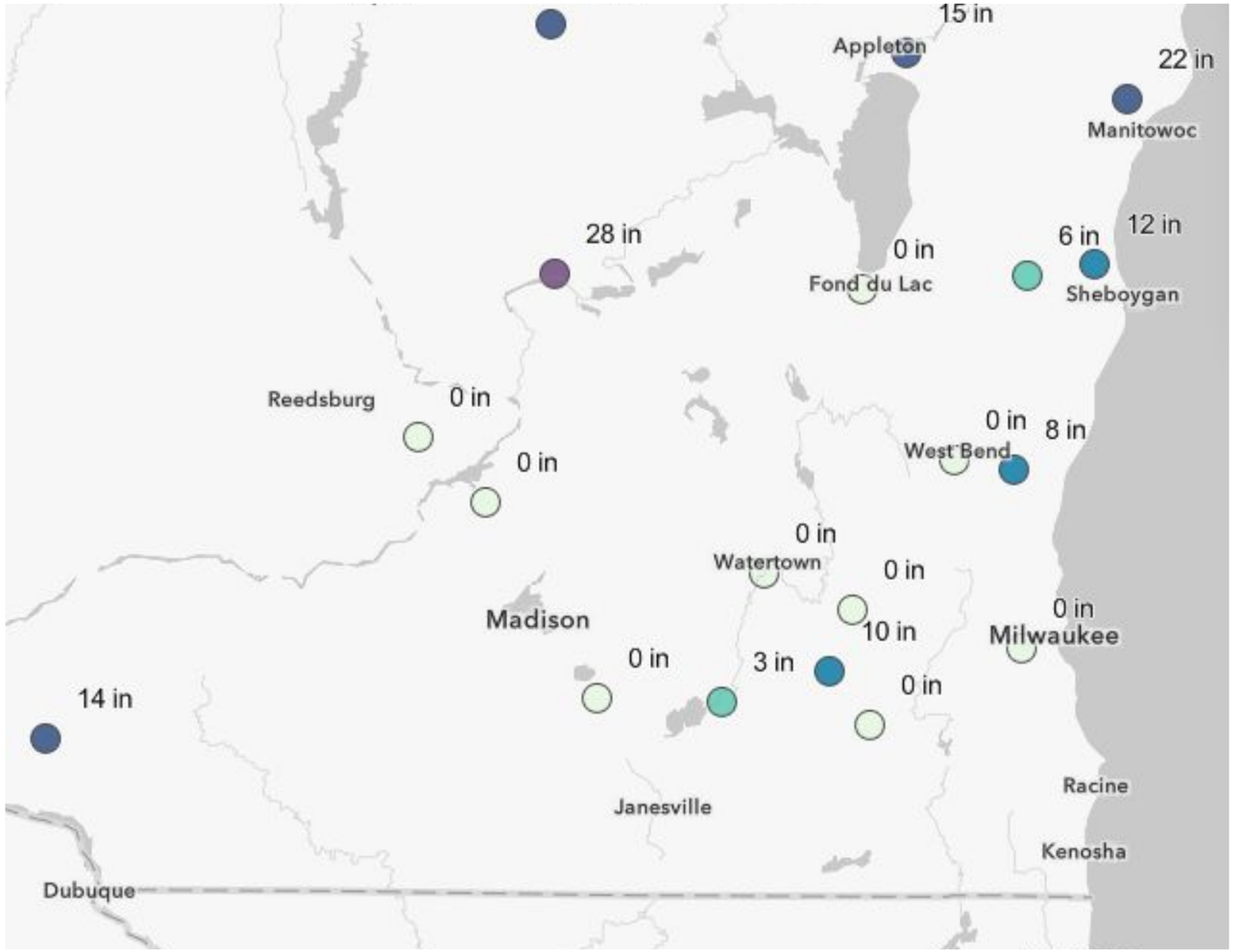
Map shows latest frost depth in inches

- Frost depth at some sites is just a few inches across southern Wisconsin but is totally thawed at many sites. Substantial thawing has occurred in the past two weeks.
- The ground typically thaws in mid March.
- Thawed soils will allow some infiltration, helping to reduce the flood risk



https://www.weather.gov/ncrfc/LMI_FrostDepthMap

Soil Moisture

Map shows CPC Soil Moisture

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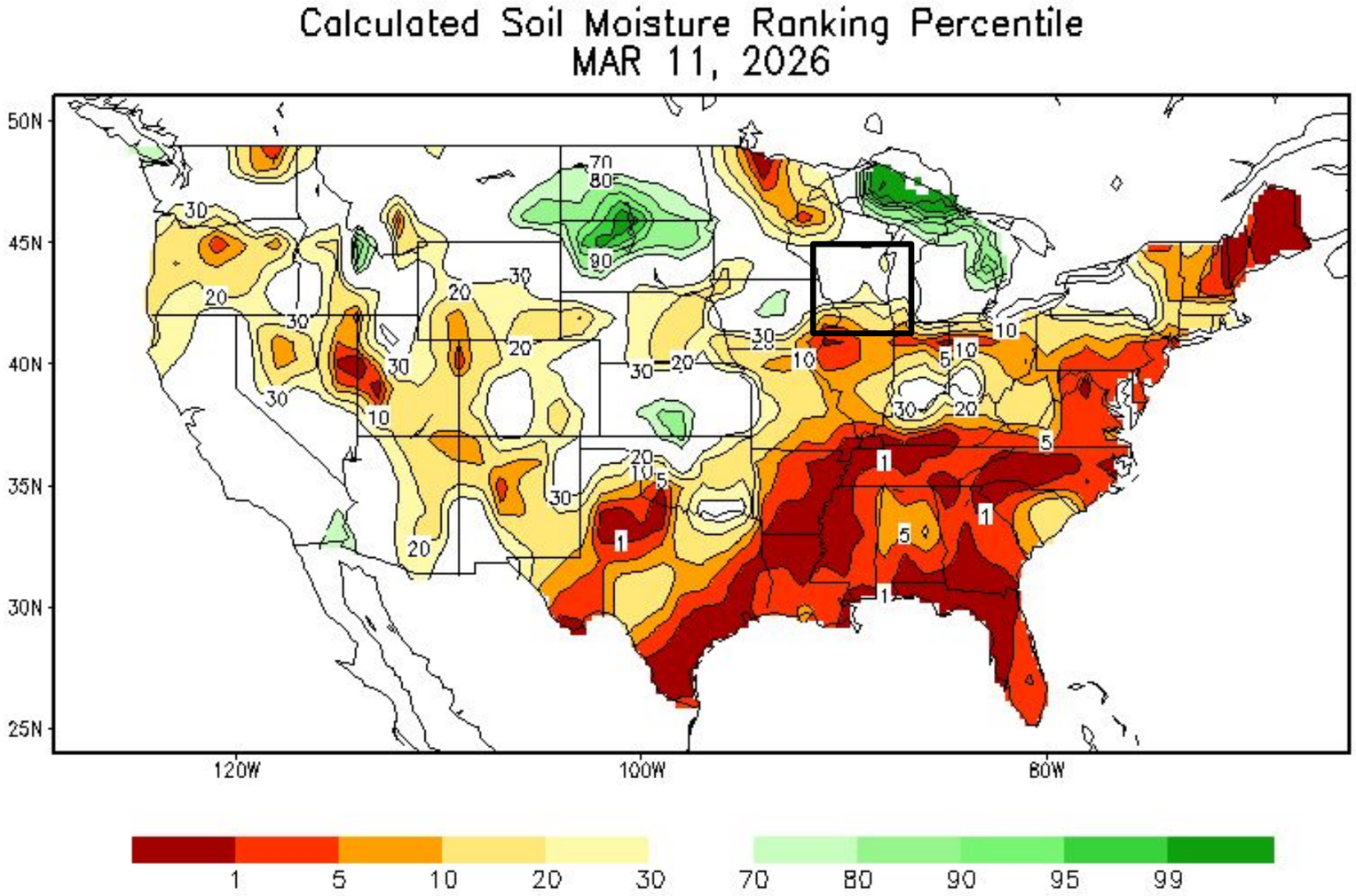
- Soil moisture is in the 10-20th percentile across far southern Wisconsin and the 30-70th percentile across the remainder of southern Wisconsin.
- There is room in the soils to absorb precipitation and runoff



https://www.cpc.ncep.noaa.gov/products/Soilmst_Monitoring/US/Soilmst/Soilmst.shtml

Latest Drought Conditions

March 12, 2026
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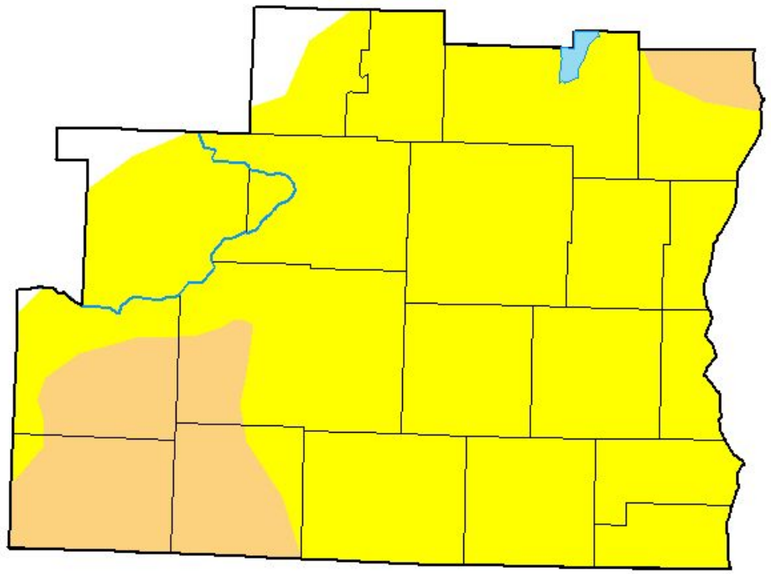
- Moderate Drought conditions are indicated across parts of south-west Wisconsin and Abnormally Dry conditions are indicated across the remainder of southern Wisconsin.
- Drought developed during the fall.
- Drought reduces spring flood risk because the soil is better able to absorb moisture.

U.S. Drought Monitor

Milwaukee/ Sullivan, WI WFO



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	2.65	97.35	15.82	0.00	0.00	0.00
Last Week 03-03-2026	2.57	97.43	23.41	0.00	0.00	0.00
3 Months Ago 12-09-2025	7.46	92.54	30.62	2.19	0.00	0.00
Start of Calendar Year 01-06-2026	7.46	92.54	18.76	2.14	0.00	0.00
Start of Water Year 09-30-2025	75.39	24.61	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
One Year Ago 03-11-2025	4.87	95.13	59.76	0.00	0.00	0.00

Intensity:

- None
- D0 Abnormally Dry
- D1 Moderate Drought
- D2 Severe Drought
- D3 Extreme 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

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CPC/NOAA

droughtmonitor.unl.edu

Long Range Flood Outlook

March 12, 2026
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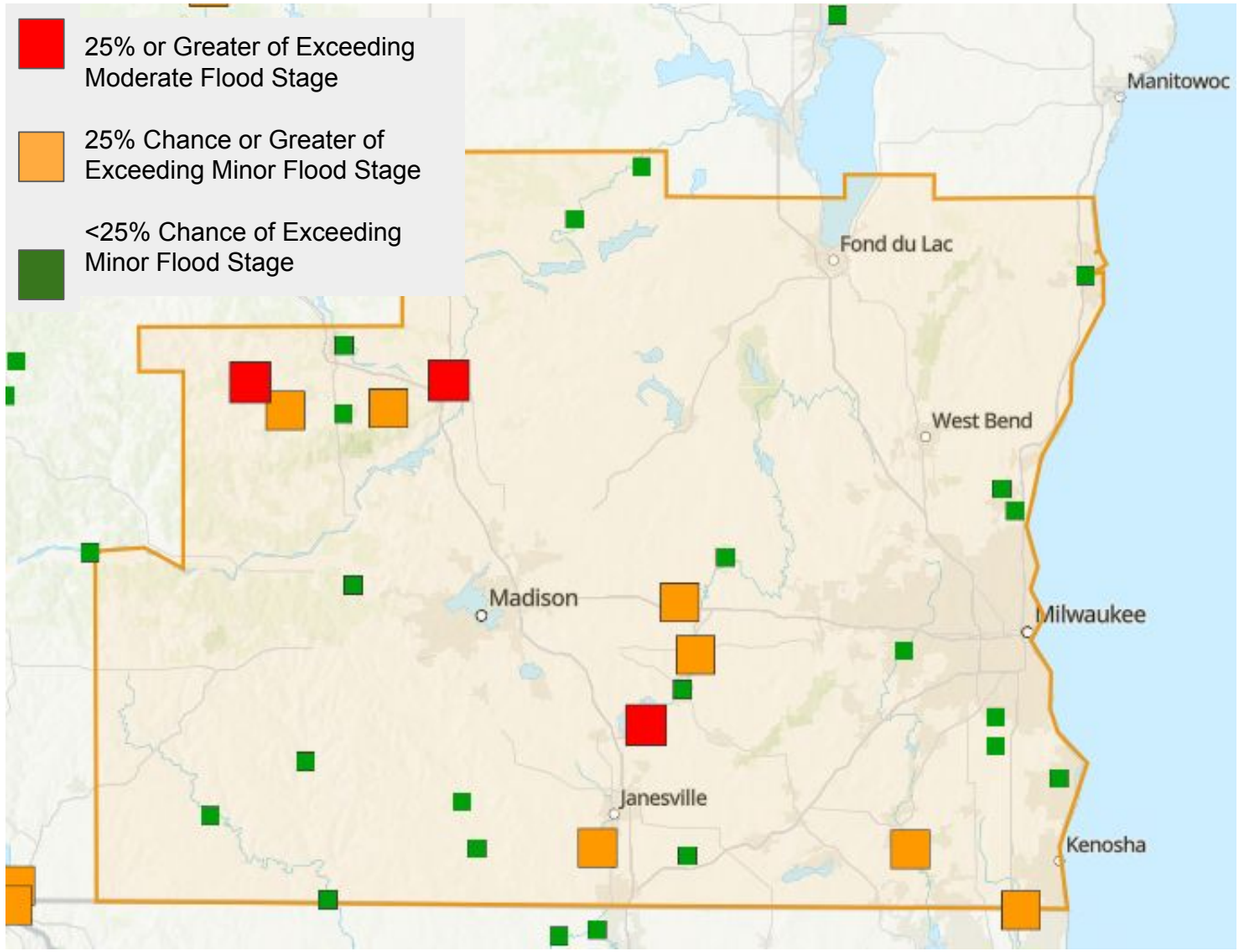
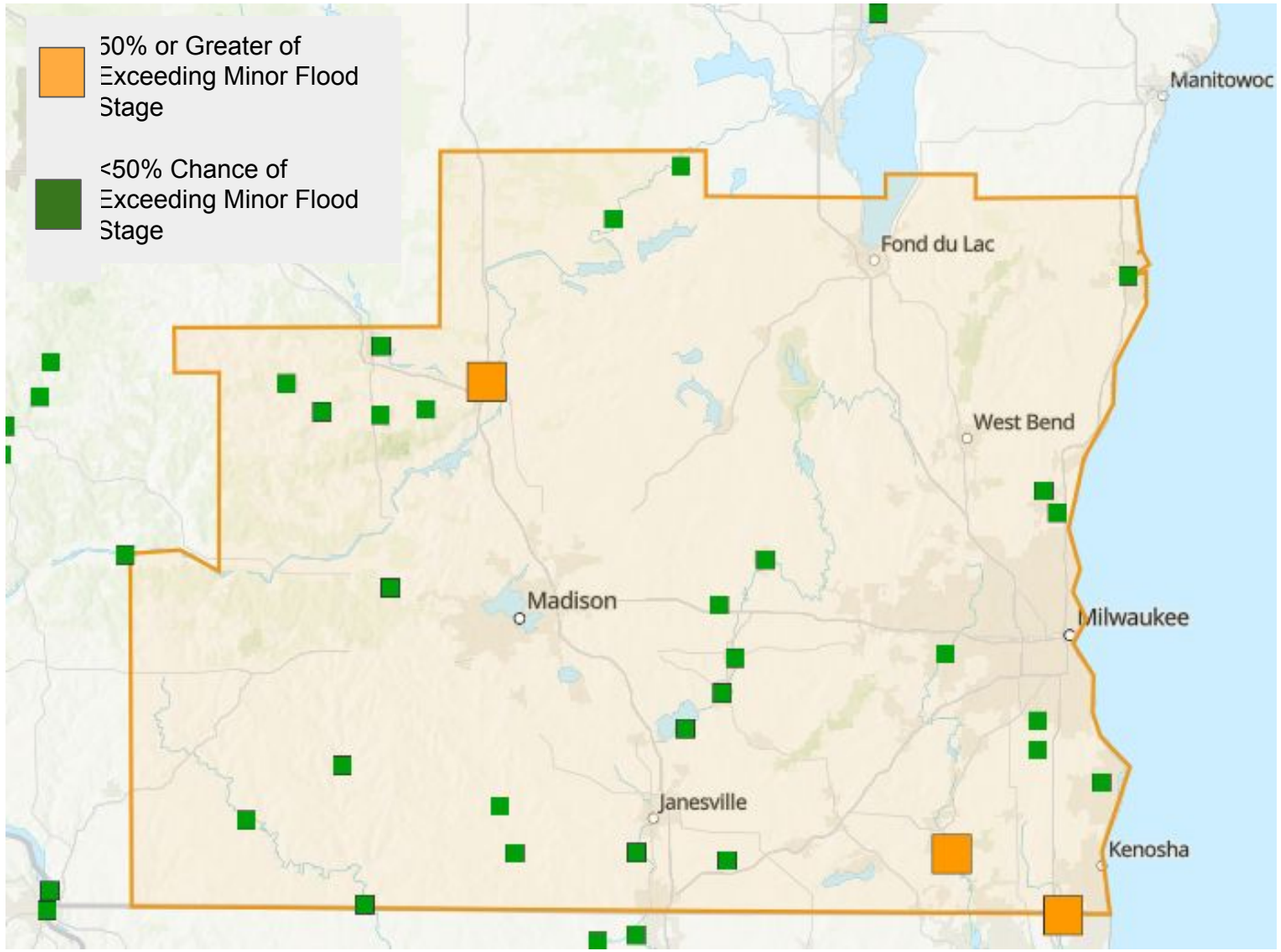
Probability of exceeding Minor/Moderate/Major Flood stages through May





https://water.noaa.gov/wfo/mkx

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Long Range Flood Outlook

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Probability of Flood Stage March 16 - May 14 for NWS River Forecast Points

Location	Chance of Exceeding Minor Flood Stage / Historical Values	Chance of Exceeding Moderate Flood Stage / Historical Values
Wis River - Wisconsin Dells	12 / 25	<5 / 23
Wis River - Portage	55 / 69	38 / 51
Baraboo River - Reedsburg	41 / 37	25 / 23
Baraboo River - Rock Springs	37 / 37	23 / 22
Baraboo River - West Baraboo	12 / 16	8 / 8
Baraboo River - Baraboo	43 / 41	7 / 8
Black Earth Creek	<5 / <5	<5 / <5
Fox River - Princeton	14 / 19	<5 / <5
Fox River - Berlin	17 / 23	<5 / <5

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Probability of Flood Stage March 16 - May 14 for NWS River Forecast Points

Location	Chance of Exceeding Minor Flood Stage / Historical Values	Chance of Exceeding Moderate Flood Stage / Historical Values
Rock River - Watertown	10 / 16	6 / 11
Rock River - Jefferson	31 / 38	24 / 27
Rock River - Fort Atkinson	14 / 20	7 / 9
Rock River - Lake Koshkonong	38 / 44	26 / 32
Rock River - Afton	36 / 43	14 / 19
Crawfish River - Milford	27 / 37	7 / 11
Turtle Creek - Clinton	9 / 13	<5 / <5
Pecatonica River - Darlington	<5 / <5	<5 / <5
Pecatonica River - Blanchardville	10 / 13	<5 / <5
Pecatonica River - Martintown	7 / 22	<5 / <5
Sugar River - Albany	<5 / <5	<5 / <5
Sugar River - Brodhead	19 / 31	<5 / 8

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Location	Chance of Exceeding Minor Flood Stage / Historical Values	Chance of Exceeding Moderate Flood Stage / Historical Values
Sheboygan River - Sheboygan	18 / 28	8 / 10
Cedar Creek - Cedarburg	8 / 12	<5 / <5
Milwaukee River - Cedarburg	20 / 37	7 / 11
Root River - Franklin	21 / 25	<5 / <5
Root River Canal - Raymond	23 / 25	5 / 7
Root River - Racine	6 / 9	<5 / <5
Fox River - Waukesha	11 / 16	5 / 9
Fox River - New Munster	51 / 57	10 / 24

Precipitation Outlook

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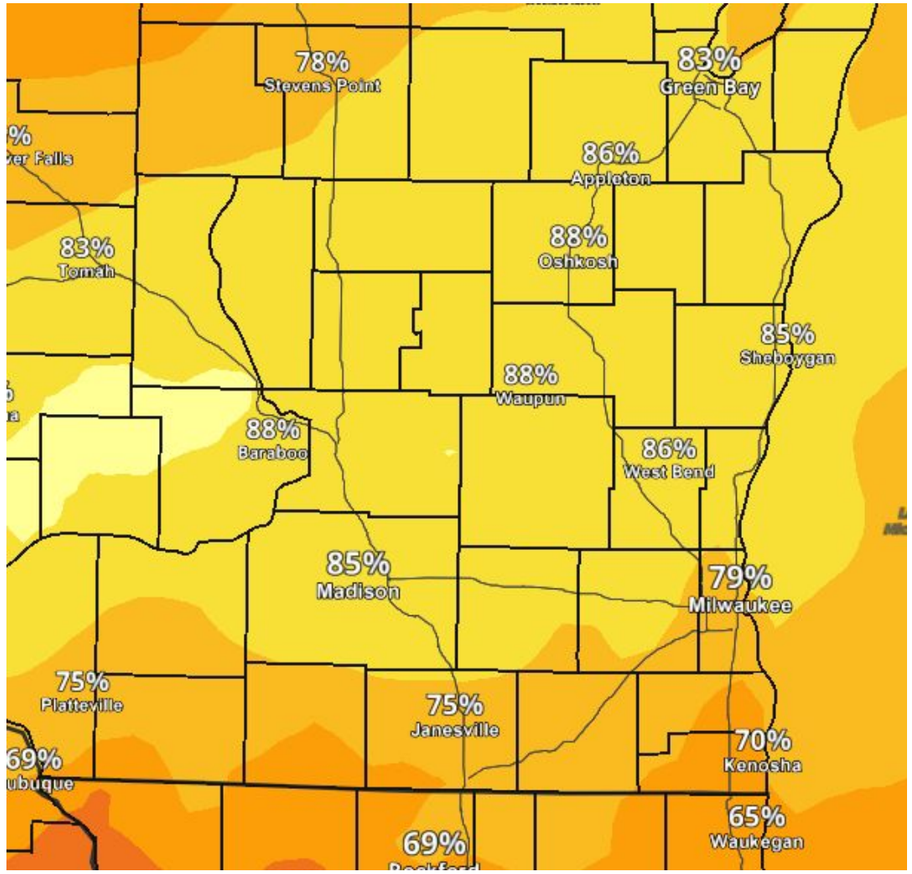
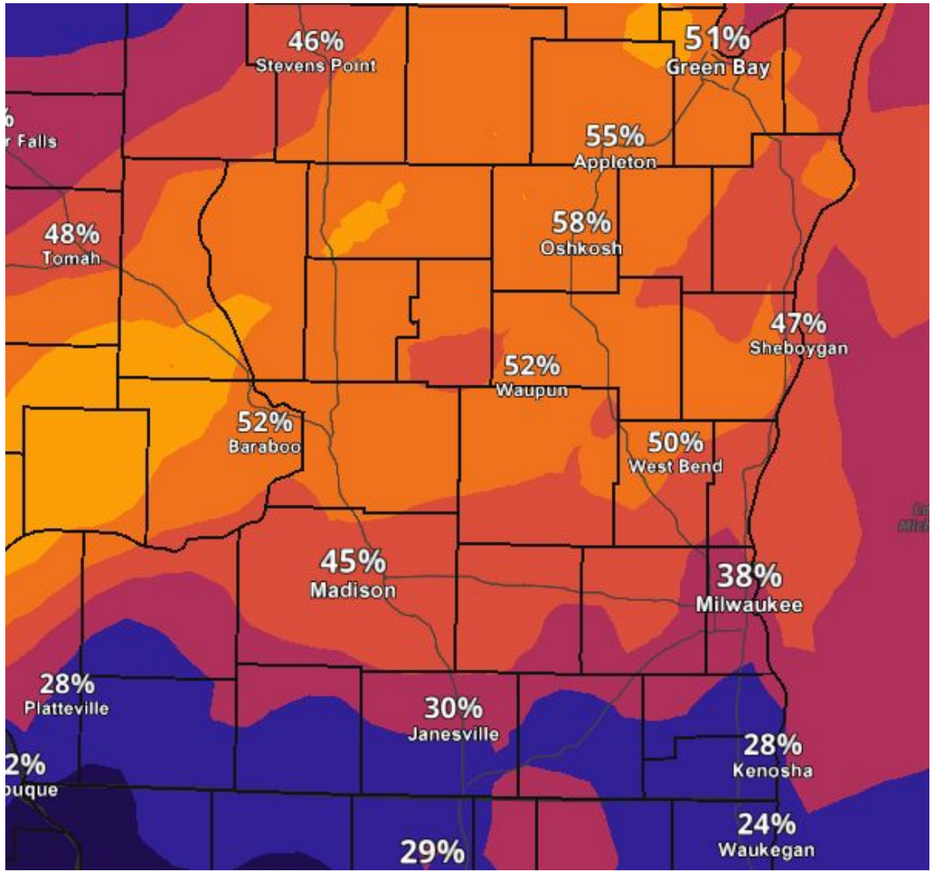
March 14 - 16 Precipitation

- Rain and snow is expected over the weekend followed by milder temperatures next week
- There is a 70-90% chance of exceeding one inch of precipitation and a 30-50% chance of exceeding 2 inches of precipitation Saturday through Monday
- Runoff from precipitation and melting snow may result in rising rivers starting later next week

Probability of 1+ Inch of Precipitation



Probability of 2+ Inch of Precipitation



10%	20%	30%	40%	50%	60%	70%	80%	90%
— Low —			— Medium —			— High —		

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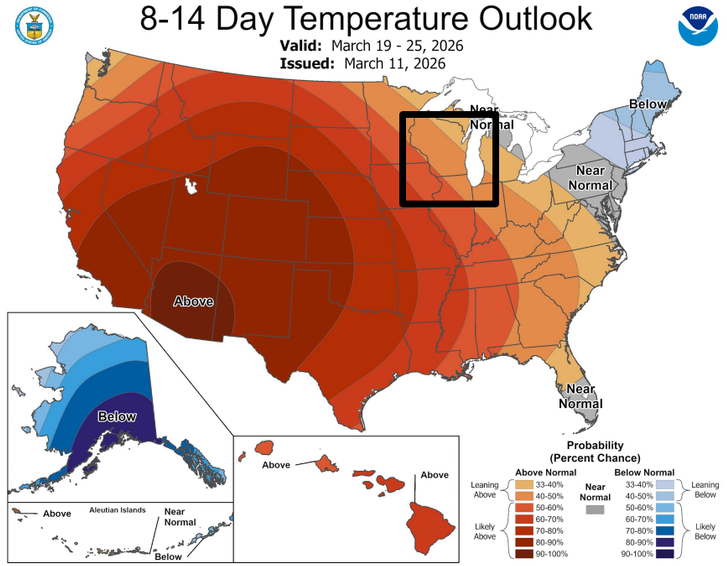
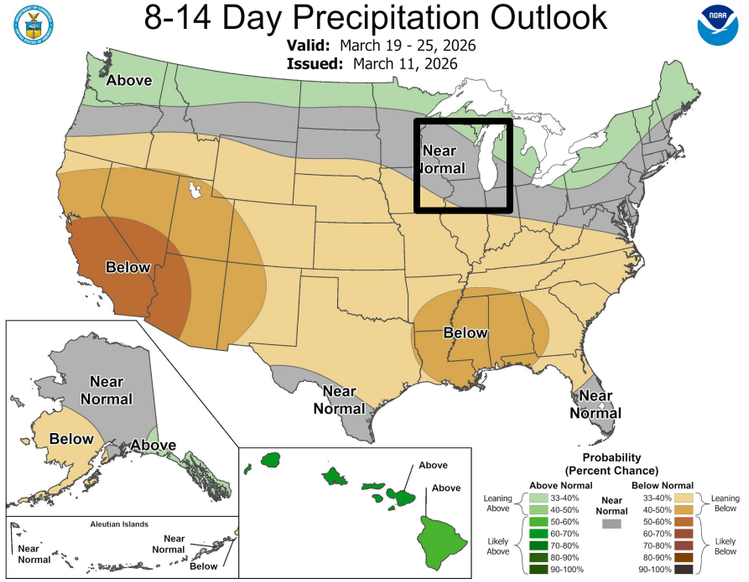
These are general outlooks that depict broad trends for the weeks and months ahead

Mid March Outlook

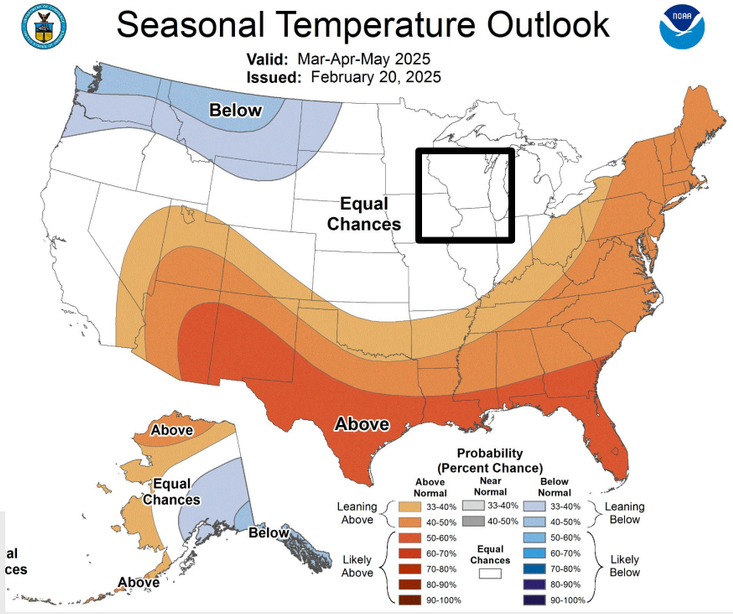
- 40-50% chance of above average temperature
- 36% of chance of near average precipitation

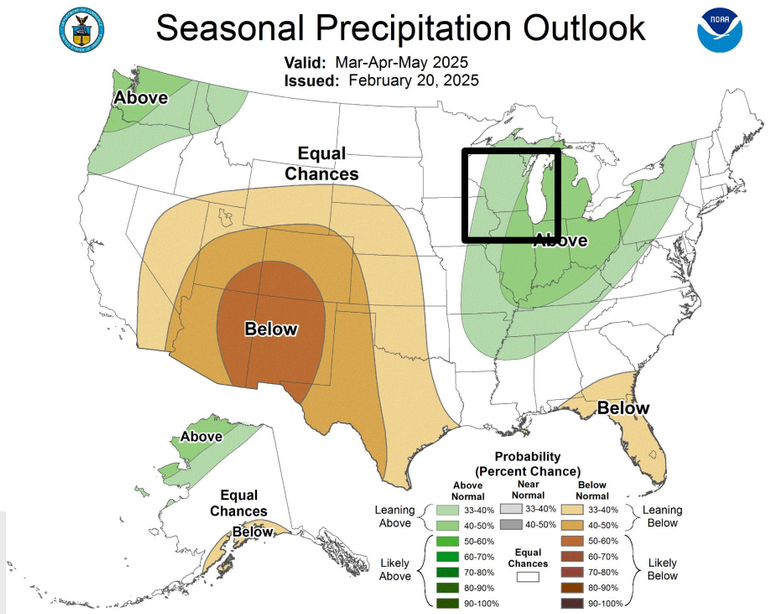




Seasonal Outlook

- Equal chances of above/below/near normal temperatures
- 30-40% chance of above normal precipitation
- Heavy rain in a short period of time may increase flood threat





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- **The greatest risk of flooding occurs with a rapid snowmelt or rain, especially on a frozen ground.**

Final Update

Additional Resources

NWS Milwaukee Website

North Central River Forecast Center

River Observations and Forecasts for southern WI

NWS Milwaukee on Facebook

NWS Milwaukee on Twitter

Forecast Points (Hourly Details)

NWS Milwaukee Spring Flood Page

Flood Safety Information

USGS National Water Dashboard