

2004 Weather Capsule

Hurricanes Help Produce Above Normal Rainfall For Third Year in Row

2004 began innocently enough. January was chilly yet again, but not as noticeable as in 2003. High Surf was common as frequent cold fronts, with west to northwest winds behind them, barreled through the state. Preceding each front, generous rainfall pushed totals to or above normal in many areas. February was fairly uneventful until the end of the month. A slow moving but moisture-laden frontal system dropped ample rain on the Suncoast, as well as scattered severe weather, between the 24th and 25th. Spring (March through May) was largely uneventful, with temperatures a bit cooler than normal in April before heating up a bit above normal before Memorial Day. Rainfall was typically light, but in some cases very light, especially south of Tampa Bay where seasonal values were well below normal. The below normal trend for rainfall reversed sharply in Summer. June featured precipitation variations common in other years when no organized weather systems are evident. July began hot and dry, and it almost looked like the Summer of 2004 might end up drier than normal. Then came mid July. Moderate to locally heavy rains fell across much of the Suncoast, and was followed by more typical, and fairly widespread, afternoon thunderstorms into early August. Much has already been written about the 2004 Hurricane Season in Florida. These six weeks to close out the summer guaranteed another Summer of above normal rainfall for most, which would eventually hold for the yearly totals (Figure 1, below). As if on cue, the last quarter (October to December) became tranquil. In fact, significant weather was not an issue in October or November. However, an early winter cold snap brought several nights of freezing temperatures the week of December 12th and again the week before Christmas (Figure 3). A warm up before the new year ended 2004 on a fine note, which continued into early January 2005.

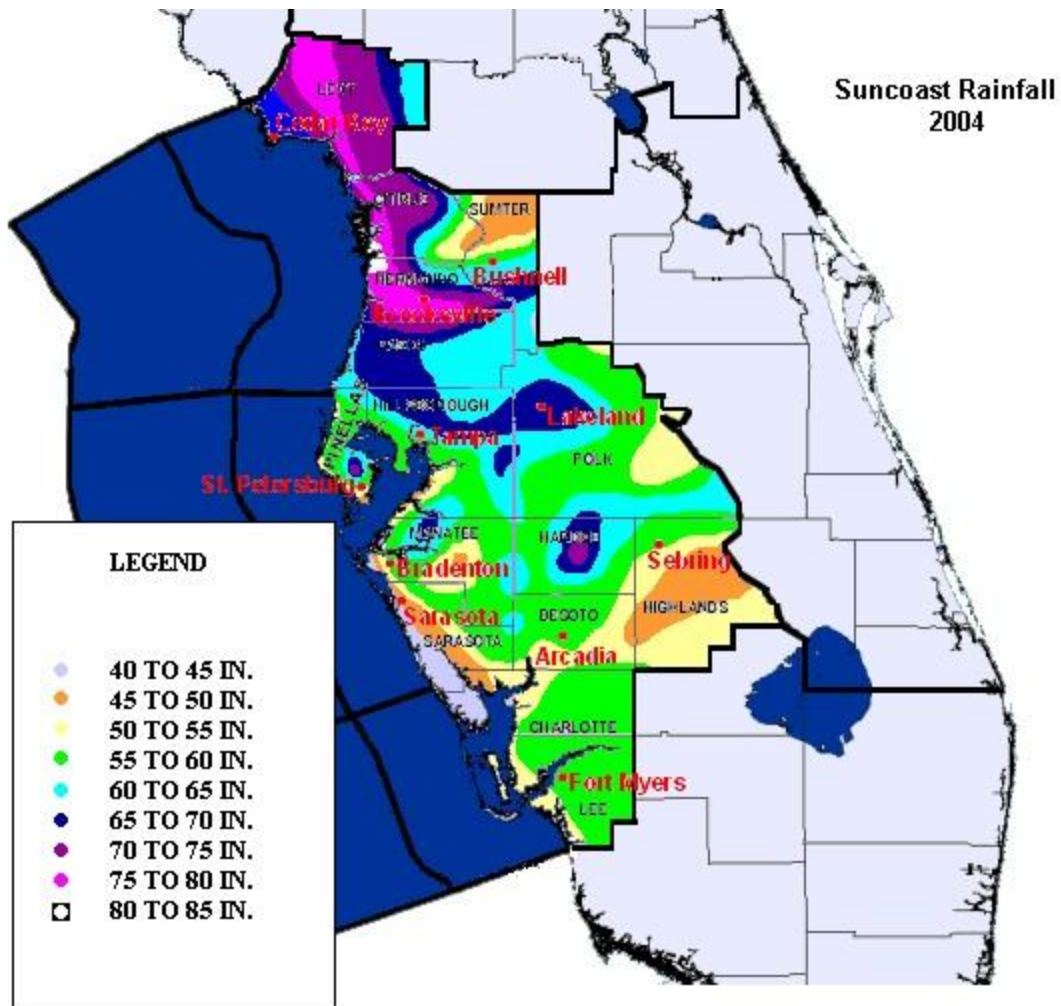


Figure 1. Total rainfall, 2003.

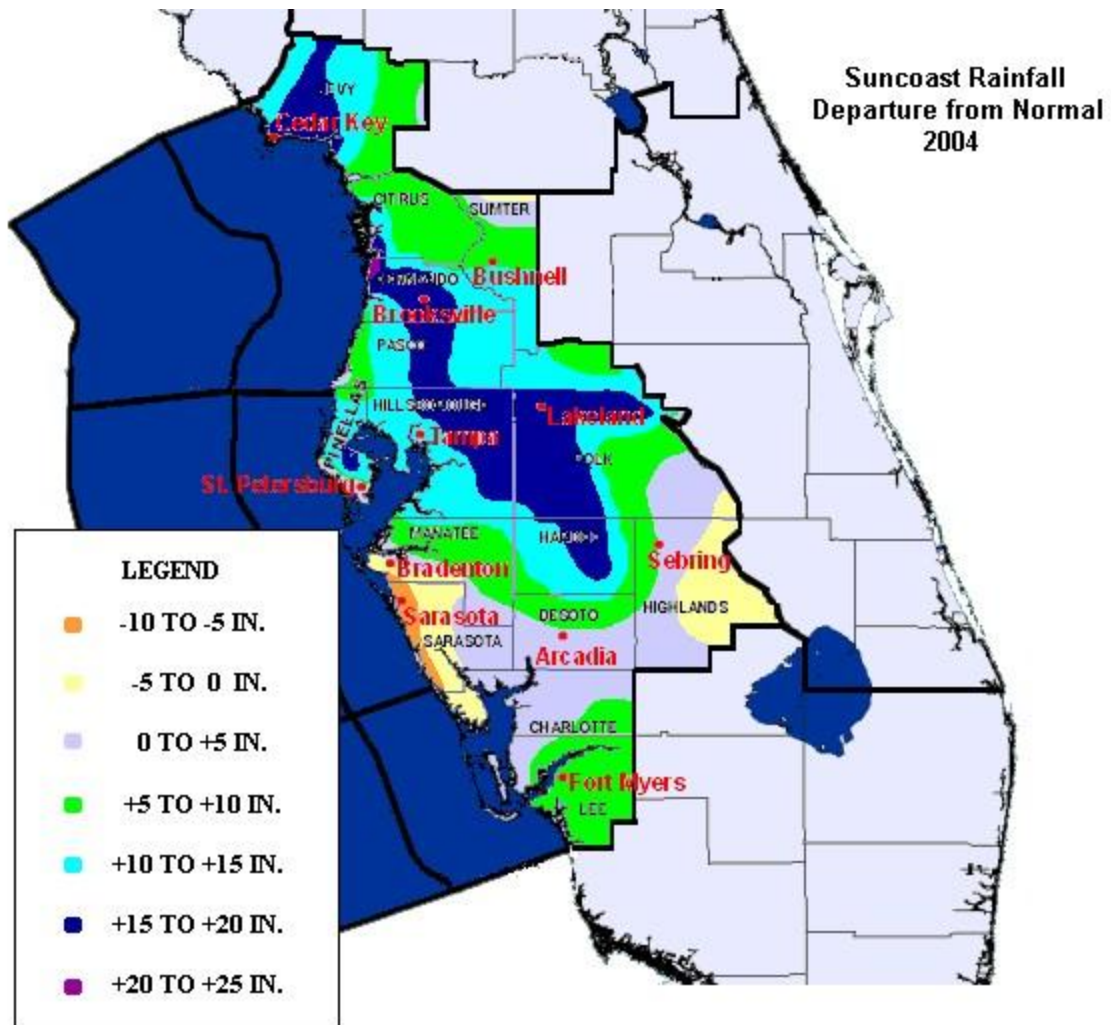
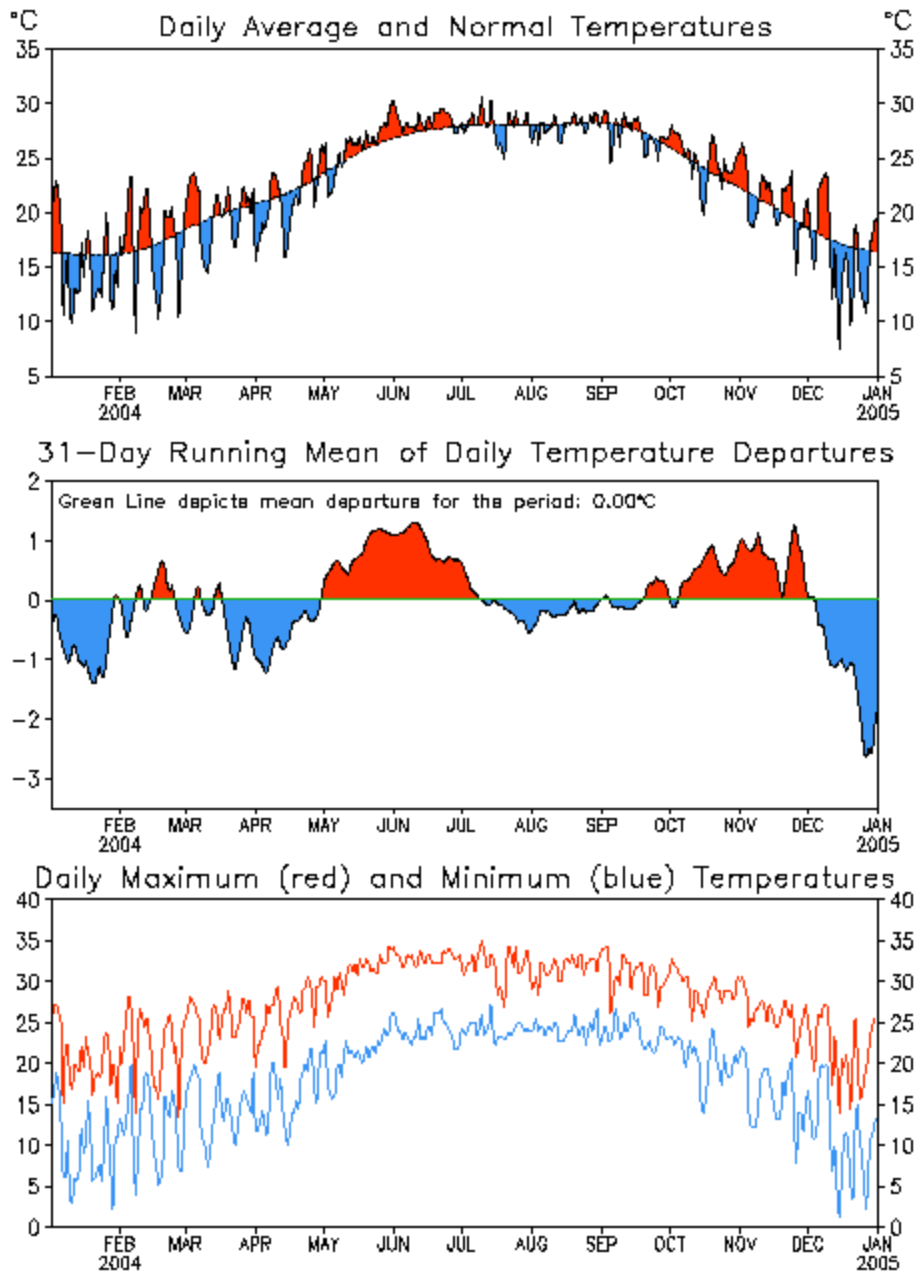


Figure 2.

2003 Departure from normal annual rainfall.

TAMPA INTL. AIRPORT, FLORIDA



Data updated through 31 DEC 2004

CLIMATE PREDICTION CENTER/NCEP

Figure 3. 2004 Temperatures at Tampa International Airport.