

Midwest Ag-Focus Climate Outlook

Main Points

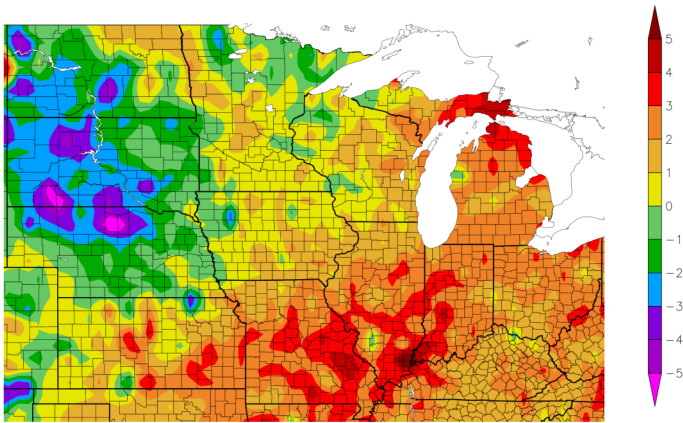


- ◆ Drought conditions continue across the central Corn Belt.
- ◆ Precipitation has removed most dryness towards the east and has contributed to excess wetness in some places.
- ◆ Southern Corn Belt soils are close to 50°F, indicating that planting season is approaching.
- ◆ The west central Corn Belt has conditions ready for planting; the East may be delayed by wetness.
- ◆ Climate service providers are still monitoring for potential freeze risk.



Current Conditions

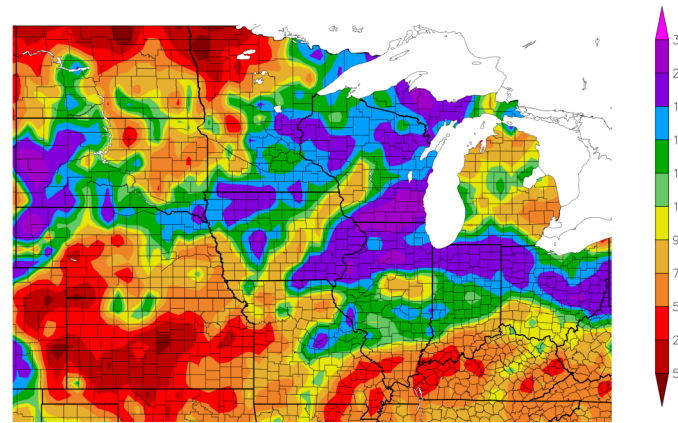
Departure from Normal Temperature (F)
3/12/2024 – 4/10/2024



Generated 4/11/2024 at HPRCC using provisional data.

NOAA Regional Climate Centers

Percent of Normal Precipitation (%)
3/12/2024 – 4/10/2024



Generated 4/11/2024 at HPRCC using provisional data.

NOAA Regional Climate Centers

Early planting season is upon the Corn Belt, with field work well under way and early planting occurring. Warmer-than-average temperatures continue to support early field work across the region with most of the eastern and southern areas of the region running above average over the last 30 days. Most of the southeast two-thirds of the region was at least 1-2°F above average. The only cooler place was the northern Plains, running a couple degrees below average. Precipitation has shifted some conditions for planting. Total precipitation (not pictured) from eastern Iowa to Ohio has run 4-7" or 150-200% of average. Southern areas and the far northern Plains have been much drier, with 2" or less being very common (i.e. less than 50% of average). Some severe weather has already occurred in Kentucky, Ohio, and southern Indiana.

Images from High Plains Regional Climate Center (HPRCC), Online Data Services: [ACIS Climate Maps](https://www.climatehubs.usda.gov/hubs/midwest). Generated: 04/11/2024.

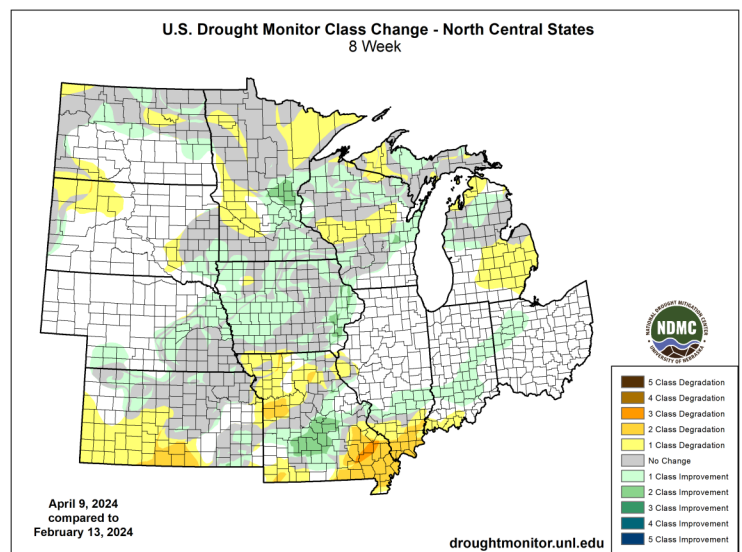
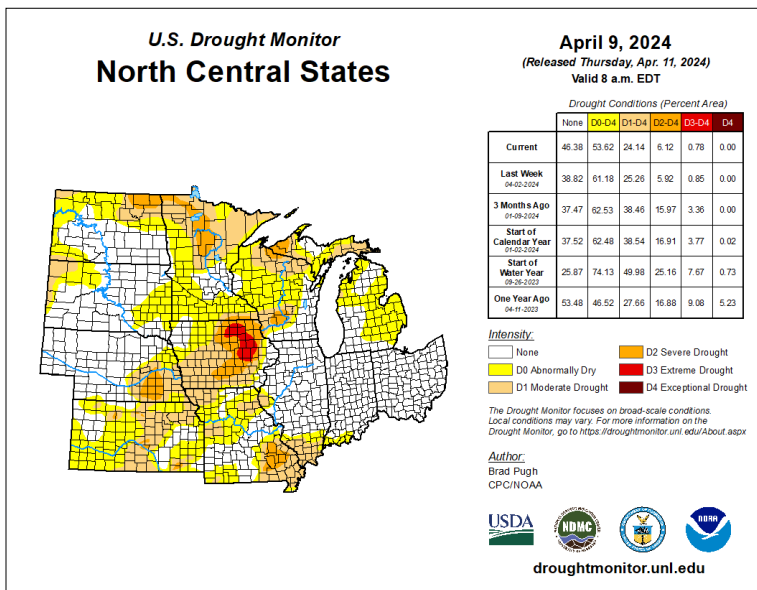
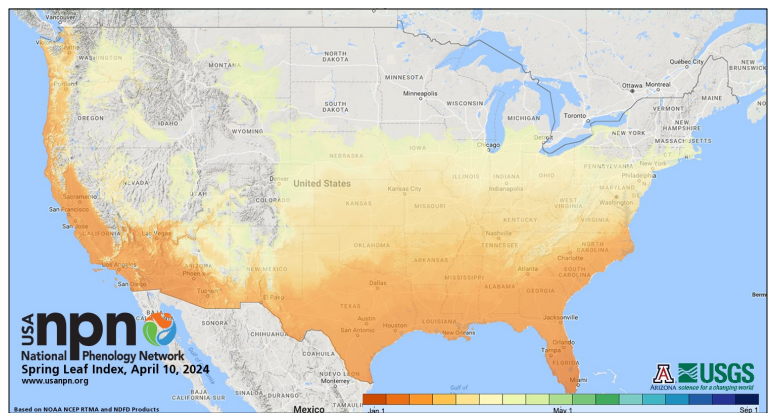
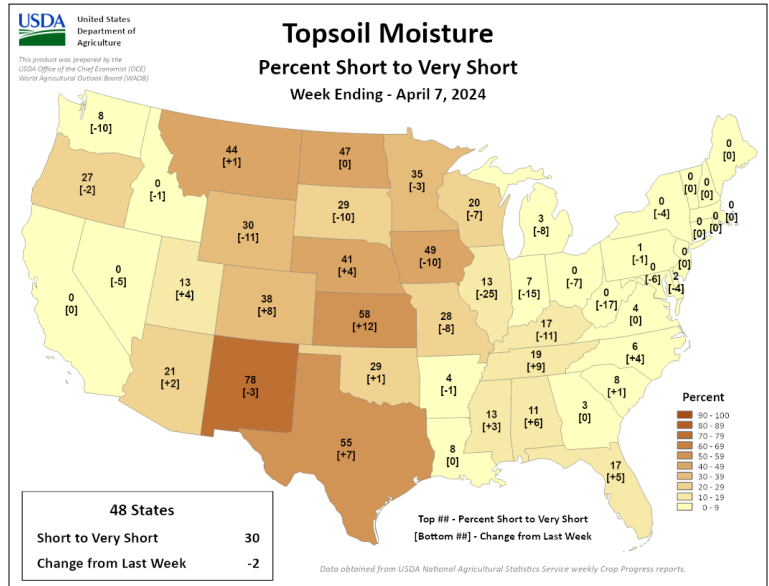


Impacts

Recent precipitation has helped ease the lesser drought areas in the eastern Corn Belt and slightly reduced some of the more severe areas in the central Corn Belt. However, the longer-term deficits over last 2-3 (or more) years still weigh on the overall water situation. Much of Iowa and some surrounding states are still in various levels of drought. Most of the East has been removed from the U.S. Drought Monitor.

The eastern wetness has likely slowed some spring field work and planting due to wetter soil conditions. The drier central area is only waiting for warmer temperatures before field work is likely to kick in (probably this week). The dry soils will allow for quicker field access and warm more quickly.

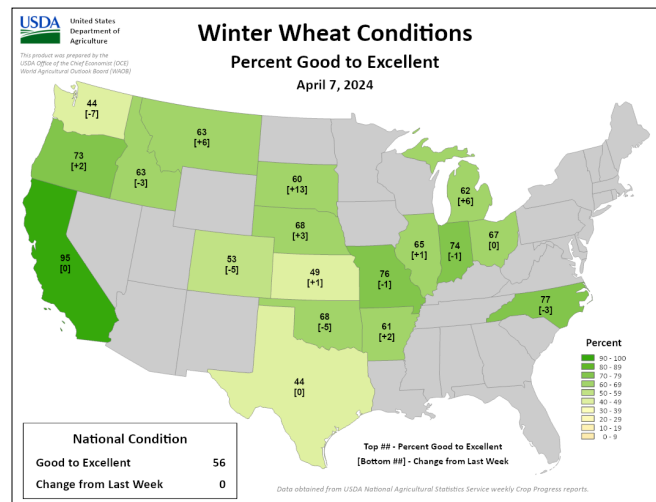
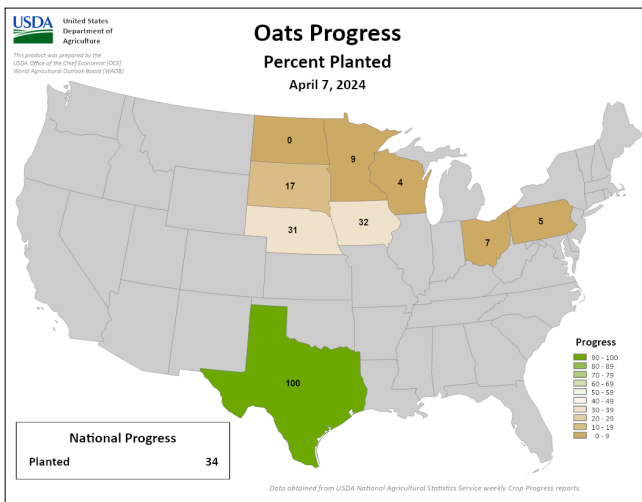
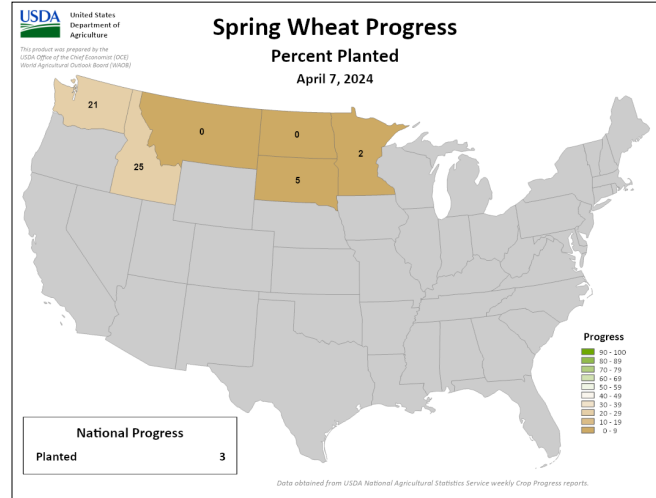
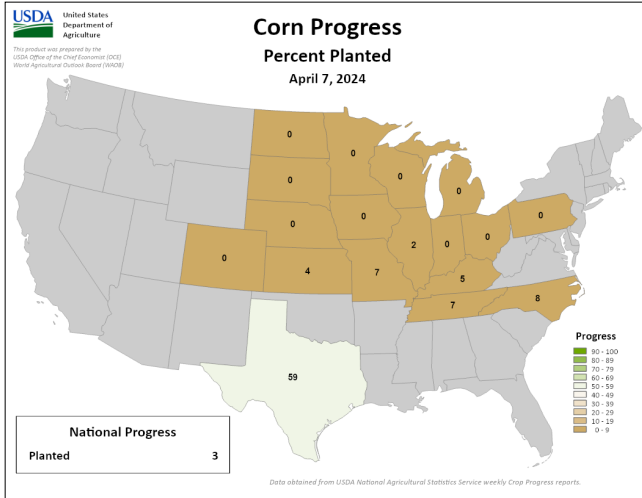
Soil temperatures are around or above 50°F over most of the southern half of the Corn Belt. Northern areas are mainly in the 40s, with far northern areas into the 30s. No locations are reporting frozen soils near the surface; hence, crop planting has begun. Corn—and likely soybean—have been planted in southern areas. Kansas, Missouri, Illinois, and Kentucky have reported planted corn. Soybean is not reported by USDA-NASS at this time, but social media reports have indicated that soybeans are also being planted. Small grain planting has started in the cooler north with barley, spring wheat, and oats all planted on some acres. Regionally, winter wheat conditions are generally good.



Maps Generated by the [United States Department of Agriculture](https://www.usda.gov), the [National Phenology Network](https://www.usanpn.org), and the [National Drought Mitigation Center](https://droughtmonitor.unl.edu).

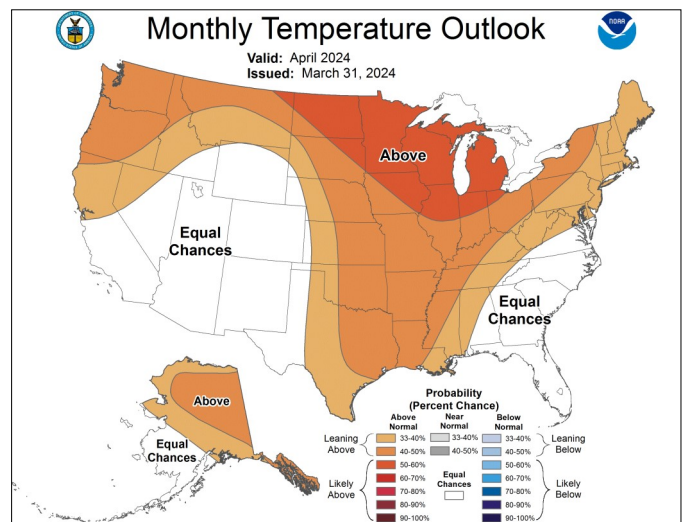
Fire concerns across the region are also very apparent in more northern areas where green-up is yet to occur. Burning should be monitored closely, avoiding days with higher fire concerns. On Red Flag days, producers should monitor for inadvertent sparks and other flame sources. See [the Midwest Climate Hub website](https://www.midwestclimatehub.usda.gov/) for more information on managing on-farm fire risks.

The warmth will also push continued leaf-out into northern areas. This leaf-out and progress in the south leaves much of the area susceptible to freeze damage. At this point, we cannot point to specific risk time, but the potential for freeze still exists.



Outlook

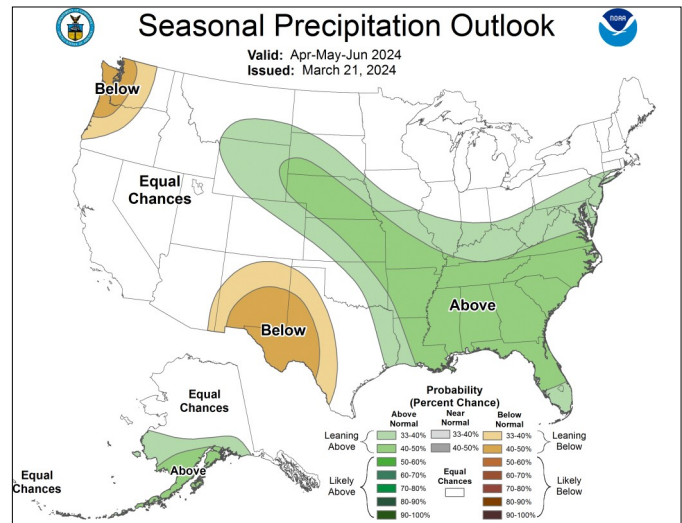
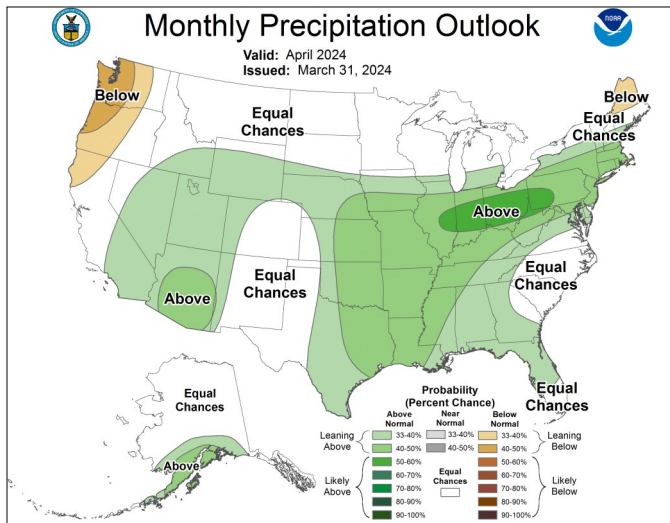
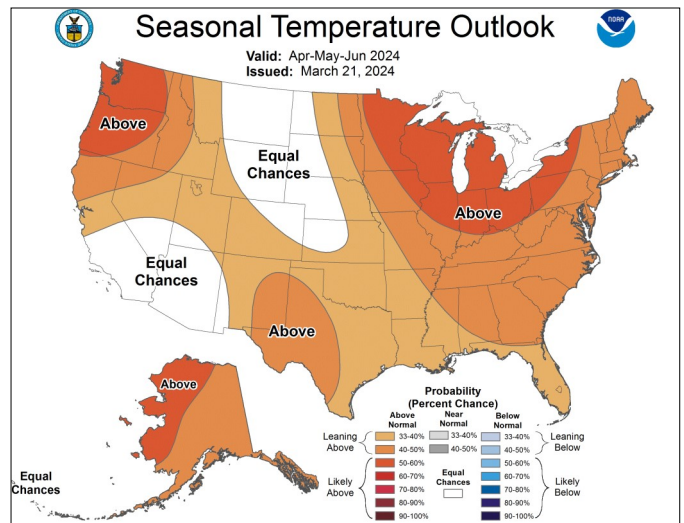
Conditions are rapidly shifting regionally and globally that have an impact on the region. On a large scale, the very strong El Niño in place over the last year is rapidly weakening, leading to ENSO-neutral conditions (between El Niño and La Niña) with a likely rapid shift to La Niña by mid- to late summer. These rapid transition summers have been associated with some major droughts, but not consistently. Some recent research has noted a fairly consistent signal of warmer summers during these transitions, while the summer precipitation signal is not clear. These patterns drive the inconsistent drought signal.



The main agricultural take-home point is that locations with dry soils should plan cautiously and carefully for the summer; heat and a potential lack of precipitation may introduce crop stress from heat and a lack of soil moisture. Wetter areas are at a lower risk because of a full soil moisture profile, but caution is still be advised.

The near-term outlooks are favorable for the start of planting over much of the area as air temperatures continue to warm and soil temperatures are close to 50°F. All of the outlooks point to some probability of above-average temperatures through the spring. More-likely chances for above-average precipitation cover most of the southern areas of the region while northern areas are mainly equal chances. Nearer-term (out to 14 days) have slightly increased chances for precipitation over the whole region.

As mentioned in the Impacts Section, there is concern about early dormancy break and potential spring freeze. At this point, we have no specific indications on when the last spring freeze may occur (if it has not already). You can check out your local trends on freeze dates at <https://mrcc.purdue.edu/freeze/freezedatetool.html>.



Outlooks provided by the [Climate Prediction Center](#).

Partners and Contributors



- [United States Department of Agriculture \(USDA\)](#)
- [National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration \(NOAA\)](#)
- [Climate Prediction Center \(CPC\)](#)
- [National Weather Service \(NWS\)](#)
- [National Center for Environmental Information \(NCEI\)](#)

- [National Drought Mitigation Center \(NDMC\)](#)
- [National Integrated Drought Information System \(NIDIS\)](#)
- [Midwestern Regional Climate Center \(MRCC\)](#)
- [Midwest State Climatologists](#)
- [High Plains Regional Climate Center \(HPRCC\)](#)



For More Information

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