

## IOWA MONTHLY WEATHER SUMMARY – APRIL 2003

General Summary. Temperatures across Iowa during April averaged 50.2° or 1.7° warmer than normal while precipitation totaled 3.25 inches or 0.08 inches less than normal. This ranks as the 42<sup>nd</sup> warmest and 45<sup>th</sup> wettest April among 131 years of state records.

Temperatures. Temperatures fluctuated greatly during the first half of April. High temperatures were in the 80's in most areas on the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> with a 91° reading at Glenwood on the 1<sup>st</sup>. However, unseasonably cold weather prevailed from the 4<sup>th</sup> through the 9<sup>th</sup> when daytime temperatures were mainly in the 30's. Estherville reported the month's lowest temperature with an 8° minimum on the morning of the 8<sup>th</sup>. Warmer than normal weather then prevailed for a week from the 10<sup>th</sup> through the 16<sup>th</sup> with Glenwood reaching 93° on the 14<sup>th</sup>. Temperatures were much less variable during the second half of the month with daily averages all within 8° of normal.

Heating Degree Days. Home heating requirements, as estimated by heating degree day totals, averaged 9% less than normal and 10% less than last April. Heating requirements so far this winter season (since July 1, 2002) are running 1% less than normal and 16% greater than last season at this time.

Precipitation. Two winter storms provided the majority of the early April precipitation. The first storm deposited 1 to 2 inches of snow from west central to northeast Iowa on the 4<sup>th</sup> with light rain falling elsewhere. The second storm, on the 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup>, was one of the largest snow events of the entire winter. Snowfall of 6 to 12 inches accumulated across the northwest one-half of the state with the greatest amounts centered on north central Iowa. The big storm event began as rain in southern Iowa with only a dusting of snow along the Missouri border. April snowfall averaged 5.3 inches across the state and was the fifth highest April total among 116 years of state snowfall records. Normal April snowfall is 1.9 inches. Snowfall for the entire 2002-2003 winter season averaged 26.2 inches across Iowa or 6.2 inches less than normal. This ranks as the 41<sup>st</sup> least snowy winter among 116 years of records. Precipitation became more frequent during the second half of the month with thunderstorms bringing the heaviest rainfall on the 18<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup>-30<sup>th</sup>. Unseasonably heavy rainfall, with 24-hour totals reaching 4 inches, affected northwest Harrison County on the night of the 29<sup>th</sup> and again in southeastern Louisa County on the night of the 30<sup>th</sup>. These heavy early season rains can cause substantial soil erosion owing to the lack of any protective crop cover at this time of year. Overall, monthly precipitation amounts were well below normal across far northern Iowa while central Iowa was generally the wettest portion of the state. April precipitation totals varied from lows of 1.18 inches at Lake Park and 1.58 inches at Milford up to 6.09 inches at Johnston and 6.65 inches at Little Sioux. April snow totals varied from none at Keokuk to 13.5 inches at Dorchester.

Severe Weather. The 2003 severe weather season got off to a slow start with only a few isolated events on April 4<sup>th</sup>, 15<sup>th</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup>. However, severe storms were reported from 26 southern and eastern Iowa counties on the 30<sup>th</sup> including baseball size hail from Jasper, Louisa, Monroe and Wapello Counties as well as 3 small tornadoes.

Drought Update. Frequent rainfall during the second half of April was sufficient to push soil moisture levels back to normal over virtually all of Iowa. However, streamflow and groundwater levels remain unusually low across much of southern Iowa. Streamflow and groundwater levels normally reach their seasonal maximum at this time of year and then slowly decline as we go into summer.

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