

THE ATMOSPHERIC RESERVOIR

Examining the Atmosphere and Atmospheric Resource Management

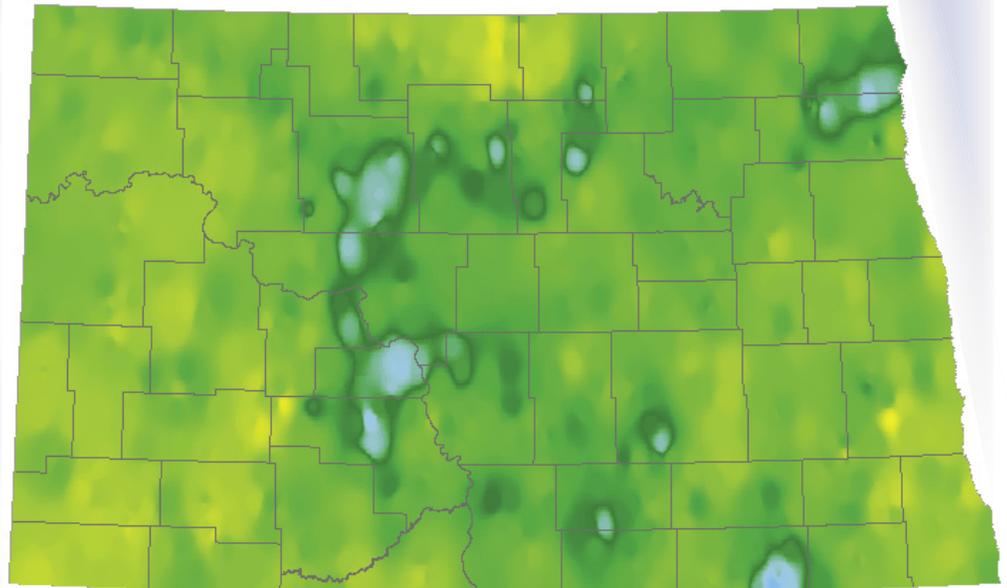
What Drought?

By Mark D. Schneider

May and June brought an end to the drought that plagued North Dakota farmers and ranchers last growing season. The National Drought Mitigation Center issues a weekly Drought Monitor, which combines various drought indices and calculates broad-scale conditions for drought across the U.S. As of June 14 when this article was written, the Drought Monitor Map showed the entire state of North Dakota outside of the abnormally dry to severe drought conditions we were experiencing last year. Local conditions can vary, so it doesn't necessarily mean that isolated areas of the state aren't dry.

According to the Bismarck National Weather Service, May went into the record books as Minot's wettest May since 1948. In addition, it was the fourth wettest May for Bismarck and Williston since records began back in 1875 and 1894. Areas of the state that normally receive two to three inches of rain for May reported up to nine and a half inches for the month! The statewide average for the month was nearly five and a half inches!

North Dakotans know all too well that "the great spigot in the sky" can be turned off as quickly as it's turned on. Current predictions by the Climate Prediction Center keep equal chances for normal precipitation over the remainder of the growing season. That's positive news for a good crop this year.



May 2007 Rainfall (in inches)



The rains in May and June were so plentiful for the western part of the state that rain enhancement operations conducted during the first half of June on the North Dakota Cloud Modification Project (NDCMP) had to be suspended at one time for all except Williams County. Hail suppression operations were conducted throughout the NDCMP during the entire month of June and will continue through the end of August.

The rainfall map shown in this article includes data from nearly 700 observers in the NDARB Cooperative Observer Network. You don't have to look very hard to see that many areas of our state have received half of their average growing season rainfall in just May alone. Many central North Dakota rainguage report-

ing sites received over 300 percent of normal rainfall for May!

Farmers and ranchers will still need additional moisture for the remainder of the growing season. Hopefully that moisture will be perfectly spaced for crops to receive optimum benefit, with hail kept to a minimum. Our state looked good for moisture going into June last year, but then the rains stopped. We will most likely see a different outcome this growing season.

Atmospheric Resource Board
North Dakota State Water Commission
900 East Boulevard, Bismarck, ND 58505
(701) 328-2788
<http://swc.nd.gov>

ND Weather Modification Association
PO Box 2599, Bismarck, ND 58502
(701) 223-4232