

December 2016 Climate Summary – Georgia

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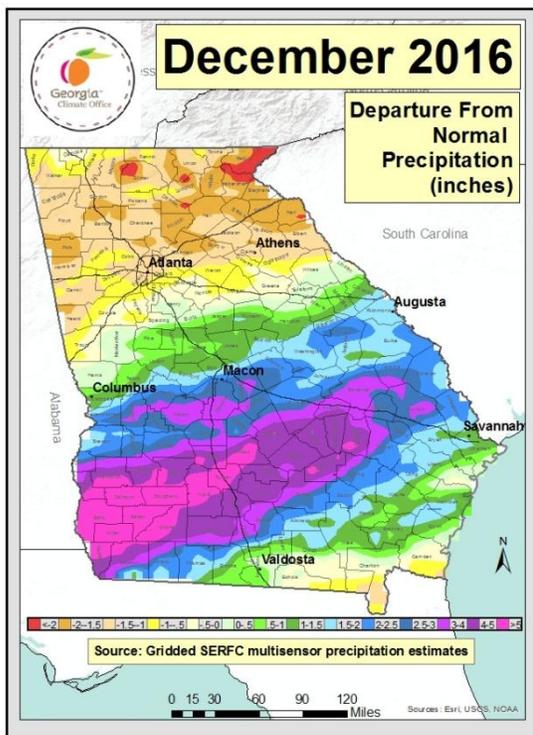
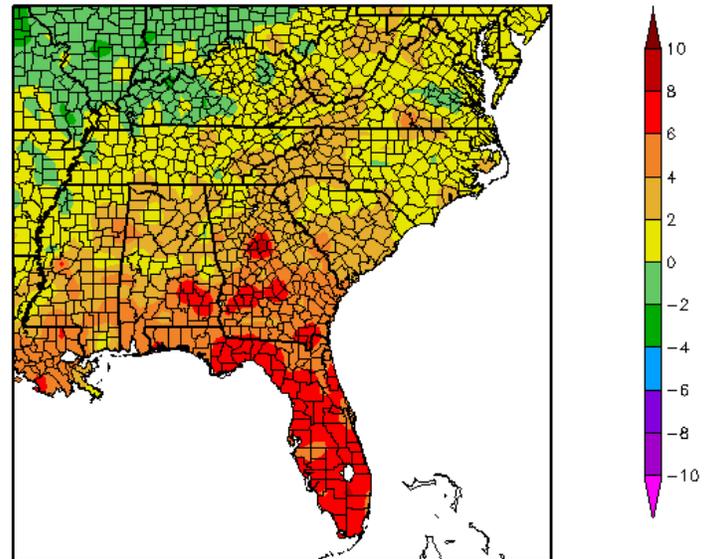
December in Georgia was once again characterized by warmer than normal temperatures statewide, slight precipitation deficits in north Georgia, and a surplus of rain in much of southern Georgia, most of which fell in the first week of the month. The much-needed rainfall helped ease drought conditions in some areas, especially central and southwest Georgia. Severe weather activity was much below normal in Georgia and throughout the southeast this month.

Atlanta's average December temperature was 48.9°F (+3.6°), Athens recorded 47.1° (+1.7°), Columbus' average temperature was 52.5° (+3.4°), Savannah recorded 56.4° (+4.7°), Valdosta's average temperature was 57.7° (+4.6°), and Rome recorded 45.4° (+2.8°). Several climate sites set daily high temperature records on December 18th when temperatures reached 81° in Macon (previous record of 79° set in 2008), 84° in Augusta, (previous record of 82° set in 2008), and 78° in St. Simons Island (tied from previously set record from 2008). All three sites also had above normal temperatures this month with Macon recording 52.2° (+4.2°), Augusta with 52.4° (+5.2°), and St. Simons Island recording 59.1° (+5.0°).

Precipitation was highly variable throughout the state in December. A long-awaited change to a more active weather pattern caused the majority of the state to receive anywhere from one to several inches of rainfall from December 4th to December 6th. Sites recording below normal monthly precipitation included Atlanta with 3.00" (-0.90"), Athens with 2.42" (-1.31"), Valdosta with 2.15" (-1.02"), and Rome with 3.41" (-0.97"). Macon's December precipitation totaled 5.95" (+1.91"), Columbus recorded 4.37" (+0.10"), Augusta saw 4.41" (+1.02"), Savannah recorded 4.29" (+1.34"), and St. Simons Island's monthly total precipitation was 3.02" (+0.38"). One noteworthy rainfall record occurred on December 6th in Camilla when 6.75" fell, breaking the record for the maximum one-day total precipitation for any day of the year at that site.

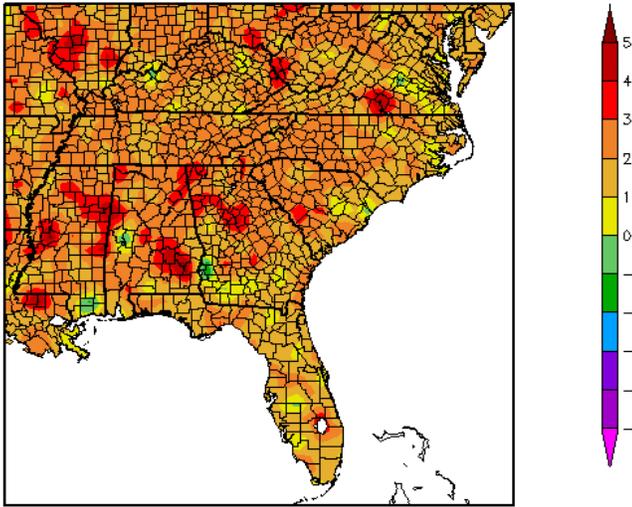
The streak of above normal average monthly temperatures for much of the year allowed the vast majority of the state to record above normal yearly average temperatures for 2016. Georgia as a whole recorded an average yearly temperature of 65.8° (+2.3°), making it the only state in the lower 48 to have its warmest year on record. Atlanta also had its warmest year on record with 65.8°, while Savannah had its 2nd warmest year on record at 69.1°. Athens and Macon had their 3rd warmest with 65.6° and 66.6°, respectively. The yearly average temperature for Columbus was 67.4° and Augusta recorded 66.1°, making it both sites' 8th warmest year on record. As for precipitation in 2016, Georgia's yearly average precipitation was 40.95" (-9.12"), ranking as the 9th driest year on record. The northern half of the state saw yearly deficits ranging from 8" to greater than 20" in extreme north Georgia, while southwest and southeast Georgia, including Savannah, saw a surplus of yearly rainfall.

Departure from Normal Temperature (F)
12/1/2016 – 12/31/2016

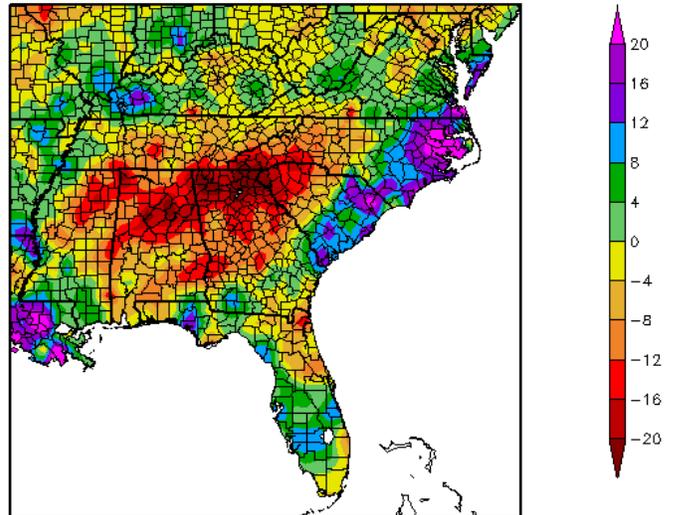


2016 Annual Departures From Normal

Departure from Normal Temperature (F)
1/1/2016 – 12/31/2016



Departure from Normal Precipitation (in)
1/1/2016 – 12/31/2016



Well below normal severe weather was reported in December in Georgia. Besides some isolated minor wind damage reports on a few days in the month, there was one EF-1 tornado that formed in Jackson County near Jefferson in the early hours of the 29th, causing damage to up to 30 homes. No injuries were reported.

The United States Drought Monitor showed some improvement from the beneficial rainfall, particularly in the first week of the month. The greatest reduction was in D3 (extreme drought) conditions in south Georgia, while D4 (exceptional drought) conditions were reduced in extreme north Georgia. Slow and minor improvement continued in the remaining drought categories throughout December.

According to the Climate Prediction Center, there is currently a La Niña Advisory, and La Niña conditions are present. Equatorial sea surface temperatures are below average in the central and eastern Pacific Ocean. A transition to ENSO-neutral is favored during January-March 2017. The CPC's three-month seasonal outlook shows up to a 50% chance of above normal temperatures for Georgia, and chances for below normal precipitation in the southern half of the state, particularly extreme south Georgia, as well as a 33% - 40% chance for above normal precipitation in extreme north Georgia.

