January 2016 Climate Summary – Georgia

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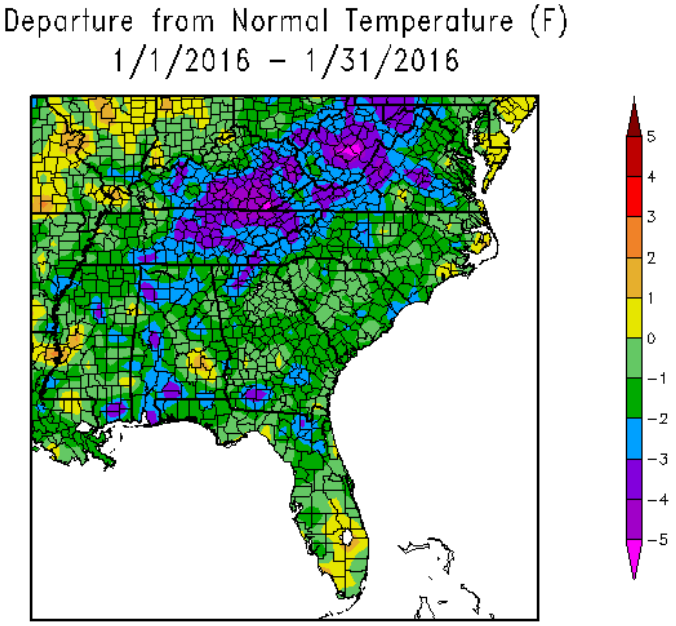
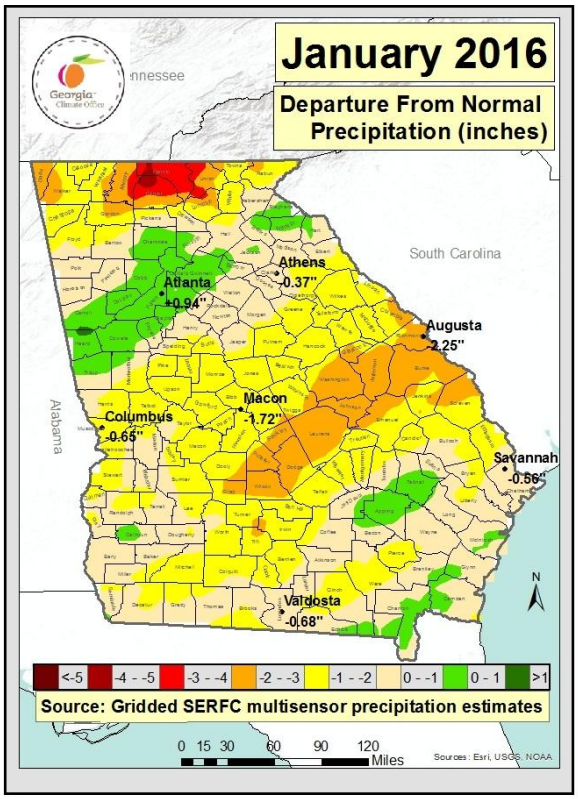
After an unseasonably warm and wet December, January turned out to be cooler than normal with variable but mostly below normal precipitation throughout Georgia. The month was dominated by high pressure ridging in the southeast U.S. with a few fast moving weather systems and frontal passages that brought winter weather in north Georgia for one weekend of the month.



Temperatures were below normal at most sites in January. Atlanta's monthly average temperature was 42.4° (-0.9°), Athens recorded 42.0° (-1.5°), Macon's average temperature was 44.9° (-1.4°), Columbus recorded 45.5° (-1.7°), Augusta's average temperature was 44.2° (-1.2°), and St. Simons Island recorded 50.6° (-0.9°). Savannah and Alma's monthly average temperatures were 48.2° (-1.3°) and 48.6° (-2.1°), respectively. Both sites broke low maximum temperature records on January 23rd when temperatures only got to 40° at Savannah (previous record of 41° was set in 2003), and only to 42° in Alma (previous record of 44° was set in 2003).



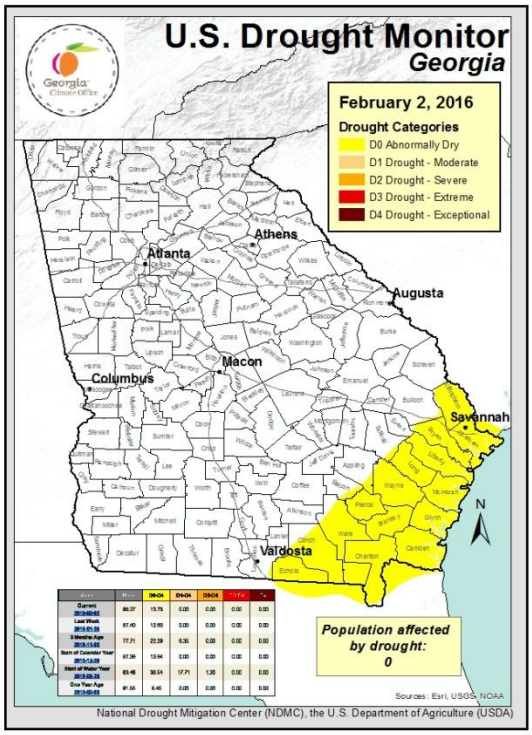
Atlanta and Alma were exceptions to the below normal precipitation in Georgia with 5.14" (+0.94") and 4.59" (+0.33") of total January rainfall, respectively. Atlanta also broke a daily rainfall record on January 22nd when 1.94" of rain fell; the previous record for that day was 1.23" in 1906. Athens' total monthly rainfall was 3.68" (-0.37"), Macon recorded 2.52" (-1.72"), Columbus recorded 3.20" (-0.65"), Savannah's total rainfall was 3.13" (-0.56"), and St. Simons Island recorded 3.15" (-0.07). Augusta was well below normal with 1.66" (-2.25").

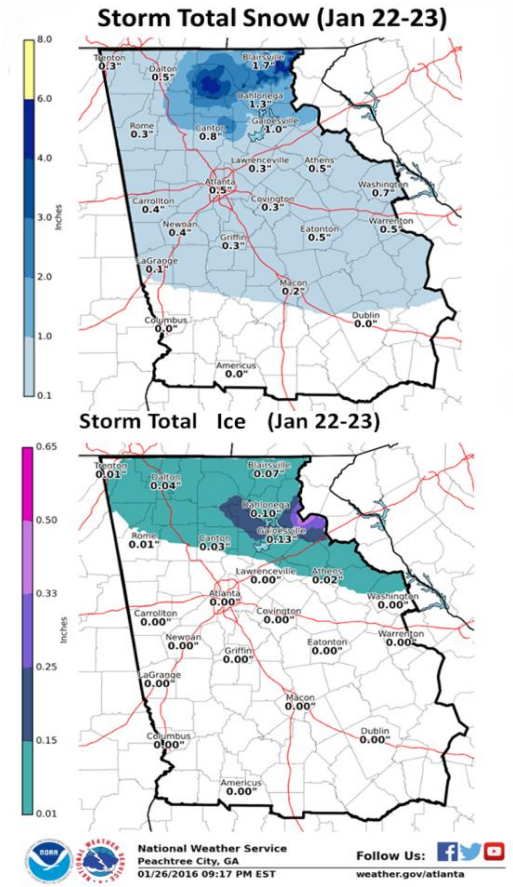
Although there were no reports of severe weather on any day in January, a winter weather event January 22nd through the 23rd impacted much of north Georgia. A strong and dynamical low pressure system moved into the state. Wrap-around precipitation plus cold air advection caused light snow showers in north Georgia. Rain changed to freezing rain and snow first in the northeast where a wedge of cold air was in place. A surface and mid-level low pressure system then formed off the Georgia coast and tracked northeastward along the Atlantic coast.

January saw no change to the area of D0 (abnormally dry) conditions in southeast Georgia according to the United States Drought Monitor. Most weather systems were

moisture-starved by the time they began to affect southeast areas of the state. The active upper-level pattern and southward shift in the subtropical jet stream path, generally associated with a strong El Niño event, should result in improvements to the dry conditions.

According to the Climate Prediction Center, El Niño conditions are present and there is currently an El Niño advisory. A strong El Niño is expected to gradually weaken through spring 2016, and to transition to ENSO-neutral during late spring or early summer 2016. The Oceanic Niño Index (ONI) value for November, December, and January is 2.3°. This ONI value ties the current El Niño event with the strongest El Niño on record, which occurred in 1997 through 1998.





The CPC's current 3-month seasonal outlook shows chances for above normal precipitation throughout the majority of the state. With the exception of extreme south Georgia where chances for below normal temperatures exist, there is an equal chance for above, near, or below normal temperatures for the state in February, March and April.