

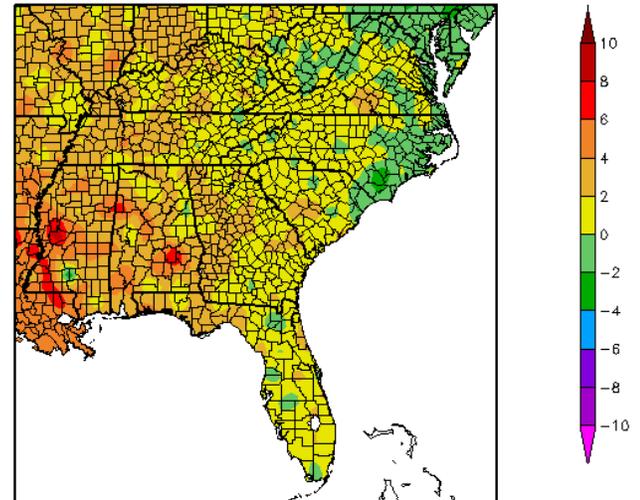
## March 2017 Climate Summary – Georgia

Lauren Lindsey, Service Climatologist  
State of Georgia Climate Office

March was characterized by above normal temperatures statewide once again with an average temperature of 57.7°F (+2.3°) for Georgia. Temperatures in the state have averaged above normal since June 2016, making March the tenth consecutive month of warmer than normal temperatures. Precipitation was near to above normal in far north Georgia, while parts of south Georgia saw less than 25% of normal rainfall this month. The weather pattern remained active - two rounds of severe weather impacted the state, and a strong low pressure system funneled very cold air into the state that caused freeze warnings and numerous problems for the agricultural sector.

Atlanta's average March temperature was 57.7° (+3.4°), Macon recorded 58.8° (+2.0°), Columbus averaged 60.3° (+2.5°), Augusta's monthly temperature was 58.8° (+2.9°), and Savannah recorded 61.0° (+1.8°). Athens had an average monthly temperature of 56.8° (+2.5°), ranking it as the 9<sup>th</sup> warmest March on record. There were three exceptionally warm days where several major climate sites broke daily temperature records. On March 1<sup>st</sup>, Atlanta tied a daily high temperature record with 80° (previously set in 1997), Augusta tied a daily record high with 85° (previously set in 1997), and Savannah tied a daily high temperature record with 86° (previously set in 1918). Savannah also set a daily high minimum temperature record with 67° (previous record of 65° set in 2012). March 21<sup>st</sup> was also a warm day. Atlanta tied its record high of 86° (previously set in 1907), Athens reached 88° and set a new daily high temperature record (previous record of 84° set in 1948), and Augusta recorded 91° and broke its previous record of 89° set in 1948. Columbus also tied its daily high minimum temperature record on this day with 65° (previously set in 1991). Lastly, on March 29<sup>th</sup>, afternoon temperatures rose rapidly and Atlanta set a new daily record high temperature of 85° (previous record of 84° set in 1989), Athens tied its daily record high with 85° (previously set in 1928), and Macon set a new high temperature record when the temperature reached 88° (previous record of 87° set in 1907). Interestingly, March 16<sup>th</sup> saw record low temperatures as cold air filtered into the state. Augusta tied its record low temperature of 23° set in 1988, and Savannah tied its record low temperature of 26° (previously set in 1890).

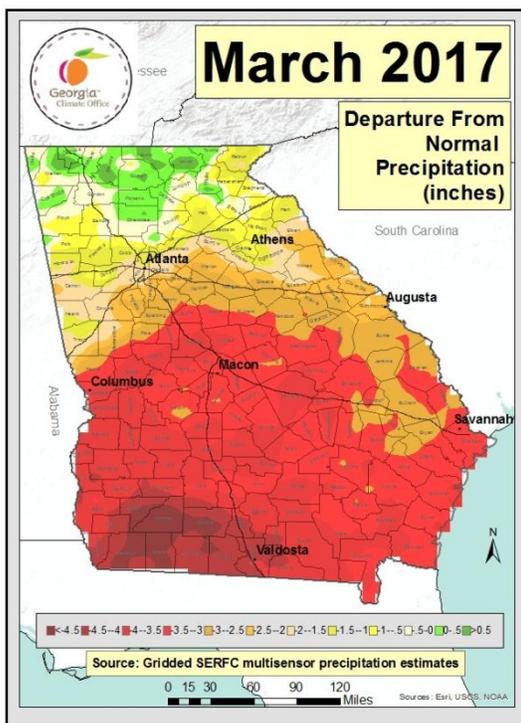
Departure from Normal Temperature (F)  
3/1/2017 – 3/31/2017



Atlanta tied its record high of 86° (previously set in 1907), Athens reached 88° and set a new daily high temperature record (previous record of 84° set in 1948), and Augusta recorded 91° and broke its previous record of 89° set in 1948. Columbus also tied its daily high minimum temperature record on this day with 65° (previously set in 1991). Lastly, on March 29<sup>th</sup>, afternoon temperatures rose rapidly and Atlanta set a new daily record high temperature of 85° (previous record of 84° set in 1989), Athens tied its daily record high with 85° (previously set in 1928), and Macon set a new high temperature record when the temperature reached 88° (previous record of 87° set in 1907). Interestingly, March 16<sup>th</sup> saw record low temperatures as cold air filtered into the state. Augusta tied its record low temperature of 23° set in 1988, and Savannah tied its record low temperature of 26° (previously set in 1890).

All the major climate sites recorded slightly below to much below normal precipitation in March. Atlanta received 2.68" (-2.13"), Athens recorded 4.31" (-0.12"), Macon's total precipitation was 1.45" (-3.10"), and Augusta received 1.77" (-2.41"). Savannah and Columbus had an unusually dry month, recording 0.50" (-3.23") and 1.53" (-3.93"), ranking as 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> driest March on record, respectively. There were no days with exceptional amounts of rainfall, so no new daily rainfall records were set in March.

The month started off with severe weather impacting much of north Georgia. On March 1<sup>st</sup>, an EF-1 tornado touched down in Chatsworth in Murray County where a barn was destroyed and roof damage was widespread. There were also reports of ping pong sized hail and wind damage causing downed trees. Another active day occurred on March 21<sup>st</sup> when an EF-0 briefly touched down in Barrow



County, in addition to an EF-1 in Jackson County that caused a home under construction to be pulled off its moorings. Several other days also saw damaging winds associated with strong frontal passages.

The United States Drought Monitor showed that D0 (abnormally dry) conditions were introduced into the southern half of Georgia by the end of March. D2 (severe drought) and D3 (extreme drought) conditions were slightly reduced in north Georgia, particularly in northwest Georgia and along the Tennessee border where numerous storm systems brought beneficial rainfall throughout March.

According to the Climate Prediction Center, ENSO-neutral conditions are present so the ENSO Alert System is not active. Equatorial sea surface temperatures (SSTs) are near-average across the central and east-central Pacific. They are above-average in the eastern Pacific Ocean. ENSO-neutral conditions are favored to continue through at least the Northern Hemisphere spring 2017, with increasing chances for El Niño development into the fall. The three-month seasonal outlook shows strong chances for above normal temperatures and equal chances of above, near, or below normal precipitation in Georgia through April, May, and June.

