February 2015 Climate Summary – Georgia

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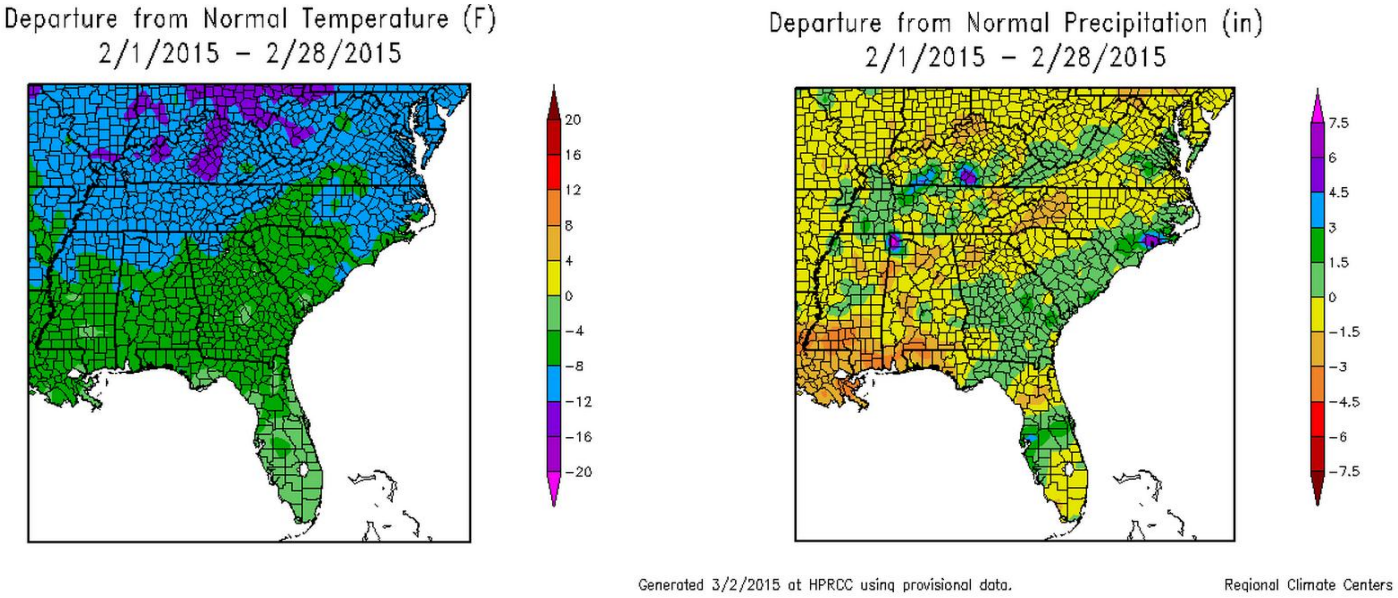
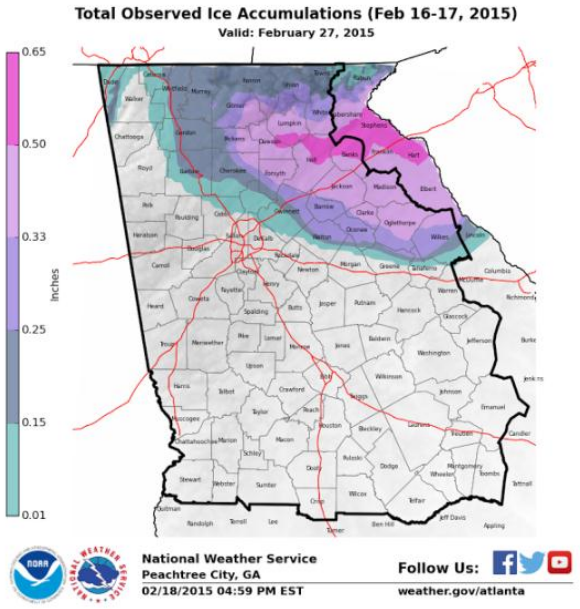
The month of February was characterized by below-average temperatures and variable precipitation. Most locations received relatively normal precipitation amounts. The cold temperatures and moisture associated with several weather systems allowed winter to make its presence known in Georgia this month.



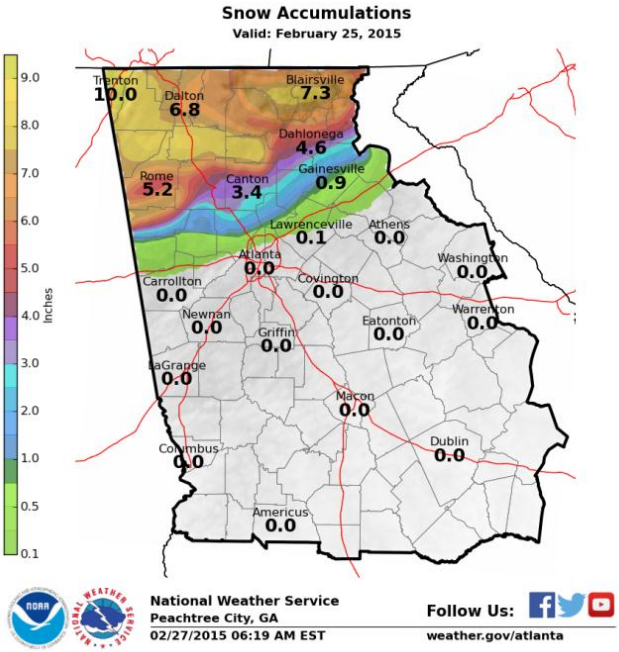
Atlanta's average temperature of 40.4° (6.8° below normal) and Athens' average temperature of 40.3° (6.9° below normal) were both well below their normal temperature of 47.2°. This month was the 8th coldest February on record for Macon: their average temperature of 43.7° was 6.3° below normal. Columbus had an average temperature of 44.7°, or 6.4° below normal. The average temperature in Augusta was 6.3° below normal at 42.8°, putting this month as Augusta's 7th coldest on record. Savannah's average temperature was 47.3° (5.7° below normal). The average temperature in Alma was 6.5° below normal at 47.7°. St. Simons Island's average temperature was 49.2° (5.3° below normal).

Precipitation was variable across the state, but most locations had close to normal precipitation totals. Atlanta's monthly total precipitation was 0.52" below normal at 4.15". Athens had a total of 3.99", or 0.49" below normal. Macon's precipitation was exactly average at 4.36". Columbus had 0.22" below normal precipitation with 4.22" in February. Augusta's monthly total of 4.7" was above normal by 0.78". Savannah had 0.65" above normal precipitation with 3.44" total. Alma's total precipitation was 3.62" (0.22" below normal). St. Simons Island had 0.78" below normal precipitation with 2.69".



A low pressure system moved across the area on February 16th bringing precipitation throughout the state. This combined with a wedge of cold air and caused a significant ice storm in parts of northeast metro Atlanta, and points north and east. Ice totals reached up to ½" in some areas, and by the morning of February 17th, more than 200,000 people were without power. Extensive damage to trees and power lines was reported as well.

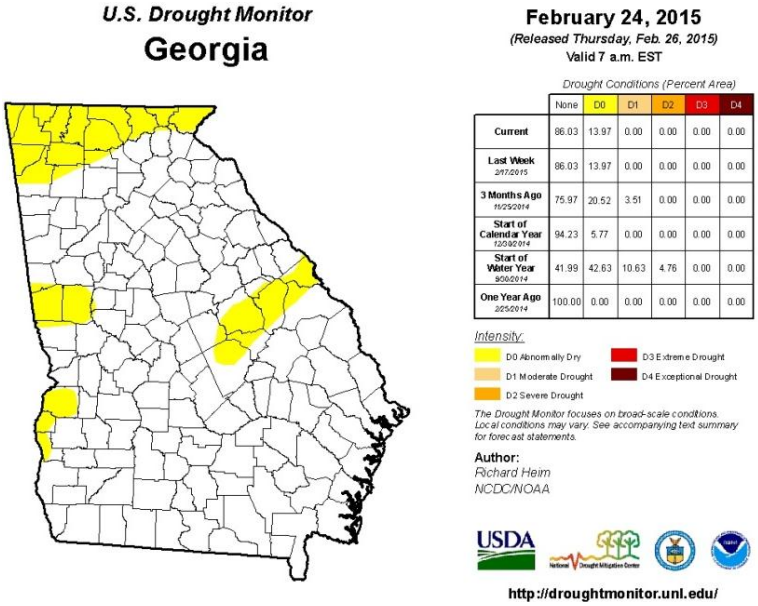
A mass of Arctic air pushing into the state caused record-breaking cold temperatures at many locations on February 20th. Atlanta had a low temperature of 16°, tying the old record set in 1934. Athens broke two records that day: a low temperature of 14° broke the old record of 18° set in 1958, and a high temperature of 37° broke the old record low maximum temperature of 38° set in 1910. Columbus broke the low temperature record with 21°; the previous record was 22° set in 1958. Macon had a low temperature of 18°, breaking the record of 21° set in 1958. Augusta broke their record low temperature and tied their record low maximum temperature that day: 13° that morning broke the old record of 19° set in 1958, and the maximum temperature of 41° tied the old record set in 1910. Savannah broke both their record low and record low maximum temperatures, with a low of 21° breaking the old record of 22° set in 1958, and a low maximum temperature of 41° breaking the previous record of 44° set in 1908. In Alma, a low temperature of 22° tied the record set in 1958, and a maximum temperature of 45° broke the previous record low maximum of 46° set in 1978. Lastly, St. Simons Island saw two days of record cold. On February 19th, they broke their record low maximum temperature with 41°; the old was 46° set in 1993. On February 20th, a low of 24° broke the previous record of 27° set in 1993, while the maximum temperature of 39° broke the record of 48° set in 1978.



Following this cold outbreak, sufficient moisture surged into north Georgia to cause snow, sleet, freezing rain, and hazardous road conditions on the night of February 20th and the morning of the 21st. The precipitation impacted metro Atlanta and further north, with totals up to 2" in extreme northwest Georgia.

On February 25th, Georgia saw more winter weather impacts in the northern portion of the state. A strong system brought plentiful moisture to the area, resulting in a heavy snowfall event in north Georgia, a heavy and wet mix of snow, sleet, and freezing in northern metro Atlanta, and cold, heavy rain in the

southern portion of the state. Areas in the north received several inches of snow, and a tight snow gradient set up along the northern metro area. The highest reported total snowfall was 9”, just northeast of Dillard.



As of February 24th, several counties in Georgia are currently in D0, or abnormally dry conditions, according to the U.S. Drought Monitor. Based on the recent precipitation events impacting the drought-affected areas, as well as the short range outlooks for precipitation, possible improvement may occur.

According to the Climate Prediction Center, there is an approximately 50-60% chance of El Niño within the late Northern Hemisphere winter and early spring, with ENSO-neutral slightly favored thereafter. ENSO-neutral conditions continue. The 3-month seasonal outlook forecasts equal chances for above or below normal temperatures for Georgia. Slightly above average precipitation totals are forecasted for southern Georgia, with equal chances of above or below normal precipitation for the northern half of the state for March, April, and May.