

April 1, 2016

Dear Precipitation Observer,

Each year, we reach out to our amazing volunteer citizen scientists with a summary of the previous year's weather, observation tips for the upcoming year, and a note of thanks.

2015 Weather Summary:

2015 will be remembered for a nearly optimal growing season with timely rains and a lack of extreme heat. The balmy fall and mild start to winter were noteworthy as well.

It may be hard to imagine now, but in spring 2015 there was a sizable drought in Minnesota. The worst of this drought was in early May, with 94% of the state experiencing a *moderate* drought and 40% of the state in *severe* drought. Spring arrived early with lake ice out averaging about eight to twelve days earlier than the historical median date.

Fears of the drought continuing into the summer were erased by a rainy May across much of the state. With this boost, soil moisture levels returned to long term averages at both Lamberton and Waseca through the summer.

There were 39 tornadoes reported in the state in 2015 with sixteen of them on May 16. Only one tornado, occurring on July 12 in Wadena and Todd counties, was strong enough to register as an EF2 on the tornado scale with winds of 111-135 mph. On the same day, severe thunderstorms brought winds from 70 to 95 mph into an area just south of Wadena eastward to the Pillsbury State Forest, where winds were in excess of 100 mph in some places. Significant damage was done to resorts on Gull and North Long Lake, and the grandstand at the Brainerd International Raceway.

July will be remembered not for summer-like heat, but for smoky skies courtesy of Canadian wildfires that reduced visibilities at times. The thickest, smoky haze was on July 6, when the visibility was reduced to less than two miles at Alexandria, Rochester, Redwood Falls and St. Cloud. The smoke and haze lingered at intervals through the summer.

Fall 2015 was Minnesota's second warmest September-November since 1895. The only other autumn that was warmer was 1963. The warmer weather produced rain well into November and beyond, and delayed the usual freeze-up of lakes. In general, lakes froze over about three weeks later than the median date in Minnesota.

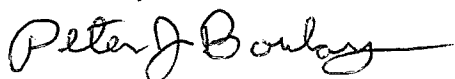
Observation Tips:

The 2015 listing of monthly precipitation totals for locations in your county should depict your measurements. If your data are missing, or if inaccurate values are shown for you, please let us know and we will correct the values in the data archive. Contact: climate@umn.edu or 651-296-4214.

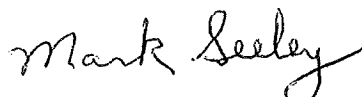
The enclosed **annual** observation form is for your personal records only. Please use the **monthly** forms to report data to the network administrator. You can also provide your data on-line. To learn how contact: climate@umn.edu. Your data, and data from all of our volunteers, can be viewed on the State Climatology Office Web site (<http://climate.umn.edu>).

THANK YOU for contributing your data to the statewide precipitation archive. We appreciate your time and your hard work. The data you provide is critical to our understanding and appreciation of Minnesota's dynamic weather patterns.

Sincerely,

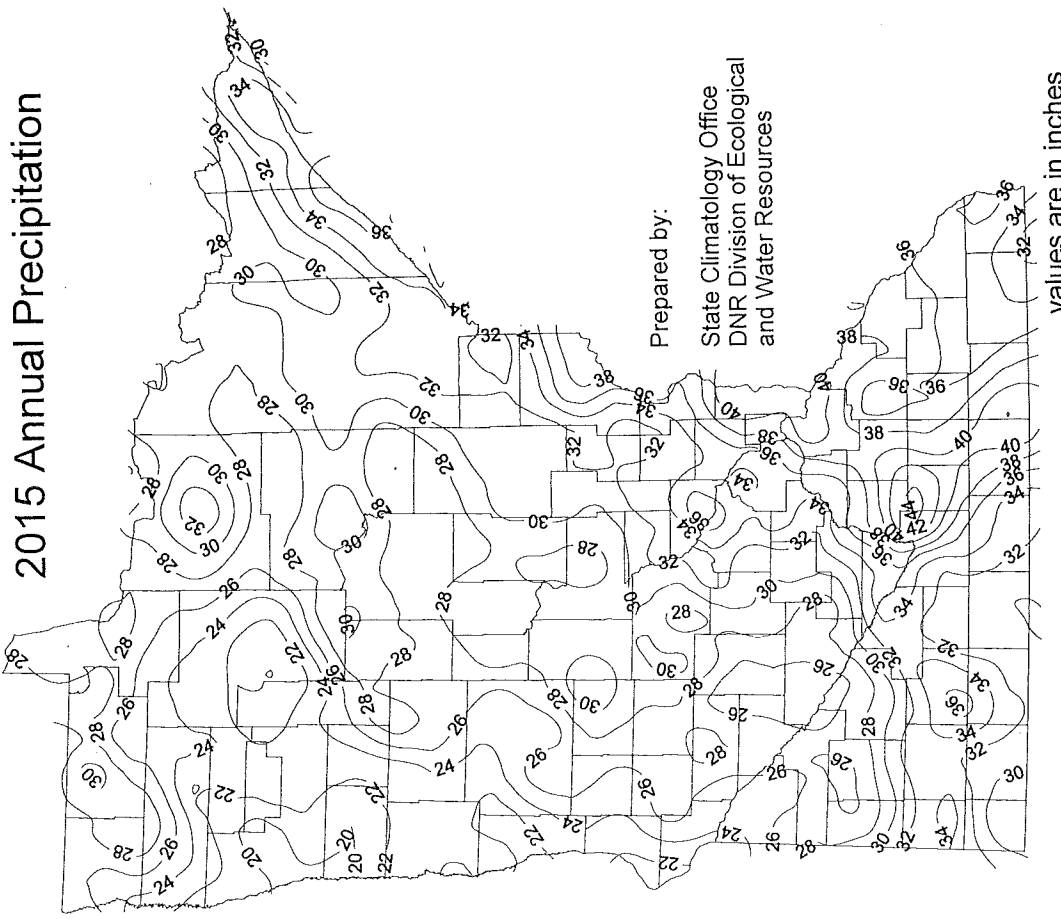


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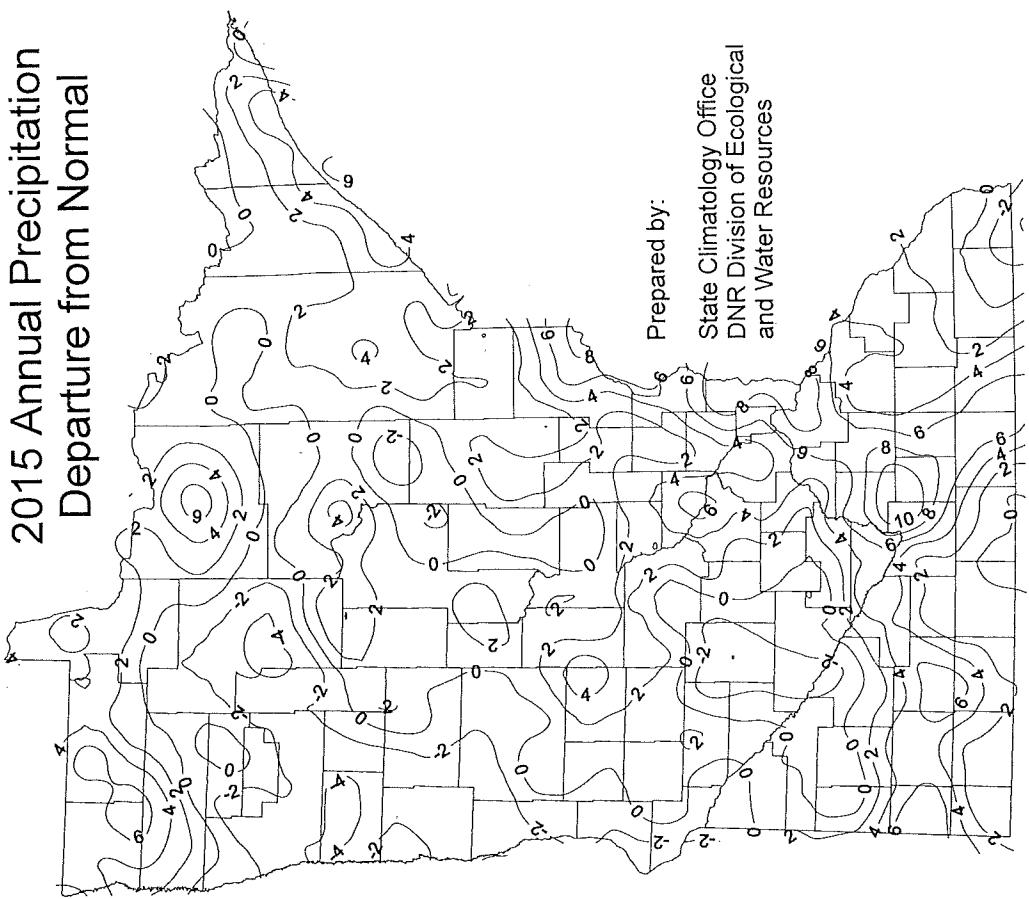
2015 Annual Precipitation



Prepared by:
State Climatology Office
DNR Division of Ecological
and Water Resources

values are in inches

2015 Annual Precipitation Departure from Normal



Prepared by:
State Climatology Office
DNR Division of Ecological
and Water Resources

values are in inches

Annual precipitation from 2015 varied from around 20 inches in western Polk County to a high of 46 inches in northeast Blue Earth County. The departure from normal ranged from two to four inches below normal in west central Minnesota to four to ten inches above normal in south central Minnesota. These maps were created with the assistance of 1,500 volunteer citizen scientist rain gauge observers.