State of Ohio Quarterly Climate Summary

THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY

Winter Review (Dec-Feb)

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Temperature and Precipitation

Ohio's 2025–26 winter was characterized by colder-than-normal temperatures and generally dry conditions. Average temperatures across most of the state ranged from 25°F to 30°F. Slightly warmer conditions, between 30°F and 35°F, were observed in southern Ohio, while the coldest temperature, ranging from 20°F to 25°F, occurred in the northwest and northeast regions (Fig. 1a). Overall, temperatures were approximately 1°F to 5°F below normal statewide (Fig. 1b). Winter precipitation totals were also below average. Most of Ohio received between 6 and 8 inches of precipitation, much of which fell as snow. However, northwest Ohio saw only 2 to 4 inches over the three-month period, providing little relief to ongoing drought conditions (Fig. 1c). Compared to historical averages, nearly the entire state experienced a precipitation deficit of at least 1 inch, with southern Ohio falling short by as much as 7 inches (Fig. 1d). The combination of below-normal temperatures and widespread precipitation deficit, despite record breaking snowfall events, resulted in a cold, dry winter across Ohio.

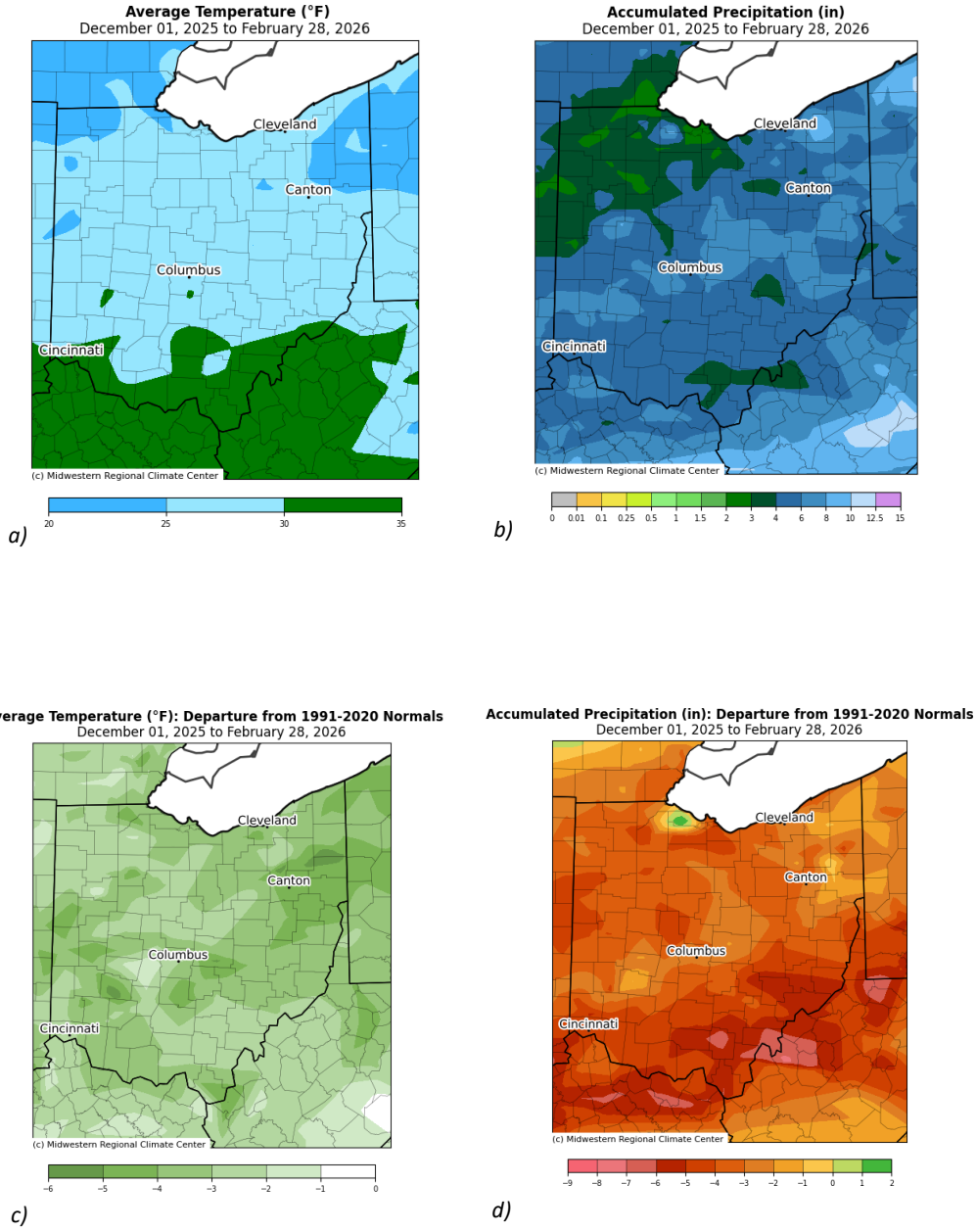


Figure 1: Statewide departures from normal temperature (a) and accumulated precipitation (b) over the winter months at top, followed by statewide accumulated precipitation departures (c) and percent of normals for precipitation (d) at bottom. All data courtesy of the Midwestern Regional Climate Center (http://mrcc.purdue.edu).

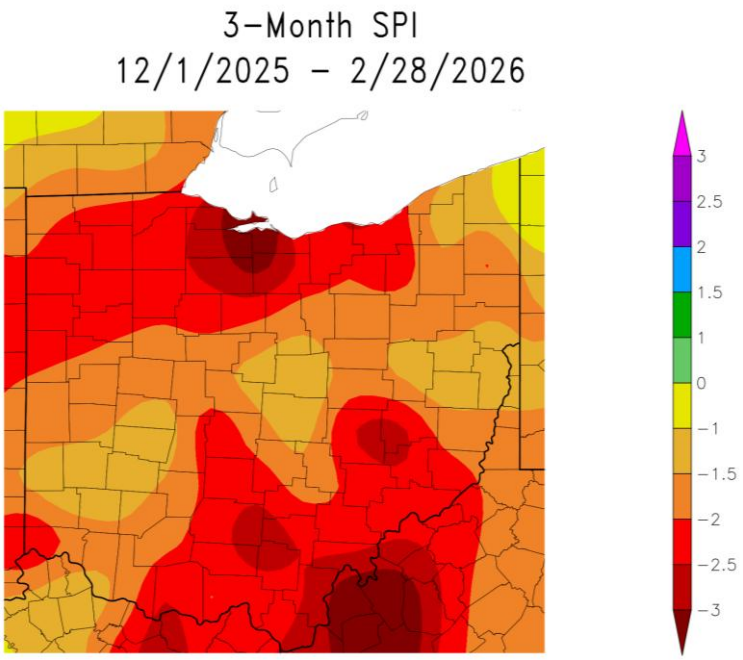


Figure 2: Three-month Standardized Precipitation Index (SPI) across the state of Ohio from December 2025 through February 2026, used as a proxy for soil moisture conditions. Data courtesy of the High Plains Regional Climate Center (https://hprcc.unl.edu/)

Soil and Energy

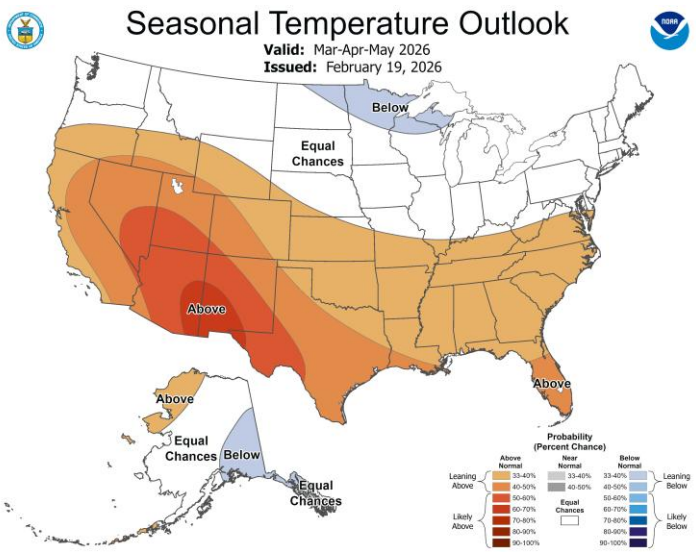
Widespread negative SPI values were present throughout winter, indicating relatively dry soils across Ohio. However, the severity of dryness varied across the state. The driest conditions were concentrated in northwest Ohio, particularly around the Sandusky and Port Clinton areas, where SPIs were exceptionally low. Additional areas of pronounced dryness were present in southern and east-central Ohio (Fig. 2).

Cooling Degree Days (CDDs) remained at 0 over the past three months, indicating that daily average temperatures did not exceed 65°F. In contrast, Heating Degree Days (HDDs) were elevated. Statewide, a total of 3,406 HDDs were recorded, which is 295 more than the seasonal average. While higher HDD totals are typical during the winter months, this positive departure suggests an increased demand for heating energy during the season, which is consistent with the average temperatures being significantly colder than normal (Fig. 3).

Climate Division	Heating Degree Days	Normal	Departure	Cooling Degree Days	Normal	Departure
1	3445	3276	169	0	0	0
2	3507	3230	277	0	0	0
3	3620	3235	385	0	0	0
4	3395	3190	205	0	0	0
5	3350	3083	267	0	0	0
6	3534	3205	329	0	0	0
7	3517	3137	380	0	0	0
8	3213	2933	280	0	0	0
9	2980	2785	195	0	0	0
10	3224	2953	271	0	0	0
Statewide	3406	3111	295	0	0	0

Figure 3: (Left) Total December 2025 – February 2026 heating & cooling degree days. (Right) Corresponding Ohio Climate Divisions. Data courtesy of the Midwestern Regional Climate Center (http://mrcc.purdue.edu).

a)



b)

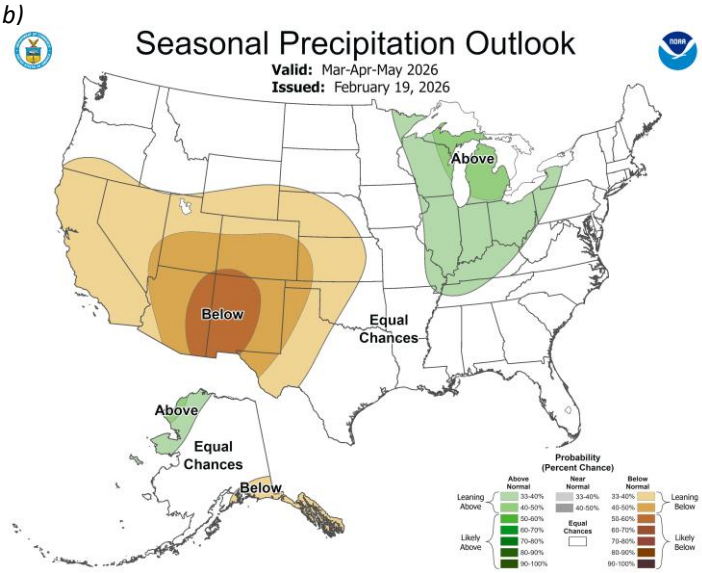


Figure 4: a) Nationwide Seasonal Temperature and b) Precipitation Outlook for March – May 2026. Courtesy of the Climate Prediction Center (https://www.cpc.ncep.noaa.gov/).

Looking Ahead

After a drier and colder-than-normal winter, what can Ohio expect for the spring three-month temperature and precipitation outlook? The seasonal temperature forecast shows no clear trend toward warmer or cooler conditions, with equal chances for either to occur (Fig. 4a). Precipitation, however, looks more promising. The Climate Prediction Center places Ohio in a region leaning toward above-normal precipitation (Fig. 4b). With increased precipitation activity already recorded in March, northwestern Ohio may see some relief from the ongoing drought conditions.

The transition from winter to spring is a critical period for planning crop planting. Planting too early can expose seeds and young seedlings to late-season frosts, which can damage or kill them. Excessive rainfall during this time can also cause soil runoff or seed washout. Planting too late, on the other hand, may shorten the growing season, preventing crops from reaching full maturity and potentially reducing overall yield. Paying attention to the weather forecast this spring is going to be crucial in maximizing crop yield and strength.

Note: these outlooks do not provide the quantity of above or below normal conditions, just the likelihood of occurrence (i.e., the probability).

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