State of Ohio Quarterly Climate Summary

THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY

Spring Review (March-May)

Released: 07/02/26

Temperature and Precipitation

The spring season featured a warm and stormy March, the warmest April on record, and a cooler, rain-filled May. Average temperatures across this period ranged from 50–55°F across northern Ohio and 55–60°F across southern Ohio (Fig. 1a). Historically, these values run up to 4–5°F above normal (Fig. 1b). Despite two overnight frosts in May, the combination of an exceptionally warm April and a mid-May heat wave pushed the overall spring temperature average higher. Spring rainfall also brought meaningful relief from drought. Ohio has not experienced severe drought since March 31, thanks to substantial precipitation totals this season. Central Ohio received 15–20 inches of rain, with some localized pockets reaching 20–25 inches. Northern and southern Ohio generally measured 10–15 inches (Fig. 1c). Nearly the entire state, aside from portions of the southern edge, finished spring 2–8 inches above normal for precipitation (Fig. 1d).

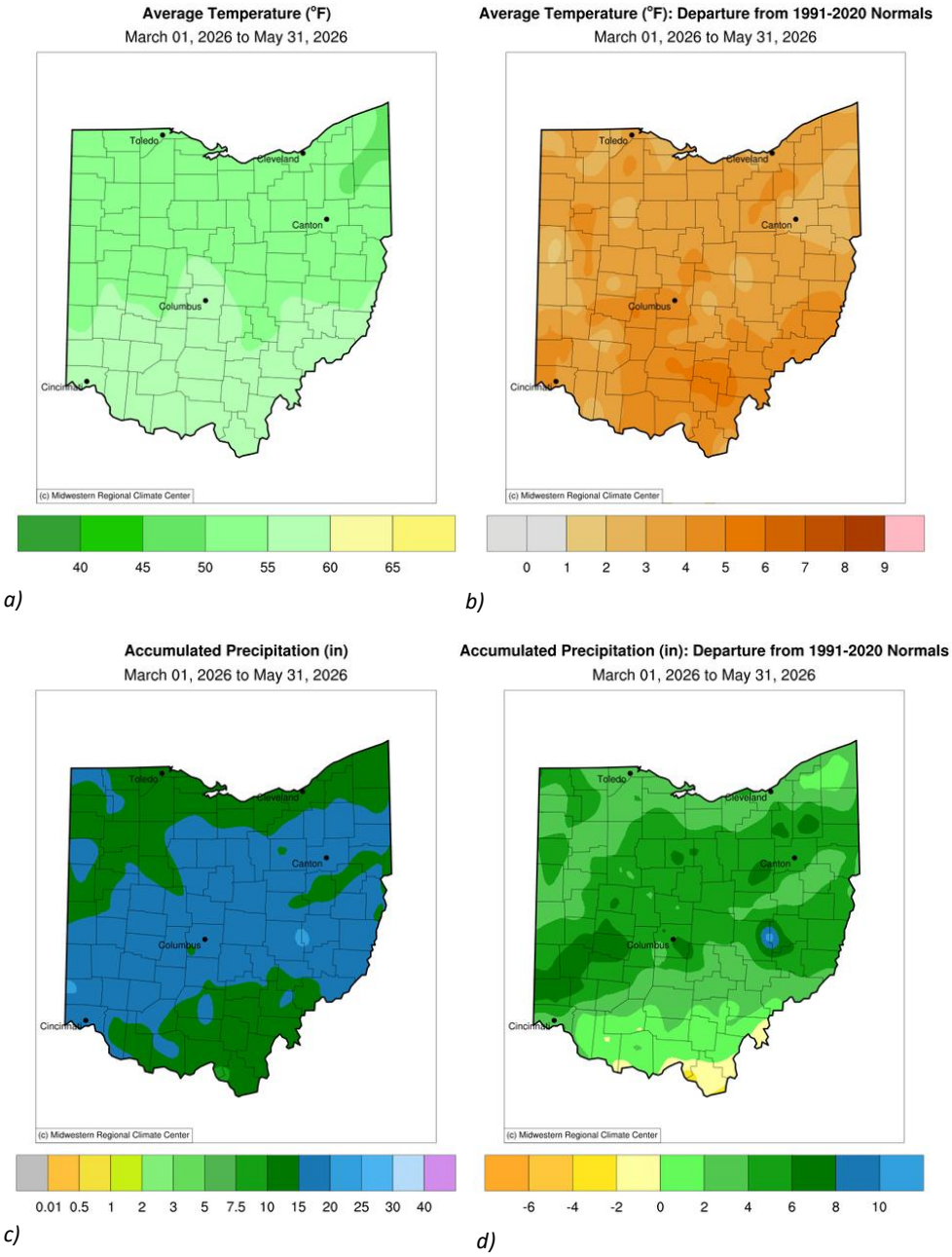

Figure 1: Statewide departures from normal temperature (a) and accumulated precipitation (b) over the spring months at top, followed by statewide accumulated precipitation departures (c) and percent of normals for precipitation (d) at bottom. All data courtesy of the Midwestern Regional Climate Center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

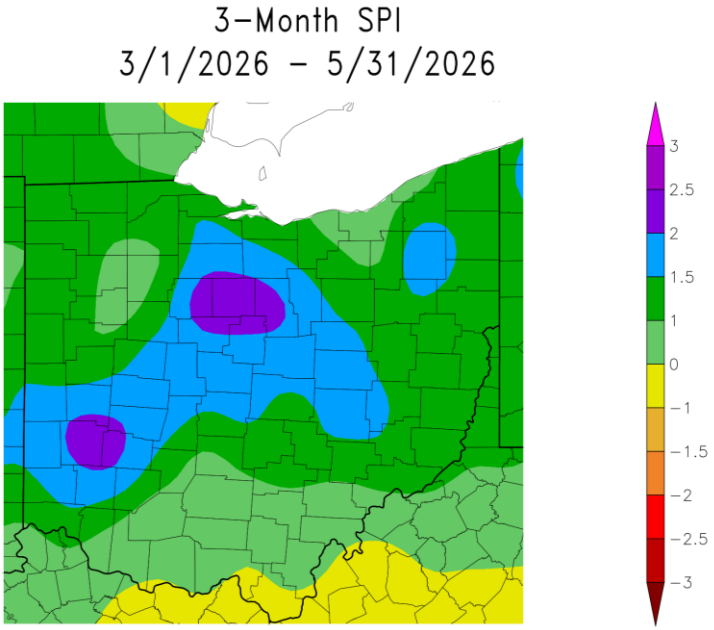

Figure 2: Three-month Standardized Precipitation Index (SPI) across the state of Ohio from March through May 2026, used as a proxy for soil moisture conditions. Data courtesy of the High Plains Regional Climate Center (https://hprcc.unl.edu/)

Soil and Energy

This past spring brought widespread rainfall across Ohio, leaving nearly the entire state with normal to above-normal precipitation. This pattern aligns with the fact that Ohio has experienced no categorical drought over the past three months and, at one point, stood out as one of the only states in the nation without drought conditions. While conditions were generally wetter than normal, localized areas of significant (2 standard deviations above the mean) soil saturation were identified in north-central and southwestern Ohio (Fig. 2).

True to the variability of Ohio's spring weather, heating and cooling needs fluctuated sharply throughout the season. Heating Degree Days (HDDs) were lower than normal, while Cooling Degree Days (CDDs) showed a statewide average departure of 18 above normal. Frequent switching between heating and air conditioning can significantly increase energy use as systems repeatedly power on and off to adjust to rapid temperature swings (Fig. 3).

Climate Division	Heating Degree Days	Normal	Departure	Cooling Degree Days	Normal	Departure
1	1225	1553	-328	76	63	13
2	1221	1555	-334	68	64	4
3	1304	1643	-339	50	49	1
4	1092	1447	-355	85	72	13
5	1031	1396	-365	94	75	19
6	1196	1536	-340	60	55	5
7	1162	1489	-327	65	57	8
8	888	1263	-375	115	89	26
9	816	1210	-394	124	84	40
10	938	1342	-404	96	66	30
Statewide	1073	1432	-359	86	68	18

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

Summer Forecast (July-September)

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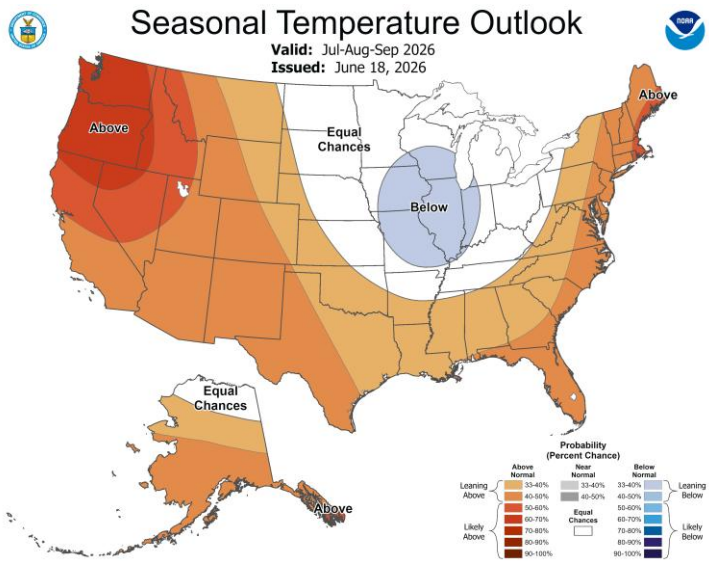
a)



b)

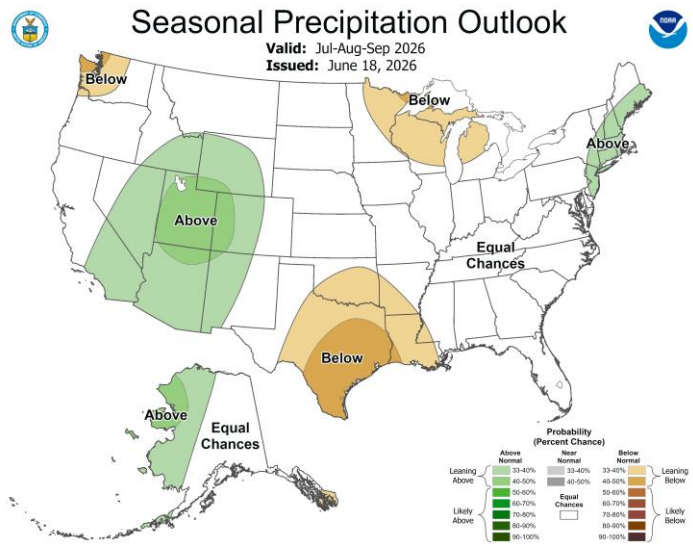


Figure 4: a) Nationwide Seasonal Temperature and b) Precipitation Outlook for June – August 2026. Courtesy of the Climate Prediction Center (https://www.cpc.ncep.noaa.gov/).

Looking Ahead

Temperature and precipitation outlooks for the next three months remain uncertain as we move into the summer season. Ohio currently has equal chances of above- or below-normal temperatures (Fig. 4a). However, given early-July trends and the significant early-month heat wave, temperatures are already leaning above normal for this time of year. A similar pattern holds for precipitation, with equal chances of wetter- or drier-than-normal conditions across the state (Fig. 4b).

As July begins, Ohio farmers are seeing strong crop growth across much of the state, along with the start of the wheat harvest. Recent rainfall has boosted soil moisture, leaving both topsoil and subsoil more than 5% above normal, a helpful buffer heading into the upcoming heat. However, as the heat intensifies, this moisture will be gradually depleted through evapotranspiration, potentially placing stress on crops and weakening them if high temperatures persist. Another ongoing challenge has been the number of localized rainfall events that have led to uneven conditions across the state. While some farms benefited from timely downpours, others saw only portions of their fields receive rain from the same storm.

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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