The contiguous U.S. had its eighth warmest spring on record with an average temperature of 53.5°F, 2.6°F above the 20th century average. With an average temperature of 46.2°F, 4.7°F above average, it was the ninth warmest March on record. April's average temperature of 53.8°F was 2.7°F above average, making it the 11th warmest on record. May's average temperature of 60.6°F was 0.4°F warmer than normal in the Northeast. Mid-Atlantic, Southern Plains and and FL.

U.S. Selected Significant Climate Anomalies and Events for May and Spring 2017

The Northeast had its sixth wettest spring on record since 1895 with 123% of normal precipitation. All twelve states and Ohio were wetter than normal, with nine ranking this spring among their top 20 wettest. Despite seven states being drier than normal, March precipitation was 101% of normal for the Northeast. Ohio was wetter than normal. In April, the Northeast received 120% of normal precipitation, with nine states and Ohio being wetter than normal. Three states ranked this April among their top 20 wettest on record. The Northeast had its fourth wettest May with 145% of normal precipitation. For all states except Connecticut, this May ranked within the top 20 wettest. The U.S. Drought Monitor released on March 2 showed 27% of the Northeast in a moderate or severe drought. Conditions eased during the month so that by early April, 11% of the region was in a drought. Above-normal precipitation in April allowed conditions to continue to improve. By late April, the Northeast became free of severe drought for the first time since late June 2016. Above-normal precipitation continued in May, and by mid-month, the region became drought-free for the first time since mid-April 2016. Abnormally dry conditions eased in Pennsylvania and Connecticut in early June but were introduced in portions of West Virginia and Ohio in mid-June.
Regional - Impacts and Updates for March–May 2017

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While the Northeast was drought-free as of early June, conditions continued to be monitored. Areas of drought could redevelop if there were a long period of dryness and unusually warm temperatures, particularly in spots with lingering groundwater and reservoir issues.

Regional - Outlook for Summer 2017

Temperature and Precipitation

Normal July–September average temperatures range from the upper 50s in northern New York and northern New England to the mid 70s in the Mid-Atlantic. NOAA’s Climate Prediction Center (CPC) is calling for an increased chance of above-normal temperatures (left map) for the Northeast and Ohio for July–September. The precipitation outlook calls for equal chances of below-, near- or below-normal.

Atlantic Hurricane Season

NOAA’s 2017 Atlantic hurricane outlook indicates there is a 45% chance that this season will be more active than normal, a 35% chance the season will be near-normal, and a 20% chance the season will be below normal. With an above-normal season most likely, the outlook calls for “a 70% likelihood of 11–17 named storms (winds of 39 mph or higher), of which 5–9 could become hurricanes (winds of 74 mph or higher), including 2–4 major hurricanes (Category 3, 4 or 5; winds of 111 mph or higher).” The Atlantic hurricane season runs from June 1 through November 30, with a peak from mid-August to late October. However, there has already been a tropical system this year (which was accounted for in the forecast): Tropical Storm Arlene in April. The system was short-lived and did not impact land, but according to NOAA’s National Hurricane Center, it was only the second tropical storm in April since satellite data began.

Factors leading to the forecast for an above-normal season included near- to above-average sea surface temperatures in the main area of the Atlantic where hurricanes develop, near- to weaker-than-average vertical wind shear (change in direction and/or speed with altitude) in this main development area, and expected ENSO-neutral or weak El Niño conditions.

Spring Conditions

Mild temperatures led to an early start to the tick season this spring and likely contributed to a greater number of ticks. After early development due to a mild February, about half of the Yoshino cherry blossoms in Washington, D.C., were damaged by frost in mid-March. Above-normal precipitation in April and May alleviated abnormally dry and drought conditions in the Northeast. Preliminary data indicated that the Lake Ontario basin had its wettest May since 1900 and the lake had its all-time highest monthly mean water level since 1918. Along the shorelines of Lake Ontario and the St. Lawrence River, buildings, roads, docks, and beaches were flooded. The high water washed away land, trees, and breakwalls, and left a few homes on the verge of falling into the lake. For more information on the Lake Ontario flooding, see the Great Lakes Spring 2017 Quarterly: www.drought.gov/drought/resources/reports. Saturated soil caused burials at a historic cemetery in Ogdensburg, NY, to be delayed. Wet conditions, such as standing water in fields, delayed planting and field work in much of the region. Some farmers may not be able to plant their intended acreage in time, while others had to replant crops. Pastures generally benefitted from the wet weather, though. Above-normal precipitation activated a fungus that kills gypsy moth caterpillars; however, with a large caterpillar population again this year, significant defoliation of trees is possible and it remains unclear how many will be killed off by the fungus.

Northeast Region Partners

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