

June 2007

Rain Washes Away 6-year N.D. Drought

Consistent rainfall throughout North Dakota has broken the drought that began at the end of 2000 and continued until mid-June 2007, the state climatologist says.

Since December 2000, North Dakota soils were under some degree of drought. The drought ruled for 78 consecutive months.

The most severe drought occurred during the third week of July 2006, when 100 percent of the state was experiencing at least moderate drought status on the drought monitor scale. "During this period, nearly 50 percent of the entire state was under severe drought or worse," says Adnan Akyuz, state climatologist and assistant professor of climatology in North Dakota State University's Soil Science Department.

"Drought is a normal feature of our climate" he adds. "The states of North and South Dakota are vulnerable to significant economic losses and environmental degradation resulting from its occurrence."

Severe drought also affected many parts of North and South Dakotas in 2002. Agricultural losses were estimated at more than \$1 billion for the two states just from the direct impact.

In comparison, this year, North Dakota experienced its 10th wettest spring and sixth wettest May since climatic recordkeeping began in 1895.

"Fargo records show more impressive results," Akyuz says.

"Monitoring the development and progression of the drought so that a timely response by the state could be coordinated involves a collaborative effort of the state's monitoring capabilities," Akyuz says. "Currently, the North Dakota Agricultural Weather Network (NDAWN) provides that capability to the state."

NDAWN's high-density coverage also can also provide crucial information for flood warnings. For example, while Wahpeton reported only 0.7 inch of rainfall on June 13, Ekre, which is only 25 miles away, reported 3.7 inches.

"Without the coverage that NDAWN provides us, it would have been impossible to see these kinds of large variations in small distances," Akyuz says.

For more information about NDAWN or to check out climate data, visit its Web site at <http://ndawn.ndsu.nodak.edu/>.

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