

May Weather Wrap

By Bill Kappel

Good news in May, as precipitation was well above normal for the month. This included nearly a foot of snow from the 8th through the 15th, the a couple inches of rain from the 21st to the 31st. Unfortunately, any plants that decided to start growing early took a double shot from Mother Nature with the snow and cold, then wind and hail.

The first few days of May were mild and dry. Temperatures started off right at normal on the 1st, with highs in the upper 50s. However, warmer weather moved in under a strong ridge of high pressure over the next few days. High temperatures jumped to the low 70s on the 2nd, then upper 70s to low 80s on the 3rd and 4th. The 80°F high temperature on the 4th was the first time we've hit 80°F since Sept. 9, 2013, so we were ready for the warmth. Atmospheric moisture levels were very low during the period as well, meaning no showers or thunderstorms developed and when the dryness combined with gusty afternoon winds, produced extreme fire danger.

Near record warmth gave way to near record cold during the first full week of May as we experienced a taste of summer followed quickly by a taste of winter. Typical spring weather on the Palmer Divide. Highs were in the upper 70s to low 80s on Monday the 5th as gusty winds and warm high pressure affected the region. Temperatures cooled slightly the next two days, "only" reaching the mid-70s on the 6th, then the upper 60s on the 7th.

During this time, the first of two storm systems was ready to affect the region. Brief heavy snow moved in during the early hours of the 8th, accumulating 1 to 2 inches of snowfall. This made for a slippery commute that morning as the warm roadways initially melted the snow and left a layer of ice. The strong May sunshine quickly melted that snow, and by noon it was gone. Temperatures hovered around average the next few days, with highs reaching the low 60s on the 9th and 10th. Clouds built up and a few sprinkles developed each day, even mixing with some graupel on the 9th.

The week ended with a power storm affecting the region. A strong and cold low pressure system moved through the intermountain West and combined with high pressure moving out of Canada to set up the perfect situation for cold, snow, and wind. Rain quickly changed to freezing drizzle and light snow around sunrise on the 11th. Then, as the storm continued to intensify and move closer to the region, snow and wind really picked up. Accumulations were slow to start for the majority of the day on the 11th, but by mid-afternoon a couple of inches had accumulated. Roads also began to get slushy that afternoon. Snow and wind continued through the evening. Most areas accumulated 4 to 8 inches by midnight, much of which was drifted around as well.

Temperatures were very cold for the middle of May,

with highs holding just below freezing for the entire day, which is very rare for this time of the year. Snow and wind continued into Monday morning, as temperatures held in the mid- to upper 20s. The storm began to pull away slowly later that morning and into the afternoon. Snow tapered off to snow showers through the day Monday, with only minor accumulations continuing. The good news with this storm was lots of beneficial moisture, from a half to more than an inch. The bad news was our newly growing plants weren't too happy to be buried in ice, snow, and cold. Hopefully they'll make it through.

Winter was still raging across the region during the first few days of the week of the 12th. Another 2 to 4 inches of snow accumulated during the morning of the 12th, with snow showers and windy conditions continuing throughout the day. High temperatures were at record low levels for the date, with most areas only touching the freezing mark. The, cold unsettled air mass stuck around the next few days as well, allowing afternoon and early evening snow showers to develop each day and keeping temperatures well below normal. Overnight lows dipped into the upper teens and low 20s on both the 13th and 14th.

Warmer air finally began to work back into the region as the week progressed, with highs reaching normal levels—in the mid-60s, by the 16th and 17th. Warm weather moved in under an area of high pressure behind the departing storm to end the weekend, with highs reaching into the mid-70s. Even with the strong May sunshine, the snow from earlier in the week managed to hang on for a few days, adding beneficial moisture to the soil, but the cold temperatures did damage some early growing plants/leaves. However, all the snow was gone by the end of the week as more May-like weather returned.

It was a wet week around the region as an area of cut-off low pressure slowly moved through the desert Southwest. This pulled high levels of moisture into the region and combined with the strong May sunshine to allow an area of severe weather and heavy rainfall to form. The first round of severe weather and heavy rain developed during the afternoon of the 23rd. This produced large hail from around 3:45 to 4:20 p.m. over parts of the Black Forest from about Highway 83 east through Meridian Road. Several tornadoes also formed from Elbert County through Denver.

We had a brief break on the 22nd, with most of the storms that day forming in the mountains and farther east into the plains. Another round of heavy rain and hail formed on the 23rd and 24th. During this wet period, most areas picked up 1 to 3 inches of beneficial moisture, but of course we could do without the hail. A unique aspect of this storm was the strong southerly flow, which allowed the thunderstorms to move from south to north. In more typical situations, we see more of a west-to-east storm

movement. Temperatures during the week were above normal ahead of the storms, reaching the low 80s on Monday afternoon. Then, as the storm began to affect the region, temperatures were generally normal to slightly below normal, with 60s to low 70s common.

The month ended in typical May fashion, with quiet and seasonable cool weather on the 26th and 27th, giving way to daily afternoon thunderstorms from the 29th to the 31st. Temperatures were able to warm into the low 80s on the 28th and 29th before cooling to the mid-60s on the 30th and mid-70s on the 31st.

A look ahead

By June we can usually say goodbye to our chance of snowfall, but hello to frequent afternoon and evening thunderstorms. There are times when see a little snowfall in June in the region, but most of the time we can expect warm, sunny days with afternoon and evening thunderstorms.

May 2014 Weather Statistics

Average High	66.8° (+0.2°)
100-year return frequency value max	75.7° min 57.9°
Average Low	36.8° (+1.2°)
100-year return frequency value max	43.2° min 32.5°
Highest Temperature	83°F on the 29th
Lowest Temperature	19°F on the 14th
Monthly Precipitation	3.23"
	(+2.53" 52% above normal)
100-year return frequency value max	6.94" min 0.15"
Monthly Snowfall	11.6"
	(+6.5" 57% above normal)
Season to Date Snow	99.4"
	(-25.4" 20% below normal)
	(the snow season is from July 1 to June 30)
Season to Date Precip	21.56"
	(+2.72" 13% below normal)
	(the precip season is from July 1 to June 30)
Heating Degree Days	410 (-18)
Cooling Degree Days	0

For more detailed weather information and Climatology of the Palmer Divide and Tri-Lakes region, please visit Bill Kappel's Weather Web page at <http://www.thekappels.com/Weather.htm>.

Bill Kappel is a meteorologist and Tri-Lakes resident. He can be reached at billkappel@ocn.me.

Letters to Our Community

Guidelines for letters to the editor are on page 35.

Disclaimer: The opinions expressed in Letters to Our Community should not be interpreted as the views of OCN even if the letter writer is an OCN volunteer.

Thanks for help with After Prom

We would like to express our gratitude for the wonderful group of community members who helped with the Lewis-Palmer High School After Prom event. The LPHS After Prom is offered as an alternative to private parties or merely driving around on the highways in the middle of the night. It is also open to those students who do not or cannot attend the actual prom, for any number of reasons.

Many school districts do not offer an After Prom event, as the planning and coordination involved takes a substantial amount of time and money. Both District 38 high schools have such a dedicated group of staff, parents, and community patrons that we have been able to make After Prom a yearly tradition.

In order to encourage students to attend, we keep ticket prices low, so a large amount of the support for this event comes from donations from the community. We were amazed at the outpouring of support from local businesses and individuals, who all understood the importance of keeping the students safe on that night. We would like to specifically recognize the following:



Above: Lewis-Palmer High School After Prom event. Photo by Karen Shuman.

American Furniture Warehouse, Bird Dog BBQ, Borriello Brothers Pizza, Bork family, Chipotle Mexican Grill, City Rock, Coca-Cola Refreshments, Cogburn family, Commerford family, Costco, Dominos Pizza, Hamula Orthodontics, Heins family, In the Moo Frozen Yogurt, Ito family, It's a Grind Coffee House, Jimmy Johns, Kadlubowski Family, Karen Morgan, King Soopers, Larsen family, Luna Hair Salon, Mallette family, Mary Tostanoski, Michael Joyal, Mills family, Mobley family, Monument Vision, Morgan Chapman, Papa John's Pizza, Pavlik family, Peoples National Bank, PF Chang's, Deuc-

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