

August 2014 Weather Wrap

By Bill Kappel

August continued the trend we saw in July, with temperatures holding at below normal levels and precipitation at average to a little above average. This was good news for the region, because the cooler temperatures and wet conditions have helped keep plants happy and healthy.

The Southwest monsoon season continued to be active at the beginning of the month. The first couple days of August started quietly, with afternoon clouds building. Thunderstorms brought brief heavy rain during the evening of the 4th and again on the afternoon and early evening of the 5th. Conditions were quiet, with a rare dry day on the 6th. More storms developed on the afternoon of the 7th and early on the 8th, with mainly dry conditions on the 9th. One last round of rain occurred to end the week on the 10th.

With all the moisture and clouds, high temperatures were generally below normal, in the 70s to low 80s. The coolest day was on the 8th, when upslope conditions behind a cold front kept highs in the 60s.

The second week of August started warm and dry. High temperatures reached into the upper 70s to mid-80s from the 11th through the 17th. The first few days of the week were dry, with just a few clouds developing in the afternoon. However, higher levels of moisture began to move back in from the southwest and combined with a little extra lift in the atmosphere to produce several rounds of afternoon and early evening thunderstorms. These produced brief heavy rain at times on the 14th and the 15th, with one final round on the 17th.

An active week of weather around the region started on the 18th. Temperatures were a little warmer than normal to start the week, with low to mid-80s on the 18th and 19th. Brief afternoon and early evening thunderstorms

developed each day, but only produced light rainfall. This pattern continued through the 20th while temperatures cooled slightly. The Southwest monsoon then brought higher levels of moisture back into the region over the remainder of the week. This combined with a disturbance moving in from the northwest and a push of cooler air from the north to produce round of strong thunderstorms during the early afternoon of the 22nd. Quiet and dry conditions returned for the weekend, with highs in the mid- to upper 70s and sunny mornings giving way to a few clouds each afternoon.

The last week of the month saw thunderstorms and rain showers develop every afternoon and evening except the last day of the month. Several waves of energy moved through, with the last couple systems more reminiscent of a fall pattern than summer. For the week, most areas accumulated around an inch or so of rain. With all the clouds and active weather, temperatures were also held to below normal levels. Highs reached into the 70s each day, ranging from the low 70s on the 26th and 28th to the upper 70s on the 25th, 27th, and all of Labor Day weekend. The longer nights also allowed overnight lows to become noticeably cooler. Low temperatures fell all the way to the upper 30s on the morning of the 29th. The first time since last spring we've been that cool.

A look ahead

September is a transition month for the region, with the last tastes of summer mixed in with our first morning freezes. Leaves begin to change by the end of the month, and it's not uncommon for some snow to fall. The overall weather pattern is generally one of tranquility, with our chances for thunderstorms dwindling and blizzard conditions not quite ready for prime time. We are often greeted with sunny, pleasant afternoons, with highs from

the mid-70s early in the month to the mid-60s later in the month. Our first sub-freezing low temperatures usually occur during the third week of the month, so prepare those tender plants.

August 2014 Weather Statistics

Average High	78.0° (-0.1)
100-year return frequency value max	83.9° min 72.9°
Average Low	48.5° (-0.7)
100-year return frequency value max	55.2° min 46.8°
Monthly Precipitation	2.72"
	(-0.41", 13% below normal)
100-year return frequency value max	6.07" min 0.94"
Monthly Snowfall	0.0"
Highest Temperature	85° on the 17th
Lowest Temperature	38° on the 29th
Season to Date Snow	0.0"
	(the snow season is from July 1 to June 30)
Season to Date Precip.	6.89"
	(+0.73", 12% above normal)
	(the precip season is from July 1 to June 30)
Heating Degree Days	73 (+5)
Cooling Degree Days	18 (-23)

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Letters to Our Community

Common Core confusion

There appears to be some confusion about what the Common Core State Standards are and how they will be implemented at the local level.

The state of Colorado has had standards for 15 years. Since 2000, school districts across Colorado were required to adopt standards that were at least as rigorous as the Colorado Model Content Standards. In 2009 the standards were updated. At about the same time, the Common Core State Standards were developed by a state-led bipartisan process informed by research and standards from high performing states and nations.

A comparison study revealed that Colorado's new standards and the Common Core State Standards were similar, and instead of adopting the Common Core standards outright, Colorado's standards for math and English/language arts were reissued with the Common Core State Standards embedded. Districts are currently on their own timelines and schedules to train teachers and align instructional materials and units to the new standards.

The Common Core standards are not a curriculum or a teaching method; they are benchmarks for what students should know and be able to do in math and English/Language Arts at each grade level. Local districts have always chosen their own curricula, textbooks, and teaching methods to implement the standards; the Common Core provides clear goals that allow for flexibility in how the goals are achieved.

Standardized Colorado-wide assessments have been in place since 1997. Both standards and assessments for math, reading, English/Language Arts, and science are required by the No Child Left Behind Act. Each state currently creates and maintains its own assessments. The new Common Core-aligned assessments will replace, not add to, tests required by Colorado's current testing schedule. These computer-based assessments will provide quicker results and are expected to be more engaging for students. Once implemented, Com-

mon Core assessments will allow comparisons between Colorado and other states in the nation.

Future predictions of doom and gloom aside, the Common Core State Standards could promote equity by preparing all students, no matter where they live, the knowledge and skills to compete with their peers across the United States.

For more about the Common Core State Standards, I recommend these links to the actual source documents:

Common Core State Standards: <http://www.corestandards.org/>
 Colorado Standards: <http://www.cde.state.co.us/standardsandinstruction/coloradostandards>

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