



Hydrologic Conditions Report

March 2026

Rainfall	1
Climate Outlook	7
Drought Conditions	8
Surface Water	9
Spring Flows.....	15
Aquifer Levels.....	20

Summary

March 2026 was characterized by much-below-normal precipitation and above-normal temperatures (averaging around 64.8 degrees Fahrenheit). The ongoing cumulative rainfall deficit worsened and continued to contribute to drought conditions across the Panhandle. Drought conditions slowly worsened during March 2026 with a resurgence of regions categorized as exceptional drought (D4).



For additional information, write or call:
Northwest Florida Water Management District
81 Water Management Drive
Havana, FL 32333-4712
(850) 539-5999
www.nfwwater.com

Rainfall

In March 2026, an average of 1.94 inches of precipitation was recorded across the Panhandle. This amount was 3.40 inches (93%) below the District normal precipitation for the month of March, which is 5.34 inches (**Table 1; Figures 1 – 7**). Normal precipitation is defined as average monthly precipitation for the 30-year reference period (1991-2020).

There was a significant rain event on March 16-17, 2026, when a squall line associated with a cold front brought 0.50 to 1.50 inches of rain to the Panhandle. Higher amounts exceeding 4.00 inches were observed in localized areas of Leon, Jefferson, and Wakulla counties. Tallahassee received most of their monthly rainfall from this event with a measured total of 1.45 inches.

All precipitation observed in the Panhandle during March 2026 was the result of frontal systems. The majority of the Panhandle received below-normal rainfall except for some parts of Leon, Jefferson, and Wakulla counties where near-normal rainfall was received (**Figures 1 & 2**).

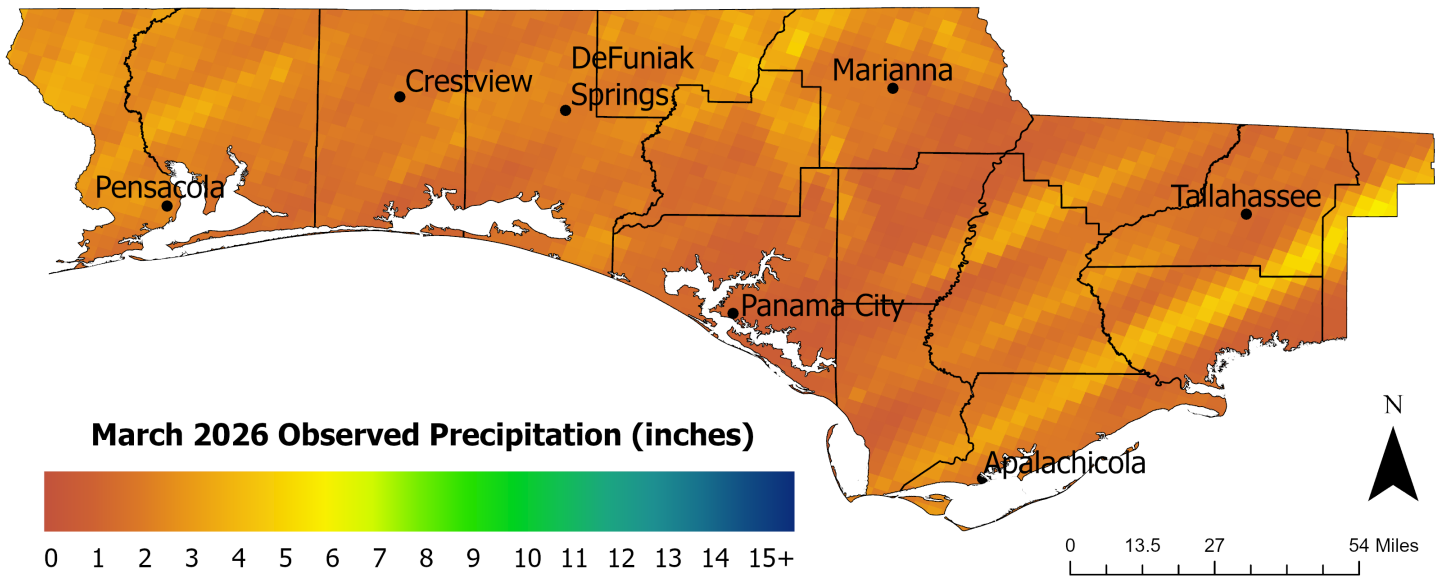
Table 1: March 2026 rainfall compared to 30-year normal monthly rainfall for Tallahassee, Marianna, Niceville, and Pensacola

Station	March Normal Rainfall (1991 to 2020)	March 2026 Observed Rainfall	Percent Difference
Tallahassee Regional Airport	5.24	1.61	-106%
Marianna Regional Airport	5.01	0.95	-136%
Niceville, FL	5.35	1.41	-117%
Pensacola Regional Airport	5.25	1.95	-91.7%

Source: <https://www.weather.gov/wrh/Climate?wfo=tae>
<https://www.weather.gov/wrh/Climate?wfo=mob>

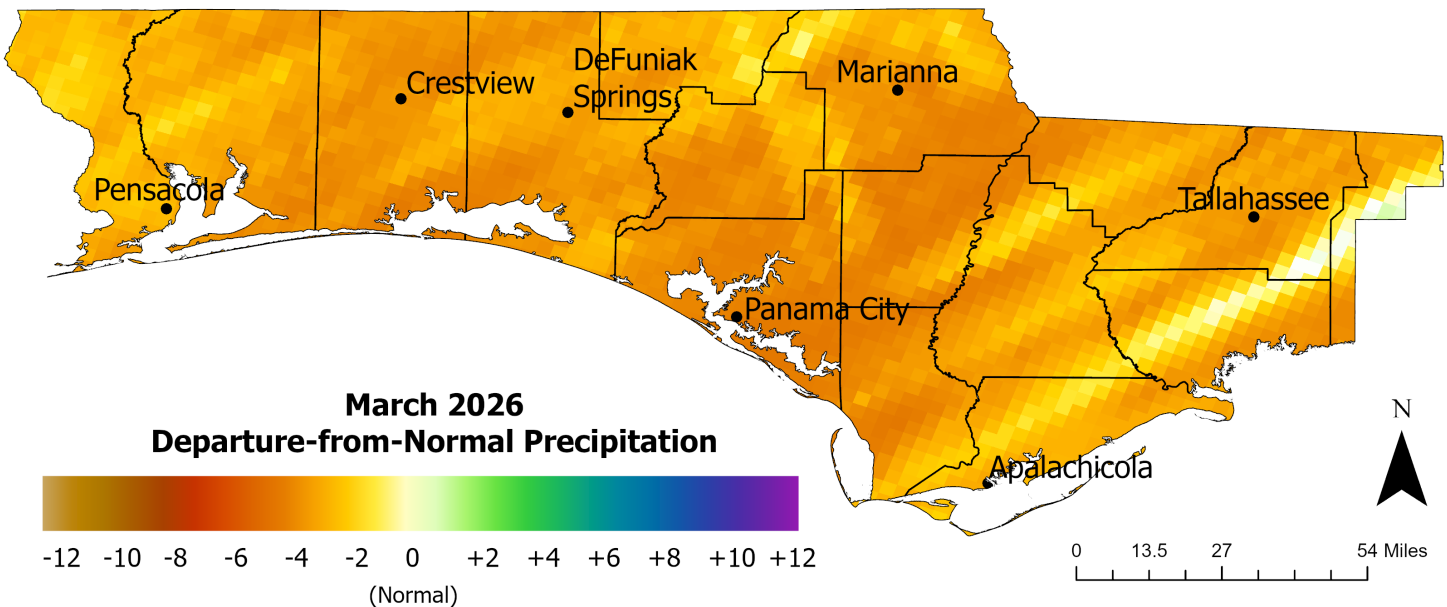


Figure 1: District-wide March 2026 observed rainfall



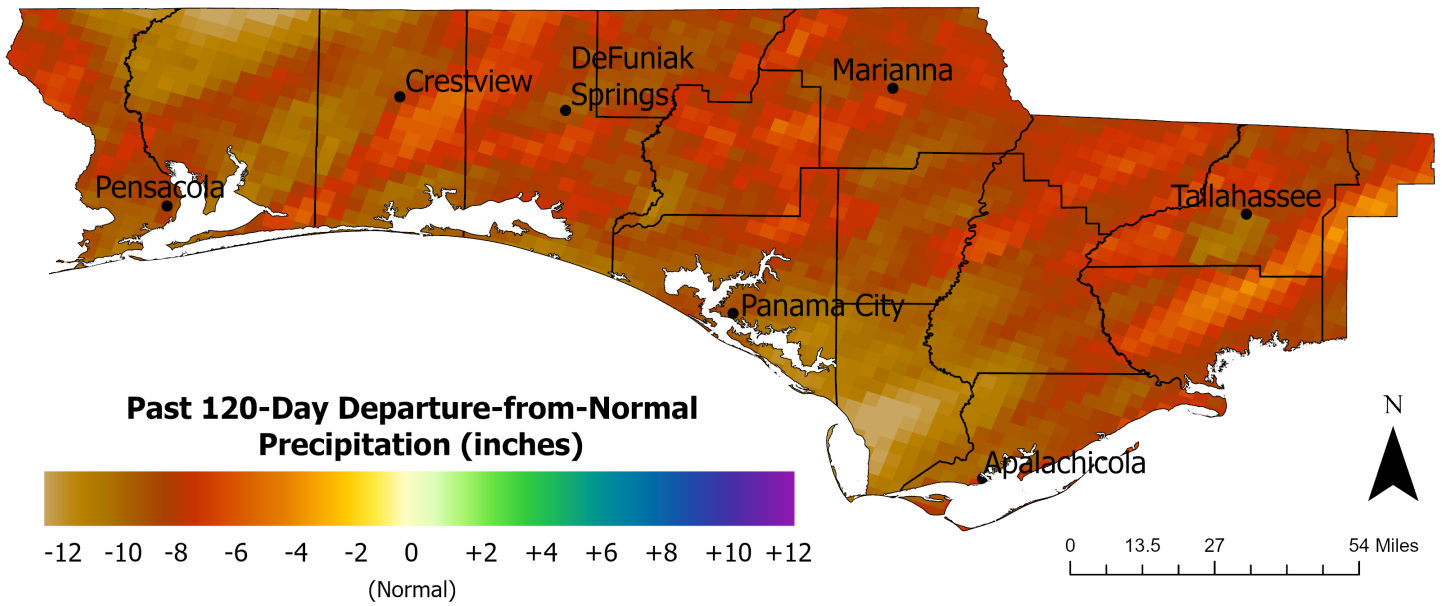
Source: <https://water.noaa.gov/resources/downloads/precip/stageIV/>

Figure 2: District-wide March 2026 precipitation departure from normal



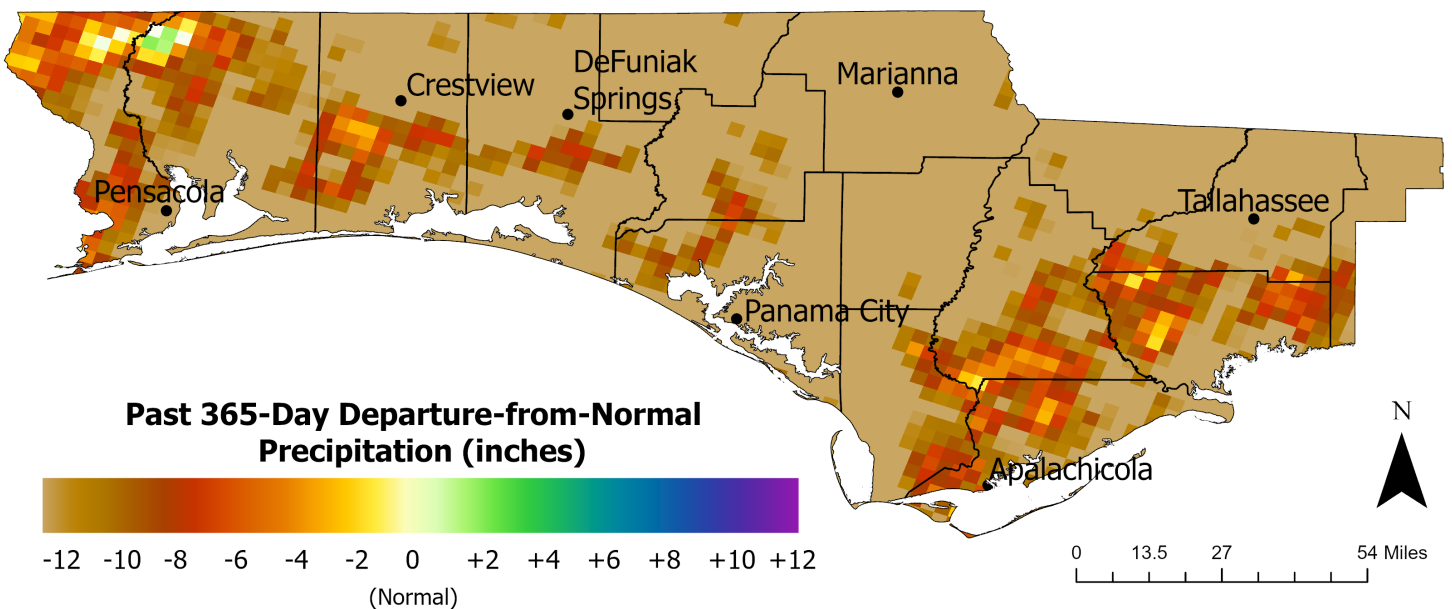
Source: <https://water.noaa.gov/resources/downloads/precip/stageIV/>

Figure 3: District-wide precipitation departure from normal for the previous 120 days



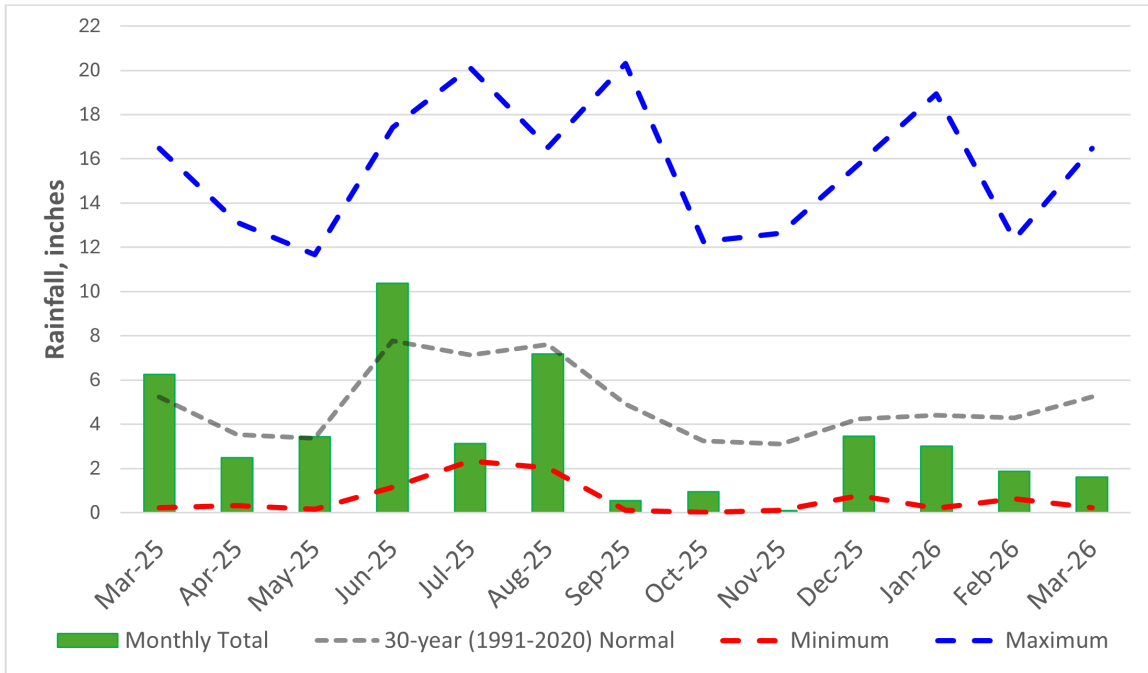
Source: <https://water.noaa.gov/resources/downloads/precip/stageIV/>

Figure 4: District-wide precipitation departure from normal for the previous 365 days



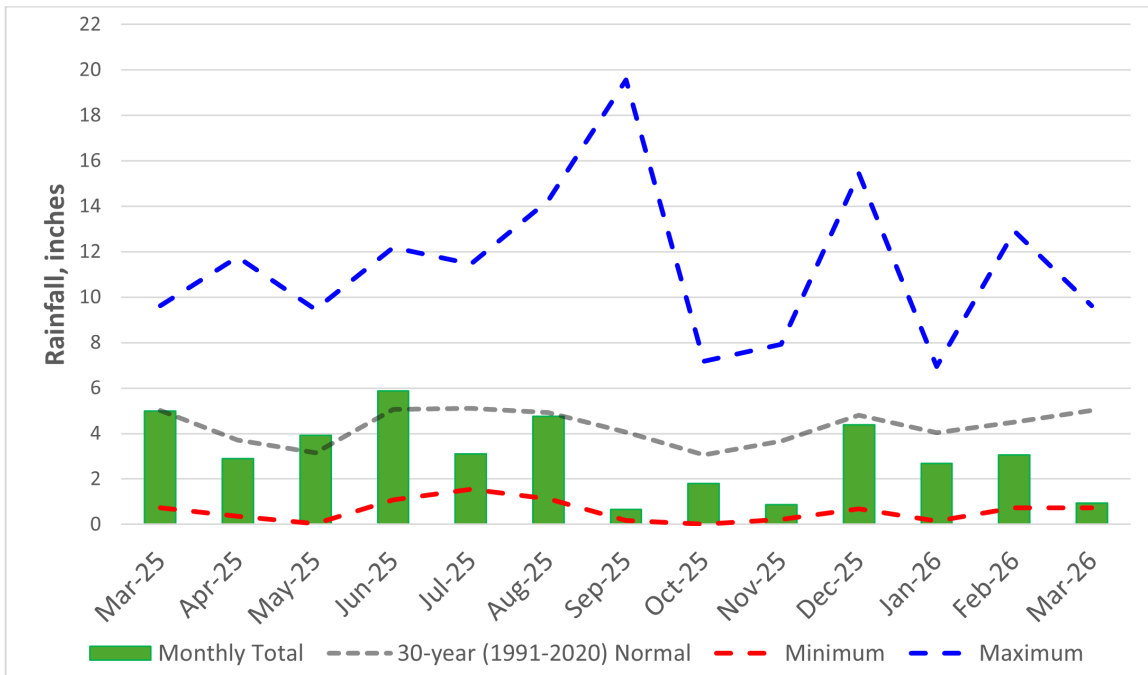
Source: <https://water.noaa.gov/resources/downloads/precip/stageIV/>

Figure 5: Observed rainfall at Tallahassee Regional Airport for the past 13 months compared to the 30-year normal, minimum, and maximum precipitation for each month



Source: <https://www.weather.gov/wrh/Climate?wfo=tae>

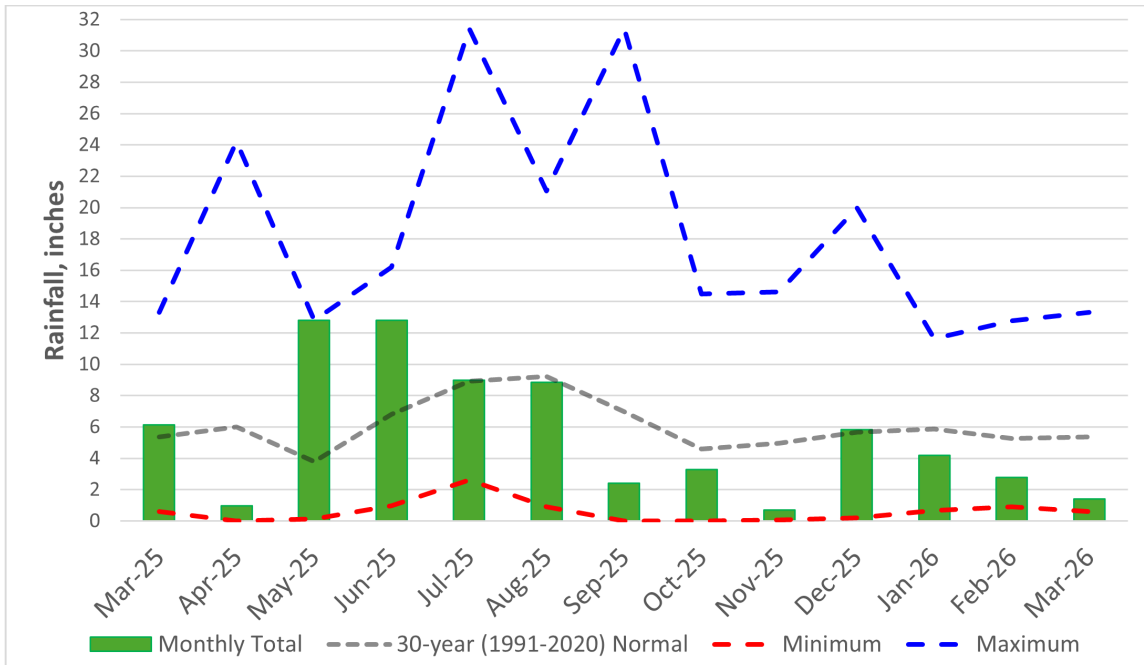
Figure 6: Observed rainfall at Marianna Regional Airport for the past 13 months compared to the 30-year normal, minimum, and maximum precipitation for each month



Source: <https://www.weather.gov/wrh/Climate?wfo=tae>

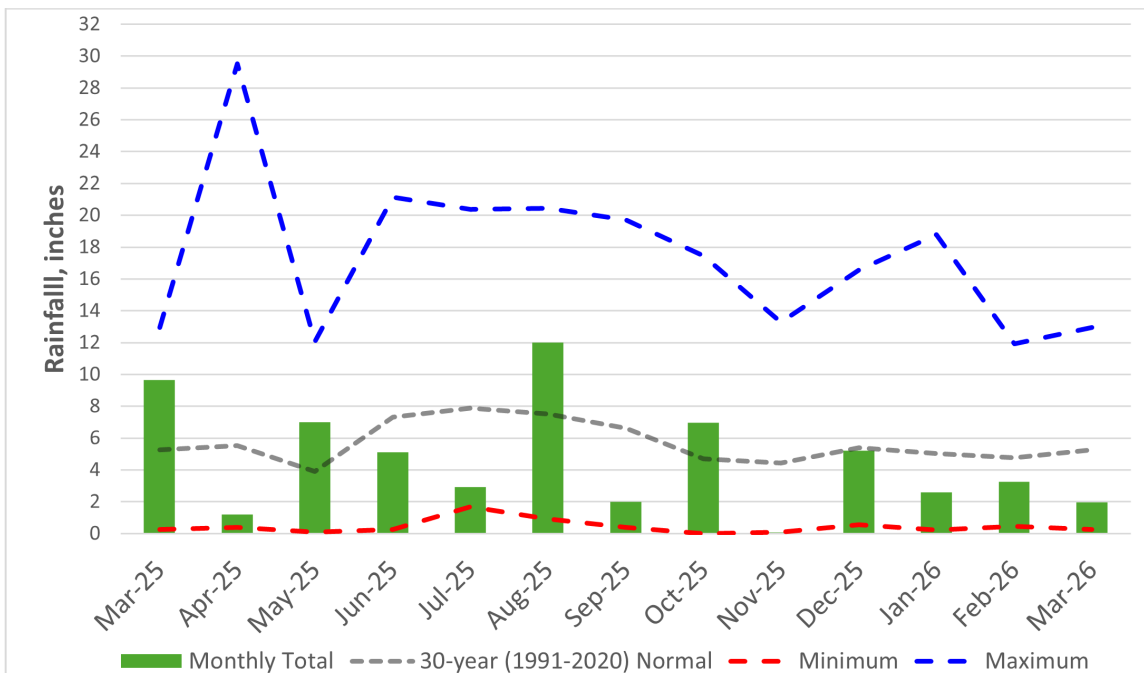


Figure 7: Observed rainfall in Niceville for the past 13 months compared to the 30-year normal, minimum, and maximum precipitation for each month



Source: <https://www.weather.gov/wrh/Climate?wfo=mob>

Figure 8: Observed rainfall at Pensacola Regional Airport for the past 13 months compared to the 30-year normal, minimum, and maximum precipitation for each month



Source: <https://www.weather.gov/wrh/Climate?wfo=mob>



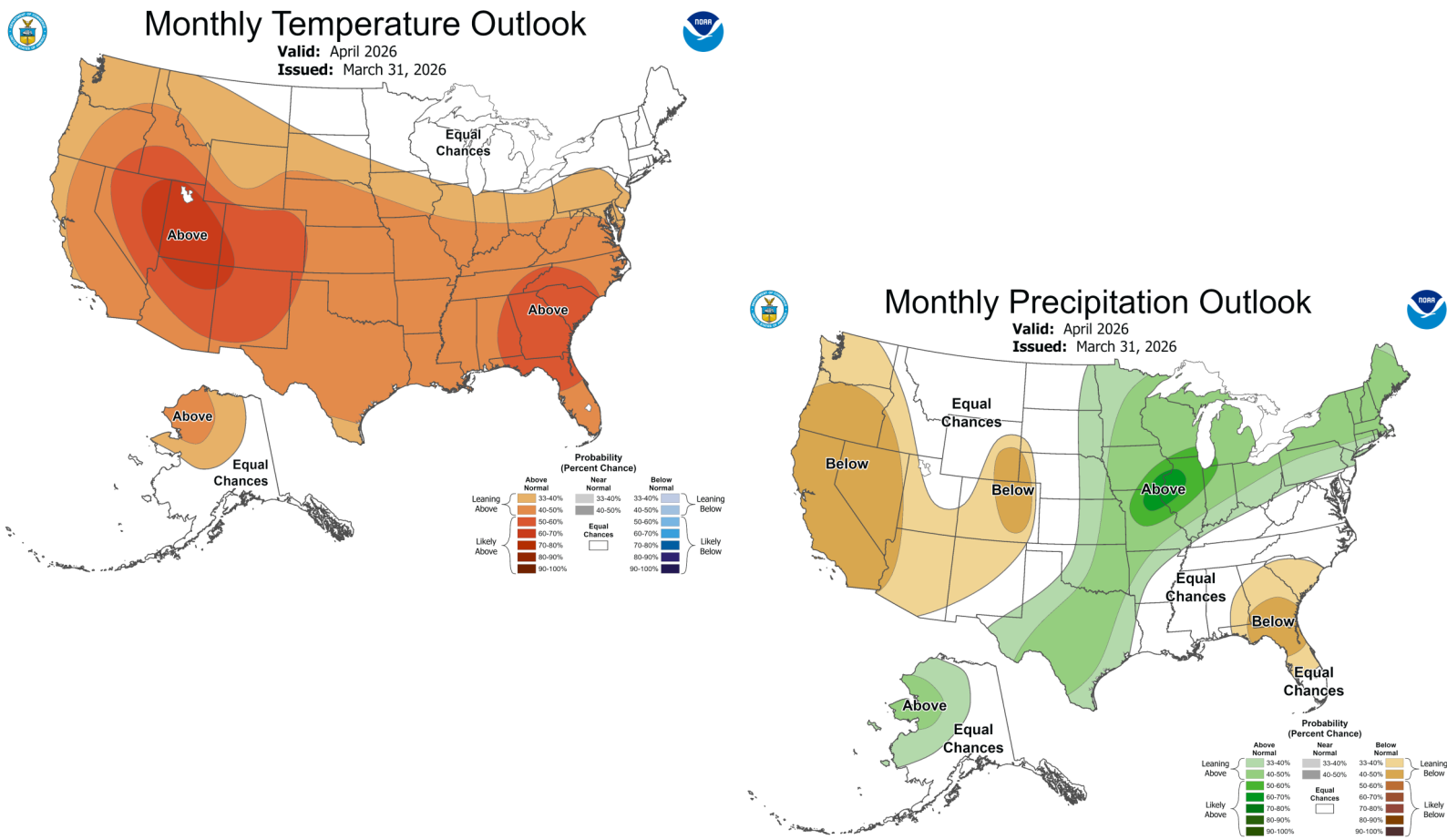
Climate Outlook

According to NOAA’s Climate Prediction Center, the forecast issued March 31, 2026, for April 2026 showed a likely chance for above-normal temperatures. The precipitation outlook showed a slight chance of below-normal rainfall in the eastern portion of the District and equal chances for above-, below-, or near-normal rainfall in the western portion (Figure 9).

As of March 30, 2026, La Niña conditions were present and a transition to ENSO-neutral conditions was forecast to occur sometime in April 2026. ENSO-neutral conditions are favored to last through May-July 2026 (55% chance). Between June and August 2026, El Niño is favored to emerge and will likely last at least through the end of 2026. In the summertime, El Niño is associated with quieter Atlantic Hurricane seasons due to increased vertical wind shear.

Source: <https://www.cpc.ncep.noaa.gov/products/predictions/30day/>
https://www.cpc.ncep.noaa.gov/products/analysis_monitoring/lanina/enso_evolution-status-fcsts-web.pdf

Figure 9: April 2026 Temperature and Precipitation Outlooks for the United States

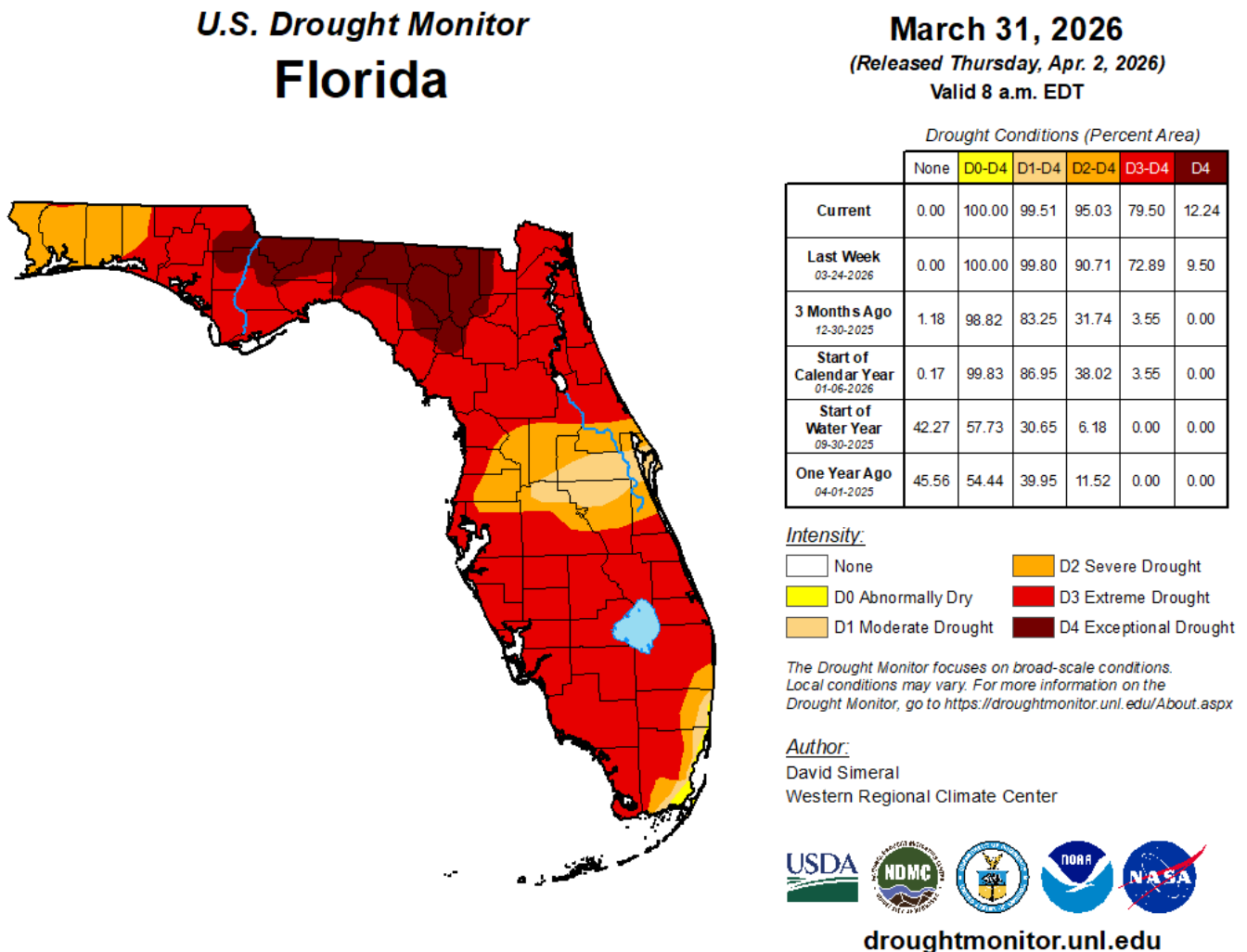


Drought Conditions

Drought slowly worsened throughout March 2026 with the area of extreme drought conditions expanding further west in the District and a re-emergence of exceptional drought conditions. The last time exceptional drought occurred in the District was in December 2025. The U.S. Drought Monitor report released for March 31, 2026, showed most of the District under severe, extreme, or exceptional drought conditions (**Figure 10**). This is due to the District receiving below-normal rainfall for every month since September 2025 except for December 2025 when near-normal precipitation was received.

According to the U.S. Monthly Drought Outlook for April 2026, drought conditions are expected to persist. This is likely a result of the chance for below-normal rainfall according to the Climate Prediction Center’s outlooks for April 2026 (**Figure 9**).

Figure 10: Florida Drought Conditions on March 31, 2026



Source: <https://droughtmonitor.unl.edu/CurrentMap/StateDroughtMonitor.aspx?FL>

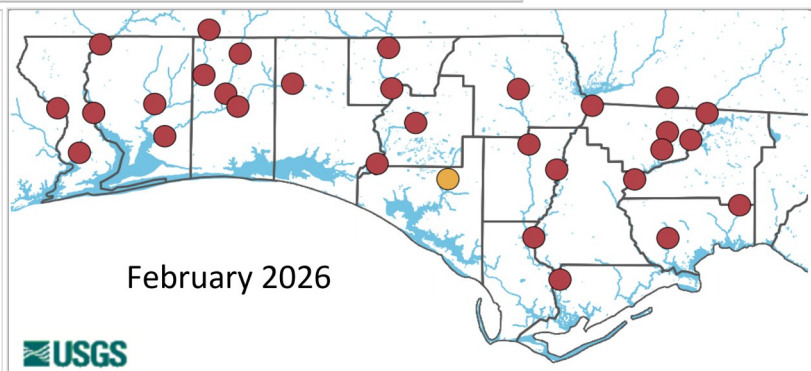
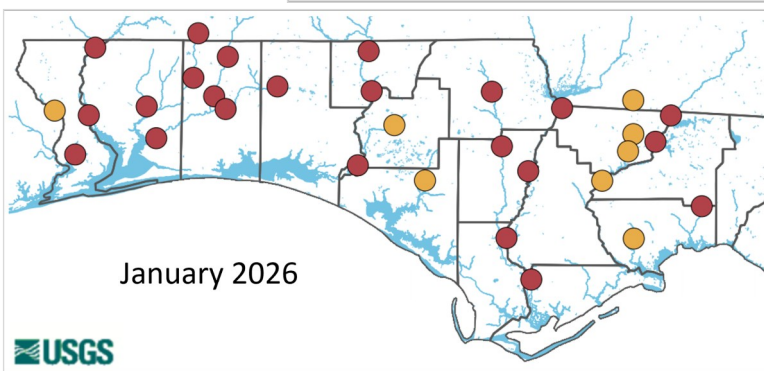
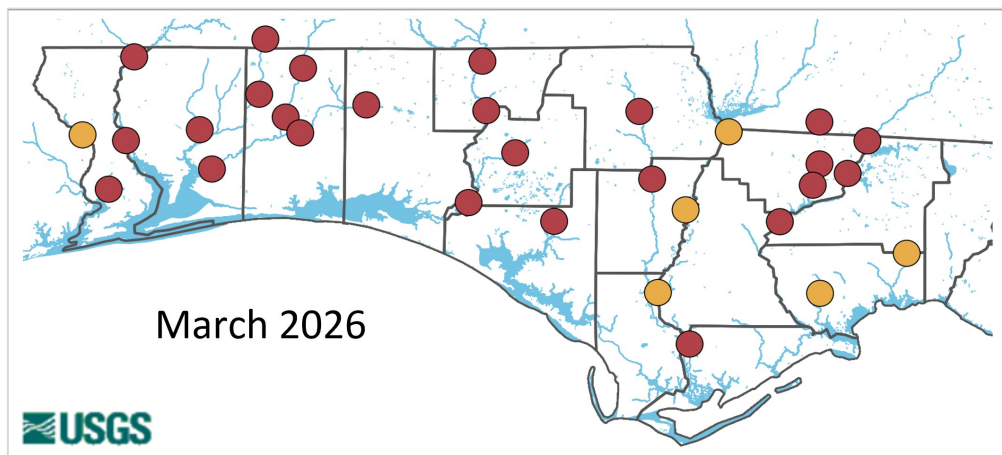


Surface Water

Streamflows. During March 2026, three streamflow station recorded below-normal flows, and the rest recorded much-below-normal flows on average for the month. No stations recorded flows within normal ranges for a majority of time during March 2026 (Figures 11 – 17). This is a result of the ongoing rainfall deficit and drought conditions. Stations along the Apalachicola River were not included in the analysis because its flows are more indicative of conditions in Georgia and Alabama due to it being dam-controlled at its headwaters.

Streamflow stations with depicted time-series plots recorded generally decreasing flows that were much-below-normal for the month of March 2026 (Figures 12 – 17). Many stations received small bumps in flow from rain events, most at notably the St. Marks River near Newport station. There was enough rainfall in the St. Marks River basin from the significant rain event on March 16-17, 2026, that the station recorded flows within normal ranges for the first time since mid-August 2025 (Figure 12).

Figure 11: Northwest Florida January to March 2026 monthly streamflow percentiles



Explanation - Percentile classes							
●	●	●	●	●	●	●	○
Low	<10	10-24	25-75	76-90	>90	High	Not-ranked
	Much below normal	Below normal	Normal	Above normal	Much above normal		

Source: <http://waterwatch.usgs.gov/index.php>



Figure 12: Daily streamflows and percentile ranges for USGS station 02326900 St. Marks River Near Newport, Florida

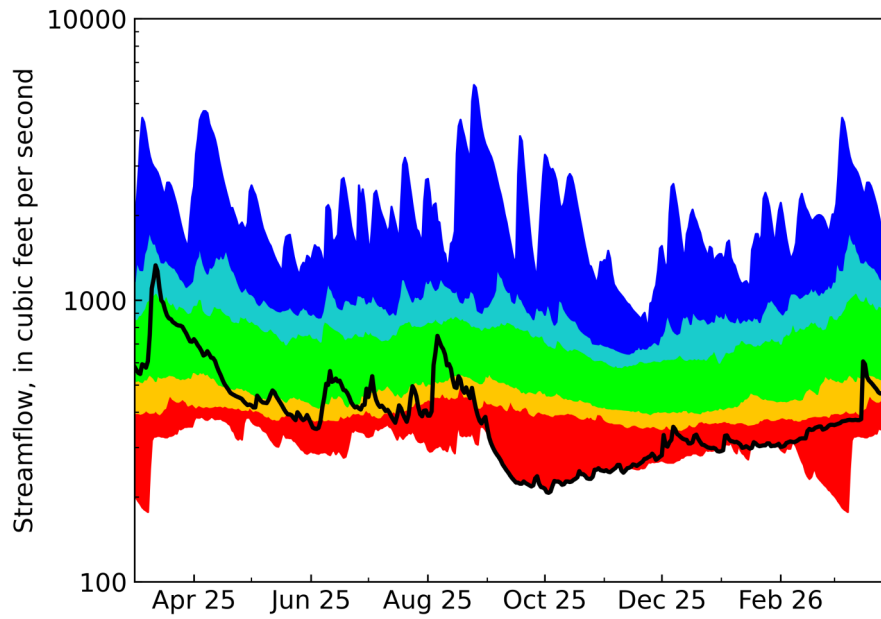
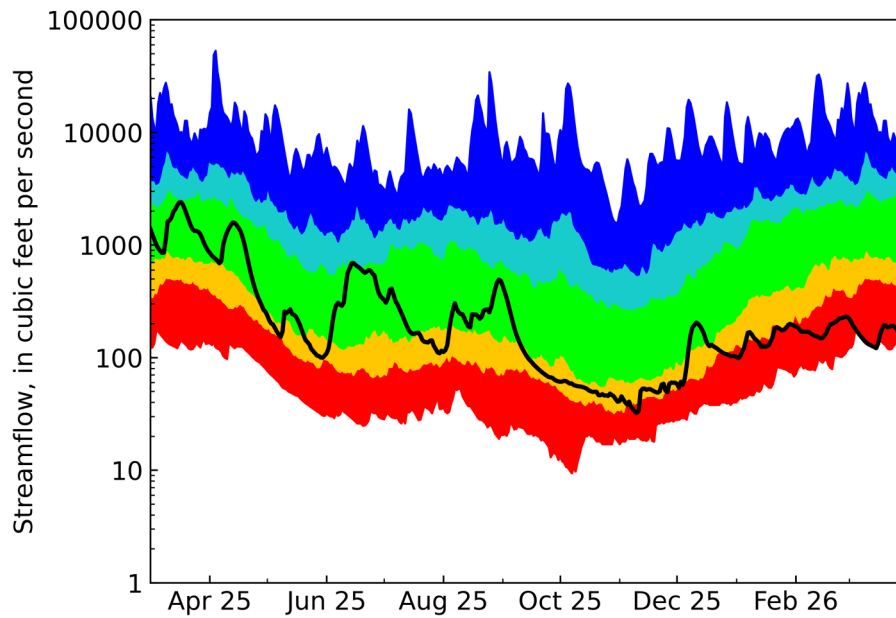


Figure 13: Daily streamflows and percentile ranges for USGS Station 02329000 Ochlockonee River Near Havana, Florida



Explanation - Percentile classes				
< 10	10-24	25-75	76-90	> 90
Much below normal	Below normal	Normal	Above normal	Much above normal

Figure 14: Daily streamflows and percentile ranges for USGS Station 02358700 Apalachicola River Near Blountstown, Florida

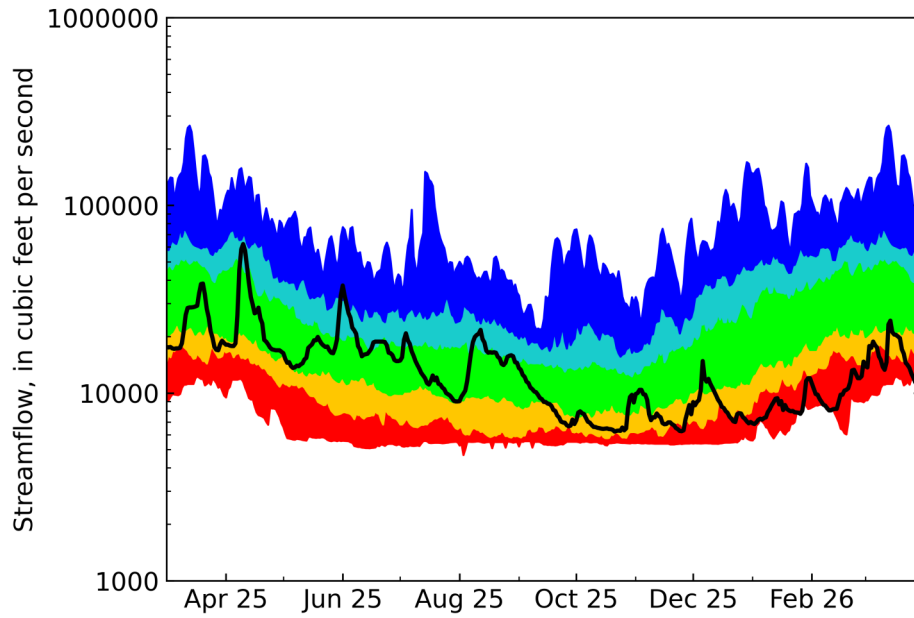
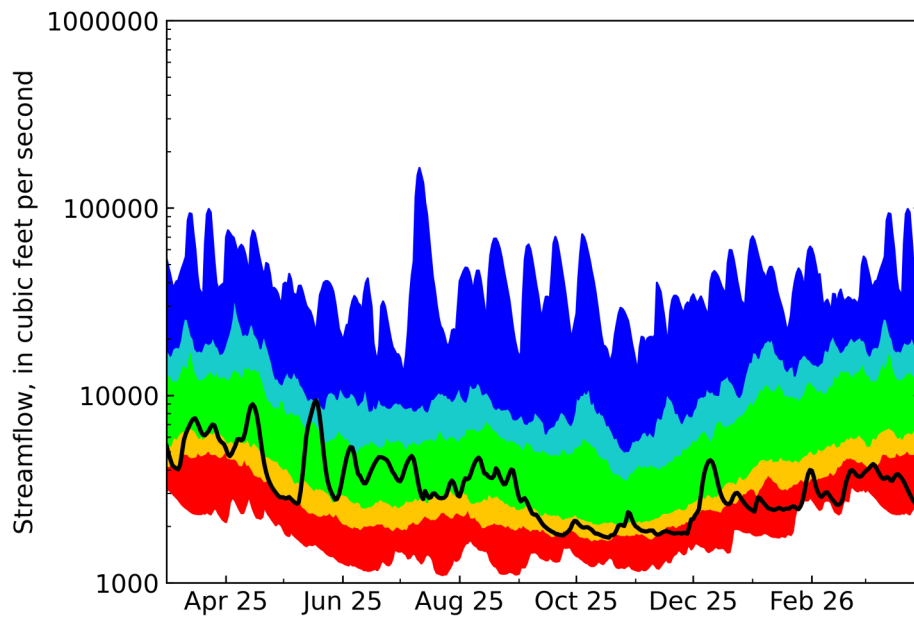


Figure 15: Daily streamflows and percentile ranges for USGS Station 02366500 Choctawhatchee River Near Bruce, Florida



Explanation - Percentile classes				
< 10	10-24	25-75	76-90	> 90
Much below normal	Below normal	Normal	Above normal	Much above normal



Figure 16: Daily streamflows and percentile ranges for USGS Station 02370000 Blackwater River Near Baker, Florida

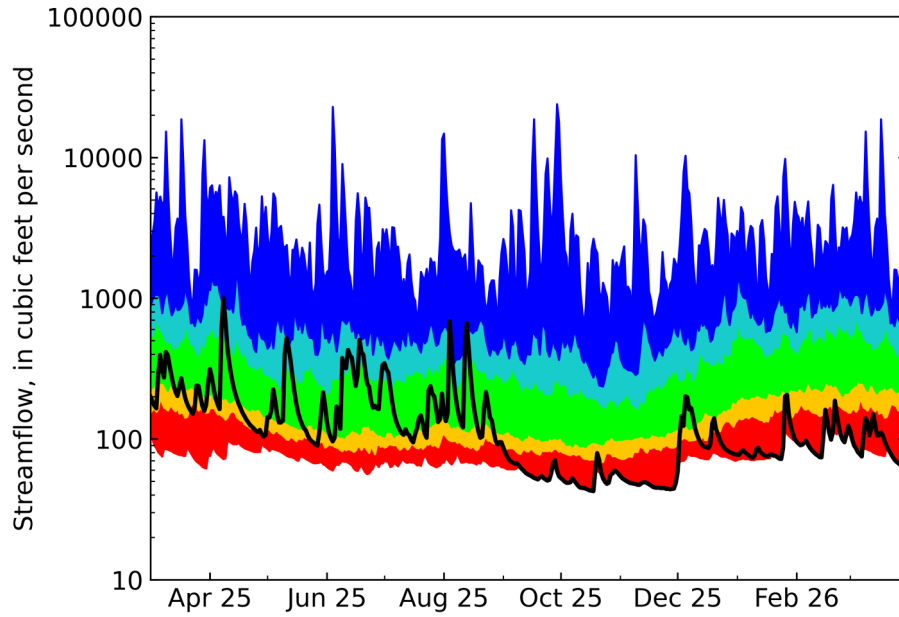
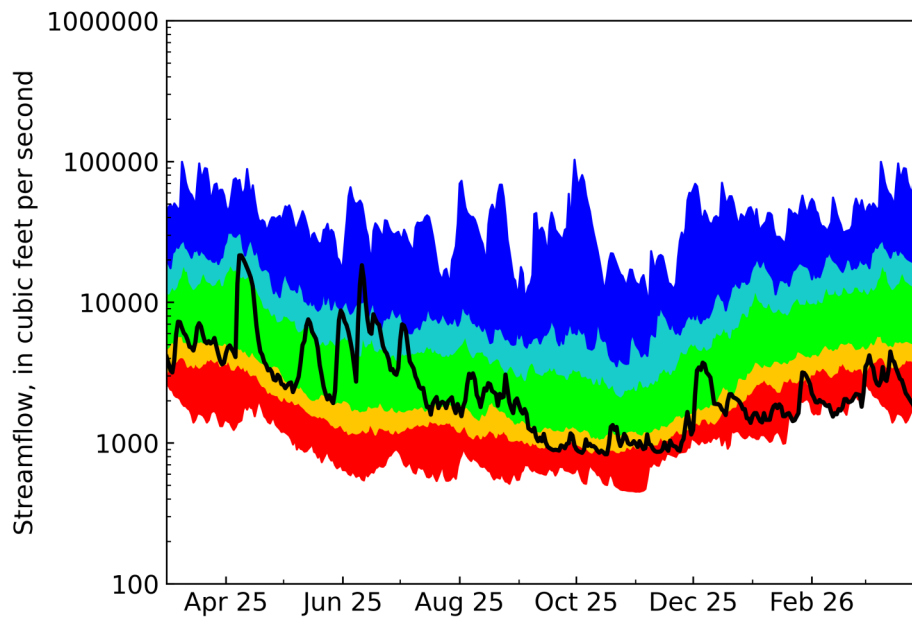


Figure 17: Daily streamflows and percentile ranges for USGS Station 02375500 Escambia River Near Century, Florida



Explanation - Percentile classes				
< 10	10-24	25-75	76-90	> 90
Much below normal	Below normal	Normal	Above normal	Much above normal



Lake Levels. Water levels at Lake Jackson in Leon County remained stable around 77.87 feet, NAVD 1988, for the month of March 2026. Late in November 2025, much of Lake Jackson drained into Porter Sink for the first time since 2021 (**Figure 18**). Porter Sink stops draining and will be covered in water again when there is enough rainfall to fill the aquifer below the lake. The long-term (January 29, 2003, to December 31, 2025) average stage level for Lake Jackson is 80.87 feet, NAVD 1988, and the full pool level is 85.74 feet, NAVD 1988.

At Piney Lake in southern Washington County, water levels were below the elevation of the water level sensor for most of January 2026 and all of February and March 2026. The water level sensor is out of the water when the lake drops below 46.88 feet, NAVD 1988 (**Figure 19**). When the water levels at Piney Lake drop below 51.42 feet, NAVD 1988, the lake separates into two distinct “lobes.” Based on the lake level data collected at Piney Lake since 2022, the lake has likely been continuously separated since December 15, 2023.

In the Econfina Creek Water Management Area in Bay and Washington counties, several recreational lakes and nearly all of the ponds have begun to go dry. Porter Lake and the Whitewater lakes have very low levels with portions of the lakes having gone dry. Ponds like Gap Pond, Hammock Pond, Gully Pond, and Hamlin Pond have all gone dry or are nearly dry. Some of the deeper ponds such as Lake Merial, White Western, and Crystal Lake that have direct flow from the Floridan aquifer have low levels but are not completely dry.



Figure 18: Daily water levels at Lake Jackson at Miller Landing, Leon County

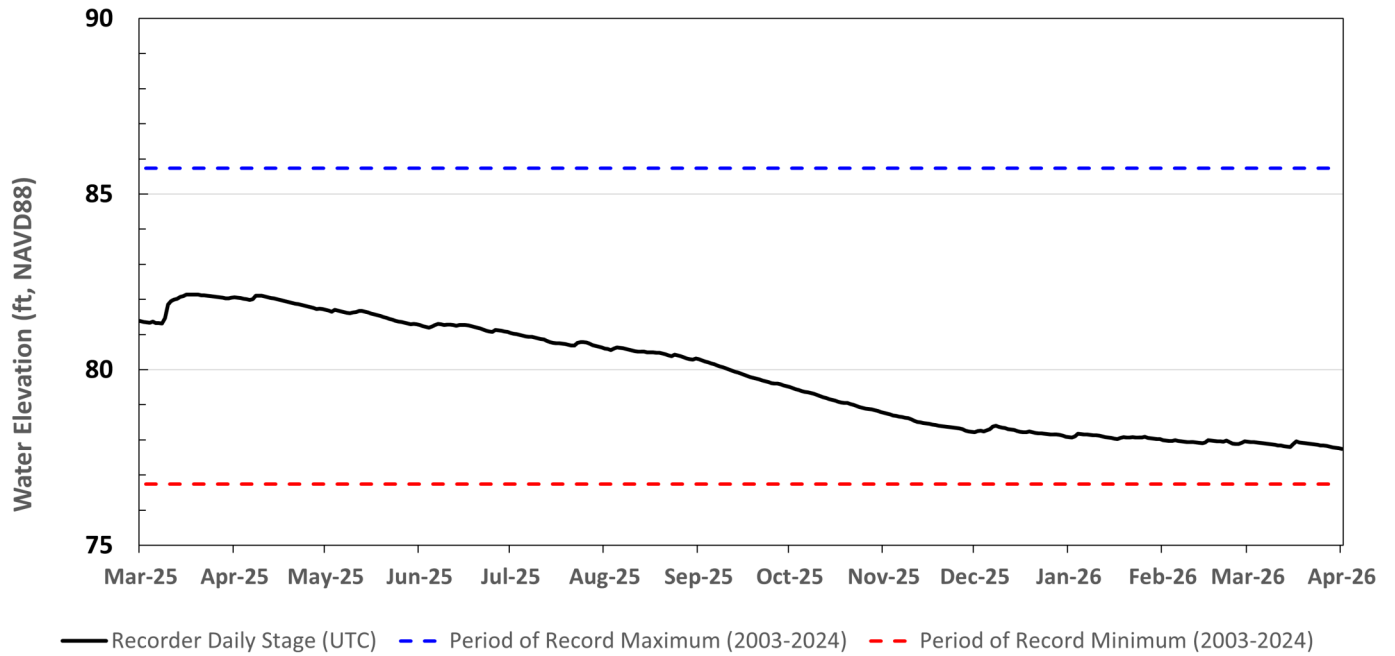
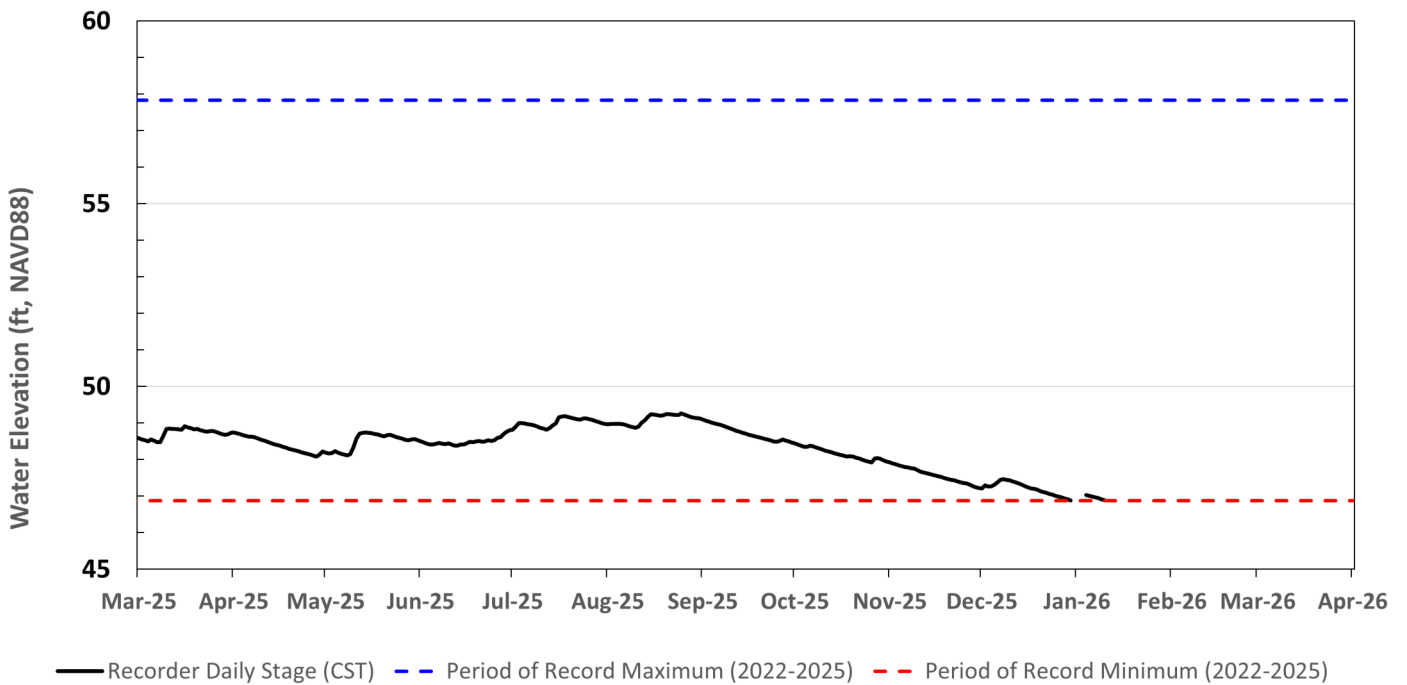


Figure 19: Daily water levels at Piney Lake, Washington County



Spring Flows

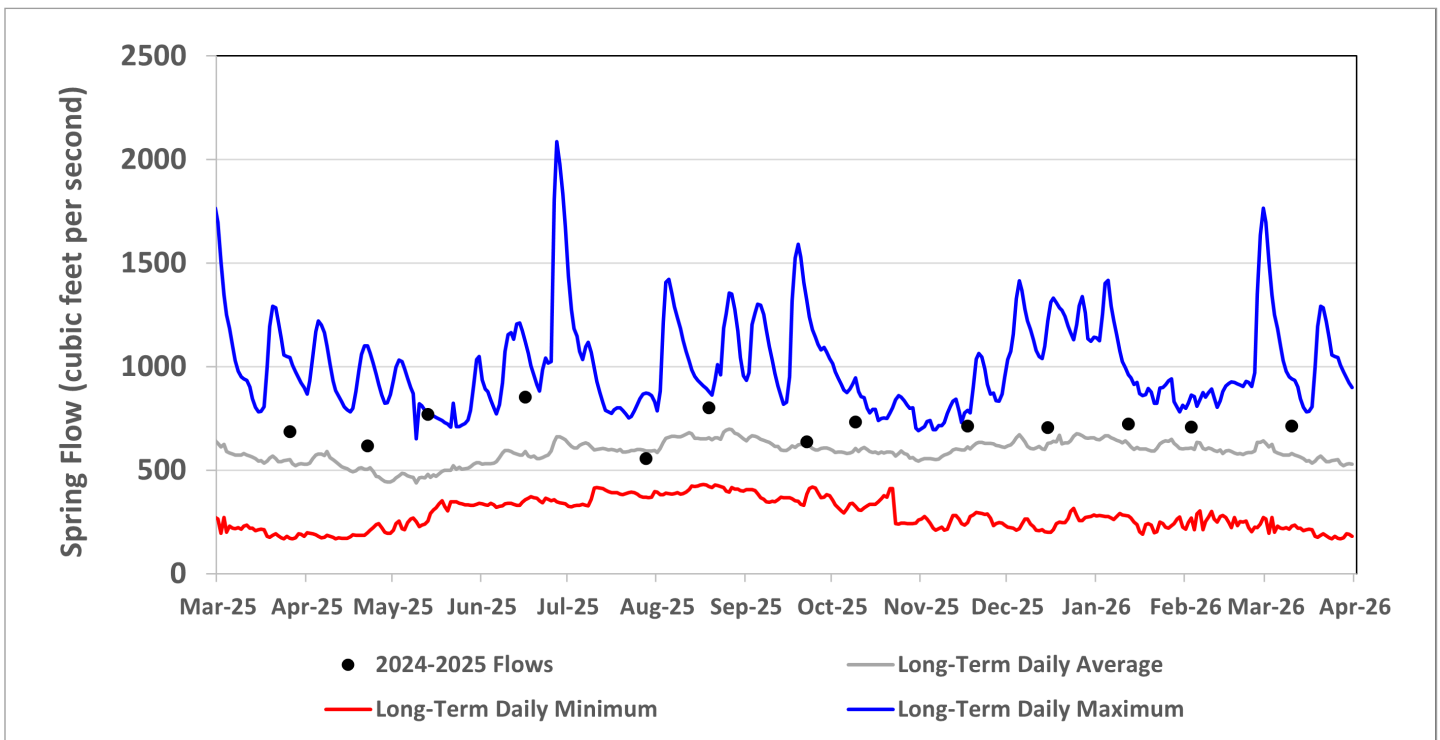
Wakulla and Sally Ward Spring System. Flow from Wakulla Spring remained generally stable between the five monthly measurements taken November 2025 to March 2026. The most recent flow measurement for Wakulla Spring was 712 cubic feet per second (cfs), which was conducted on March 10, 2026 (**Figure 20**). This measurement was 151 cfs higher than the long-term (October 23, 2004, to March 10, 2026) average flow for the month of March of 561 cfs.

Flow at Sally Ward Spring remained generally stable between the five monthly measurements taken November 2025 to March 2026. The most recent flow measurement for Sally Ward was 22.8 cfs on March 10, 2026. This measurement was 7.0 cfs lower than the long-term (November 1, 2004, to March 10, 2025) average flow for the month of March of 29.8 cfs.

The minimum flow established for the combined Wakulla and Sally Ward Spring System under Florida Administrative Code chapter 40A-8.041 continues to be met. The long-term (October 23, 2004, through March 10, 2026) average flows for Wakulla and Sally Ward springs are 589 cfs and 24.2 cfs, respectively. The combined long-term spring flow for both systems is 613.2 cfs, which exceeds the established minimum flow of 538 cfs by 75.2 cfs.

Figure 20: Wakulla Spring flows

Data from October 1, 2023, through March 10, 2026, represent discrete measurements. Daily statistics are based on the October 23, 2004, through March 10, 2026, period of record.

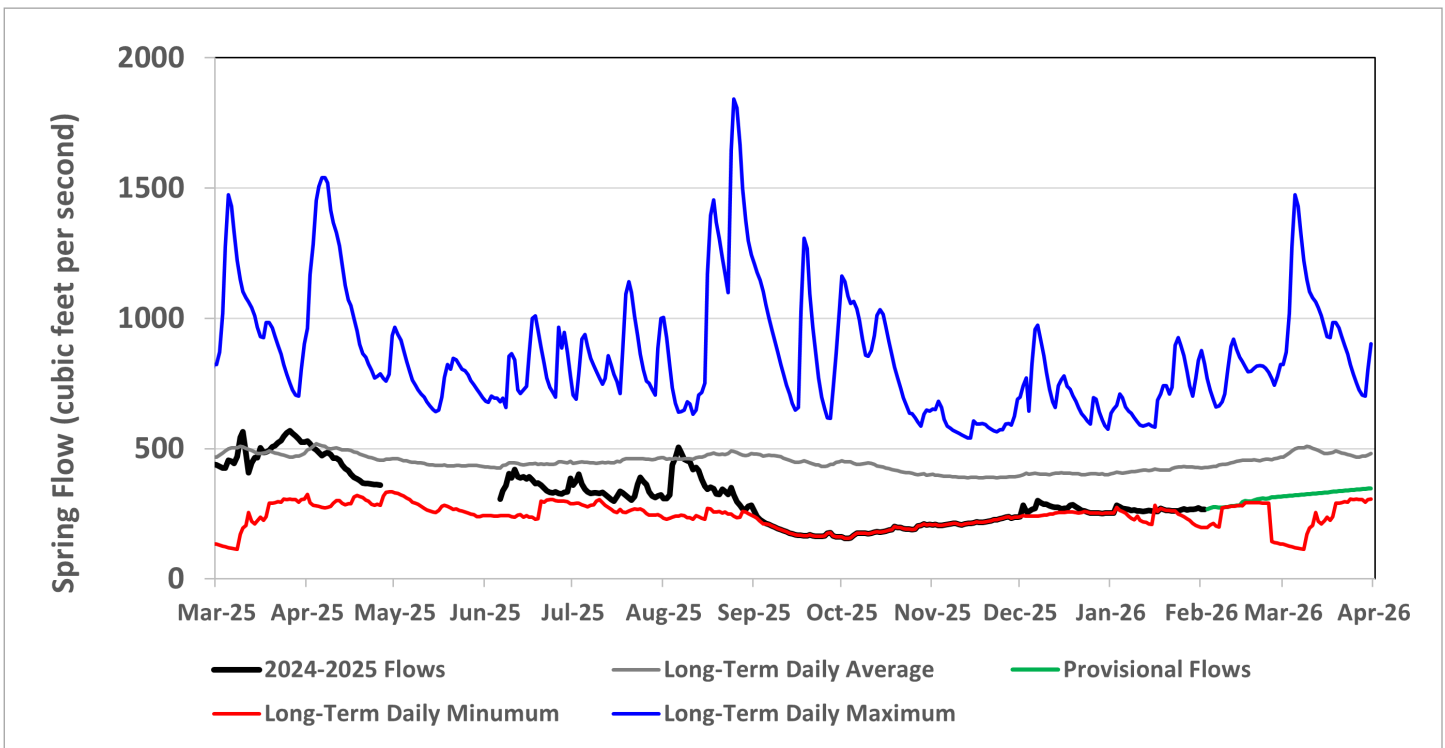


St. Marks River Rise. The mean daily spring flow for March 2026 at the St. Marks River Rise was 332 cfs, based on the available USGS provisional data which extends through March 31, 2026 (Figure 21). This was much below the long-term (October 1, 1956, through March 31, 2026) average flow for the month of March of 486 cfs.

The current 30-year moving average spring flow for the St. Marks River Rise based on the most recent approved USGS data (November 15, 1993, through December 3, 2024) is 423 cfs. If the provisional data from December 4, 2024, through March 31, 2026, are included, the 30-year moving average spring flow for the St. Marks River Rise is 418 cfs. The established minimum flow for the St. Marks River Rise is 419 cfs. When using the most recent approved USGS data, the 30-year moving average flow exceeded the established minimum flow for the St. Marks River Rise by 4 cfs. When the provisional data from December 4, 2024, through March 31, 2026, was included, the 30-year moving average flow was 1 cfs below the established minimum flow.

Available groundwater pumping data in Florida suggests that pumping rates have been relatively stable for the last 5 years and therefore do not appear to indicate that St. Marks River Rise low flows are due to pumping. At this time, extremely low rainfall accumulations are the most likely explanation for the low flow conditions at the St. Marks River Rise. Available rainfall data indicates that recent antecedent rainfall totals are among the lowest values recorded in the region. The status of the St. Marks River Rise will continue to be evaluated as additional data and results become available.

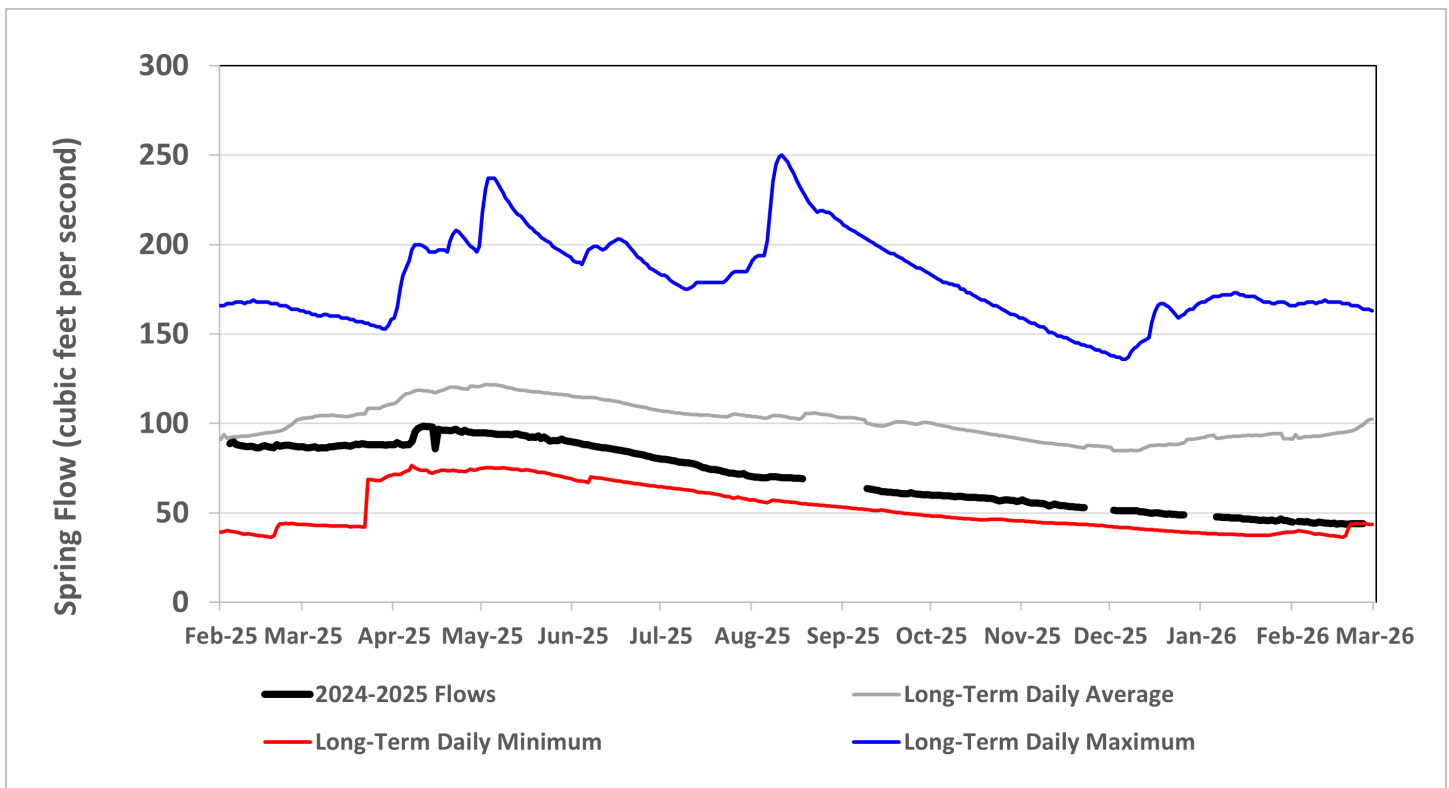
Figure 21: Spring flows for the St. Marks River Rise



Jackson Blue Spring. Daily flows at Jackson Blue Spring during the month of March 2026 averaged 43.0 cfs. This was below the long-term average flow of 106 cfs for the month of March, based on the December 21, 2004, through March 23, 2026, period of record. Flows from Jackson Blue Spring have been below the long-term daily average flow since January 2025 (Figure 22).

Figure 22: Spring flows for Jackson Blue Spring

Data represents daily averages. Long-term flows represent the daily average between December 21, 2004, and March 31, 2026.

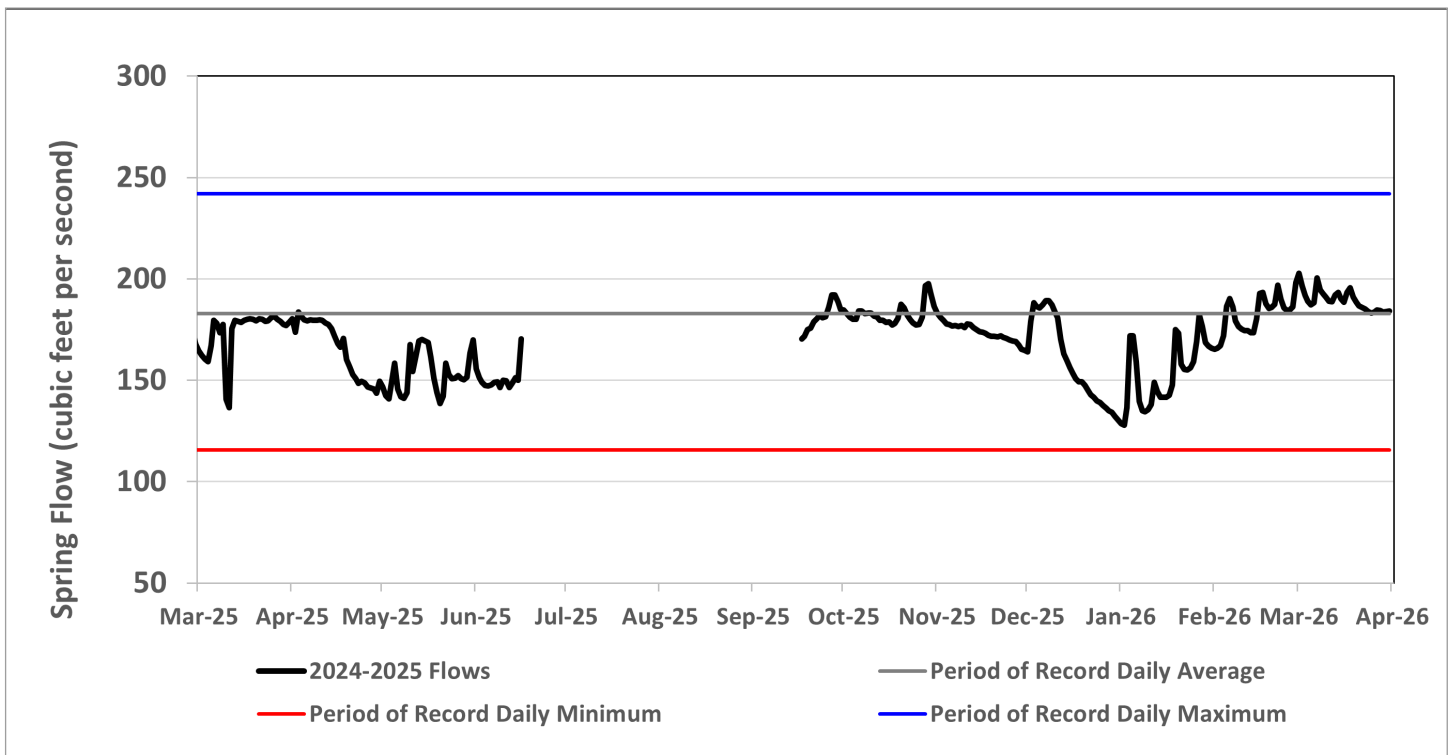


Gainer Spring Group. During March 2026, the average flow from the Gainer Spring Group was 189 cfs (**Figure 23**). The record period (October 28, 2019, through March 31, 2026) average monthly spring flow for the month of March is 177 cfs. It should be noted that there is a relatively brief period of record for this system, and spring flows among the highest and lowest on record are to be expected.

Throughout the time-series, there are several drops and recoveries in the spring flow. This is caused by Econfina Creek spiking in stage adjacent to the spring group after rain events. The extra pressure exerted on the groundwater by the higher surface water in the stream slows flow from the spring group. Since Econfina Creek does not tend to stay high for long after the conclusion of a rain event as the stage level quickly drops, the flow from the spring group recovers since there is less head pressure from the stream.

Figure 23: Gainer Spring Group flows

Data represents daily averages. Streamflow statistics are not shown due to the relatively short period of daily data.

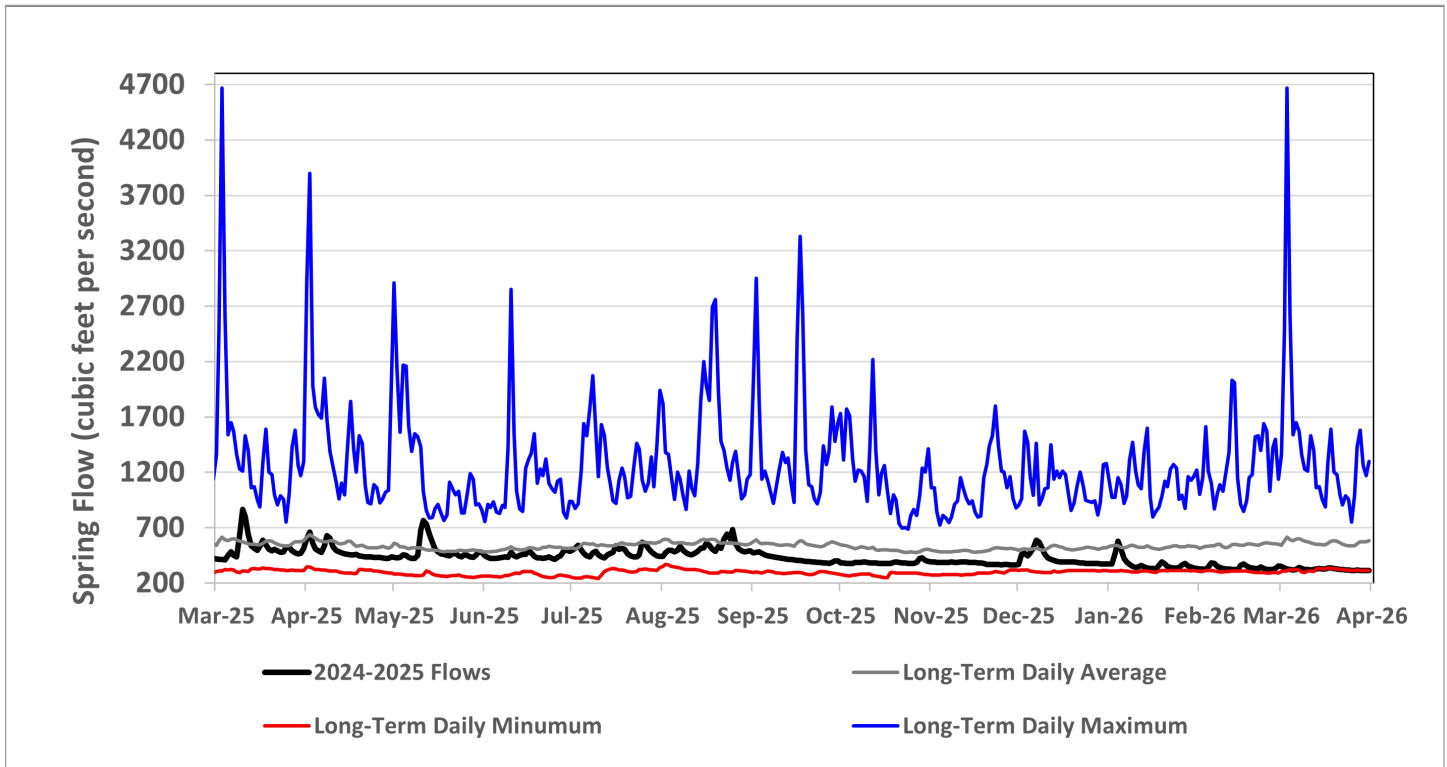


Middle Econfina Creek. The mean daily flow for March 2026 at Middle Econfina Creek was 325 cfs, based on the available USGS provisional data which extends through March 10, 2026 (Figure 24). This was below the long-term (October 1, 1935, through March 31, 2026) average flow for the month of March of 568 cfs.

The current 30-year moving average flow for Middle Econfina Creek based on the most recent approved USGS data (October 1, 1935, through December 15, 2025) is 517 cfs. If the provisional data from December 4, 2024, through March 31, 2026, is used, the 30-year moving average flow for Middle Econfina Creek is 515 cfs.

A minimum flow of 486 cfs was formally adopted on June 29, 2025, for Middle Econfina Creek, which includes the Gainer, Sylvan, and Williford spring groups. Whether using the approved or provisional data, the 30-year moving average flow exceeded the established minimum flow for Middle Econfina Creek by 31 cfs and 29 cfs, respectively.

Figure 24: Spring flows for Middle Econfina Creek (Econfina @ Bennett)



Aquifer Levels

In the middle of March 2026, of a total of nine Floridan aquifer monitor wells, three were classified as having groundwater levels within normal ranges, three were classified as below-normal, and three were classified as much-below-normal (**Figures 25 - 31**). Most Floridan monitor wells with sufficient long-term data to calculate percentiles continued to decline through March 2026 except for USGS Benchmark monitor well (NWFID 392) in Wakulla County, which remained generally stable in below-normal ranges until the significant rain event from March 16-17, 2026, bumped groundwater levels into normal ranges (**Figure 27**). Pittman VISA Floridan monitor well (NWFID 5266) in eastern Jackson County remained classified as much-below-normal as groundwaters continued to decline (**Figure 28**). At USGS-422A Near Greenhead Floridan monitor well (NWFID 3216) in southeastern Washington County, groundwater levels declined enough to be considered below-normal by the end of January 2026 for the first time since June 2013. Groundwater levels at Jackson Still upper Floridan monitor well (NWFID 5417) in northern Walton County and Sand Hill upper Floridan monitor well (NWFID 5597) in northwestern Okaloosa County continued to decline and remained classified as much-below-normal.

Of three sand-and-gravel aquifer monitor wells, two had below-normal water levels and one had above-normal water levels. Allen Tower Deep monitor well (NWFID 5401), had water levels classified as within normal ranges in mid-December 2025 but has since dropped into below-normal ranges. Water levels at Weller Ave Deep monitor well (NWFID 1382) in southern Escambia County remained generally stable in above-normal ranges (**Figure 31**). The Oak Grove Deep monitor well (NWFID 5479) continued to record below normal groundwater levels, as it has for several months (**Figure 25**).



Figure 25: Monitor wells and aquifer level percentiles for mid-March 2025

Percentile class rankings are based on each well's period of record. All wells have a minimum of 20 years of data.

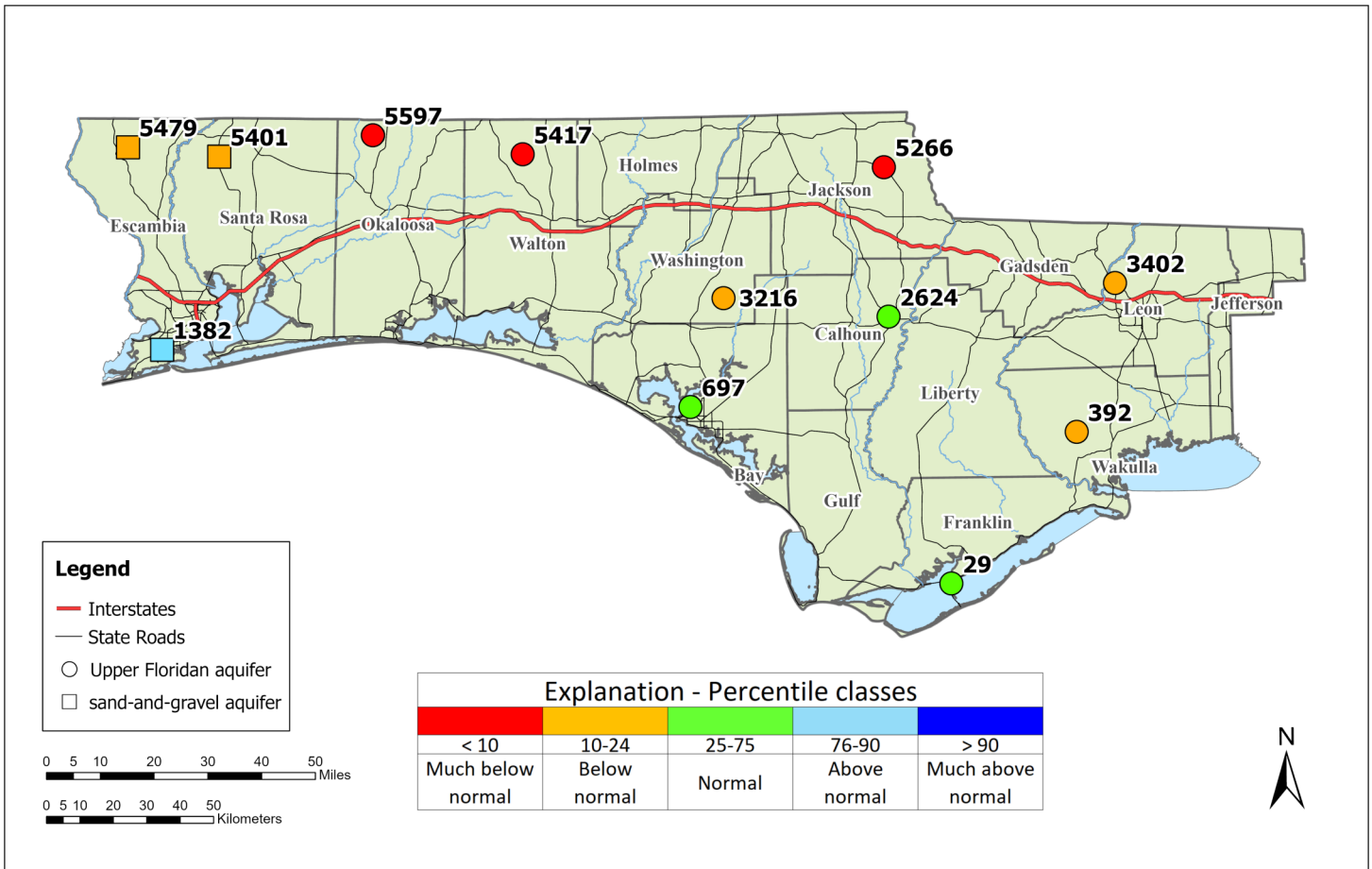


Figure 26: Daily upper Floridan aquifer levels at USGS-Lake Jackson well (NWFID 3402), Leon County

Land surface elevation is 121.40 ft, NAVD 88

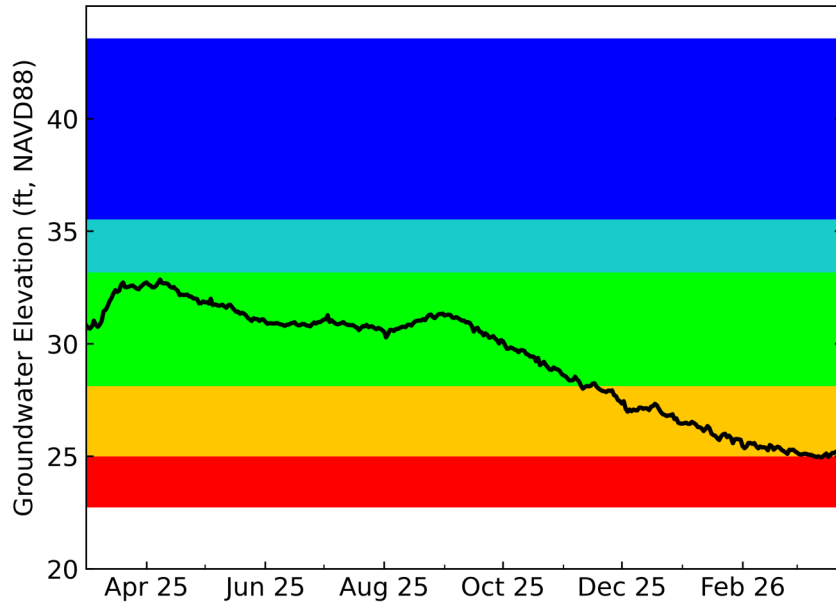
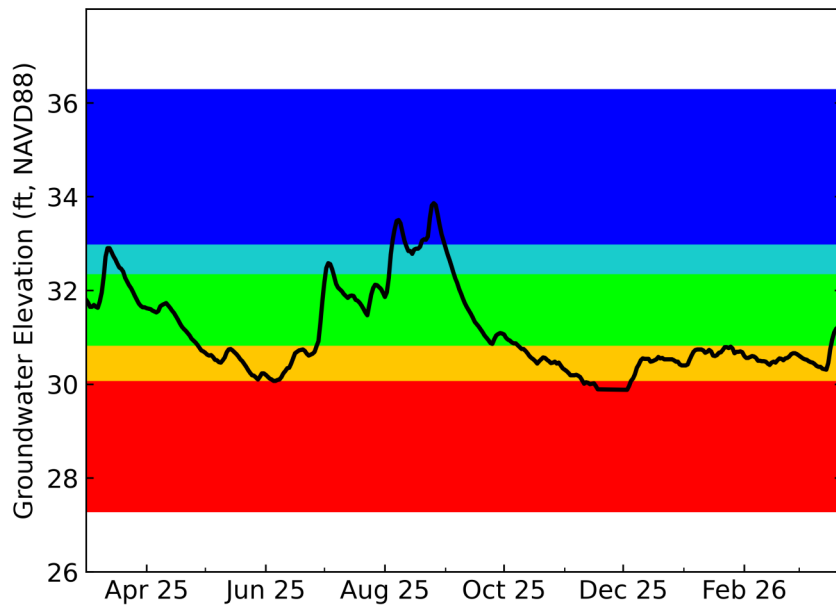


Figure 27: Daily upper Floridan aquifer levels at USGS Benchmark well (NWFID 392), Wakulla County

Land surface elevation is 46.27 ft, NAVD 88



Explanation - Percentile classes				
< 10	10-24	25-75	76-90	> 90
Much below normal	Below normal	Normal	Above normal	Much above normal



Figure 28: Daily upper Floridan aquifer levels at NFWMD Pittman Visa well (NWFID 5266), Jackson County

Land surface elevation is 127.31 ft, NAVD 88

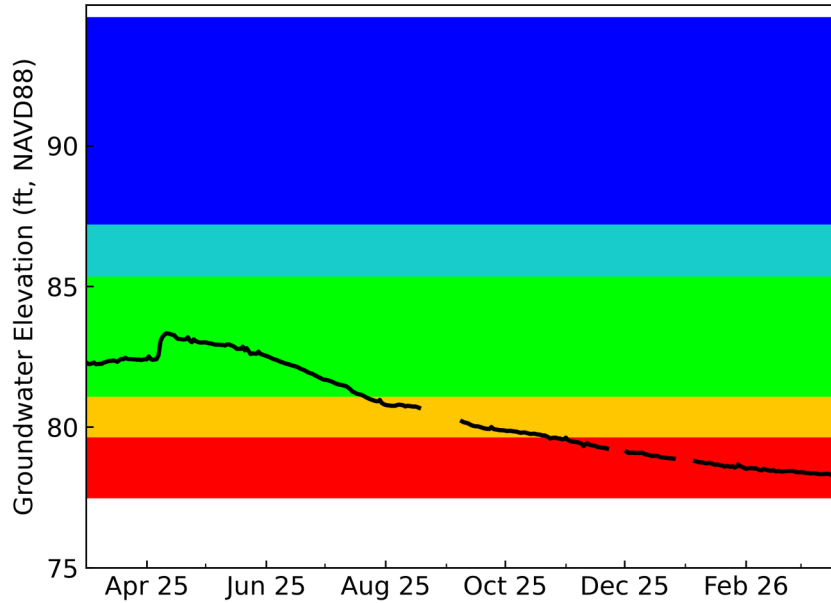
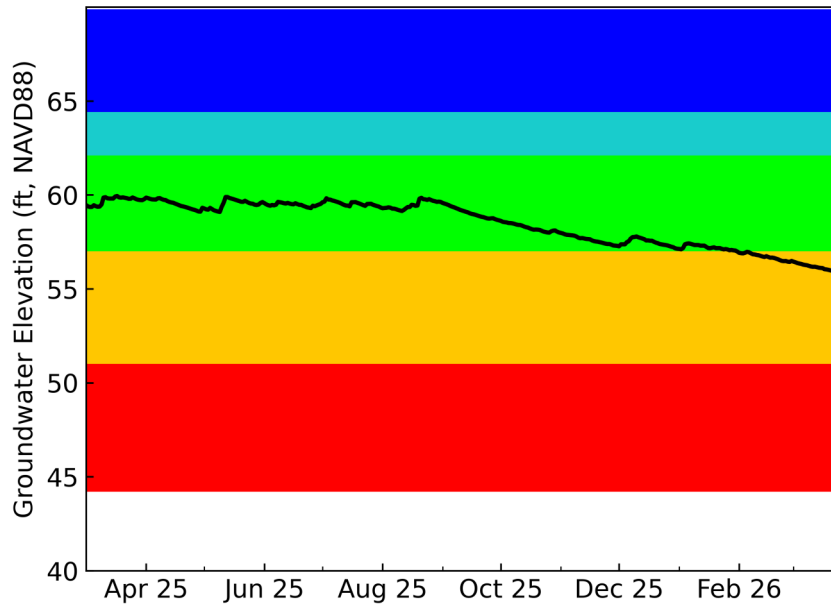


Figure 29: Daily upper Floridan aquifer levels at USGS-422A Near Greenhead well (NWFID 3216), Washington County

Land surface elevation is 66.75 ft, NAVD 88



Explanation - Percentile classes				
< 10	10-24	25-75	76-90	> 90
Much below normal	Below normal	Normal	Above normal	Much above normal



Figure 30: Daily upper Floridan aquifer levels at Fannin Airport well (NWFID 697), Washington County

Land surface elevation is 4.05 ft, NAVD 88

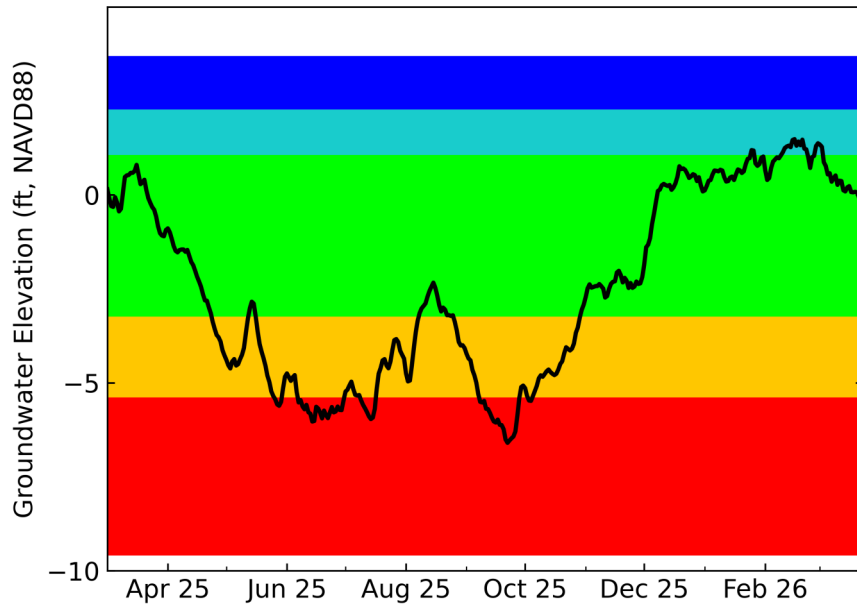
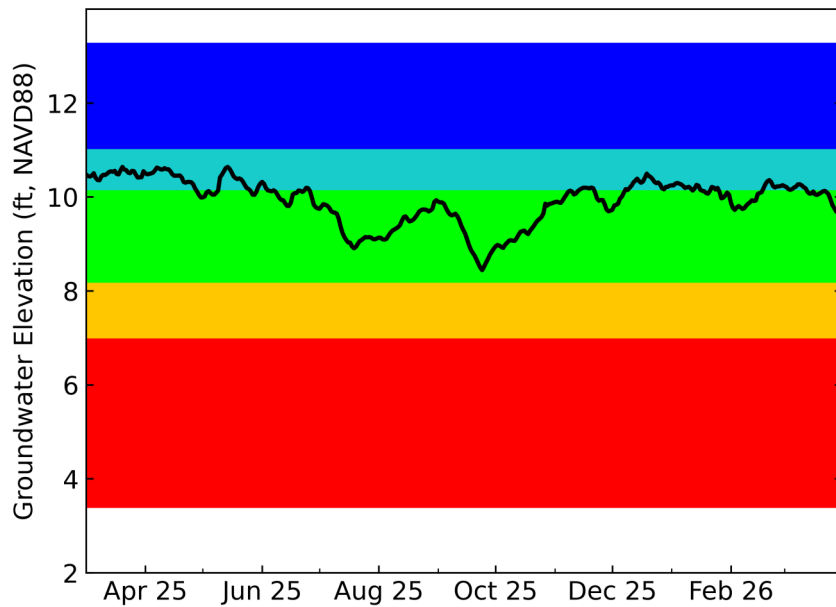


Figure 31: Daily sand-and-gravel aquifer levels at NFWMD Weller Ave Deep well (NWFID 1382), Escambia County

Land surface elevation is 25.09 ft, NAVD 88



Explanation - Percentile classes				
< 10	10-24	25-75	76-90	> 90
Much below normal	Below normal	Normal	Above normal	Much above normal

