Northwest Florida Water Management District

Hydrologic Conditions Report

July 2026

Summary

July 2026 was characterized by near-normal precipitation and above-normal temperatures (averaging around 83.1 degrees Fahrenheit). Near-normal rainfall did not significantly change the 365-day rainfall deficits between July 1 and July 31, 2026. Most streamflows continued to be within normal ranges; however, improvements to stage at surface waterbodies such as lakes and ponds varied significantly by geographical location and rainfall amount. Similarly, groundwater level improvements were spatially variable with rainfall amounts and degree of aquifer confinement. Drought conditions generally improved during July 2026 with regions categorized as moderate drought (D1) or severe drought (D2) receding and the removal of extreme drought (D3) from the District. The majority of the District remains under abnormally dry (D0) conditions.

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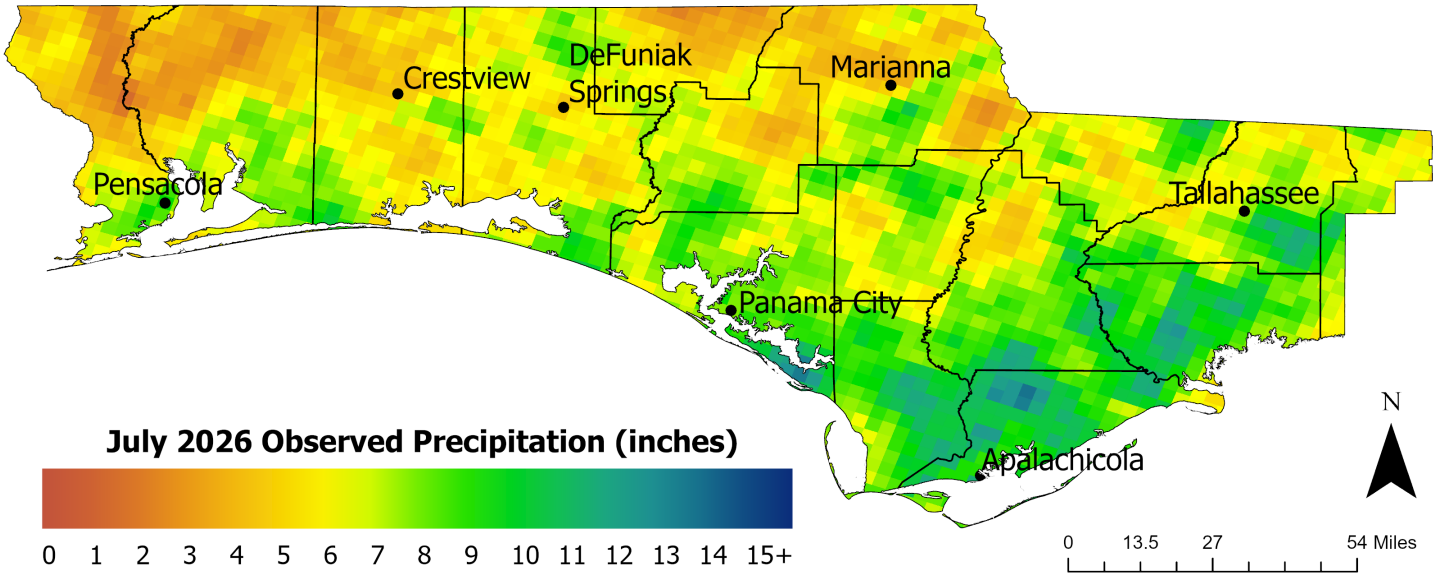
Rainfall

In July 2026, an average of 6.36 inches of precipitation was recorded across the Panhandle . This amount was 0.81 inches below the District normal precipitation for the month of July and was considered 89% of normal. The District normal for the month of July is 7.17 inches. In a typical year in the District, the month of July has the highest monthly normal rainfall (**Tables 1 & 2; Figures 1 – 9**). Normal precipitation is defined as average monthly precipitation for the 30-year reference period (1991-2020).

There were several rain events throughout July 2026, mainly caused by deep Gulf moisture, heating-caused instability, and sea breeze circulation convergence. The most significant rain event for the month occurred July 18-23, 2026, when a surface low (Tropical Storm Bertha after July 20, 2026) formed off the Gulf Coast and brought several inches of rain to the Panhandle. Higher amounts exceeding 5 inches were observed in some parts of the counties near the Gulf Coast.

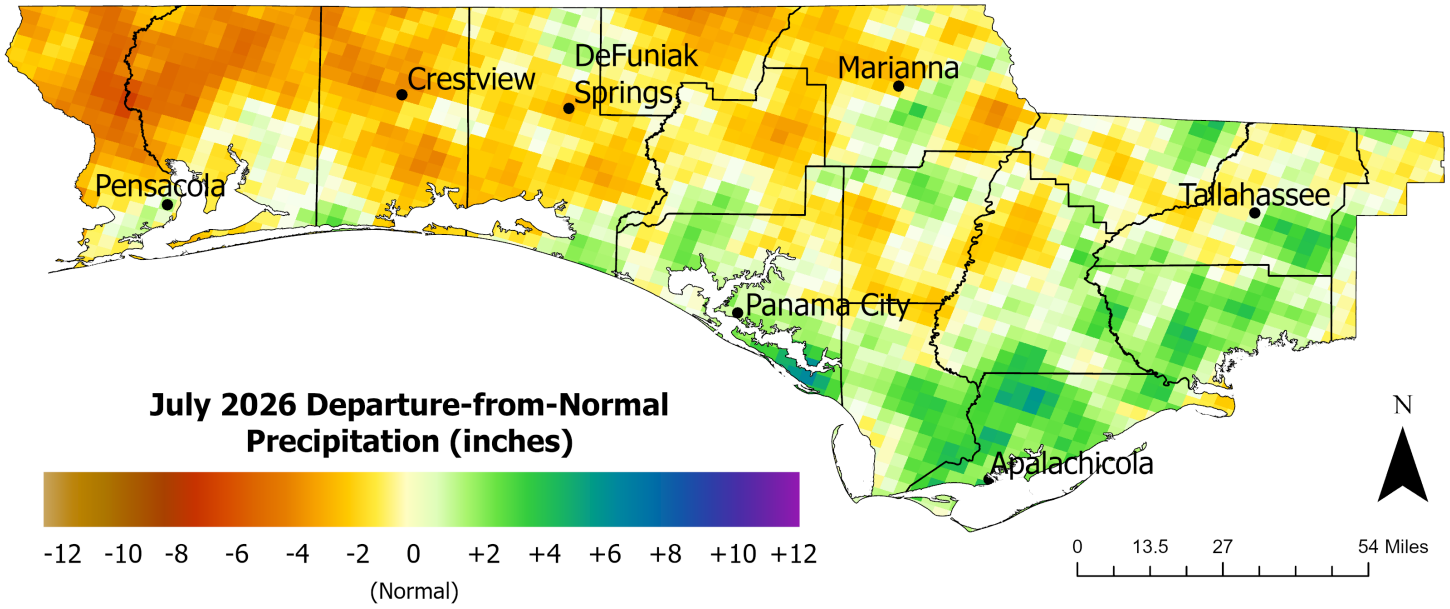
Between July 1 and July 31, 2026, 365-day rainfall deficits generally did not change in either the positive or negative direction more than an inch (**Table 2**). This is due to both the near-normal rainfall amounts from this month and also the 365-day cut-off date. As the year progresses, any rainier periods before the start of the drought (pre-September 2025) will be considered less, leaving a majority of the 365-day period during the active drought.

Figure 1: District-wide July 2026 observed rainfall



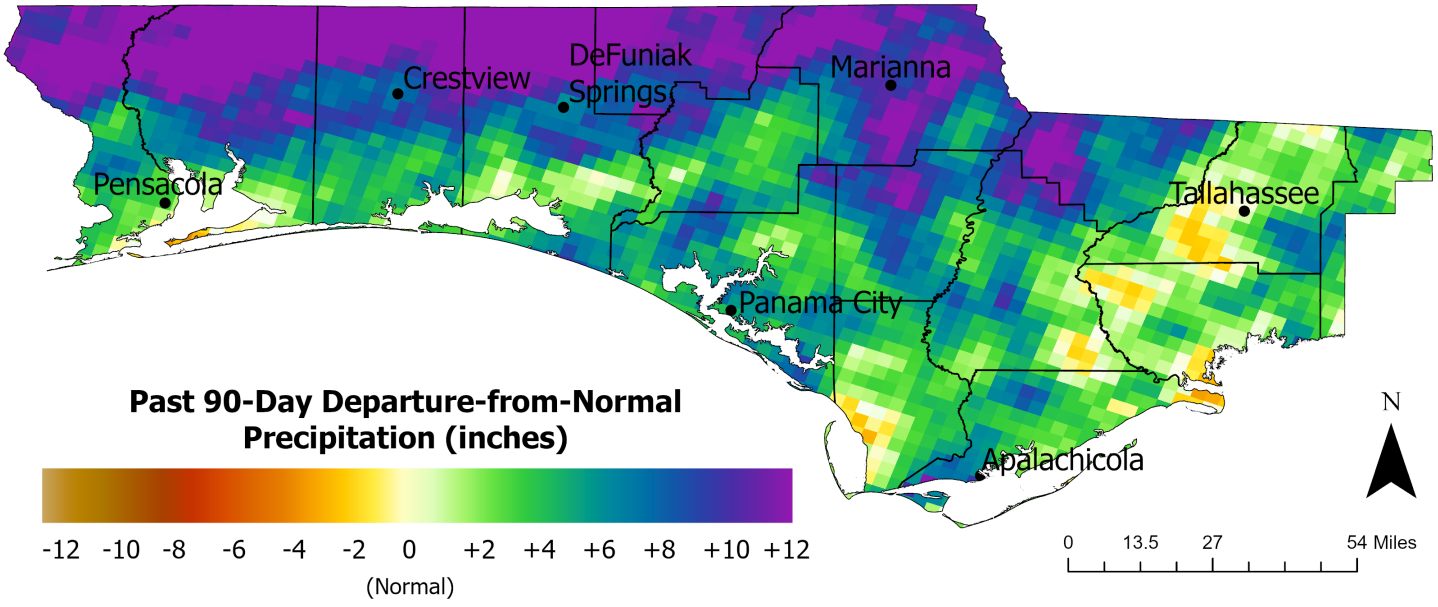
Source: *https://water.noaa.gov/resources/downloads/precip/stageIV/*

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



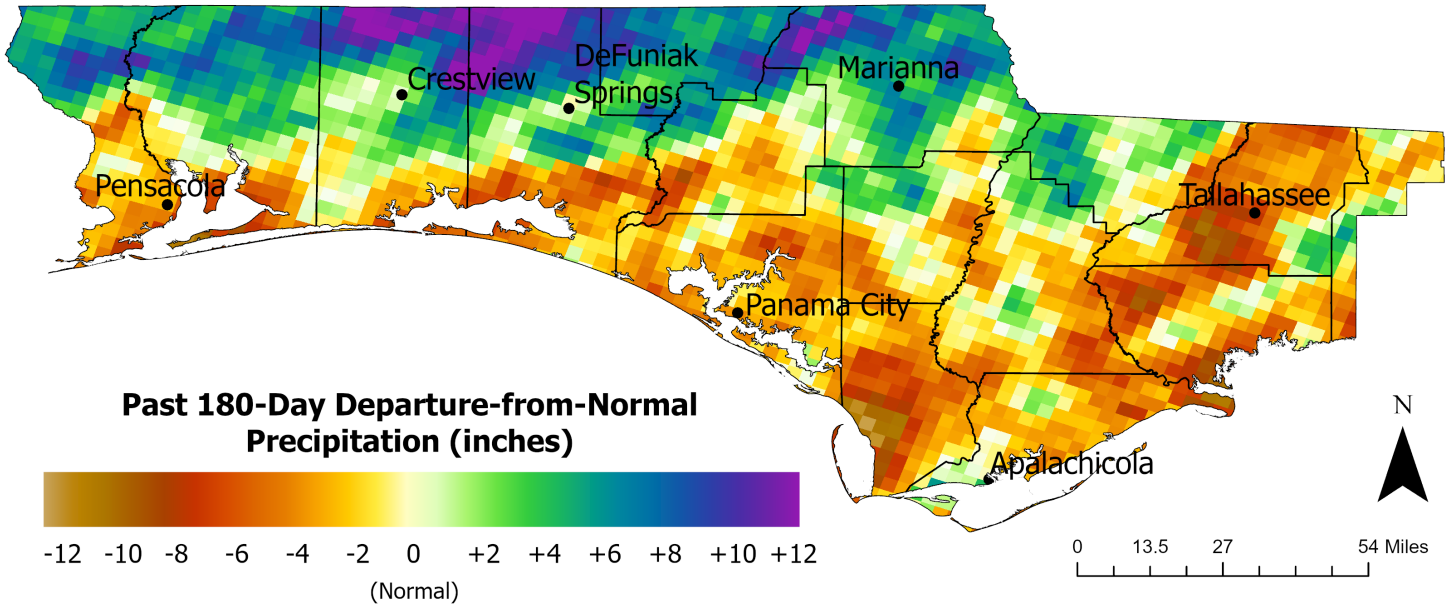
Source: *https://water.noaa.gov/resources/downloads/precip/stageIV/*

Figure 3: District-wide precipitation departure from normal for the previous 90 days as of July 31, 2026



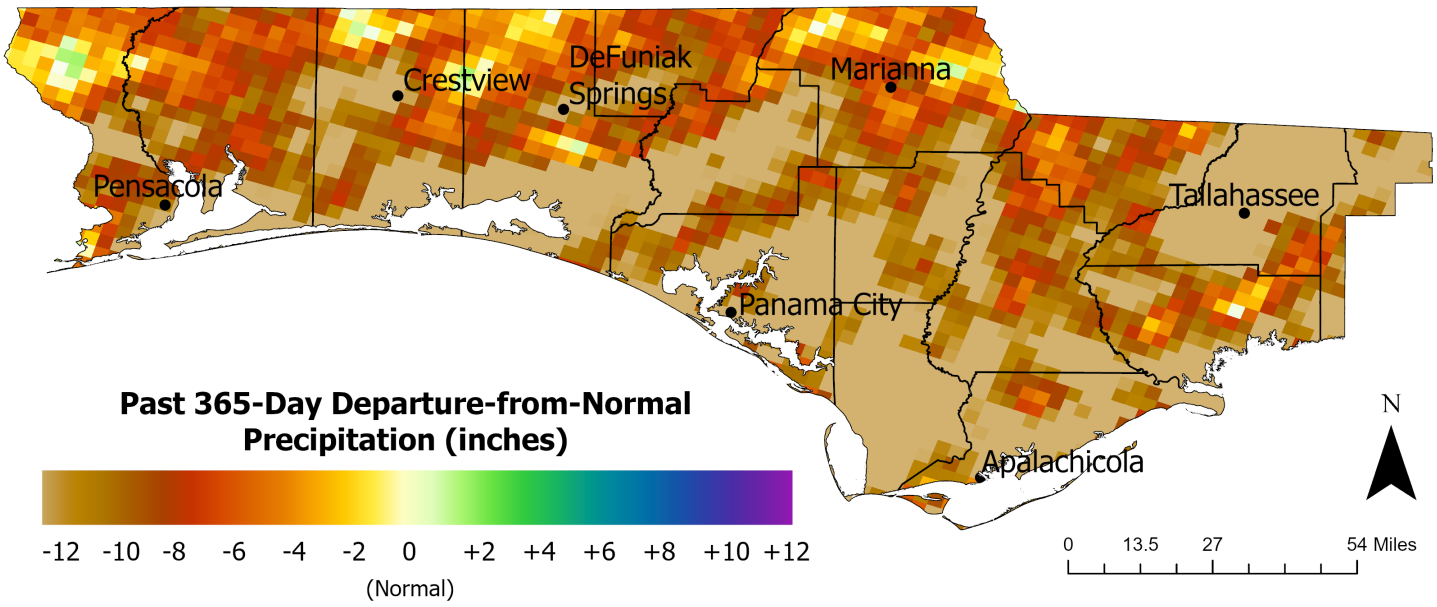
Source: https://water.noaa.gov/resources/downloads/precip/stageIV/

Figure 4: District-wide precipitation departure from normal for the previous 180 days as of July 31, 2026



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

Figure 5: District-wide precipitation departure from normal for the previous 365 days as of July 31, 2026



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

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

Station	July Normal Rainfall (1991 to 2020)	July 2026 Observed Rainfall	Percent of Normal
Tallahassee Regional Airport	7.14	6.13	86%
Marianna Regional Airport	5.10	2.35	46%
Niceville, FL	8.91	5.89	66%
Pensacola Regional Airport	7.89	9.55	121%

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

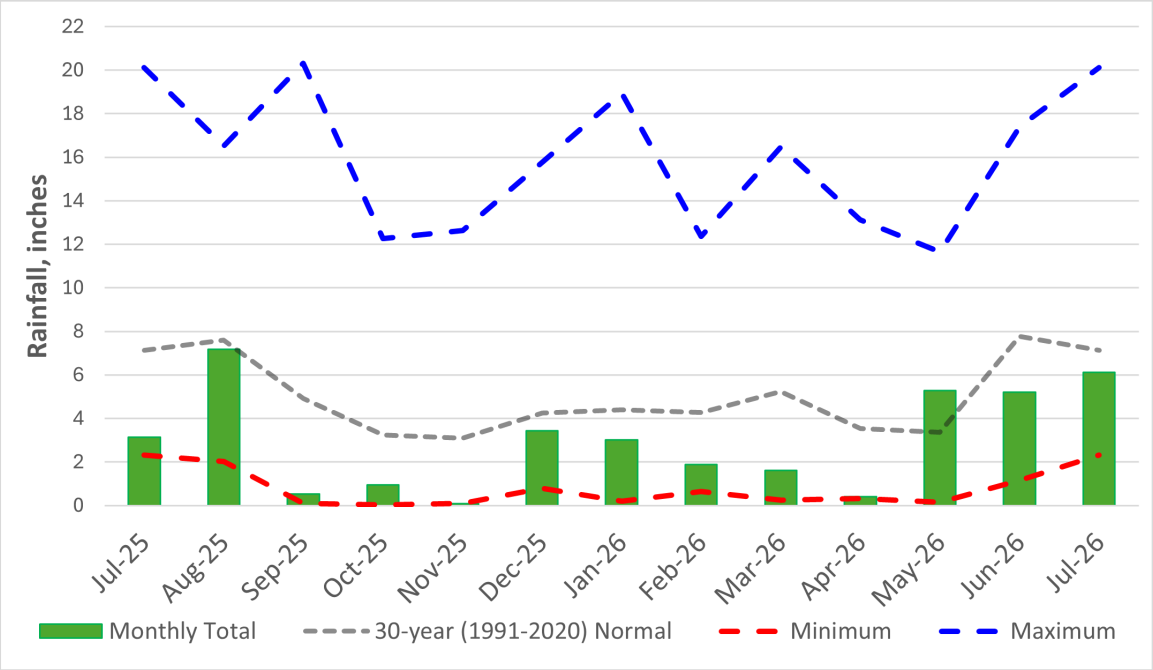
https://www.weather.gov/wrh/Climate?wfo=mob

Table 2: County-averaged rainfall deficit comparison between July 1, 2026, and July 31, 2026

County	365-day Departure-from-Normal Rainfall (inches) as of July 31, 2026	365-day Departure-from-Normal Rainfall (inches) as of July 1, 2026	Difference (inches)
Bay	-11.92	-13.42	-1.50
Calhoun	-11.95	-12.97	-1.02
Escambia	-6.46	-5.44	+1.03
Franklin	-12.27	-13.04	-0.77
Gadsden	-8.55	-10.09	-1.54
Gulf	-14.79	-16.36	-1.57
Holmes	-7.75	-6.81	+0.94
Jackson	-6.38	-6.23	+0.15
Jefferson	-12.25	-13.56	-1.31
Leon	-15.03	-16.92	-1.88
Liberty	-10.57	-10.27	+0.30
Okaloosa	-9.33	-8.88	+0.45
Santa Rosa	-8.70	-8.36	+0.33
Wakulla	-9.91	-12.07	-2.15
Walton	-9.02	-9.57	-0.55
Washington	-11.41	-11.86	-0.44

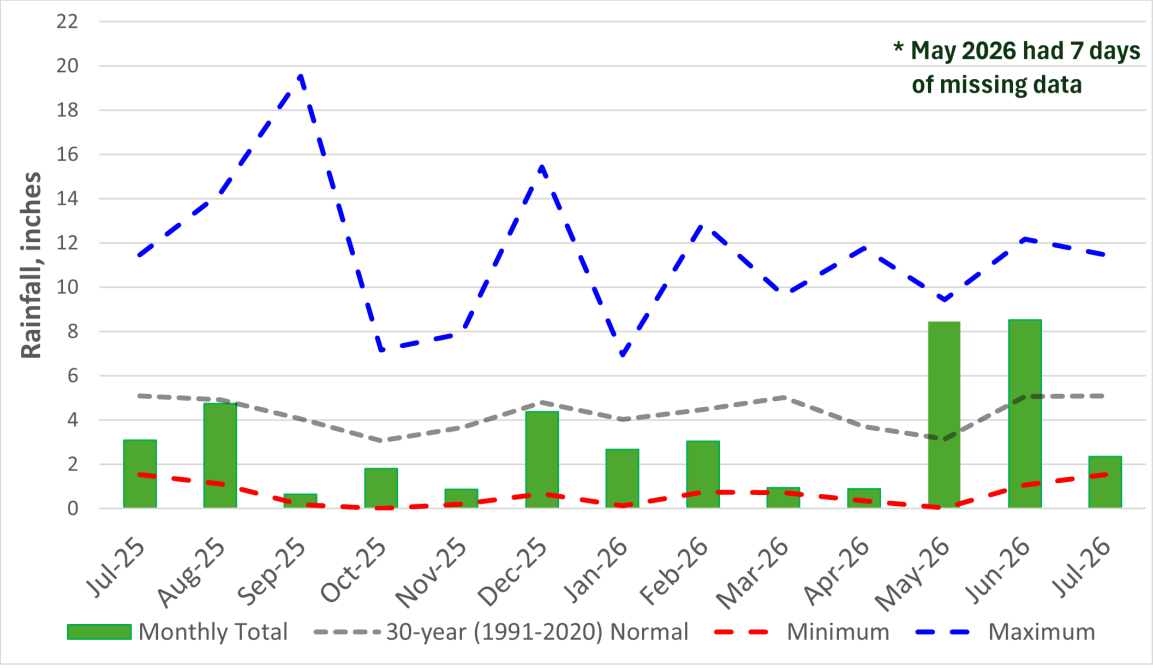
* Please note that a negative difference refers to a decrease in the deficit and a positive difference refers to an increase in the deficit between July 1 and July 31, 2026

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



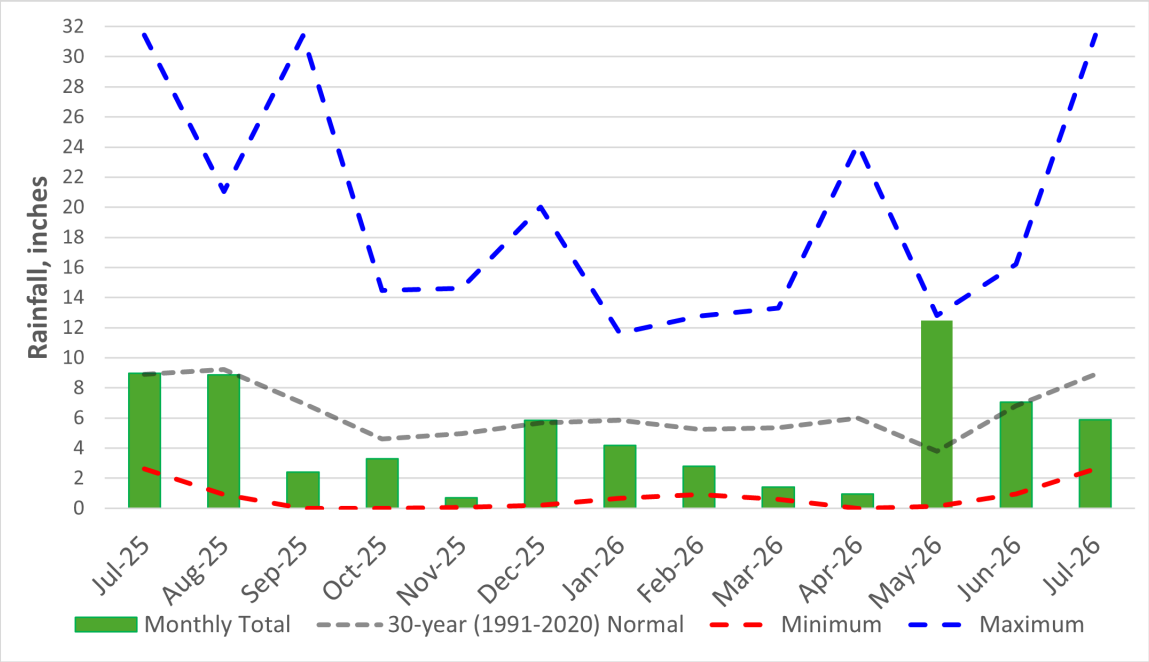
Source: https://www.weather.gov/wrh/Climate?wfo=tae

Figure 7: Observed rainfall at Marianna Regional Airport for the past 13 months compared to the 30-year normal, minimum, and maximum precipitation for each month



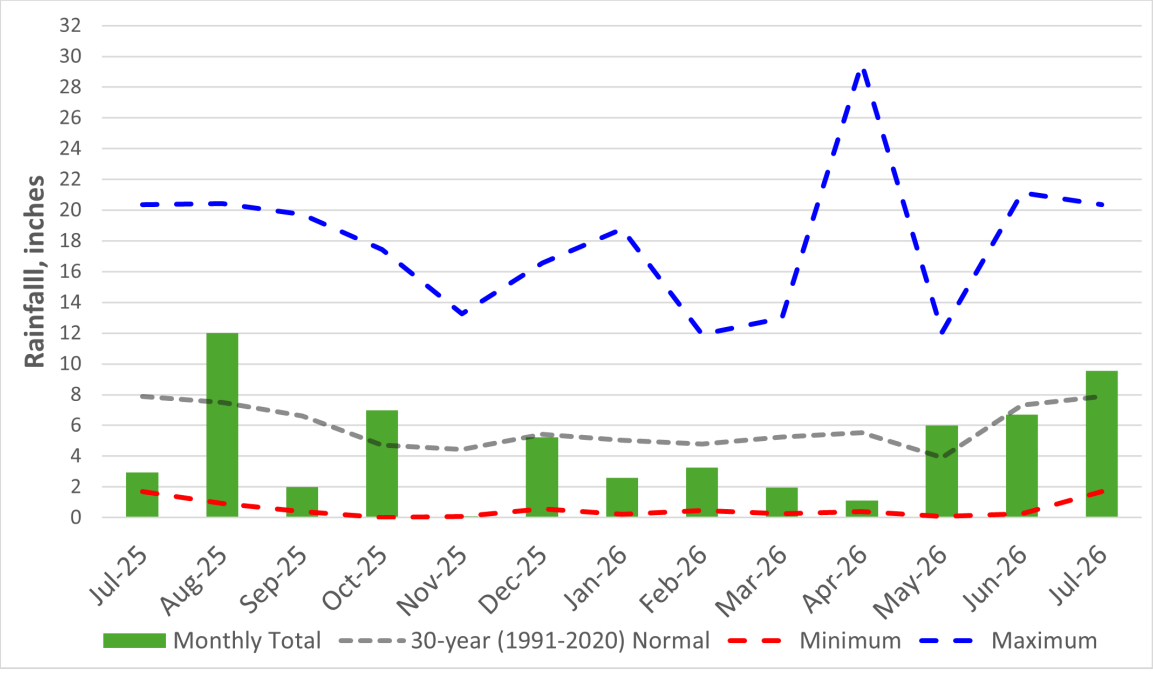
Source: https://www.weather.gov/wrh/Climate?wfo=tae

Figure 8: 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 9: 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

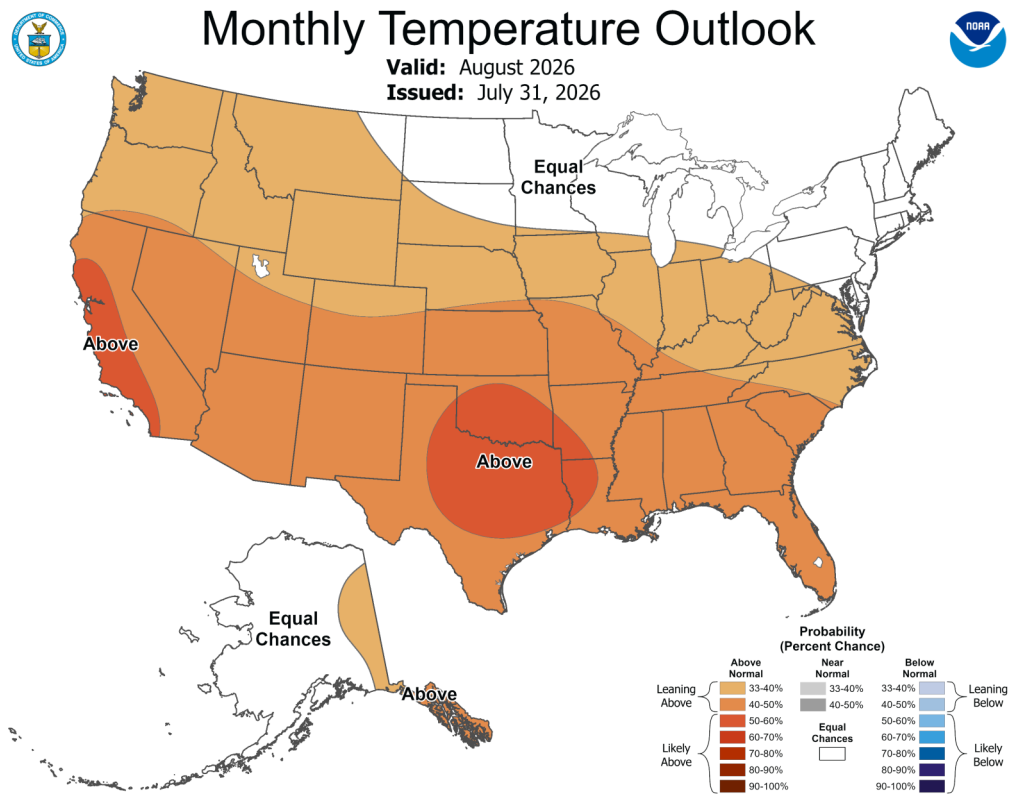
According to NOAA's Climate Prediction Center, the forecast issued July 31, 2026, for August 2026 showed a slight chance for above-normal temperatures in the District. The precipitation outlook showed equal chances for above-, below-, or near-normal rainfall in the Panhandle as well as the aquifer recharge zones in southern Georgia and Alabama (**Figure 10**).

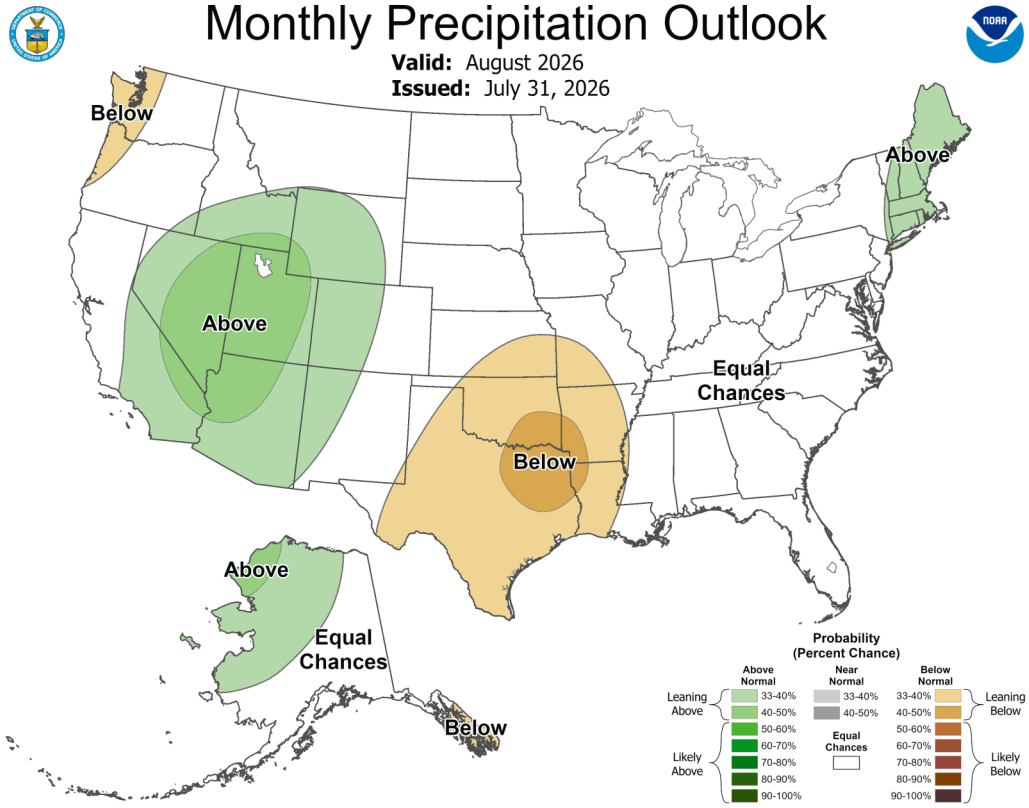
As of August 10, 2026, El Niño is present, and an advisory has been issued. El Niño is favored to continue to strengthen and will likely continue through the Northern Hemisphere 2027 spring (97% chance). In the summertime, El Niño is associated with quieter Atlantic hurricane seasons due to increased vertical wind shear that hinders the development of tropical cyclones.

The 2026 Atlantic Hurricane Season began on June 1, 2026, and extends through November 30, 2026. According to the updated hurricane season outlook released August 6, 2026, NOAA is still predicting below-normal hurricane activity in the Atlantic basin largely due to the strengthening El Niño. One named storm, Tropical Storm Bertha, formed during July 2026 in the Atlantic basin and contributed to several inches of the rainfall that was observed in the District, particularly the western coastal regions.

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 10: August 2026 Temperature and Precipitation Outlooks for the United States





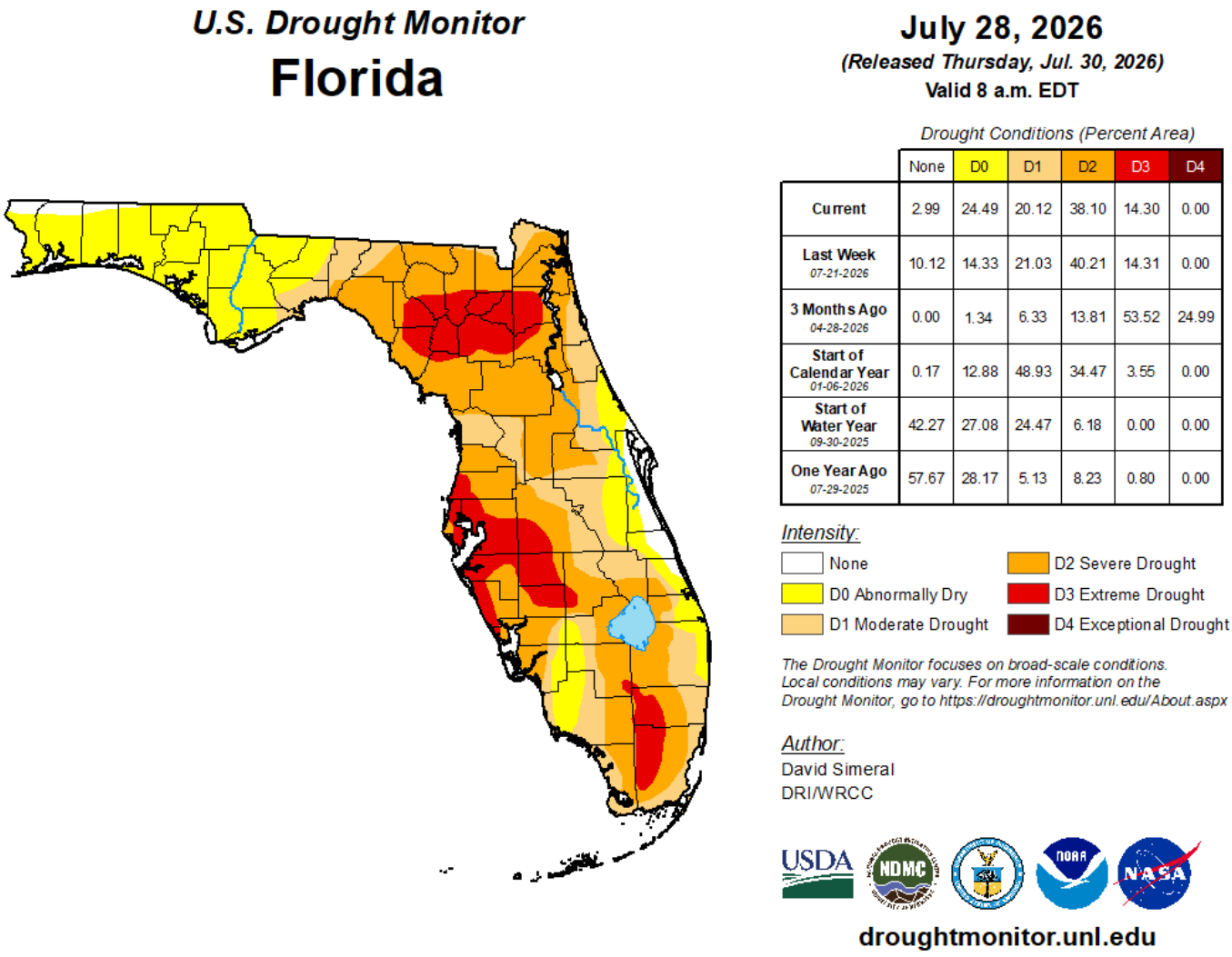
Drought Conditions

The U.S. Drought Monitor report released for July 28, 2026, showed the majority (85%) of the Panhandle being under abnormally dry (D0) conditions, with areas of moderate drought (D1) in Franklin, Wakulla, Leon, and Jefferson counties. Though drought conditions slowly improved in the eastern portions of the District throughout July 2026, there was also a return of abnormally dry (D0) conditions to regions previously considered drought-free at the end of June 2026 towards the Florida-Alabama border (**Figure 11**).

On June 30, 2026, areas of extreme drought (D3) conditions encompassed roughly 8% of the District's land area and moderate drought (D1) and severe drought (D2) conditions combined covered about 20%. As of July 28, 2026, there were no longer areas in the District classified as extreme drought (D3) and regions considered under moderate drought (D1) or severe drought (D2) had reduced to less than 10% of the District's land area. These changes in drought categories can be attributed to the District receiving generally above-normal rainfall in the eastern region and below-normal rainfall towards the western region and along the northern state border (**Figure 2**).

According to both the U.S. Monthly Drought Outlook for August 2026 and the Seasonal Drought Outlook for August 1 through October 31, 2026, drought conditions are expected to be removed from the District. No drought conditions are expected to redevelop in areas of no drought or abnormally dry conditions in either timeframe. This is likely due to the expected increased rainfall the Panhandle typically receives during the summertime as a result of the sea breeze circulation that drives the near-daily afternoon thunderstorms.

Figure 11: Florida Drought Conditions on July 28, 2026



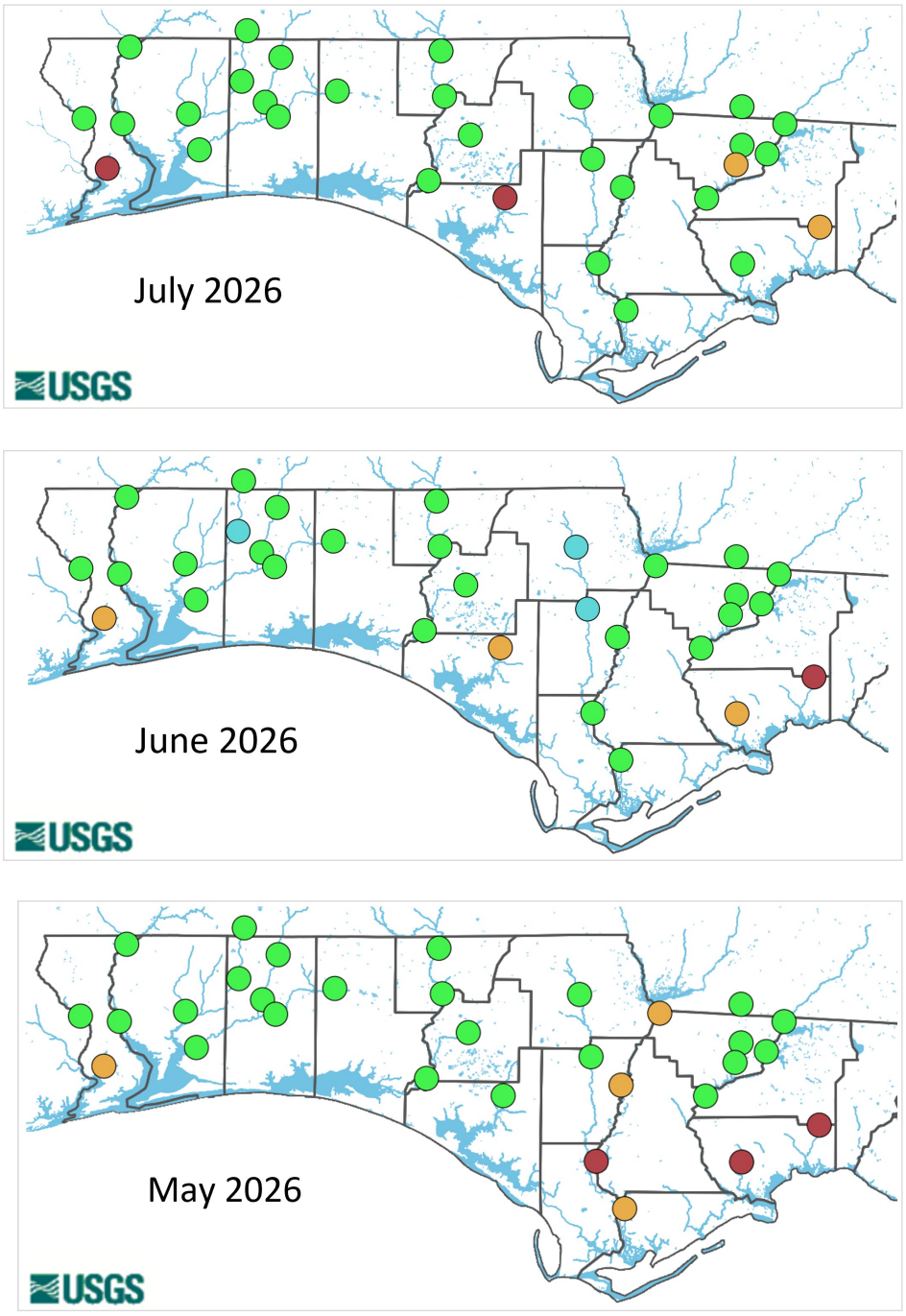
Source: https://droughtmonitor.unl.edu/CurrentMap/StateDroughtMonitor.aspx?FL

Surface Water

Streamflows. During July 2026, 23 of 27 streamflow stations recorded flows within normal ranges, two stations recorded below-normal flows, and two stations recorded much-below-normal flows on average for the month (**Figures 12 – 18**). The continued improvement in streamflows in and around the District was due to the above-normal rainfall during May and near-normal rainfall in June and July 2026. However, flows recorded at stations on the St. Marks River near Newport (**Figure 13**), Econfina Creek near Bennett, and Elevenmile Creek near west Pensacola continued to be lower than normal likely due to less rainfall received in those basins and watersheds (**Figures 2 & 3**). Another gauge at the Little River near Midway station was also flowing below normal but has not been a continuous occurrence like at the other three stations that are below- or much-below-normal. Stations along the Apalachicola River were not included in the analysis because its flows are more indicative of hydrologic conditions in Georgia and Alabama due to it being dam-controlled at its headwaters.

All streamflow stations with depicted time-series plots, recorded generally stable or decreasing flows (**Figures 13 – 18**). During mid to late July 2026, most stations recorded an increase or stabilization in flow due to the rainfall associated with Tropical Storm Bertha (and its precursor forms).

Figure 12: Northwest Florida May to July 2026 monthly streamflow percentiles



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

Figure 13: Daily streamflows and percentile ranges for USGS station 02326900 St. Marks River Near Newport, Florida

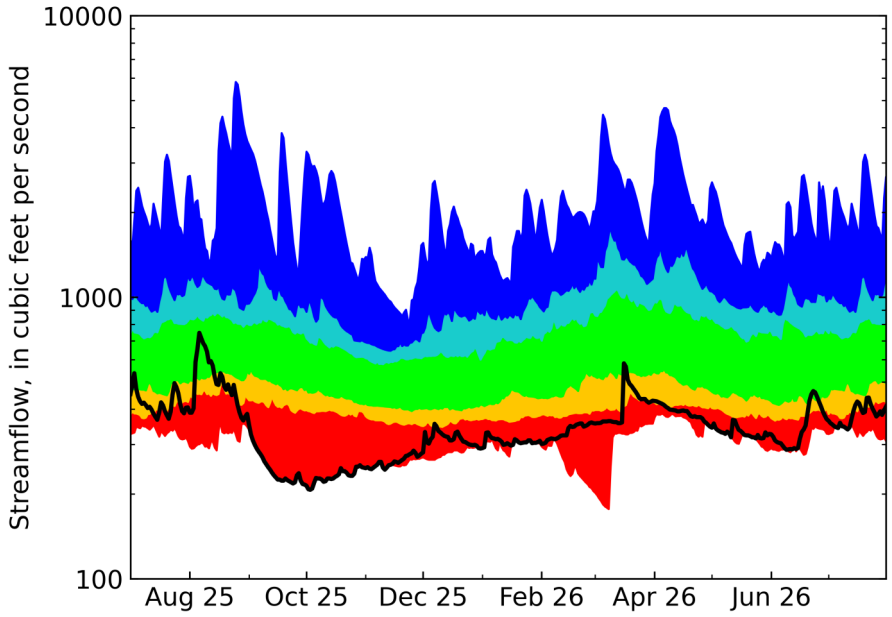


Figure 14: Daily streamflows and percentile ranges for USGS Station 02329000 Ochlockonee River Near Havana, Florida

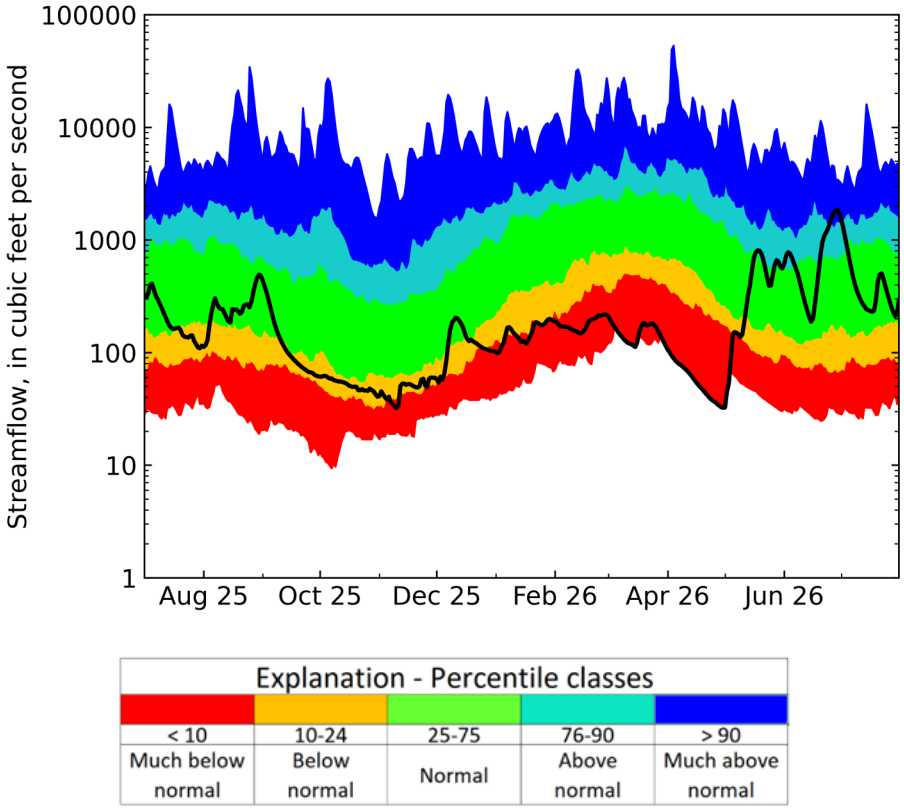


Figure 15: Daily streamflows and percentile ranges for USGS Station 02358700 Apalachicola River Near Blountstown, Florida

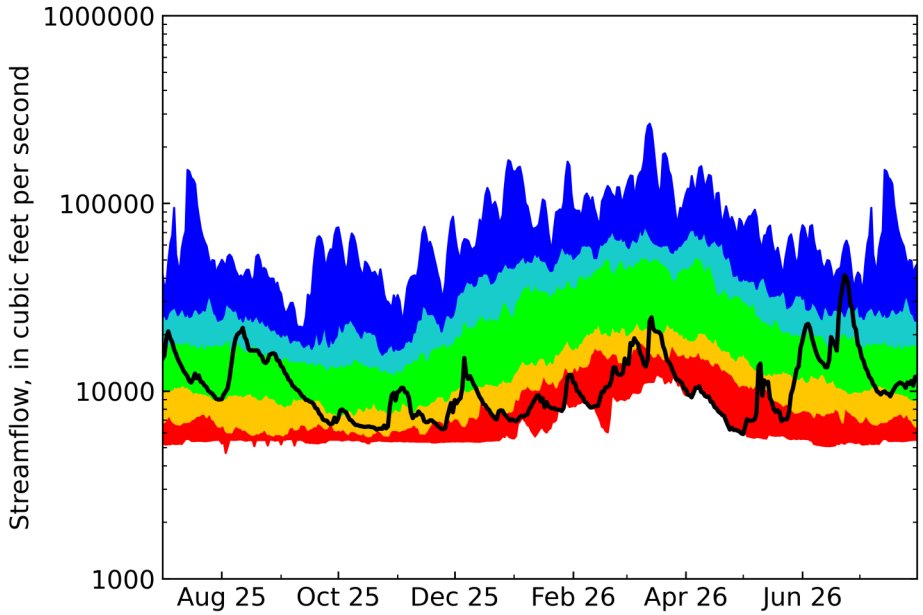


Figure 16: Daily streamflows and percentile ranges for USGS Station 02366500 Choctawhatchee River Near Bruce, Florida

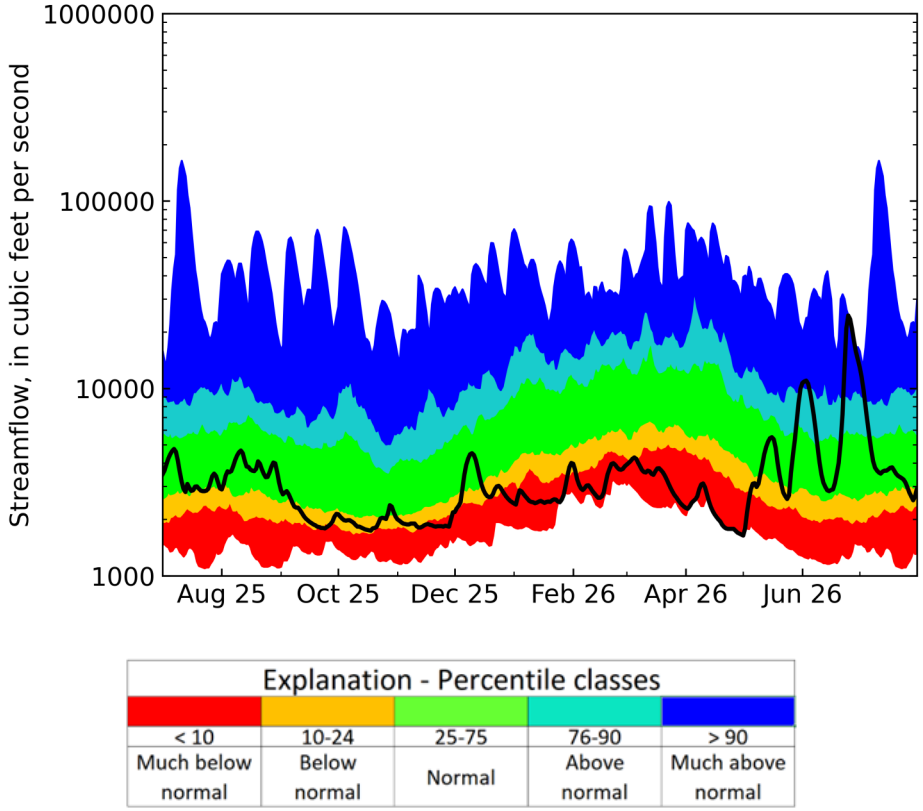


Figure 17: Daily streamflows and percentile ranges for USGS Station 02370000 Blackwater River Near Baker, Florida

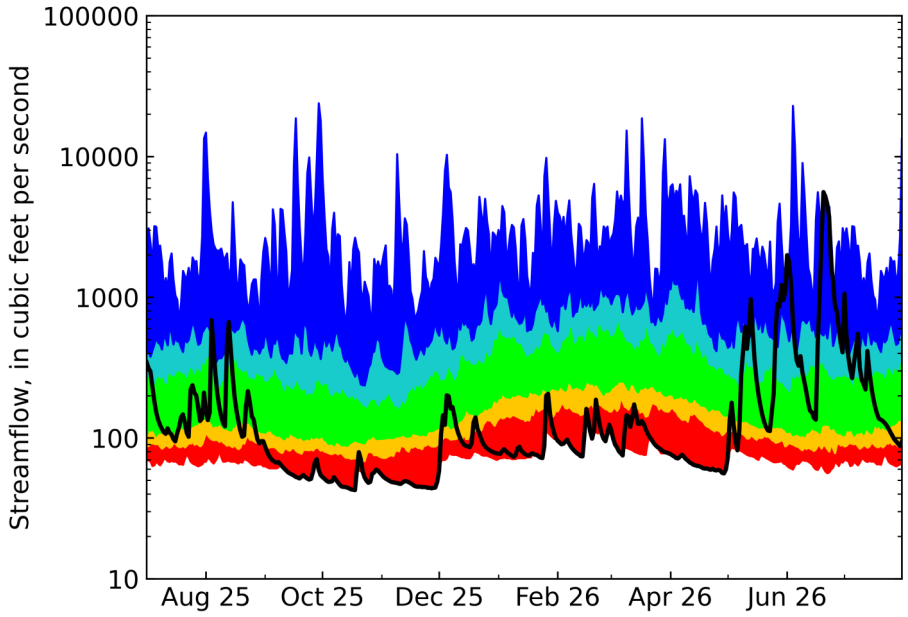
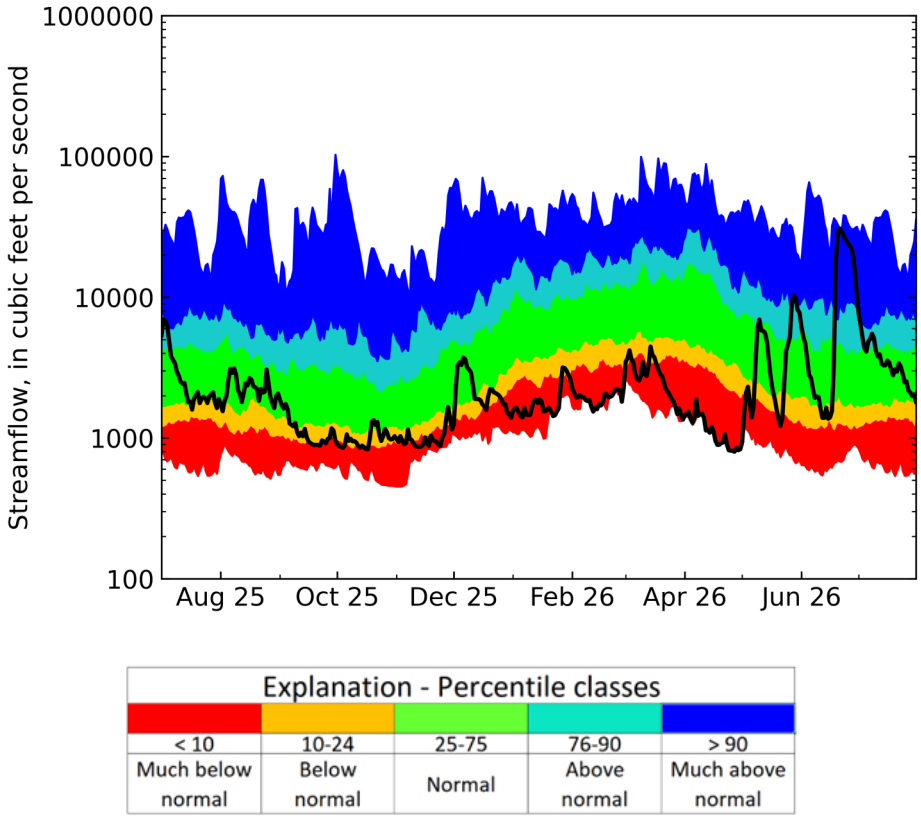


Figure 18: Daily streamflows and percentile ranges for USGS Station 02375500 Escambia River Near Century, Florida



Lake Levels. Water levels at Lake Jackson in Leon County remained generally stable around 77.57 feet, NAVD 1988, during the month of July 2026. Lake Jackson ended the month with a stage level of 77.53 feet, NAVD 1988 (**Figure 19**). The long-term (January 29, 2003, to July 31, 2026) average stage level for Lake Jackson is 80.79 feet, NAVD 1988, and the full pool level is 85.74 feet, NAVD 1988. Late in November 2025, much of Lake Jackson drained into Porter Sink for the first time since 2021. Porter Sink stops draining and will be covered in water again when there is enough rainfall to fill the aquifer below the lake.

At Piney Lake in southern Washington County, water levels have continued to remain below the elevation of the water level sensor and measuring points for most of 2026 including July 2026. The water level sensor is out of the water when the lake drops below 46.88 feet, NAVD 1988 (**Figure 20**). 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.

As of mid-March 2026, in the Econfina Creek Water Management Area in Bay and Washington counties, several recreational lakes and nearly all the ponds had begun to go dry. Porter Lake and the Whitewater lakes had very low levels with portions of the lakes going dry. Ponds like Gap Pond, Hammock Pond, Gully Pond, and Hamlin Pond had all gone dry or were nearly dry. Some of the deeper ponds such as Lake Merial, White Western, and Crystal Lake that have direct flow from the Floridan aquifer had low levels but were not completely dry. As of the end of July 2026, many of the larger lakes and ponds in the upper Econfina Water Management Area have come up one to two feet in stage. The smaller ephemeral ponds closer to State Road 20 remained low due to less rainfall received in those basins.

Figure 19: Daily water levels at Lake Jackson at Miller Landing, Leon County

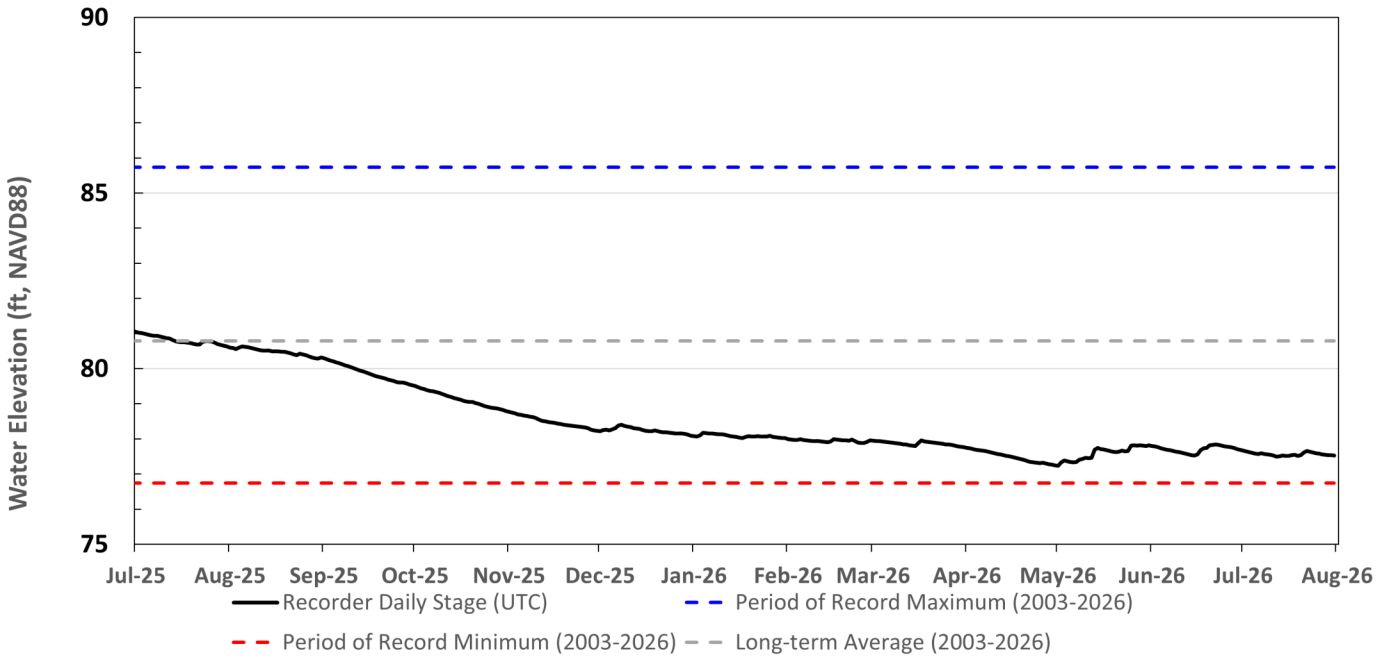
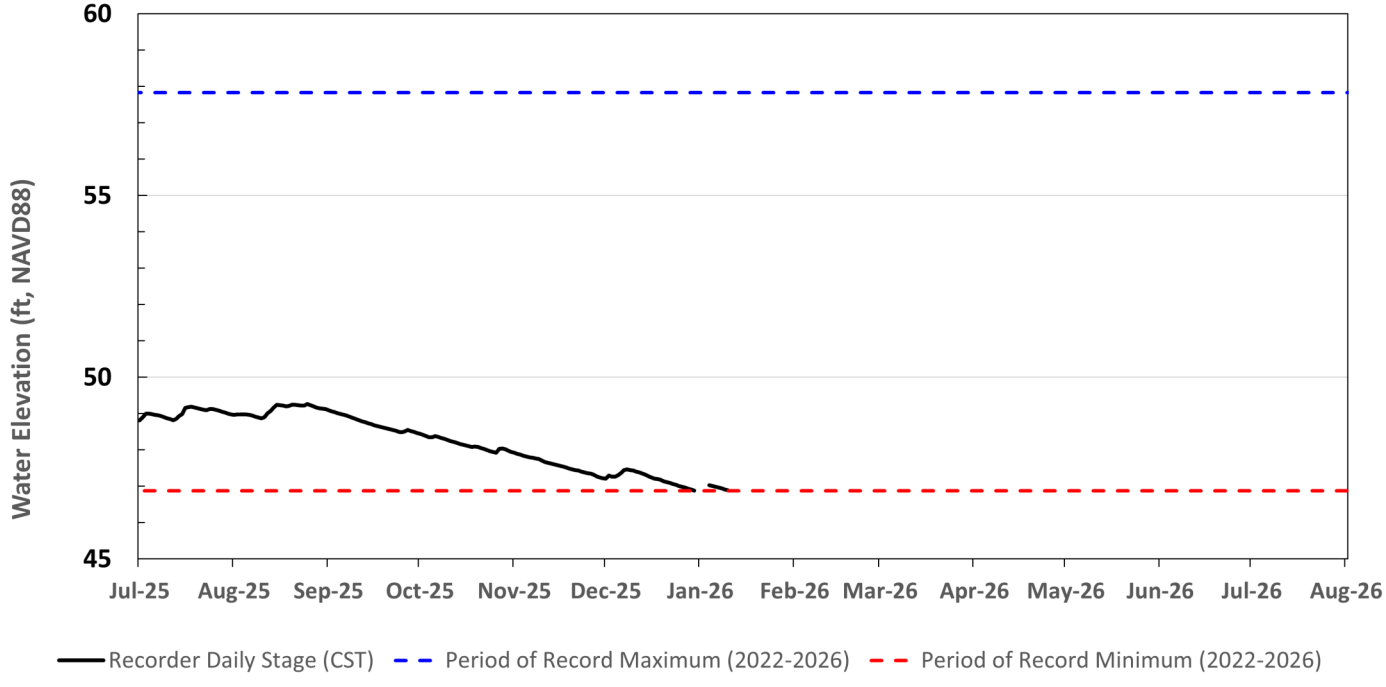


Figure 20: Daily water levels at Piney Lake, Washington County



Spring Flows

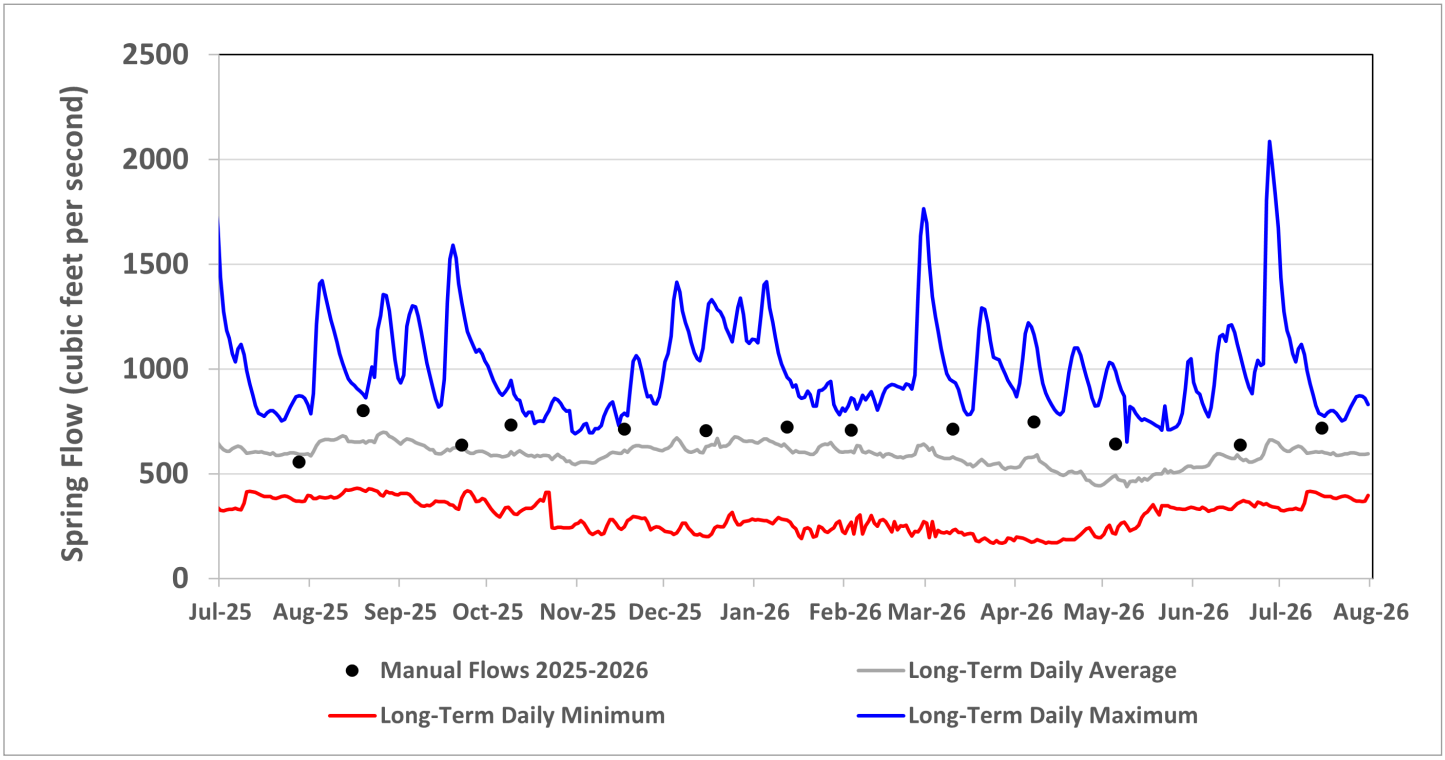
Wakulla and Sally Ward Spring System. Flow from Wakulla Spring increased 80 cubic feet per second (cfs) between the measurements taken in June and July 2026. The most recent flow measurement for Wakulla Spring was 717 cfs, on July 15, 2026 (Figure 21). This measurement was 114 cfs higher than the long-term (October 23, 2004, to July 15, 2026) average flow for the month of July of 603 cfs. All flow measurements taken since August 2025 have been above the long-term daily average flow.

The most recent flow measurement for Sally Ward was 23.8 cfs on July 15, 2026. This measurement was 2.2 cfs higher than the long-term (November 1, 2004, to July 15, 2026) average flow for the month of July of 21.6 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 July 15, 2026) average flows for the 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 21: Wakulla Spring flows

Data from October 1, 2023, through July 15, 2026 , represent discrete measurements. Daily statistics are based on the October 23, 2004, through July 15, 2026 , period of record.

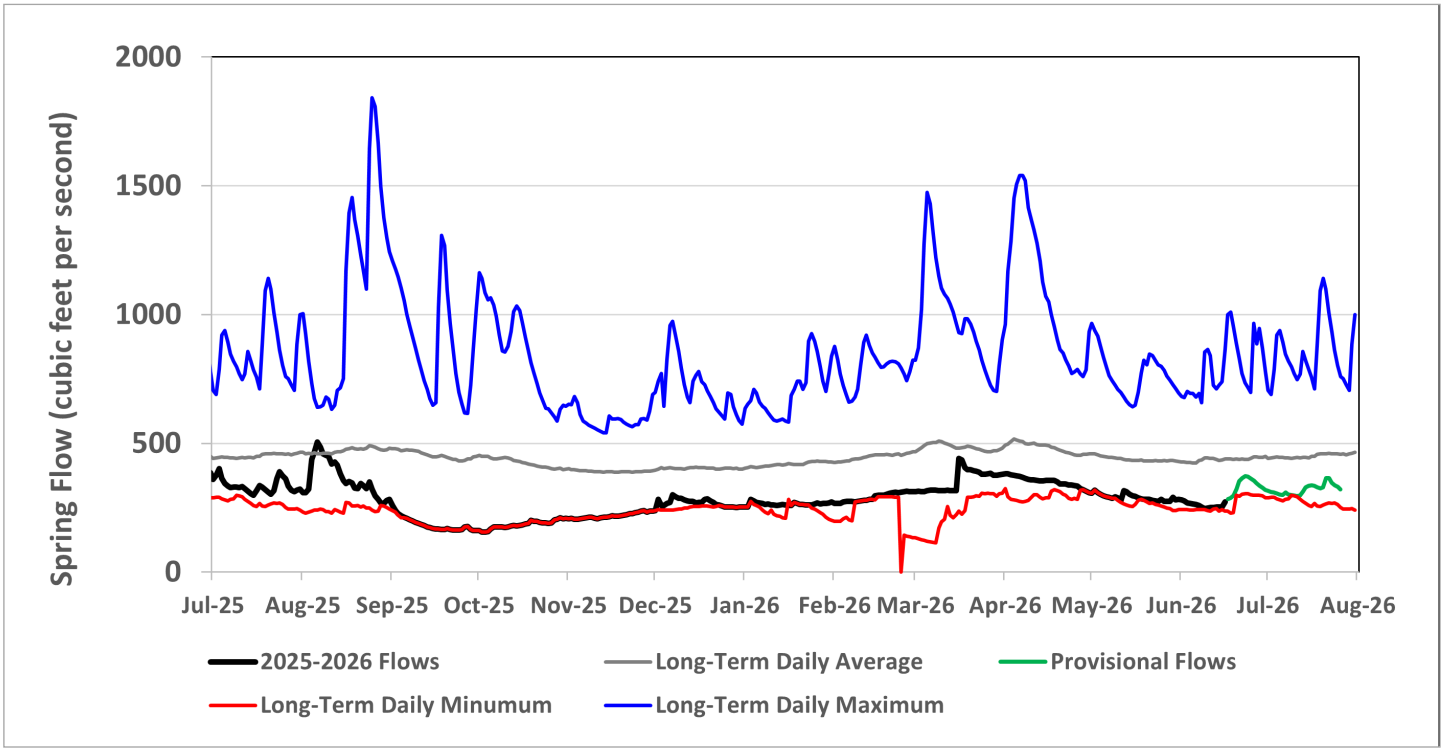


St. Marks River Rise. The mean daily spring flow for July 2026 at the St. Marks River Rise was 322 cfs, based on the available USGS provisional data which extends through July 31, 2026 (**Figure 22**). This was below the long-term (October 1, 1956, through July 31, 2026) average flow for the month of July of 451 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 February 24, 2026) is 418 cfs. If the provisional data from February 24, 2026, through July 31, 2026, are included, the 30-year moving average spring flow for the St. Marks River Rise is 417 cfs. The established minimum flow for the St. Marks River Rise is 419 cfs. Whether using the most recent approved USGS data or the provisional data, the 30-year moving average flow was 1 cfs and 2 cfs below the established minimum flow, respectively.

Available groundwater pumping data in Florida suggests that pumping rates have been relatively stable for the last five years and therefore do not appear to indicate that St. Marks River Rise low flows are due to pumping. 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 becomes available

Figure 22: Spring flows for the St. Marks River Rise

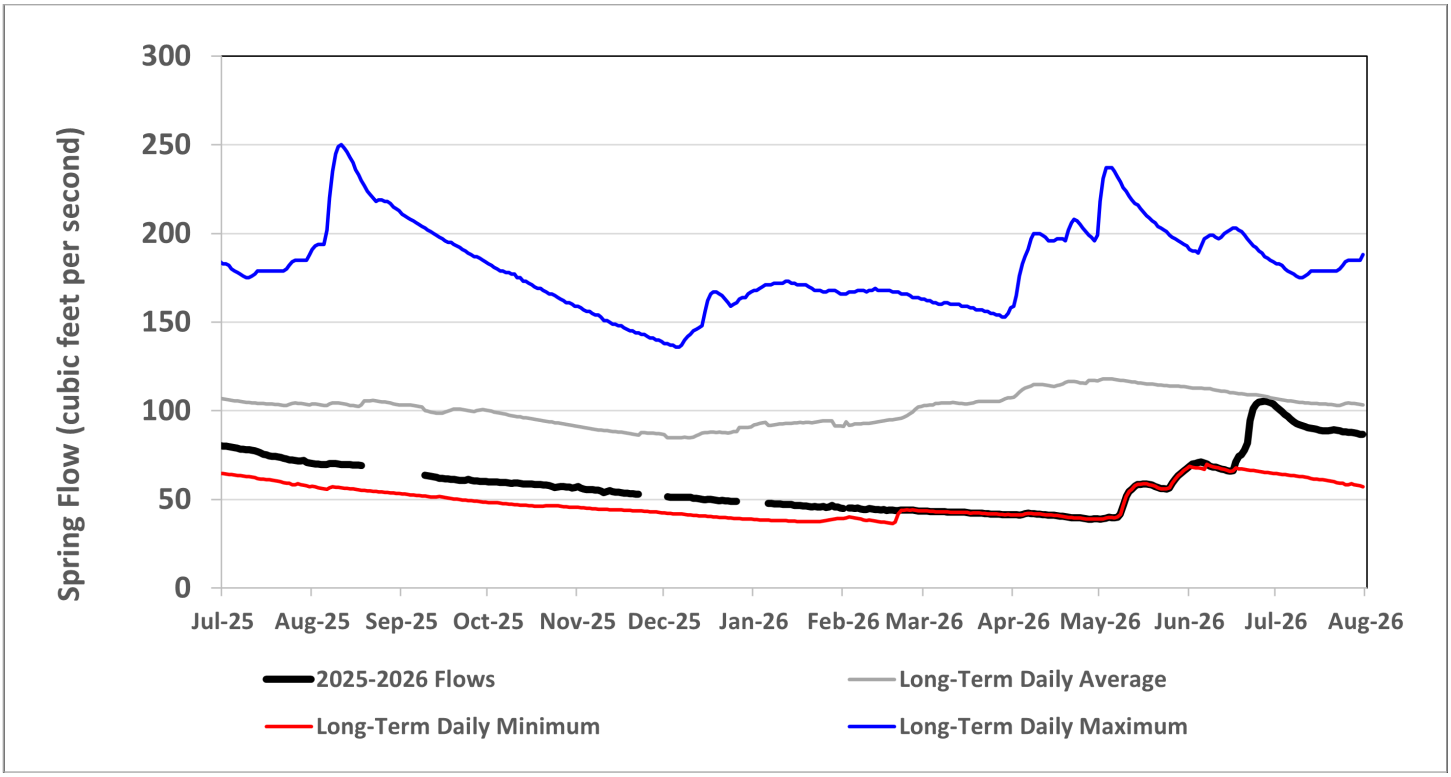


Jackson Blue Spring. Daily flows at Jackson Blue Spring during the month of July 2026 averaged 91.2 cfs. This was below the long-term average flow of 104.4 cfs for the month of July, based on the January 1, 2005, through July 31, 2026, period of record. Flows from Jackson Blue Spring had been below the long-term daily average flow since January 2025 and had been period-of-record low for the time of year since late February 2026. Since late June 2026, flows have increased to be near the long-term daily average flow (**Figure 23**).

A minimum flow of 92.2 cfs was formally adopted on April 28, 2026, for Jackson Blue Spring based on the 30-year moving median discharge. Since there has not yet been 30 years of data collection at Jackson Blue, the minimum flow is compared to the median discharge between January 1, 2005, and July 31, 2026. The long-term (January 1, 2005, through July 31, 2026) median flows from Jackson Blue Spring are 96.3 cfs, which exceeds the established minimum flow of 92.2 cfs by 4.1 cfs.

Figure 23: Spring flows for Jackson Blue Spring

Data represents daily averages. Long-term flows represent the daily average between January 1, 2005, and July 31, 2026.

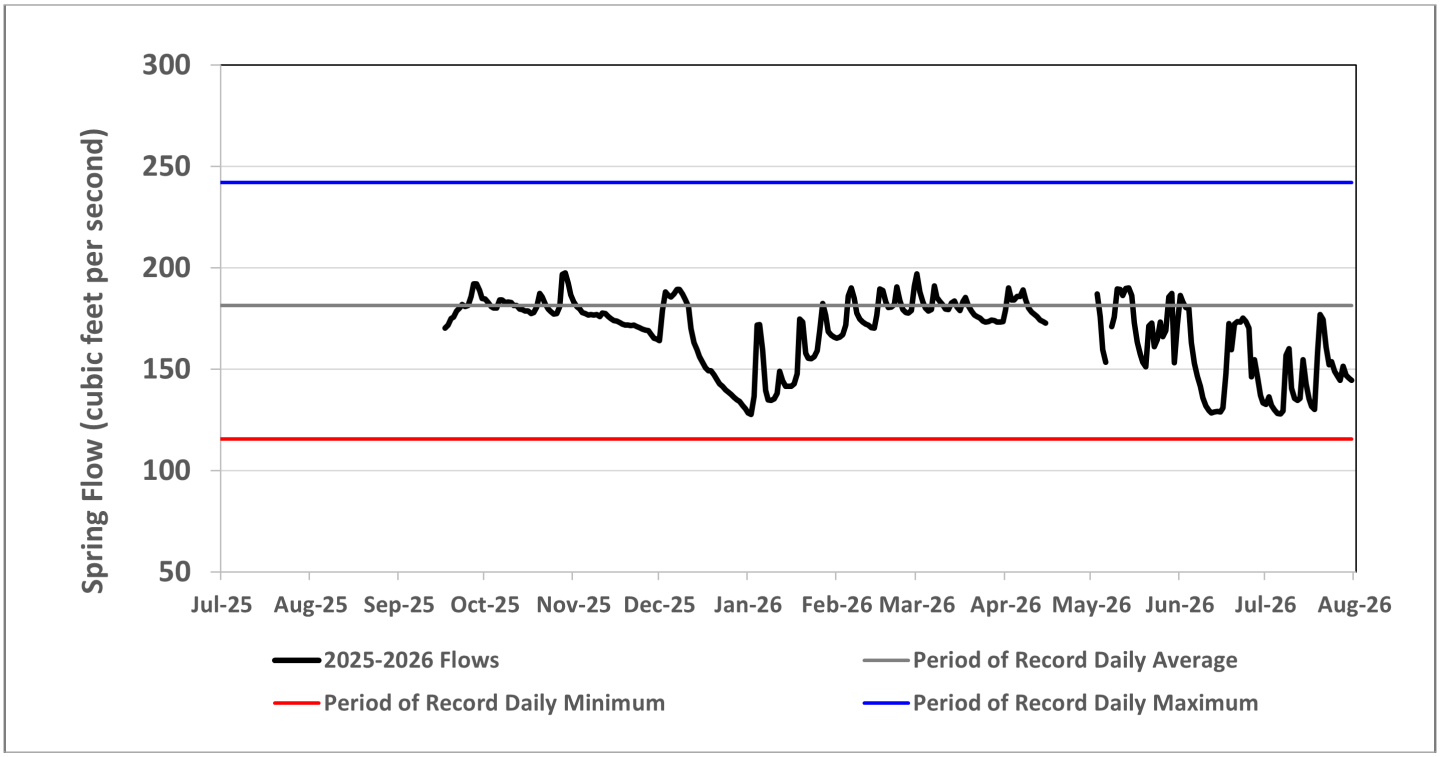


Gainer Spring Group. During July 2026, the average flow from the Gainer Spring Group was 145 cfs (**Figure 24**). The record period (October 28, 2019, through July 31, 2026) average monthly spring flow for the month of July is 180 cfs. Flow from July 2026 was the lowest average July flow on record. However, 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 level 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 24: Gainer Spring Group flows

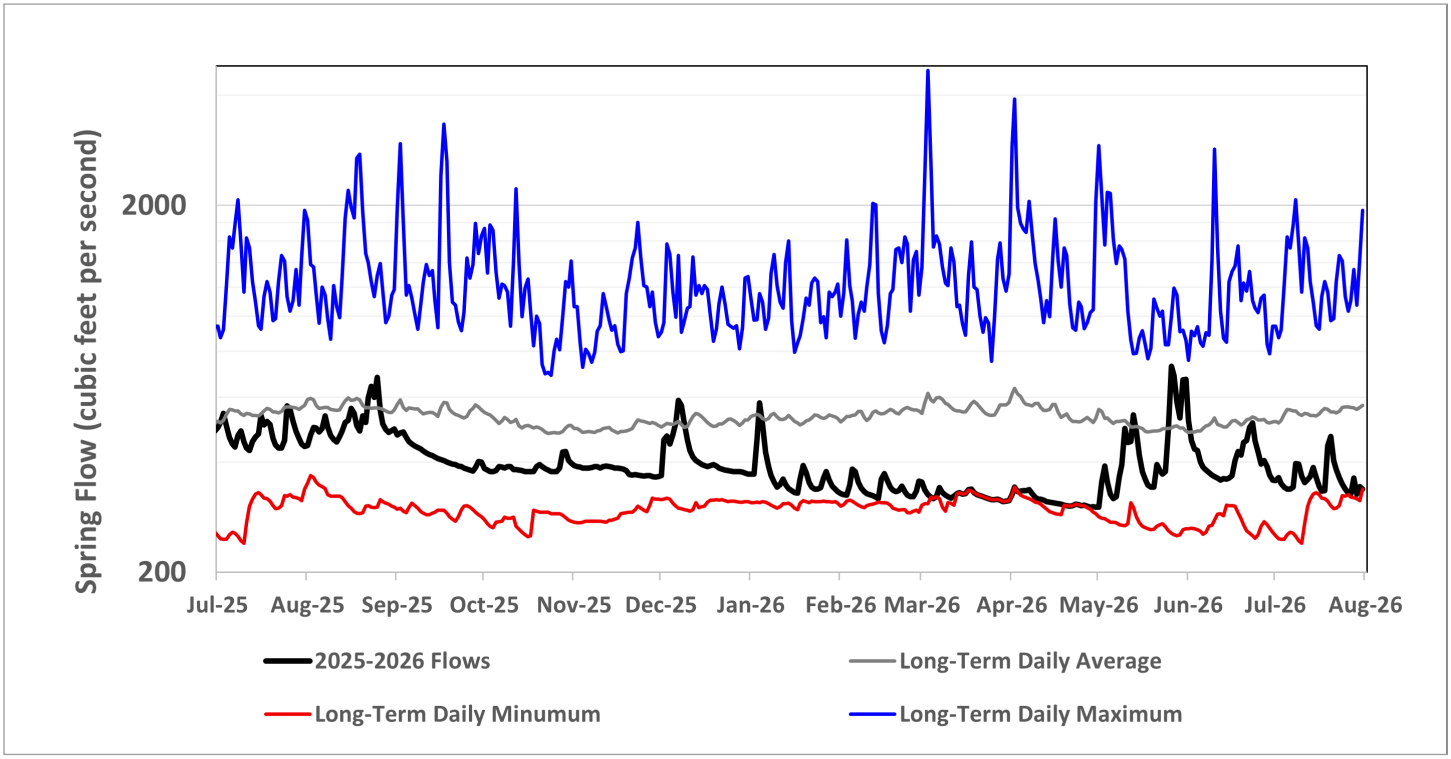
Data represents daily averages. Streamflow statistics are not shown due to the relatively short period of daily data.



Middle Econfina Creek. The mean daily flow for July 2026 at Middle Econfina Creek was 361 cfs, based on the available USGS provisional data which extends through July 31, 2026 (Figure 25). This was below the long-term (October 1, 1935, through July 31, 2026) average flow for the month of July of 547 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 July 31, 2026, is used, the 30-year moving average flow for Middle Econfina Creek is 514 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 28 cfs, respectively.

Figure 25: Spring flows for Middle Econfina Creek (Econfina Creek @ Bennett)



Aquifer Levels

In the middle of July 2026, of a total of fifteen Floridan aquifer monitor wells, five wells were classified as having groundwater levels within normal ranges, seven were classified as below-normal, and three were classified as much-below-normal (**Figures 26 - 32**). Four Floridan groundwater sites had a positive change in percentile class between mid-June and mid-July 2026, including Property Tower monitor well (NWFID 5271) in western Holmes County, Compass Lake Tower (NWFID 4183) and Pittman VISA (NWFID 5266) monitor wells in Jackson County, and USGS-Benchmark monitor well (NWFID 392) in west-central Wakulla County. The largest increase of around two feet was recorded at the USGS-Benchmark Floridan monitor well (NWFID 392). This increase in groundwater level brought the percentile classification from below-normal into normal levels by the second half of the month (**Figure 28**). Water levels at all other Floridan monitor wells with sufficient long-term data to calculate percentiles did not change enough to affect their percentile classification.

Of four sand-and-gravel aquifer monitor wells with sufficient long-term data to calculate percentiles, two had groundwater levels within normal ranges and two had below-normal water levels (**Figure 26**). Water levels generally increased between mid-June and mid-July 2026 in the sand-and-gravel aquifer, but not enough to affect their percentile classification.

Figure 26: Monitor wells and aquifer level percentiles for mid-July 2026
Percentile class rankings are based on each well's period of record. All wells have a minimum of 20 years of data.

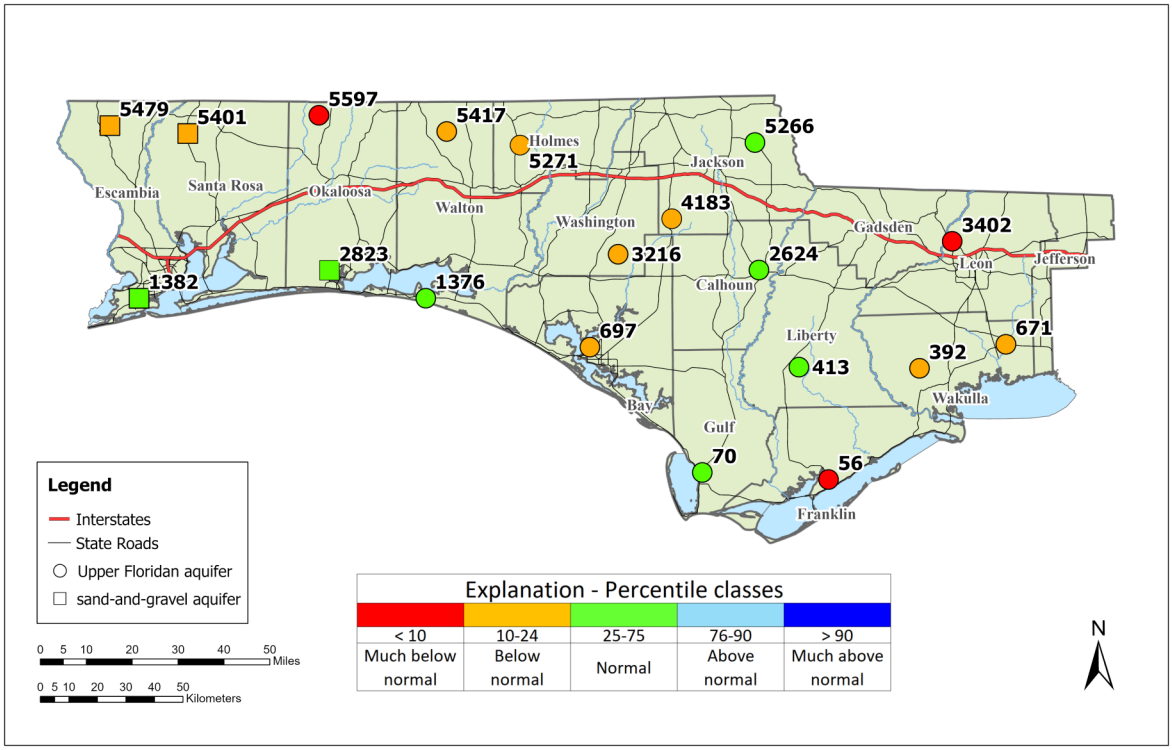


Figure 27: Daily upper Floridan aquifer levels at USGS-Lake Jackson well (NWFID 3402), Leon County

Land surface elevation is 121.40 ft, NAVD 88

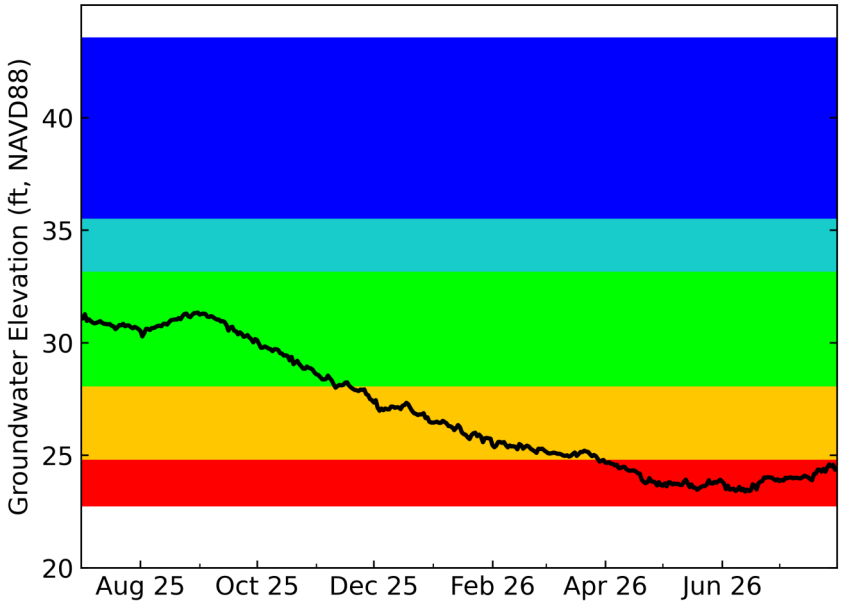
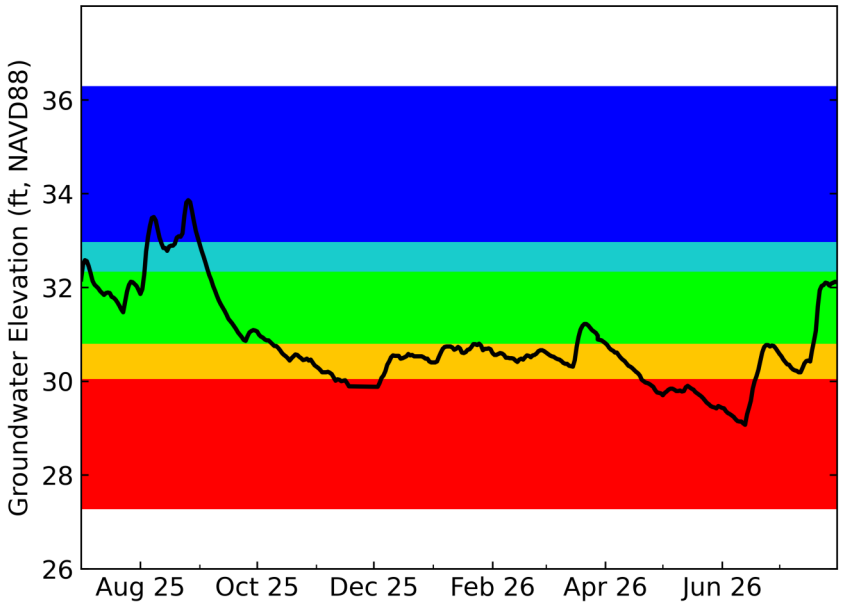


Figure 28: Daily upper Floridan aquifer levels at USGS Benchmark well (NWFID 392), Wakulla County

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 29: Daily upper Floridan aquifer levels at NWFWMD Pittman Visa well (NWFID 5266), Jackson County

Land surface elevation is 127.31 ft, NAVD 88

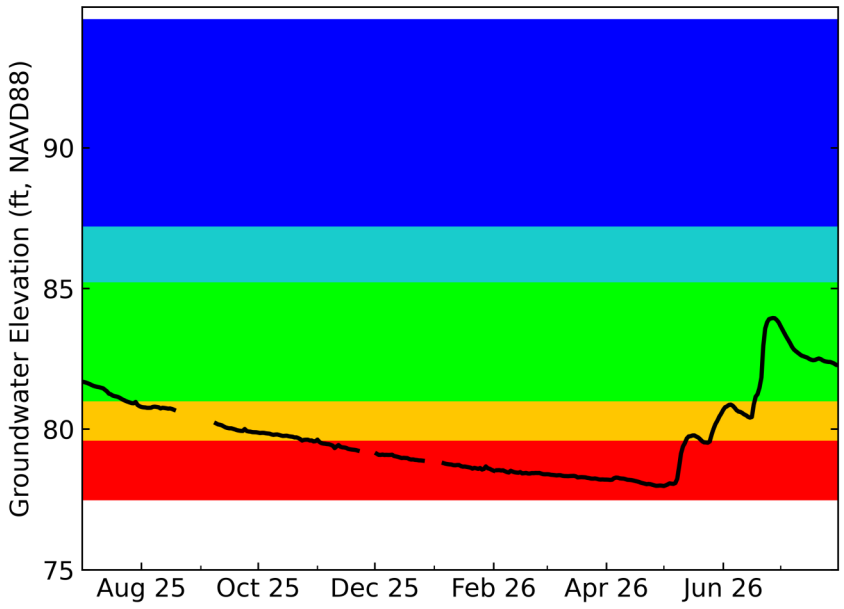


Figure 30: Daily upper Floridan aquifer levels at USGS-422A Near Greenhead well (NWFID 3216), Washington County

Land surface elevation is 66.75 ft, NAVD 88

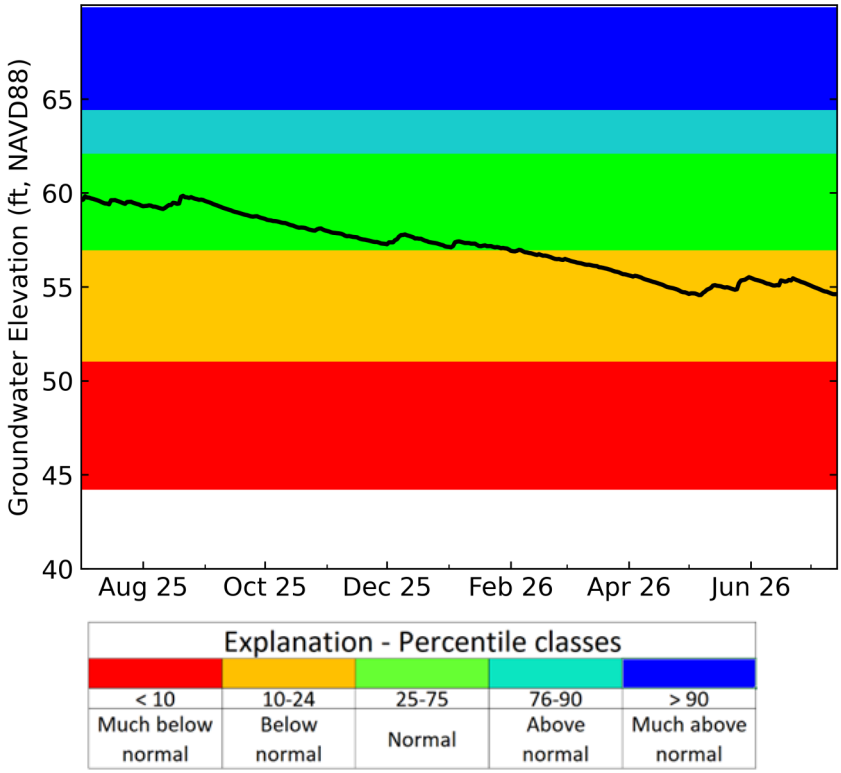


Figure 31: Daily upper Floridan aquifer levels at Fannin Airport well (NWFID 697), Washington County

Land surface elevation is 4.05 ft, NAVD 88

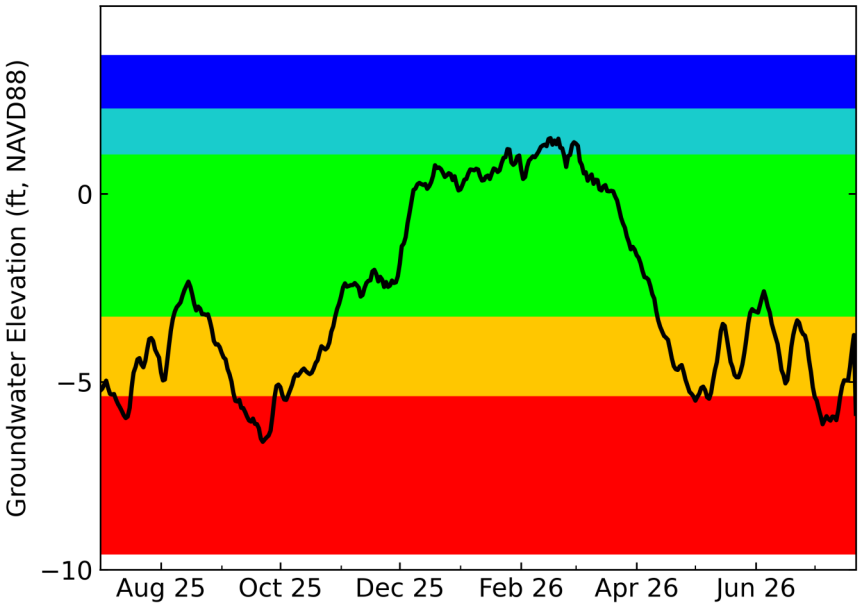
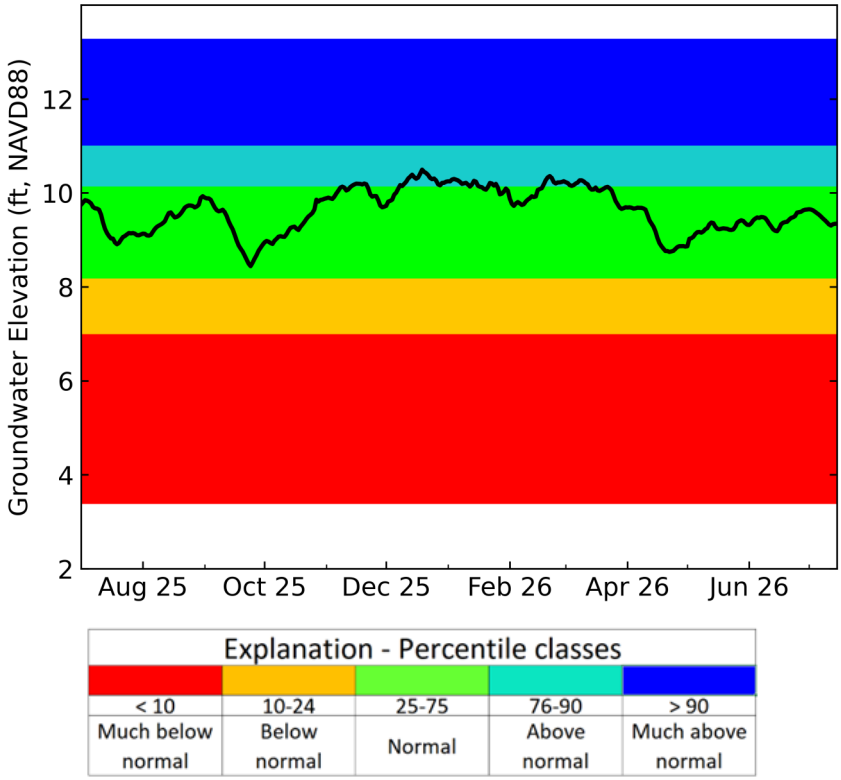


Figure 32: Daily sand-and-gravel aquifer levels at NWFWMD Weller Ave Deep well (NWFID 1382), Escambia County

Land surface elevation is 25.09 ft, NAVD 88



Appendix

Table A1: Monthly normal (1991-2020) rainfall values averaged by county (inches)

County	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Yearly Total
Bay	4.86	4.83	5.20	4.23	3.53	5.76	6.95	7.31	5.80	3.59	3.79	4.64	60.49
Calhoun	4.93	4.74	5.23	4.38	3.80	6.35	7.15	6.67	5.47	3.41	3.59	4.51	60.23
Escambia	5.69	4.59	5.22	5.24	4.49	6.87	7.65	6.91	6.11	4.19	4.60	5.51	67.05
Franklin	4.58	4.12	4.86	3.46	3.04	6.76	7.28	8.17	6.04	3.28	3.30	3.78	58.66
Gadsden	4.82	4.34	5.05	4.11	3.44	6.03	6.52	6.20	4.91	3.17	3.44	4.27	56.31
Gulf	4.78	4.55	5.20	4.09	3.33	6.51	7.48	7.95	6.12	3.46	3.41	4.06	60.93
Holmes	5.15	5.07	5.39	4.79	3.86	5.98	6.71	5.86	5.07	3.43	4.29	5.19	60.79
Jackson	4.96	4.82	5.30	4.45	3.50	5.53	6.29	5.70	4.72	3.29	3.85	4.80	57.20
Jefferson	4.72	3.99	4.84	3.74	3.24	6.75	6.88	6.83	5.23	3.16	3.03	3.87	56.28
Leon	4.74	4.12	4.97	3.85	3.34	6.92	6.92	7.07	5.20	3.20	3.27	4.15	57.75
Liberty	4.92	4.45	5.14	4.15	3.61	6.74	7.24	6.92	5.45	3.30	3.45	4.28	59.66
Okaloosa	5.41	4.84	5.34	5.51	4.11	6.56	7.57	7.04	5.92	4.18	4.49	5.28	66.24
Santa Rosa	5.71	4.66	5.34	5.33	4.30	7.02	7.47	6.78	6.02	4.25	4.57	5.38	66.84
Wakulla	4.64	4.02	4.89	3.64	3.46	7.27	7.25	7.36	5.46	3.07	3.21	3.90	58.19
Walton	5.15	5.03	5.30	5.03	4.08	6.44	7.32	6.88	5.88	3.79	4.31	5.17	64.38
Washington	5.06	4.96	5.37	4.72	3.90	6.28	7.08	6.45	5.56	3.49	4.05	5.07	61.99

Figure A1: District-wide monthly normal (1991-2020) rainfall values (inches)