Northwest Florida Water Management District

Hydrologic Conditions Report

October 2026

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Summary

Hydrologic conditions during October 2026 were characterized by much-above-normal precipitation and above-normal temperatures (averaging around 70.3 degrees Fahrenheit). The increased rainfall, due in part to Hurricane Isaias, at the beginning of October 2026 contributed to most streamflow stations recording normal flows with some recording in above-normal ranges for the month. Improvements to stage at surface waterbodies such as lakes and ponds were generally minimal and varied by geographical location and rainfall amount. Similarly, groundwater level changes were spatially variable with rainfall amounts and degree of aquifer confinement though several monitor wells did have an increase in level enough to change percentile classes compared to September 2026. The much-above-normal rainfall during the beginning of October 2026 also removed the dry conditions that had begun to reappear following below-normal rainfall in September 2026. Only a small sliver (0.5% of the District's land area) of abnormally dry (D0) conditions remain in the District.

Rainfall

In October 2026, an average of 9.76 inches of precipitation was recorded across the District. This amount was 6.14 inches above the District normal precipitation for the month of October and was considered 270% of normal (much-above-normal). The District normal for the month of October is 3.62 inches (**Table 1; Figures 1 – 10**). Normal precipitation is defined as average monthly precipitation for the 30-year reference period (1991-2020).

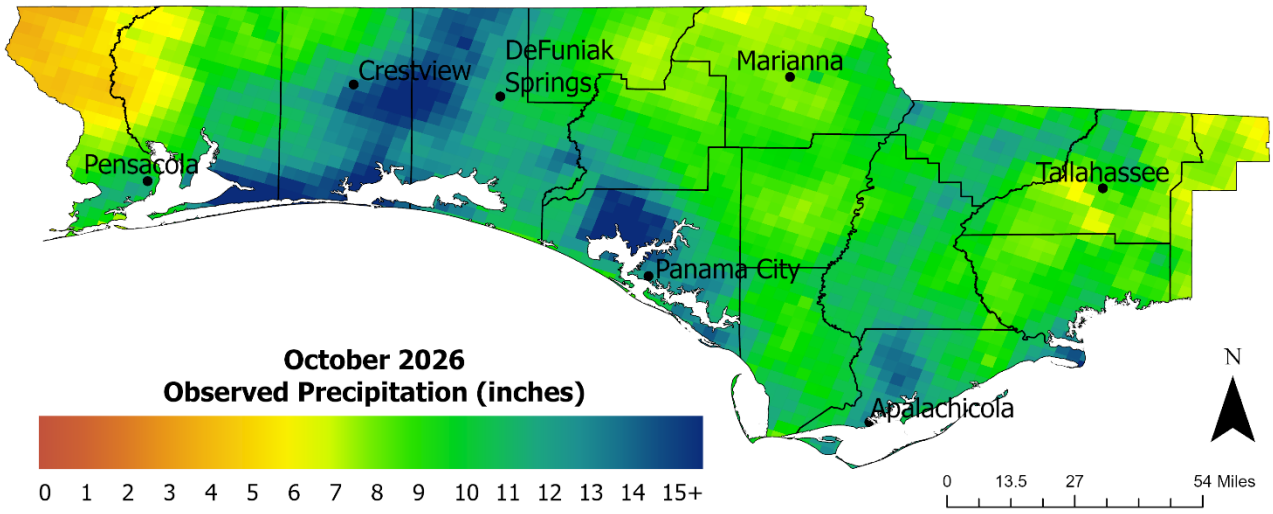
During October 2026, rainfall was generally 4 to 6 inches above normal except for a few localized areas. Coastal Santa Rosa County, parts of Okaloosa County, and the northwestern portion of Walton county received at least 14 inches of rain with a large percentage of that rainfall coming from Hurricane Isaias (**Figure 2**). There was also a region north of St. Andrews Bay that also received a similar amount of rain, but much of this rain was received from the significant rain events that occurred prior to Hurricane Isaias. Though most of the District received much-above-normal rainfall, northern Escambia County and northwestern Santa Rosa County received only near-normal rainfall (**Figure 3**). This area missed out on much of the rainfall from Hurricane Isaias due to being located on the left side of the forward motion of Hurricane Isaias (**Figure 2**).

Nearly all the rainfall from the month of October 2026 fell between October 1 and 11, 2026. Rain events were caused by a slow-moving frontal boundary (October 1-6, 2026) which was quickly followed by the landfall of Hurricane Isaias near Destin on October 10, 2026. All four cities' rain gauges collected significant rainfall from the rain events between October 1-6, 2026, with Tallahassee Regional Airport, Marianna Regional Airport, Niceville, and Pensacola Regional Airport each collecting 3.59, 3.35, 6.76, and 9.28 inches of rain, respectively. Rainfall totals from Hurricane Isaias (October 9-10, 2026) were also significant with Tallahassee Regional Airport, Niceville, and Pensacola Regional Airport collecting 3.12, 9.62, and 2.25 inches, respectively. The rain gauge at Marianna Regional Airport was malfunctioning on October 9 and 10, 2026, so no rainfall amount was recorded during Hurricane Isaias but likely would have measured around 3 inches of rain based on radar data (**Figure 2**). The Niceville rain gauge received so much rain this month that a new maximum rainfall record was set for the month of October with 16.38 inches measured in October 2026. This exceeded the previous record of 14.47 inches (set October 1959) by 1.91 inches.

Between October 12 and 31, 2026, only southern Escambia County had a small rain event, which amounted to less than an inch of rainfall. This rain event occurred October 16, 2026, and Pensacola Regional Airport collected 0.69 inches of rainfall. The rest of the District between October 12 through 31, 2026, had no measurable rainfall.

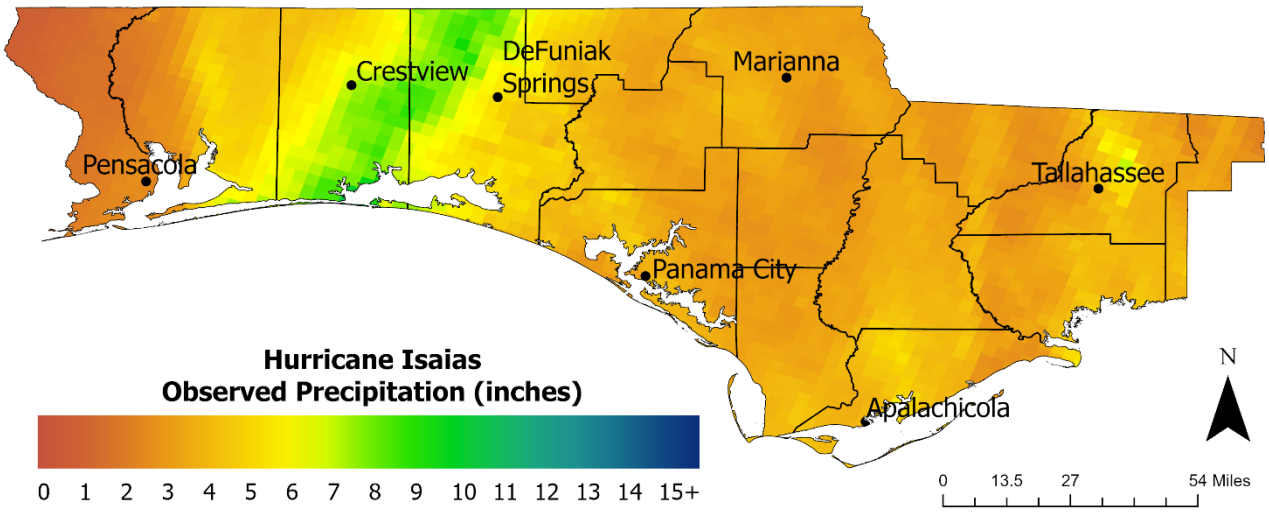
The end of September 2026 marks one year since the ongoing drought began. As of September 30, 2026, the average one- and two-year rainfall deficits were 9.67 and 17.68 inches, respectively. During October 2026, rainfall deficits decreased significantly across the District due to the above-normal rainfall (**Figure 3**). As of October 31, 2026, the average one- and two-year rainfall deficits were 2.97 and 8.41 inches, respectively.

Figure 1: Districtwide October 2026 observed precipitation



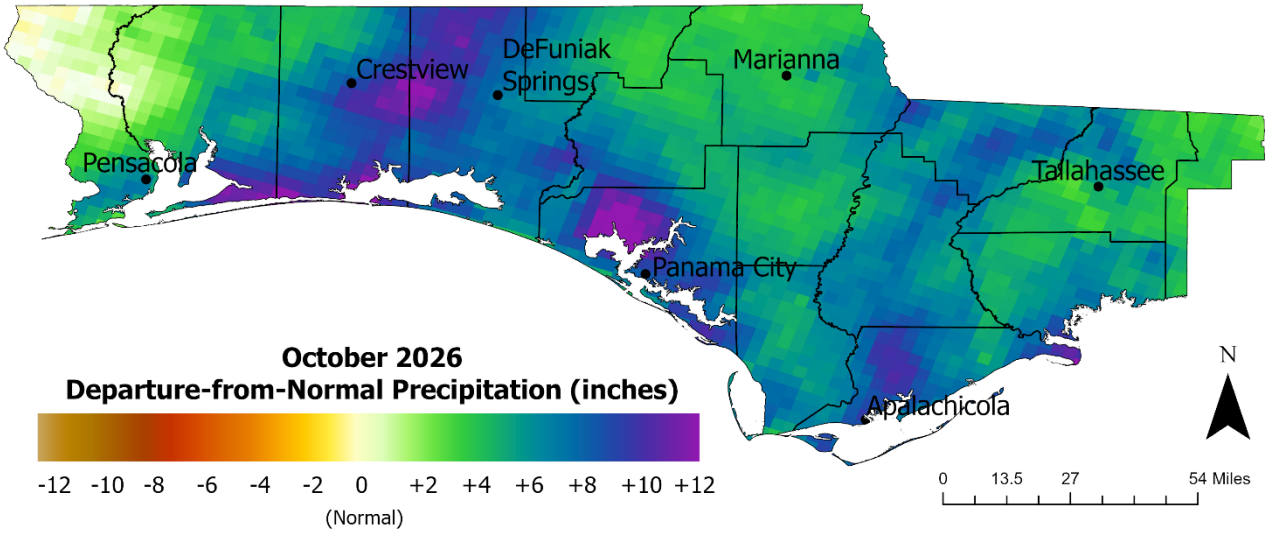
Source: *https://water.noaa.gov/resources/downloads/precip/stageIV/*

Figure 2: Districtwide observed precipitation from Hurricane Isaias



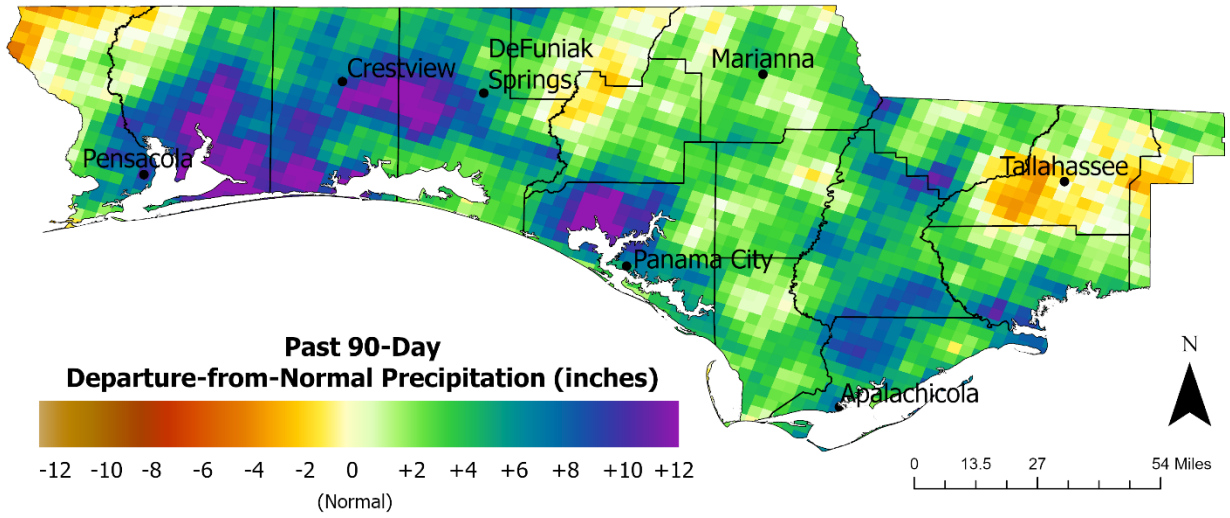
Source: *https://water.noaa.gov/resources/downloads/precip/stageIV/*

***Figure* 3: Districtwide October 2026 departure-from-normal precipitation**



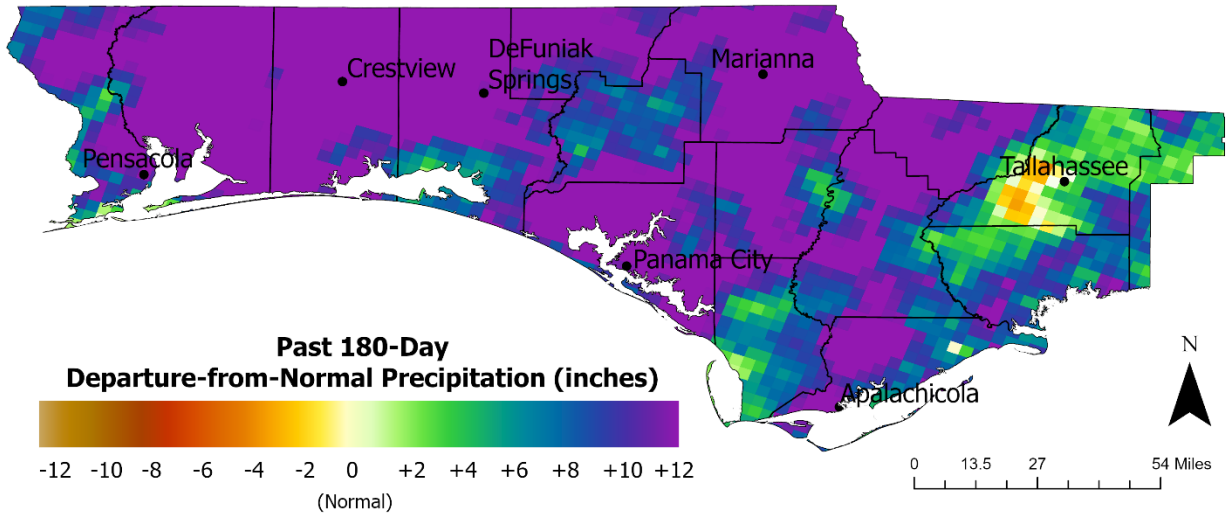
Source: *https://water.noaa.gov/resources/downloads/precip/stageIV/*

Figure *4*: Districtwide departure-from-normal precipitation for the previous 90 days as of October 31, 2026



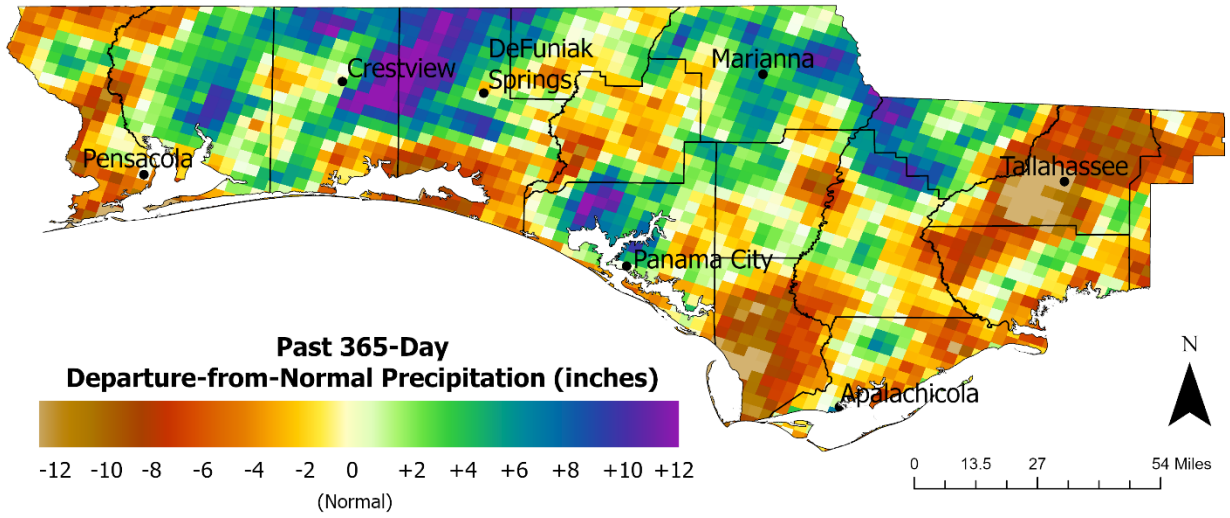
Source: *https://water.noaa.gov/resources/downloads/precip/stageIV/*

Figure 5: Districtwide departure-from-normal precipitation for the previous 180 days as of October 31, 2026



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

***Figure* 6: Districtwide departure-from-normal precipitation for the previous 365 days as of October 31, 2026**



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

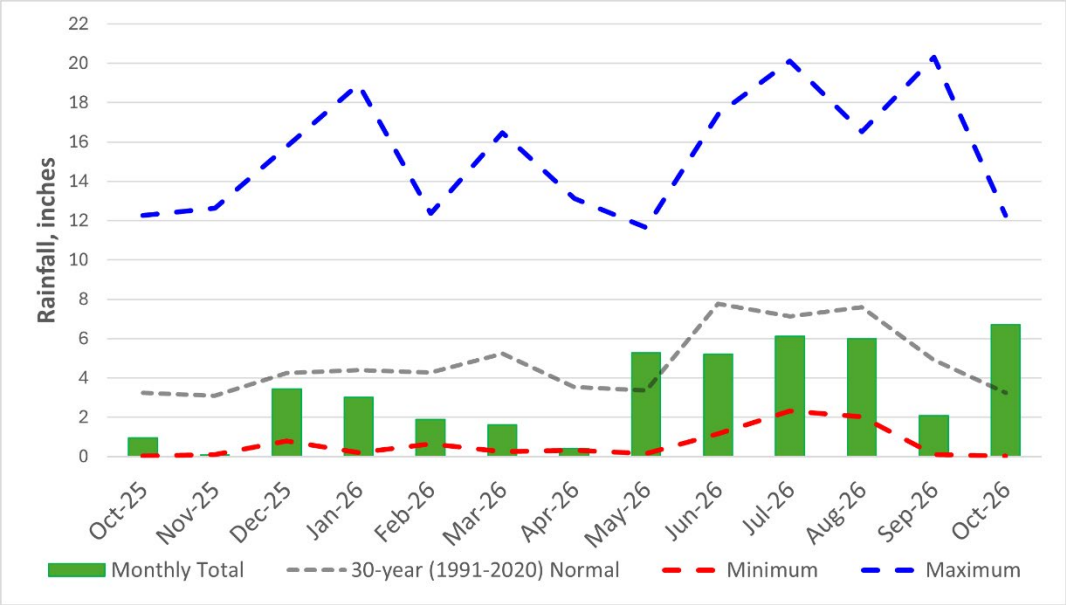
Table 1: *October* 2026 rainfall compared to the 30-year normal monthly rainfall for Tallahassee, Marianna, Niceville, and Pensacola

Station	October Normal Rainfall (1991 to 2020)	October 2026 Observed Rainfall	Percent of Normal
Tallahassee Regional Airport	3.24	6.71	207%
Marianna Regional Airport	3.06	3.35*	109%
Niceville, FL	4.60	16.38	356%
Pensacola Regional Airport	4.70	12.23	260%

A star (*) indicates one or more days of missing rainfall data

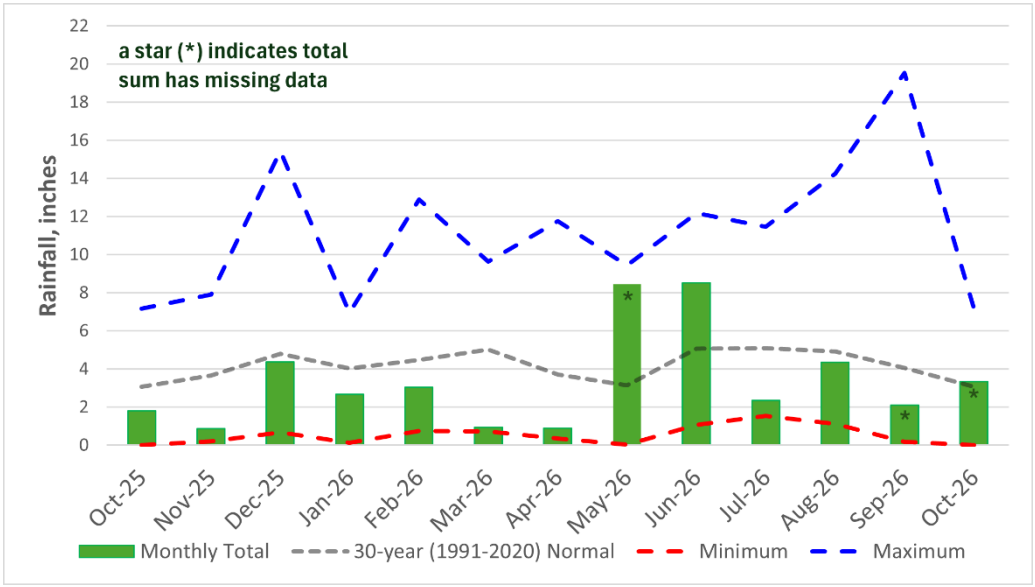
Source: *https://www.weather.gov/wrh/Climate?wfo=tae*
https://www.weather.gov/wrh/Climate?wfo=mob

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



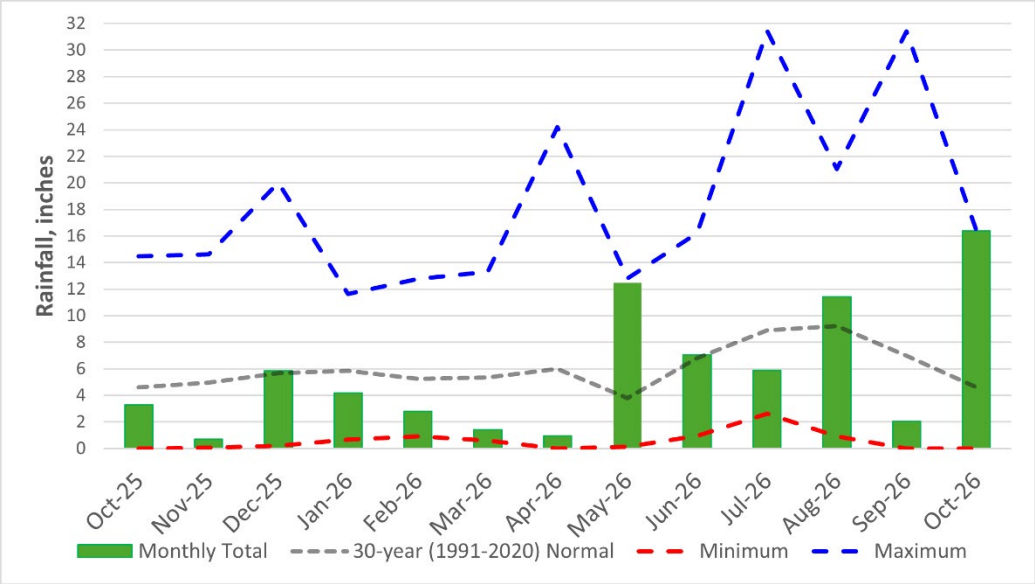
Source: https://www.weather.gov/wrh/Climate?wfo=tae

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



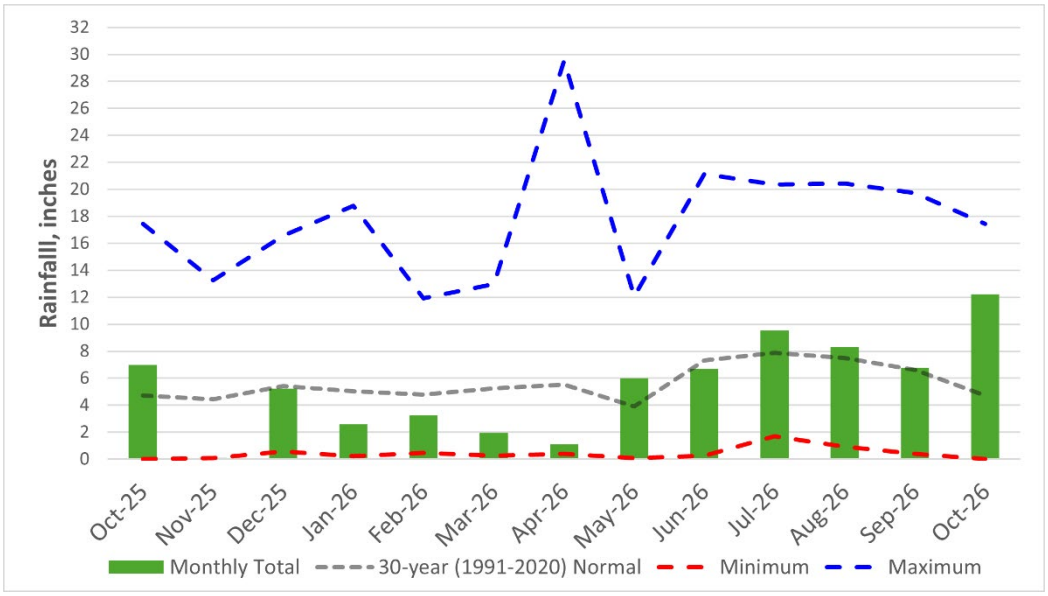
Source: https://www.weather.gov/wrh/Climate?wfo=tae

Figure 9: 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 10: 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

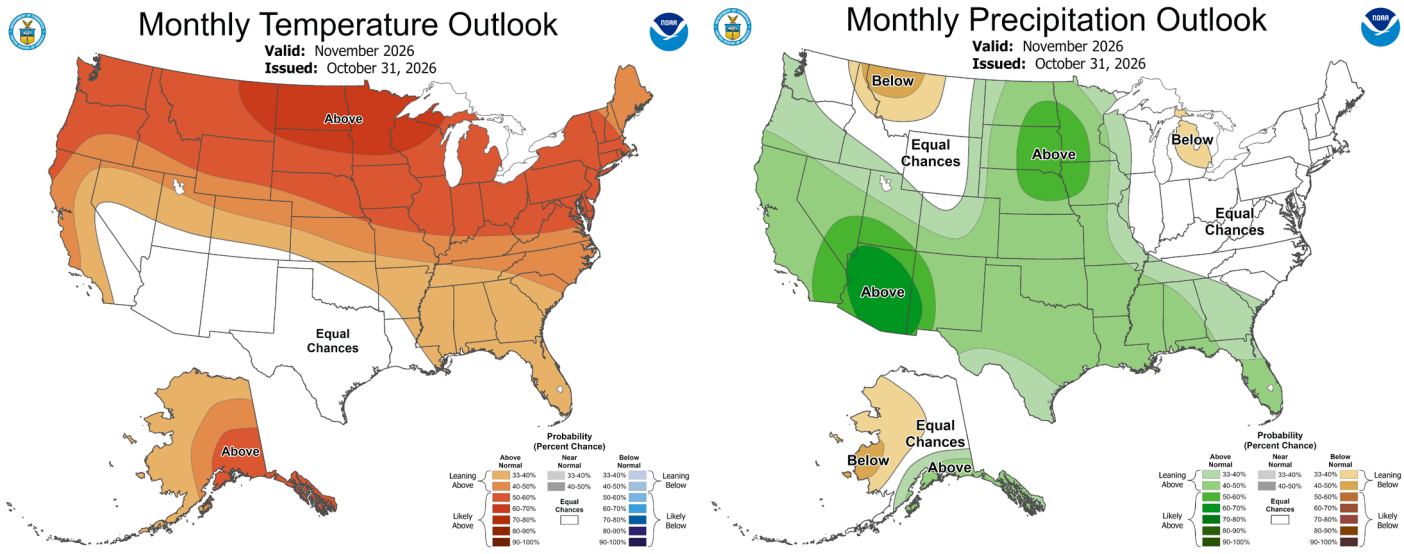
According to NOAA's Climate Prediction Center, the forecast issued October 31, 2026, for November 2026 showed a slight chance for above-normal temperatures in the District. The precipitation outlook showed slight chances for above-normal rainfall in the Panhandle as well as the Floridan aquifer recharge areas in southern Georgia and Alabama (**Figure 11**).

As of November 2, 2026, El Niño was present and continuing to strengthen. There is a greater than 83% chance of a strong to very strong El Niño event during the fall and winter. In the fall and winter, El Niño typically brings above-normal rainfall and cooler-than-normal temperatures to the southeastern United States.

The 2026 Atlantic Hurricane Season began on June 1, 2026, and extends through November 30, 2026. Two named storms, Hurricane Isaias and Subtropical Storm Josephine formed during October 2026 in the Atlantic basin. Hurricane Isaias affected the District from October 9-10, 2026, bringing heavy rainfall and damaging winds to much of the Panhandle. It made landfall near Destin on October 10, 2026, as a strong Category 2 Hurricane with sustained winds of 105 miles per hour. Hurricane Isaias was briefly a Category 3 Hurricane at peak strength hours before making landfall, making it the first major hurricane (Category 3 or higher) of the 2026 Atlantic Hurricane season.

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 11: November 2026 Temperature and Precipitation Outlooks for the United States



Source: *https://www.cpc.ncep.noaa.gov/products/predictions/30day/*

Drought Conditions

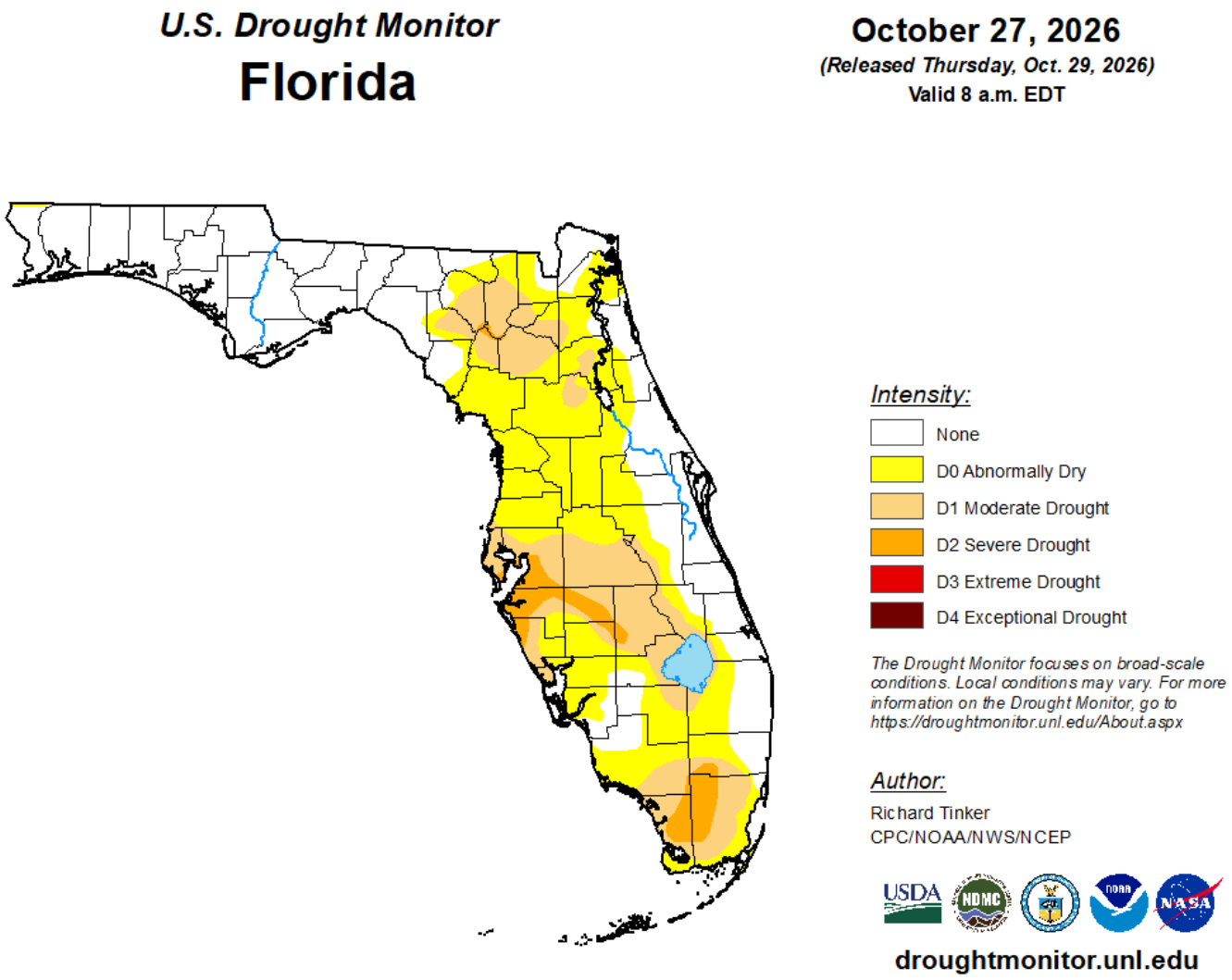
The U.S. Drought Monitor report released for October 27, 2026, showed the majority (99.5%) of the District's land area being under no drought conditions. Only a small sliver (0.5% of the District's total land area) along the Florida-Alabama border in Escambia County continues to be under abnormally dry (D0) conditions (**Figure 12**).

This is much improved compared to the Drought Monitor report released September 29, 2026. At the end of September 2026, after the District received below-normal rainfall during the month, about 70% of the District was under abnormally dry (D0) conditions and about 16% of the District across 10 counties were considered to be in moderate drought (D1). Much-above-normal rainfall from Hurricane Isaias and stationary fronts during the beginning half of October 2026 helped alleviate the drought conditions that had slowly worsened in September 2026. The District received so much rainfall between October 1 and October 11, 2026, that it was enough to stave off drought condition growth in the last half of the month despite most of the Panhandle receiving no rainfall between October 12-31, 2026.

According to both the U.S. Monthly Drought Outlook for November 2026 and the Seasonal Drought Outlook for November 1, 2026, through January 31, 2027, drought conditions are not expected to return to the District. This likely due to the strengthening El Niño, which typically is associated with wetter and cooler conditions than normal in the southeastern United States during the fall and winter.

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

Figure 12: Florida Drought Conditions on October 27, 2026



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

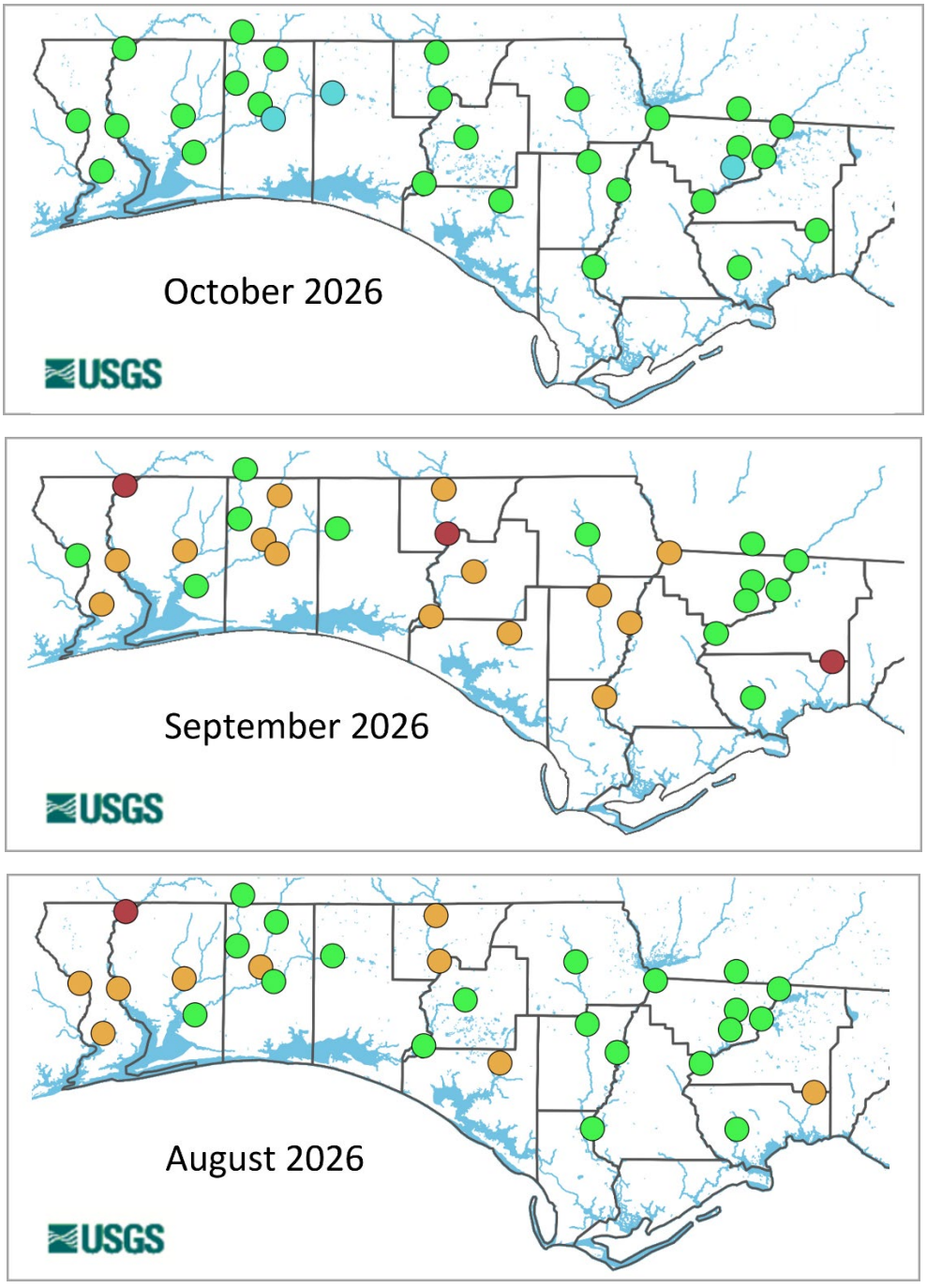
Surface Water

Streamflows

During October 2026, 24 of 27 streamflow stations recorded flows within normal ranges and three stations recorded above-normal flows on average for the month (**Figures 13 – 19**). The number of streamflow sites recording in normal ranges had steadily decreased every month since July 2026, but the much-above-normal rainfall received during October 2026 broke this pattern. 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 the river being dam-controlled at its headwaters at Lake Seminole.

All depicted stations recorded flows that peaked in much-above-normal ranges during and following the much-above-normal rainfall received between October 1-11, 2026 (**Figures 14-19**). After the peak in flow, flows at all stations decreased for the remainder of the month due to the lack of rainfall for the remainder of the month. Three of the streamflow stations, the Ochlockonee River near Havana, Apalachicola River near Blountstown, and the Choctawhatchee River near Bruce, declined into normal flow ranges by the end of the month. The other three stations, the St. Marks River near Newport, Blackwater River near Baker, and the Escambia River near Century decreased into below-normal flow ranges by the end of the month.

Figure 13: Northwest Florida August 2026 to October 2026 monthly streamflow percentiles



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

Figure 14: Daily streamflows and percentile ranges for USGS station 02326900 St. Marks River Near Newport, Florida

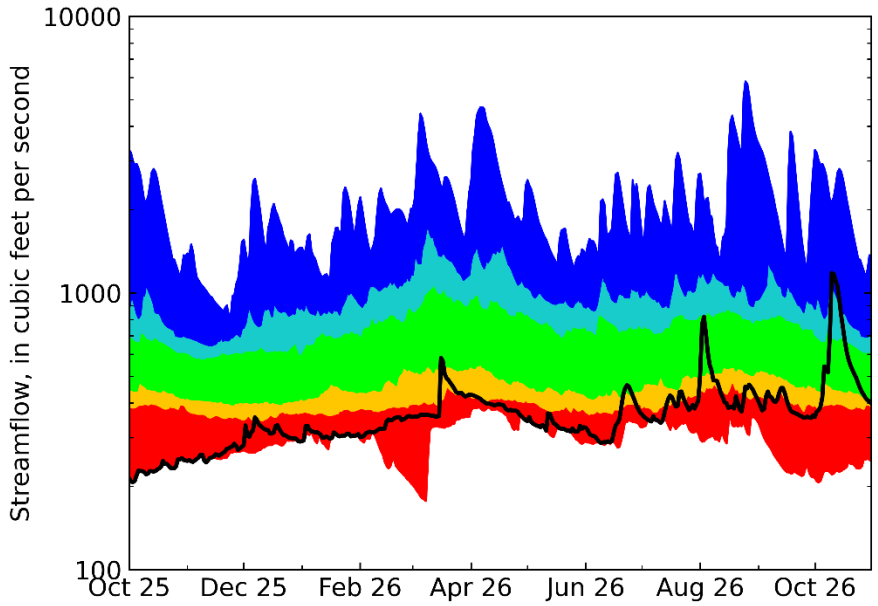
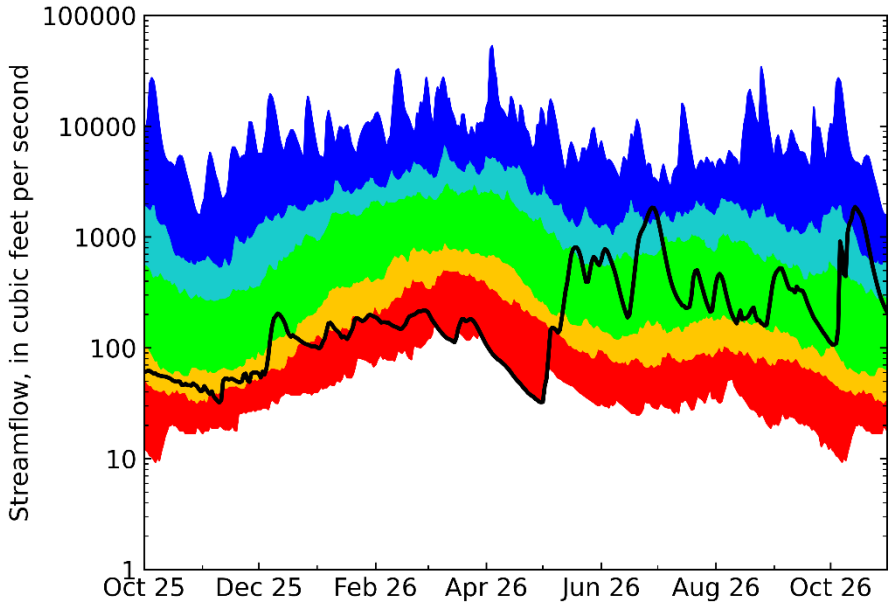


Figure 15: Daily streamflows and percentile ranges for USGS Station 02329000 Ochlockonee River Near Havana, Florida



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

Figure 16: Daily streamflows and percentile ranges for USGS Station 02358700 Apalachicola River Near Blountstown, Florida

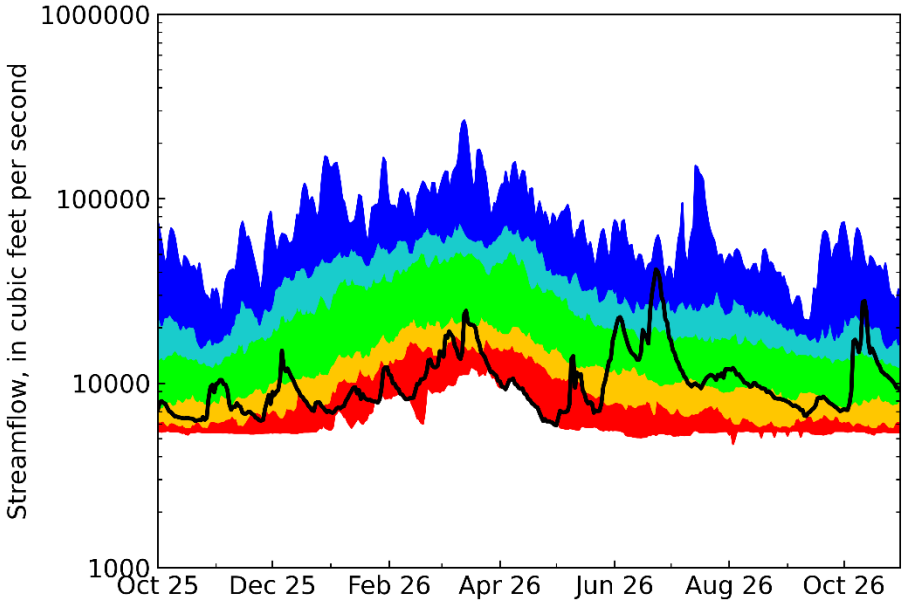
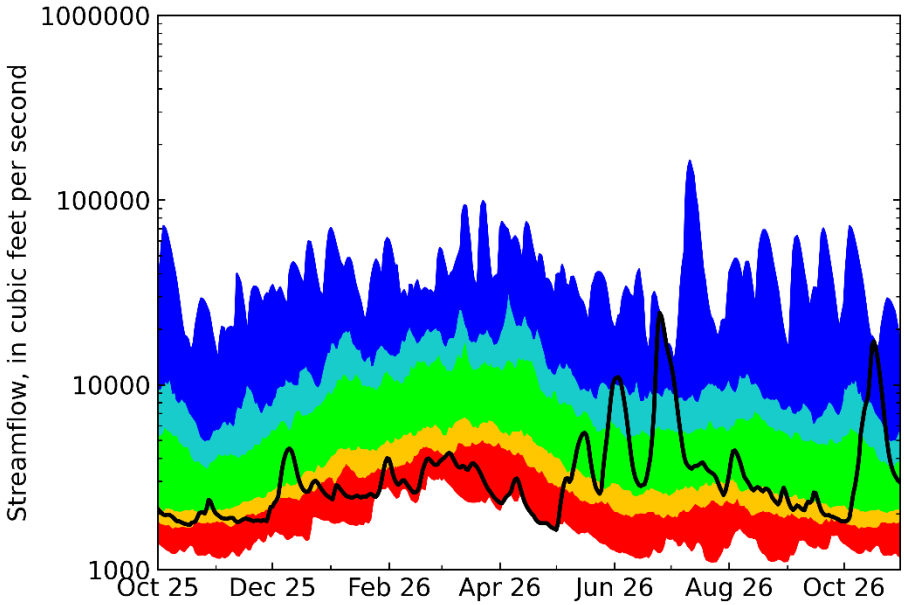


Figure 17: Daily streamflows and percentile ranges for USGS Station 02366500 Choctawhatchee River Near Bruce, Florida



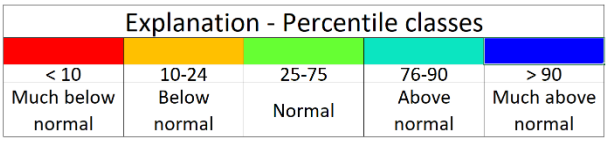


Figure 18: Daily streamflows and percentile ranges for USGS Station 02370000 Blackwater River Near Baker, Florida

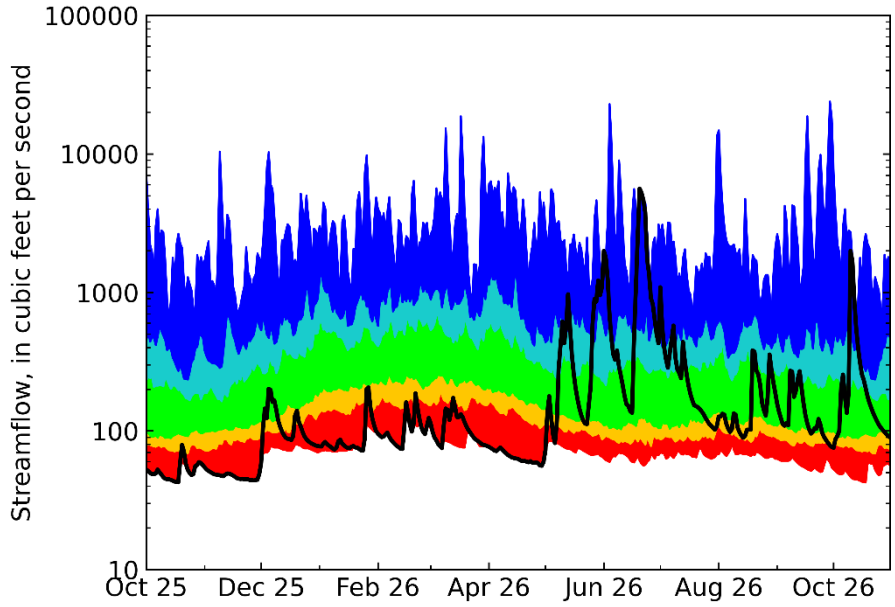
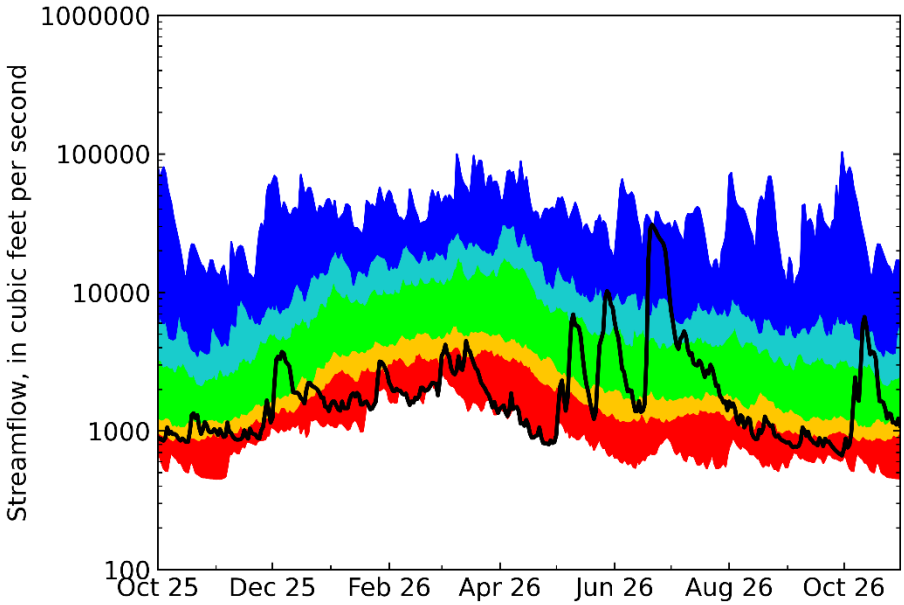
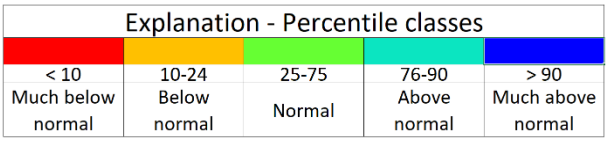


Figure 19: Daily streamflows and percentile ranges for USGS Station 02375500 Escambia River Near Century, Florida





Lake Levels

Lake Jackson. Water levels at Lake Jackson in Leon County increased about 0.75 feet during and following the significant rain events from the beginning of October 2026. Water levels then declined about 0.3 feet during the remainder of the month. Lake Jackson ended the month with a stage of 77.44 feet NAVD 1988 (**Figure 20**). The long-term (January 29, 2003, to October 31, 2026) average stage for Lake Jackson is 80.75 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.

Piney 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 all of October 2026. The water level sensor is out of the water when the lake drops below 46.88 feet NAVD 1988 (**Figure 21**). 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.

Econfina Water Management Area. As of the end of October 2026, in the Econfina Creek Water Management Area in Bay and Washington counties, many of the recreational lakes and ponds were still fairly low. Water levels at Hamlin Lake, Whitewater Lakes, and Porter Lake were several feet below their full pool levels and the end of their boat ramps. Despite the area receiving 7-9 inches of rainfall during October 2026, the lakes and ponds ended the month with lower levels than at the start of the month.

Figure 20: Daily water levels at Lake Jackson at Miller Landing, Leon County

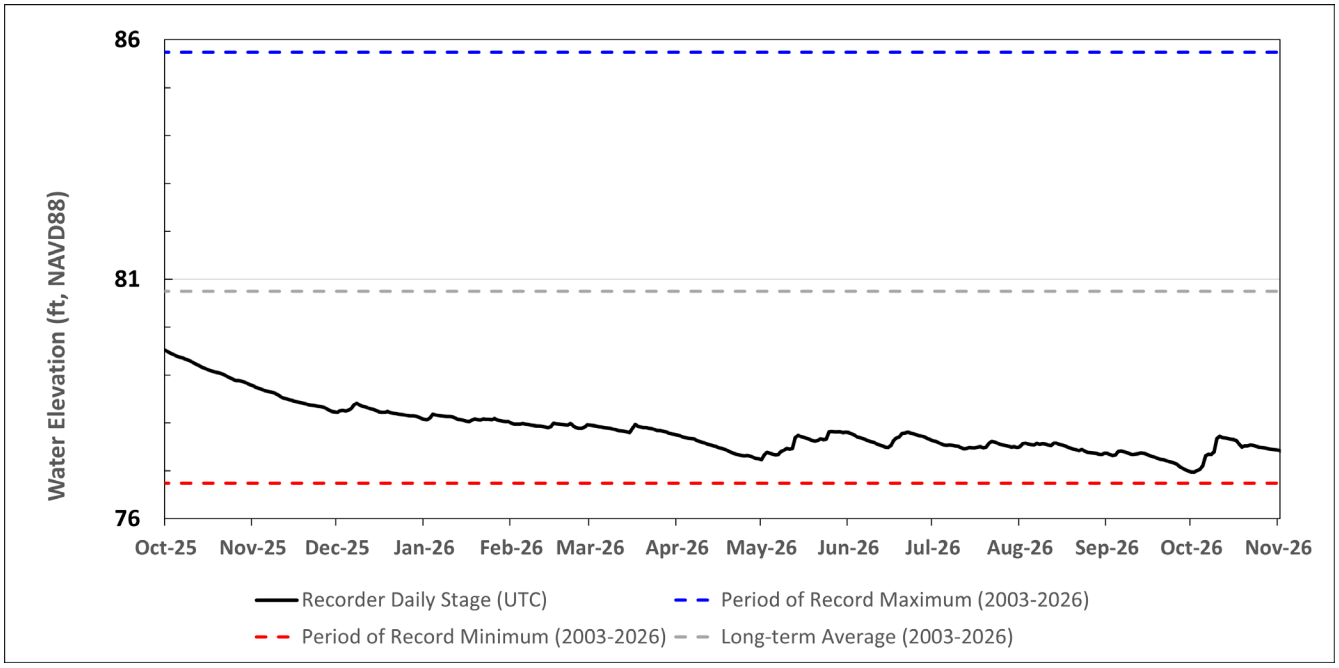
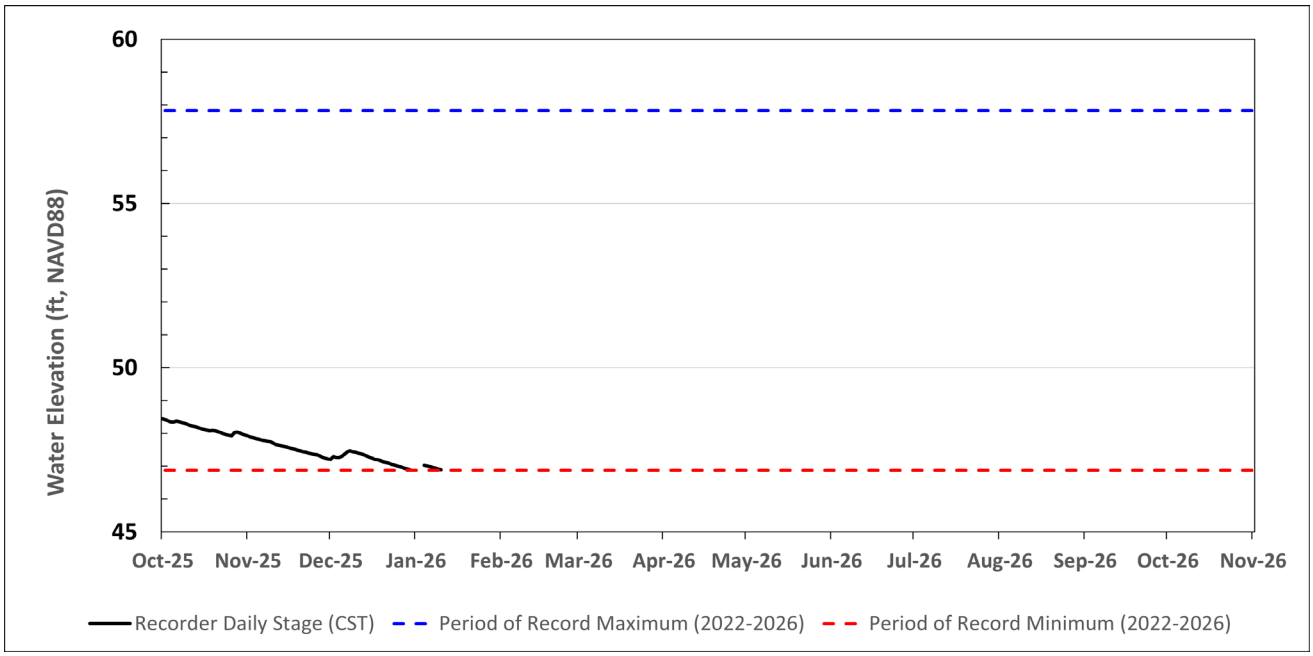


Figure 21: Daily water levels at Piney Lake, Washington County



Spring Flows

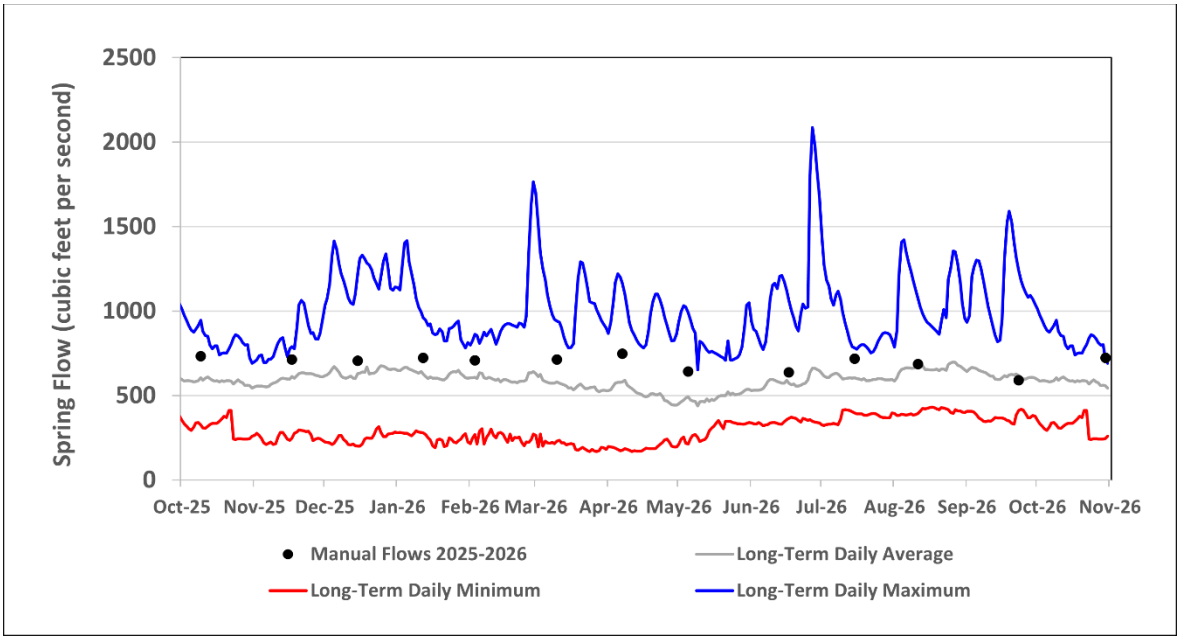
Wakulla and Sally Ward Spring System. Flow from Wakulla Spring increased 132 cubic feet per second (cfs) between the measurements taken in September and October 2026. The most recent flow measurement for Wakulla Spring was 723 cfs, on October 30, 2026 (Figure 22). This measurement was 140 cfs higher than the long-term (October 23, 2004, to October 30, 2026) average flow for the month of October of 583 cfs.

The most recent flow measurement for Sally Ward was 21.6 cfs on October 30, 2026. This measurement was 0.6 cfs lower than the long-term (November 1, 2004, to October 30, 2026) average flow for the month of October of 22.2 cfs.

The minimum flow established for the combined Wakulla and Sally Ward Spring System continues to be met (Chapter 40A.801, Florida Administrative Code). The long-term (October 23, 2004, through October 30, 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 22: Wakulla Spring flows

Data from October 1, 2023, through October 30, 2026, represent discrete measurements. Daily statistics are based on the October 23, 2004, through October 30, 2026, period of record.



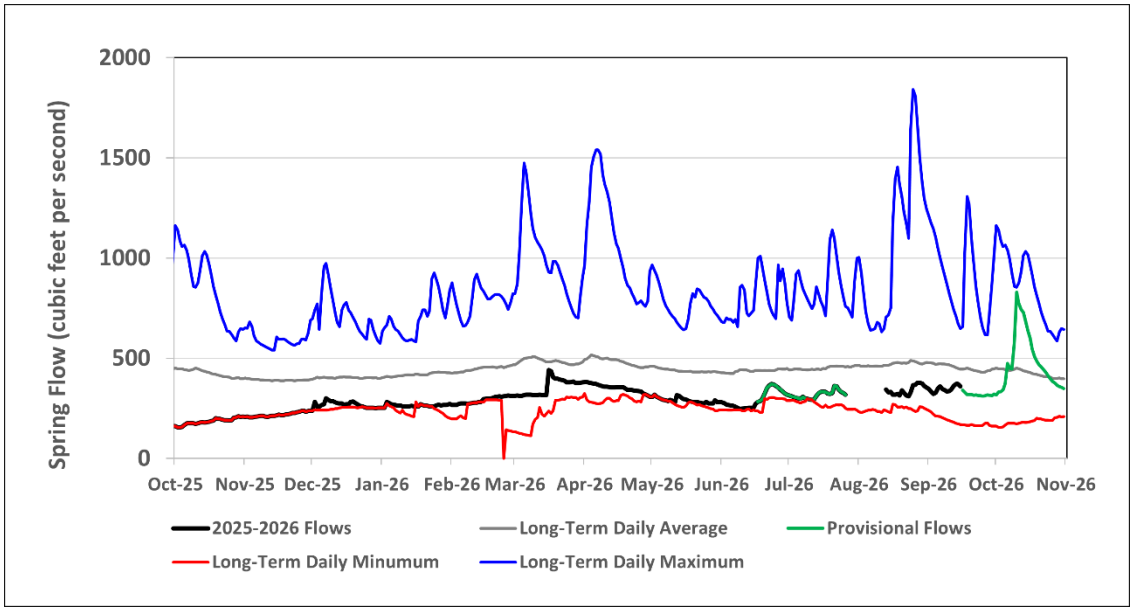
St. Marks River Rise. The mean daily spring flow for October 2026 at the St. Marks River Rise was 484 cfs, based on the available USGS provisional data which extends through October 31, 2026 (Figure 23). This was above the long-term (October 1, 1956, through October 31, 2026) average flow for the month of October of 426 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 August 10, 2026) is 417 cfs. If the provisional data from August 10, 2026, through October 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 2 cfs below the established minimum flow.

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 23: Spring flows for the St. Marks River Rise

Daily statistics are based on the October 1, 1956, through October 31, 2026, period of record.

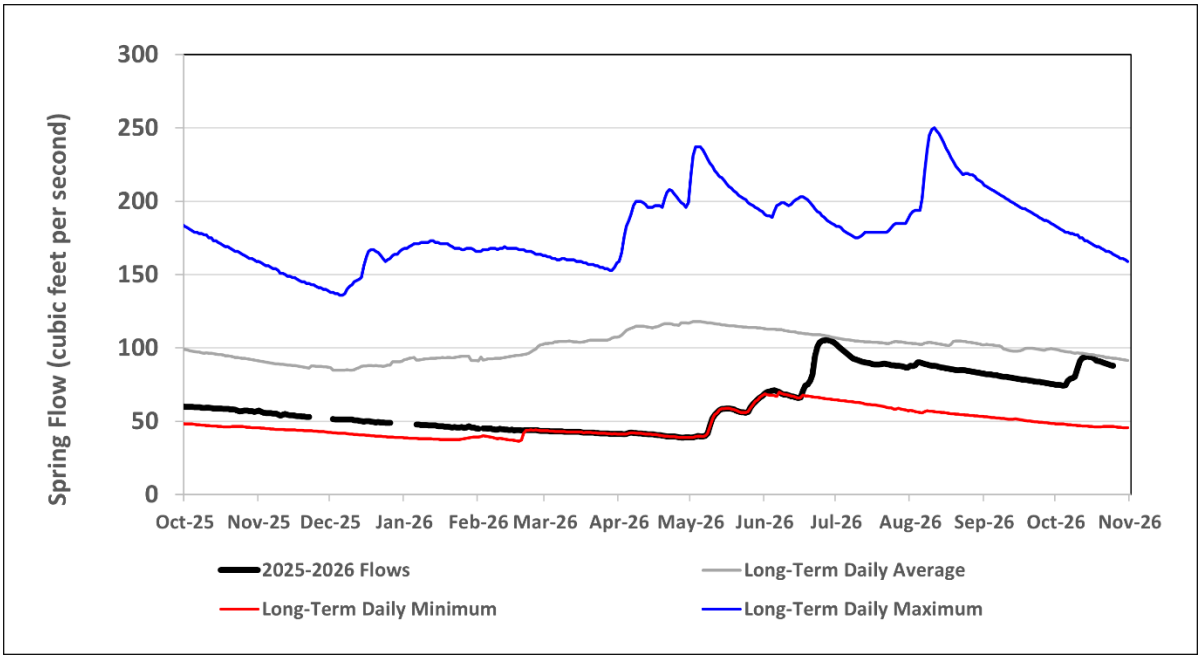


Jackson Blue Spring. Daily flows at Jackson Blue Spring during the month of October 2026 averaged 85.8 cfs. This was below the long-term average flow of 99.7 cfs for the month of October, based on the January 1, 2005, through October 25, 2026, period of record. Flows from Jackson Blue Spring increased to near the long-term daily average flow in the middle of October 2026 following the rain events from the beginning of the month. However, flows remain below the long-term daily average flows as they have since January 2025 (**Figure 24**).

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 October 25, 2026. The long-term (January 1, 2005, through October 25, 2026) median flows from Jackson Blue Spring are 95.9 cfs, which exceeds the established minimum flow of 92.2 cfs by 3.7 cfs.

Figure 24: Daily spring flows for Jackson Blue Spring

Data represents daily averages. Long-term flows represent the daily average between January 1, 2005, and September 29, 2026.

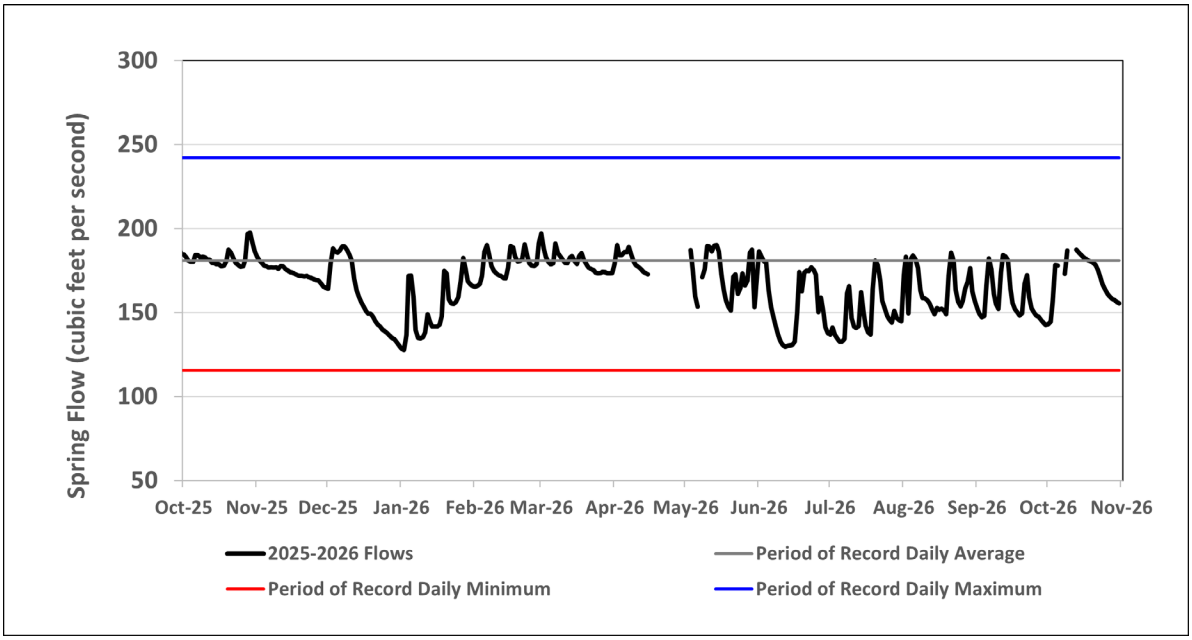


Gainer Spring Group. During October 2026, the average flow from the Gainer Spring Group was 170 cfs (**Figure 25**). The record period (October 28, 2019, through October 31, 2026) average flow for the month of October is 174 cfs. However, it should be noted that there is a relatively brief period of 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 vents after rain events. The extra pressure exerted on the groundwater by the higher surface water level in the stream slows flow from the spring vents. 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 vents recovers since there is less head pressure from the stream.

Figure 25: Daily spring flows for Gainer Spring Group

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

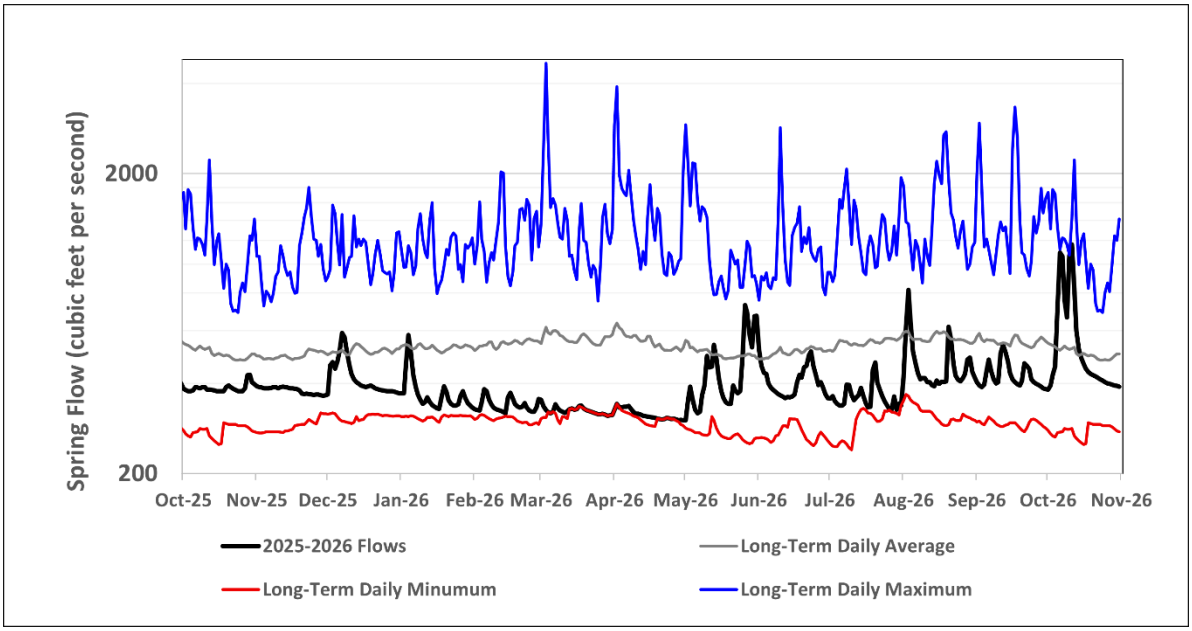


Middle Econfina Creek. The mean daily flow for October 2026 at Middle Econfina Creek was 556 cfs, based on the available USGS provisional data which extends through October 31, 2026 (**Figure 26**). This was above the long-term (October 1, 1935, through October 31, 2026) average flow for the month of October of 505 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 15, 2025, through October 31, 2026, is used, the 30-year moving average flow for Middle Econfina Creek is 513 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 27 cfs, respectively.

Figure 26: Daily spring flows for Gainer Spring Group (Econfina Creek @ Bennett)
Daily statistics are based on the October 1, 1935, through October 31, 2026, period of record.



Aquifer Levels

Floridan Aquifer. In the middle of October 2026, of a total of fifteen Floridan aquifer monitor wells, six wells were classified as having groundwater levels within normal ranges, four were classified as below-normal, two were classified as much-below-normal, two were classified as above-normal, and one was classified as much-above-normal (**Figures 27 - 33**). Seven Floridan aquifer wells had an increase in percentile classification between mid-September and mid-October 2026. At the USGS-Lake Jackson Floridan aquifer (NWFID 3402) monitor well in Leon County, water levels increased from much-below-normal ranges into below-normal ranges. Water levels at the USGS-Lake Jackson Floridan aquifer (NWFID 3402) monitor well in Leon County had been mostly in much-below-normal ranges since April 2026 (**Figure 28**). At the Newport Recreation (NWFID 671) monitor well in eastern Wakulla County, Jackson Still Floridan aquifer monitor well (NWFID 5417) in northern Walton County, and Fannin Airport monitor well (NWFID 697) in central Bay County, water levels increased from below-normal into normal ranges. Water levels at Placid Oil Supply (NWFID 413) monitor well in Liberty County and Green Point Floridan (NWFID 59) monitor well in coastal Franklin County increased from normal ranges into above-normal ranges. At the USGS-Benchmark monitor well (NWFID 392) in western Wakulla County, water levels increased by about 2.5 feet which increased the percentile class from normal ranges to much-above-normal ranges (**Figure 29**). Water levels at all other Floridan aquifer monitor wells with sufficient long-term data to calculate percentiles did not change enough in either direction to affect their percentile classification.

Sand-and-Gravel Aquifer. Of four sand-and-gravel aquifer monitor wells with sufficient long-term data to calculate percentiles, one had below-normal water levels, one had much-below-normal water levels, and two had above-normal water levels in the middle of October 2026 (**Figure 27 & 33**). Only one sand-and-gravel aquifer well, Weller Ave Deep (NWFID 1382) monitor well in southern Escambia County, had a change in percentile class between mid-September and mid-October 2026 after water levels rose about 1 foot (**Figure 33**).

Figure 27: Monitor wells and aquifer level percentiles for mid-October 2026
Percentile class rankings are based on each well's record period. All wells have a minimum of 20 years of data

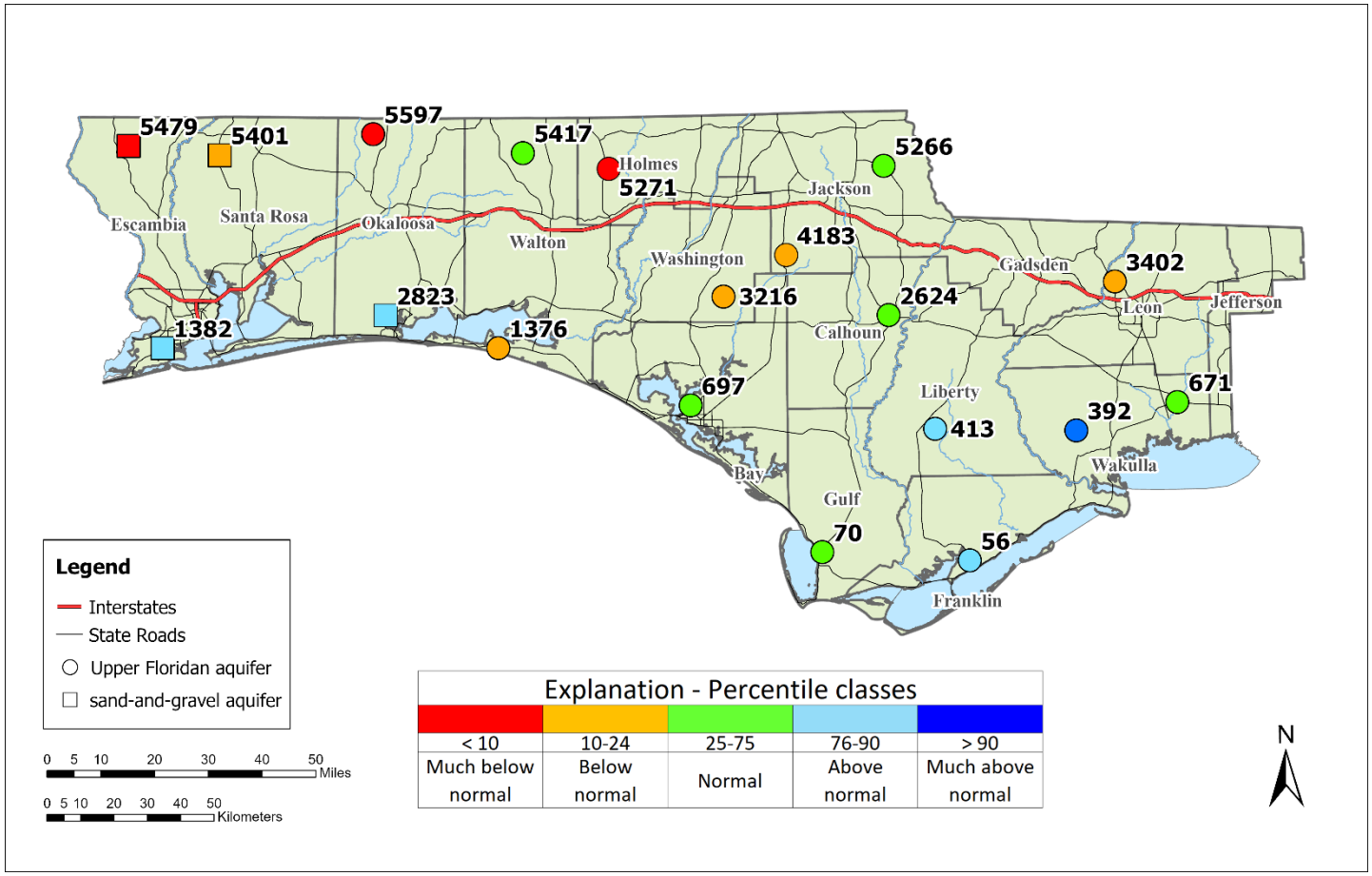


Figure 28: Daily upper Floridan aquifer levels at USGS-Lake Jackson well (NWFID 3402), Leon County
Land surface elevation is 121.40 ft, NAVD 88

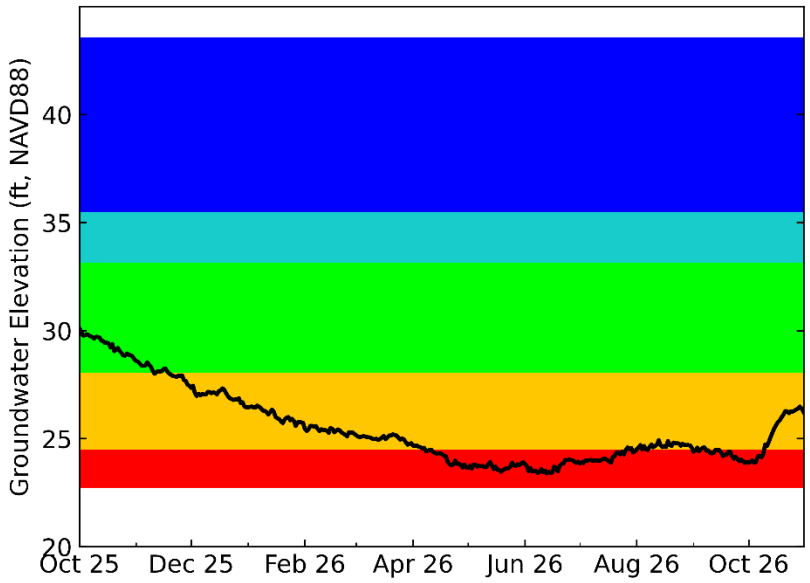
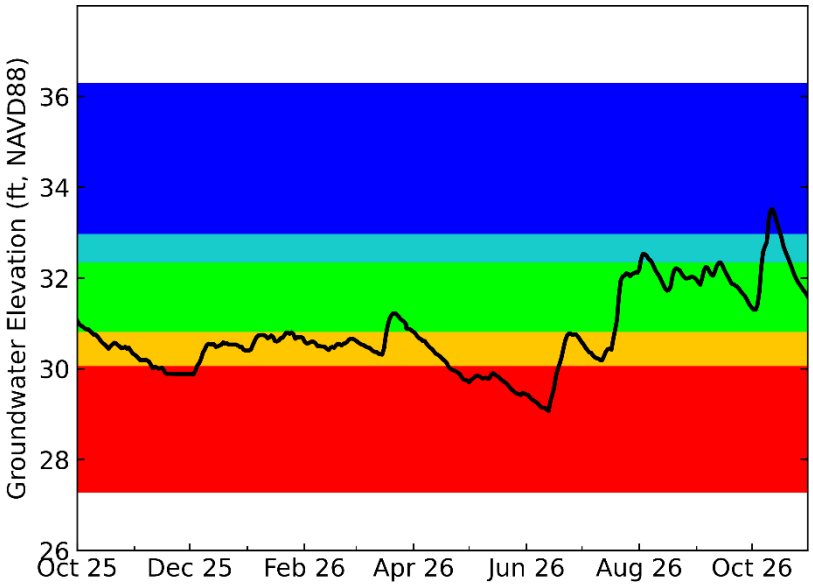


Figure 29: Daily upper Floridan aquifer levels at USGS Benchmark well (NWFID 392), Wakulla County
Land surface elevation is 46.27 ft, NAVD 88



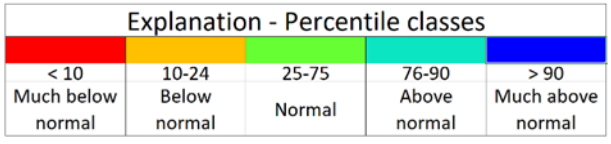


Figure 30: Daily upper Floridan aquifer levels at NWFWMD Pittman Visa well (NWFID 5266), Jackson County
Land surface elevation is 127.31 ft, NAVD 88

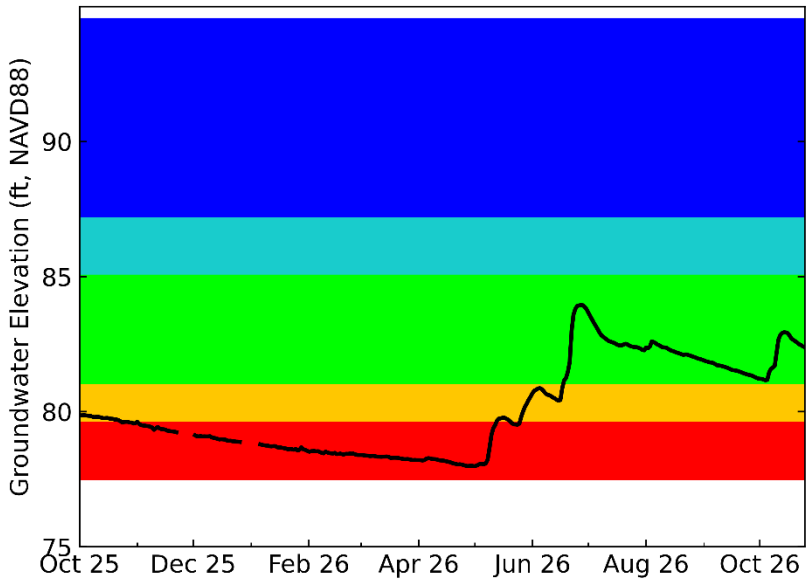
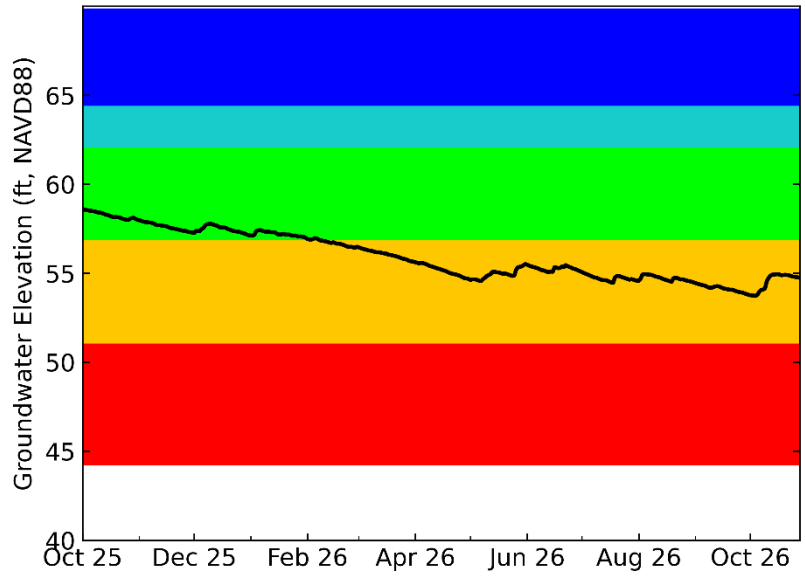


Figure 31: Daily upper Floridan aquifer levels at USGS-422A Near Greenhead well (NWFID 3216), Washington County
Land surface elevation is 66.75 ft, NAVD 88



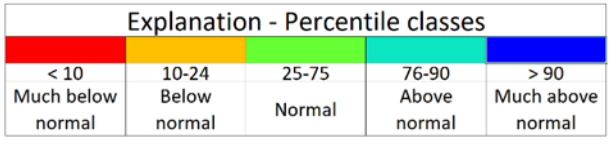


Figure 32: Daily upper Floridan aquifer levels at Fannin Airport well (NWFID 697), Bay County
Land surface elevation is 4.05 ft, NAVD 88

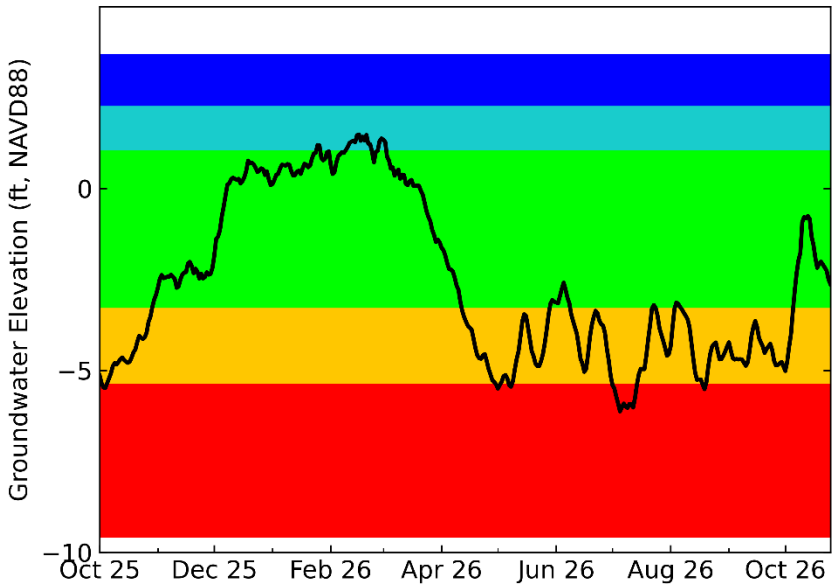
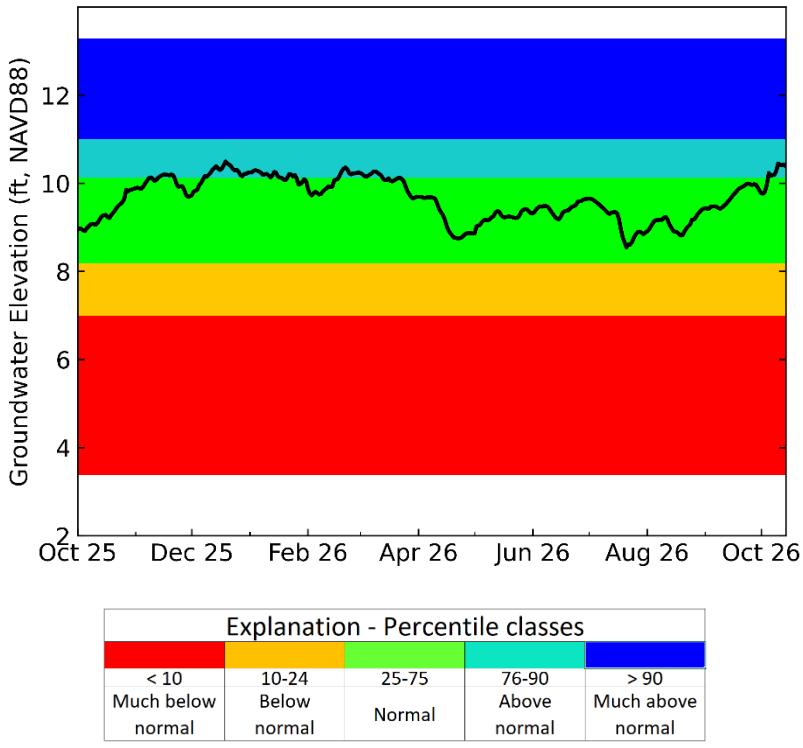


Figure 33: Daily sand-and-gravel aquifer levels at NWFWMD Weller Ave Deep well (NWFID 1382), Escambia County
Land surface elevation is 25.09 ft, NAVD 88



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)

