April 2026 Climate Summary

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April was an active and impactful month across Wisconsin, featuring temperature extremes, record precipitation, severe weather outbreaks, and agricultural disruption.

- Sub-freezing lows to 80-degree highs
- Wettest April on record
- Completely drought-free by month's end

From Parkas to T-Shirts

From frosty mornings to summerlike afternoons, April delivered another month of dramatic temperature swings in typical Wisconsin spring fashion (Figure 1).

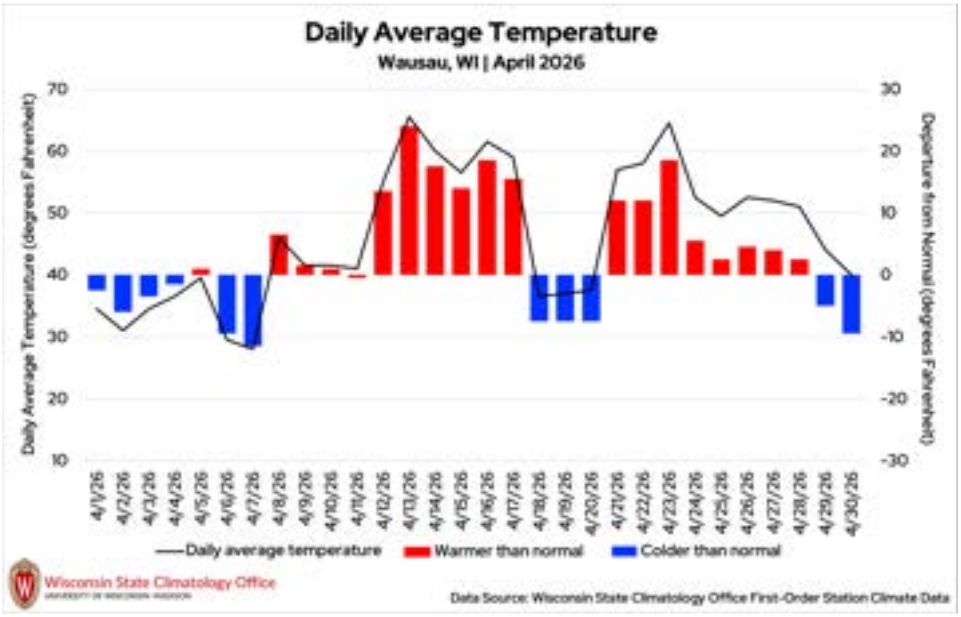

Figure 1. Daily average temperature (black line) and its departure from normal (red and blue bars) in degrees Fahrenheit for April at the Wausau Downtown Airport (Marathon County). Wausau (and much of Wisconsin) saw early-, mid-, and late-month chill with unseasonable warmth in between. Data are from the State Climatology Office's First-Order Station Climate Data.

The month began on a chilly note, with the coldest air arriving on April 7. Temperatures dropped into the single digits across parts of north-central Wisconsin and into the teens across much of northern and central Wisconsin.

The coldest temperature of the month was a shocking 0.7 degrees at the Knight Wisconet station (Iron County), recorded on the 7th. Madison fell to 21 degrees that morning (12 degrees colder than the city's normal low temperature for April 7), and Blanchardville (Lafayette and Iowa counties) dropped to 18 degrees.

Just days later, Wisconsin experienced a significant warm-up. Unseasonably warm and humid air spread across the state, helping fuel severe weather. Nearly two dozen stations recorded temperatures of 80 degrees or warmer. Eau Claire reached its first 80-degree day of the year on April 13. Milwaukee hit 80 degrees on April 14, which is 26 degrees warmer than the normal high for that date and more than two months ahead of when Brew City typically begins seeing 80-degree highs.

The warmth disappeared quickly, though, as temperatures once again dropped sharply. In Wausau, for example, the high temperature fell from 78 degrees on April 17 to a low of 32 degrees on April 18. Across much of the state, overnight lows dropped into the teens and 20s.

While the rapid cooldown felt dramatic after the summerlike warmth, the sub-freezing temperatures were not unusual. Wisconsin's average last spring freeze typically occurs in late April across many southern counties and late May in the north.

Another warm spell returned during the final week of April. Nearly 100 occurrences of 80 degrees or warmer were recorded across much of central and southern Wisconsin. The warmest temperature of the month was 84 degrees in Sparta (Monroe County) on April 23.

Cooler-than-normal temperatures then returned during the final days of the month, ending the month as it started: on a chilly note.

Overall, April averaged 46.4 degrees, 3.3 degrees warmer than normal, marking Wisconsin's third warmer-than-normal month in a row (Figures 2 and 3).

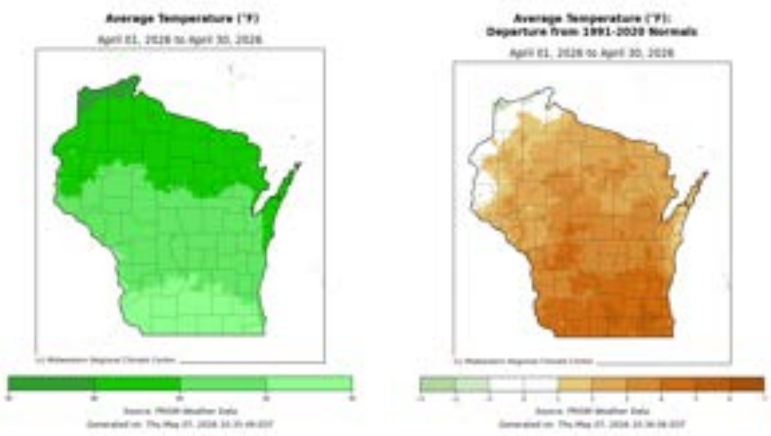

Figure 2 (left). April average temperature in degrees Fahrenheit. Average temperatures ranged from 40 to 45 degrees across much of northern Wisconsin to 50 to 55 degrees across southern Wisconsin.

Figure 2 (right). April average temperature departure from normal. The state averaged one to six degrees warmer than normal, with southern Wisconsin seeing the largest temperature anomalies, or departures from the 1991 to 2020 normal.

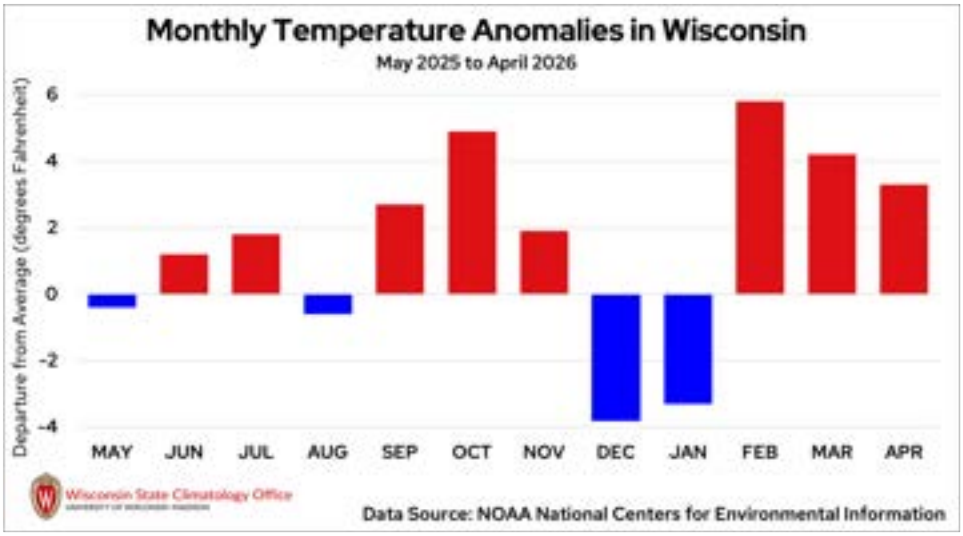

Figure 3. Monthly statewide average temperature anomalies in degrees Fahrenheit for Wisconsin between May 2025 and April 2026 compared to the 1991 to 2020 normal. Temperature anomalies are from NOAA's National Centers for Environmental Information.

Wisconsin's Wettest April

April 2026 will be remembered for its abundance of showers, though deluges may be a more accurate description. Downpour after downpour brought the statewide average precipitation total to a whopping 6.53 inches (Figures 4 and 5).

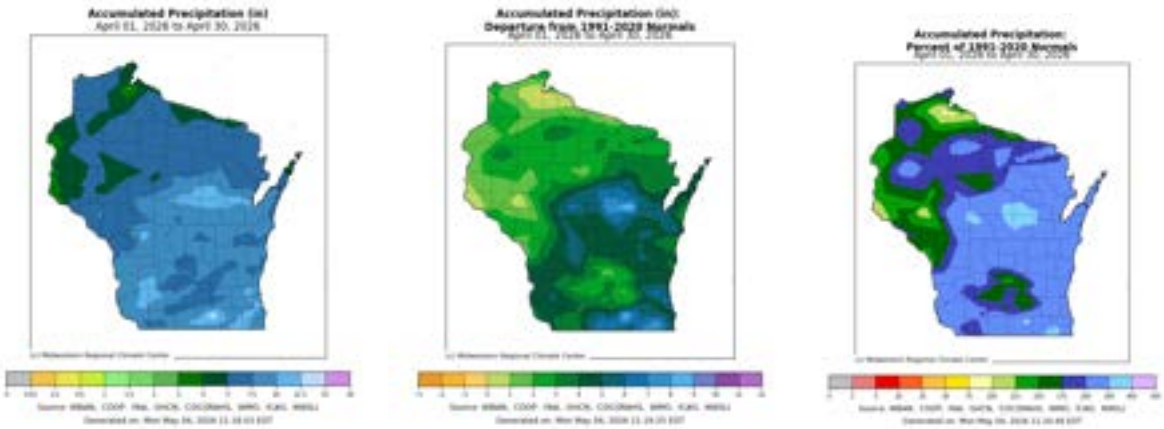

Figure 4 (left). April accumulated total precipitation in inches. Wisconsin's southern and central regions received upwards of six inches of precipitation, while amounts between three and five were seen in the north and west.

Figure 4 (middle). April precipitation departure from average, showing nearly the entire state received above-average precipitation for the month. Only a small section of Ashland and Bayfield counties reported below-average precipitation.

Figure 4 (right). April precipitation percent of normal, highlighting how significantly wet the month was. Many areas in southern, central, and northeastern Wisconsin received more than 200 percent of average April precipitation.

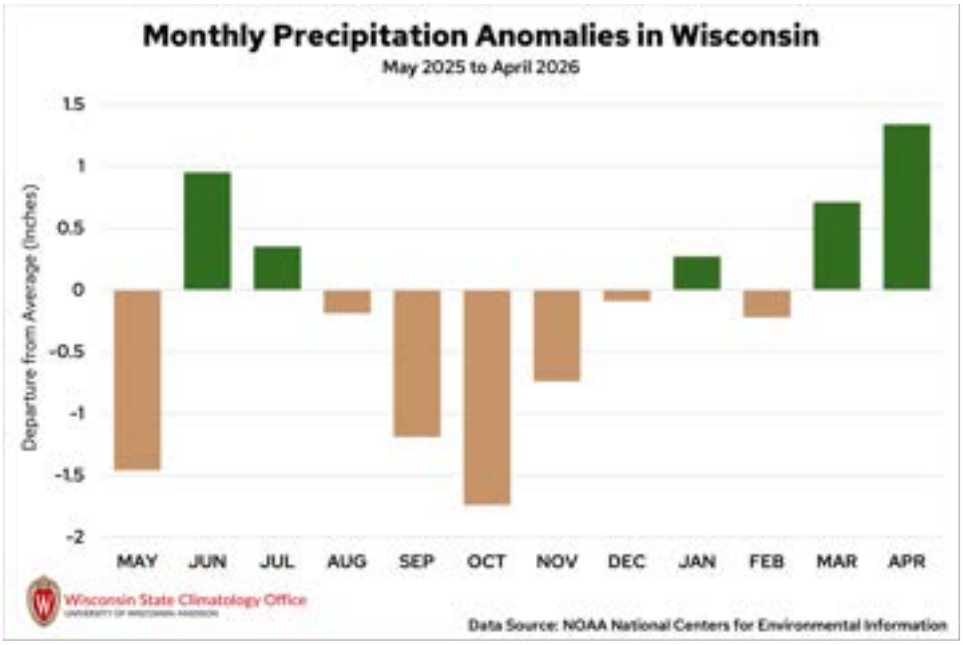

Figure 5. Monthly statewide average precipitation anomalies in inches for Wisconsin between May 2025 and April 2026 compared to the 1991 to 2020 normal. Precipitation anomalies are from NOAA's National Centers for Environmental Information.

Previously, Wisconsin's wettest April had an average total of 5.19 inches – 1.34 inches below the 2026 total. Reaching new state records is always significant, but surpassing a record by more than an inch is rare (Table 1).

Wisconsin's Wettest Aprils (Year)
6.53 inches (2026)
5.19 inches (2008)
5.18 inches (1954)
5.04 inches (2014)
4.86 inches (2001)

Table 1. Wisconsin's wettest Aprils on record and the year of their occurrence. Records began in 1895. April 2026 surpassed the previous record by 1.34 inches.

April's warmth kept most of Wisconsin's precipitation as rain rather than snow. The state's sole April snowstorm arrived early in the month, dropping about a half-foot of

snow in the far northern counties, and leaving a coating of ice through the western and central regions of the state.

Flooding concerns began on April 4, after multiple rounds of heavy rain brought two to three inches of water to western and east-central Wisconsin. Vehicles became stranded as streets flooded in parts of Brown County, and there were reports of overflowing creeks and water seeping into basements in Winnebago County. The Kickapoo River reached its major flood stage, forcing road closures in Vernon County.

Dry weather only lasted for a week before the firehose was pointed back at central Wisconsin.

Rounds of thunderstorms on April 12, 13, and 14 poured more than five inches of rain on parts of central Wisconsin, with some three-day totals exceeding six inches. A stationary front parked over the state was responsible for the relentless stretch of rainfall and storms.

As the rain fell, already high rivers continued to rise. In Waupaca County, many residents along the Pigeon River were forced to evacuate as water encroached on their homes. Residents along the Little Wolf River breathed a sigh of relief after emergency reinforcements prevented the Big Falls Dam from failing. In Brown County, floodwaters trapped vehicles and even washed out roadways.

As water flowed downstream, the Wolf River reached major flood stage on April 17, leading to severe flooding and prompting evacuations in New London (Outagamie and Waupaca counties).

Attention shifted to southern Wisconsin on the evening of April 17, as potent thunderstorms flooded Rock County (Figure 6). Janesville was significantly impacted as areawide rain estimates neared 10 inches – easily surpassing the area's two-day threshold for a 100-year rainfall of 7.44 inches. Roadways and train tracks were washed out in the city, and damage to an elementary school forced its closure for the remainder of the school year.

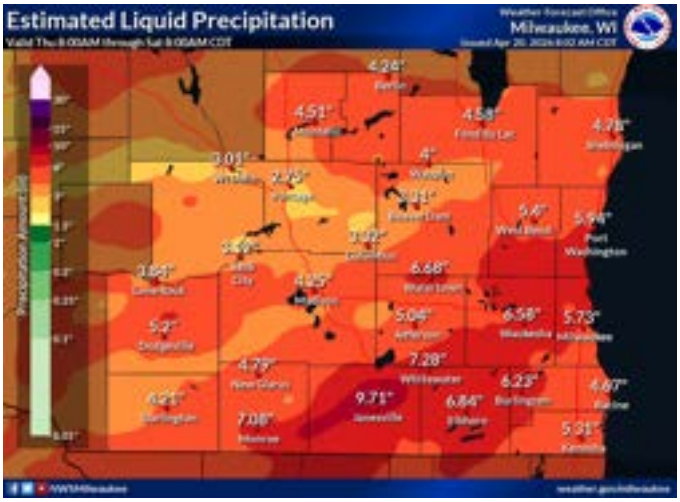

Figure 6. Estimated precipitation amounts in southern Wisconsin from April 16 to 18, 2026. Widespread amounts of over six inches were estimated through Rock, Walworth, and Waukesha counties. Map from the National Weather Service in Milwaukee.

In addition to being the state's wettest April, many cities also recorded their wettest April on record and set numerous daily rainfall records (Table 2). Wausau received 8.74 inches of precipitation through the month, breaking the city's previous April record from 1954 by more than two inches. Milwaukee surpassed its April 2013 record by more than two inches with a monthly total of 9.49 inches, also making it the city's sixth wettest month overall. At 8.56 inches, Green Bay topped 1929 to become both the city's wettest April and the seventh wettest month on record. Madison's monthly total of 7.26 inches broke the capital city's April 1909 record of 7.19 inches.

Location	Date	2026 Daily Precipitation	Previous Record (Year)
Green Bay	April 2	**1.61 inches**	0.96 inches (2024)
Madison	April 2	**1.34 inches**	1.31 inches (2024)
La Crosse	April 2	**1.12 inches**	1.09 inches (1940)
Green Bay	April 12	**1.03 inches**	0.85 inches (1900)
Wausau	April 13	**2.13 inches**	0.80 inches (1955)
Green Bay	April 13	**1.82 inches**	1.53 inches (2018)

Madison	April 14	**1.53 inches**	0.97 inches (1974)
La Crosse	April 24	**0.85 inches**	0.77 inches (1896)

Table 2. Daily rainfall records set at Wisconsin's first-order stations during April 2026. The period of record varies by location.

Slew of Destructive Storms

Strong thunderstorms accompanied the heavy rain that fell across the state during April. The National Weather Service offices issued 281 tornado and severe thunderstorm warnings in Wisconsin during April. This is not only the most issued during April, but the most in a single month in the state since records of warnings began in 1986.

The majority of the month's severe weather hit the state in one week.

On the evening of April 13, severe storms brought damaging winds to Wisconsin's southern counties and large hail to central counties. The worst wind damage was reported between Dane and Milwaukee County. The roof of a church was torn off, trees were toppled, and many homes were damaged. One tornado touched down in Taylor County.

The next day, another round of storms pummeled southern Wisconsin. Nine tornadoes tore roofs from homes, snapped trees, and destroyed barns and sheds. The strongest tornado, ranked an EF3, began near Hillsboro in Vernon County and spun through the village of Union Center in Juneau County. Numerous homes were significantly damaged, including one that was completely flattened by the storm. This was the first EF3 tornado to occur in Wisconsin since 2021.

Meanwhile, farther south, baseball-sized hail (three inches in diameter) battered Madison, smashing cars and denting house siding. A four-inch hailstone (softball-sized) that fell in the nearby village of Maple Bluff was the largest hailstone to be reported in Dane County since July 1960.

Image 1. Baseball-sized hail that fell on the east side of Madison on April 14, 2026. Photo taken by Albert Betancourt.

Storms returned on April 15, once again targeting southern Wisconsin. One man was struck and killed by lightning near Waukesha. One tornado touched down in Elkhorn (Walworth County).

Severe storm activity peaked on April 17 as a strong cold front sparked severe storms across both central and southern Wisconsin. There were 46 tornado warnings issued across the state – the most that Wisconsin's National Weather Service offices have issued in a single day. Sixteen tornadoes ripped through the state, two of them producing estimated winds of 140 miles per hour. The most extensive damage was seen in the town of Ringle (Marathon County), where at least 75 homes were damaged, many of them flattened (Table 3).

Location	Date	Enhanced Fujita (EF) Rating	Estimated Maximum Winds	Damage Reported
Gilman (Taylor Co.)	April 13	EF0	80 MPH	Trees broken and minor damage to outbuildings
Kansasville (Racine Co.)	April 14	EF0	80 MPH	Tree damage, minor damage to outbuildings
Beaver Dam (Dodge Co.)	April 14	EF0	85 MPH	
East Troy (Walworth Co.)	April 14	EF1	100 MPH	Significant damage to barns, outbuildings, and trees

Waterford (Racine Co.)	April 14	EF1	100 MPH	Trees damaged and thrown, barn lifted off its foundation
Somers (Kenosha Co.)	April 14	EF1	105 MPH	
Rockdale (Dane Co.)	April 14	EF1	105 MPH	Cement silo lifted, metal barns destroyed
Endeavor (Marquette Co.)	April 14	EF1	109 MPH	
Sussex (Waukesha Co.)	April 14	EF2	120 MPH	Significant damage to buildings
Union Center (Juneau Co.)	April 14	EF3	140 MPH	Significant damage to a home, damage to trees and outbuildings
Elkhorn (Walworth Co.)	April 15	EF1	100 MPH	Damage to barns
Waterford (Racine Co.)	April 17	EF0	70 MPH	Some tree damage
Wind Lake (Racine Co.)	April 17	EF0	70 MPH	Some tree damage
Honey Lake (Walworth & Racine Co.)	April 17	EF0	75 MPH	Uprooted trees and minor damage to roofs
Raymond (Racine Co.)	April 17	EF0	80 MPH	
La Prairie (Rock Co.)	April 17	EF1	90 MPH	
Osseo (Trempeleau Co.)	April 17	EF1	100 MPH	Widespread tree damage
Hatfield (Jackson Co.)	April 17	EF1	100 MPH	Widespread tree damage
Emerald Grove (Rock Co.)	April 17	EF1	100 MPH	Damage to trees and agricultural equipment
Richmond (Rock Co.)	April 17	EF1	100 MPH	Damage to sheet metal sheds
Delavan (Walworth Co.)	April 17	EF1	100 MPH	Widespread tree damage and silo blown over
Delavan (Walworth Co.)	April 17	EF1	100 MPH	Damage to barns and a home
Kneeland (Racine Co.)	April 17	EF1	100 MPH	
Blair (Trempeleau Co.)	April 17	EF1	110 MPH	
Glandon (Marathon Co.)	April 17	EF1	110 MPH	Significant damage to a barn and outbuilding

Cream (Buffalo Co.)	April 17	EF3	140 MPH	Significant damage to a home, widespread damage to trees, and outbuildings
Ringle (Marathon Co.)	April 17	EF3	145 MPH	Extensive damage to numerous homes

Table 3. A summary of the tornadoes that occurred in Wisconsin during April. Information is from the National Weather Service. At some locations, the National Weather Service did not share reports of damage. A map of this year's tornado events can be found here.

A total of 27 tornadoes occurred in Wisconsin during April. Based on the 30-year average, only one tornado typically touches down in the Badger State in April. This makes 2026 by far the most tornadic April in the state since records began in 1950.

The month also tied as the state's second-most-tornadic month overall, falling behind June 2005, when 30 tornadoes occurred. Based on the 30-year average, 23 tornadoes typically touch down in Wisconsin in a year.

Drought Erased

It's no surprise that April's abundance of rain alleviated all drought conditions in Wisconsin. The month began with some areas of abnormal dryness in parts of southern and eastern counties, along with a small area of moderate drought (D1) in the northwest. By the end of the month, only a sliver of abnormally dry conditions remained in parts of Douglas, Burnett, and Washburn counties (Figure 7).

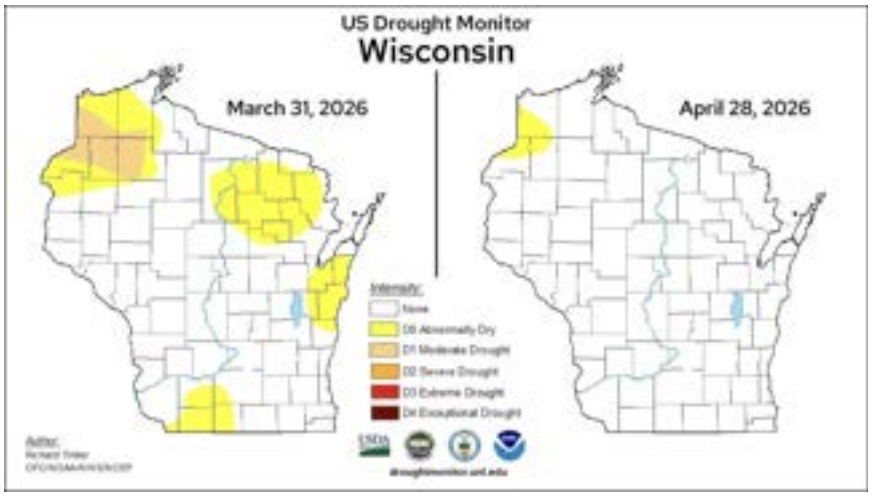

Figure 7. U.S. Drought Monitor conditions in Wisconsin as of March 31 and April 28, 2026, showing significant improvement in drought conditions through the month.

The state's Drought Severity and Coverage Index was nearly zero by the end of the month – a low not seen since Wisconsin was last drought-free in September 2025 (Figure 8). This comes amid the most expansive spring drought on record for the Lower 48 states. As of April 28, Wisconsin was one of just four states that were completely drought-free.

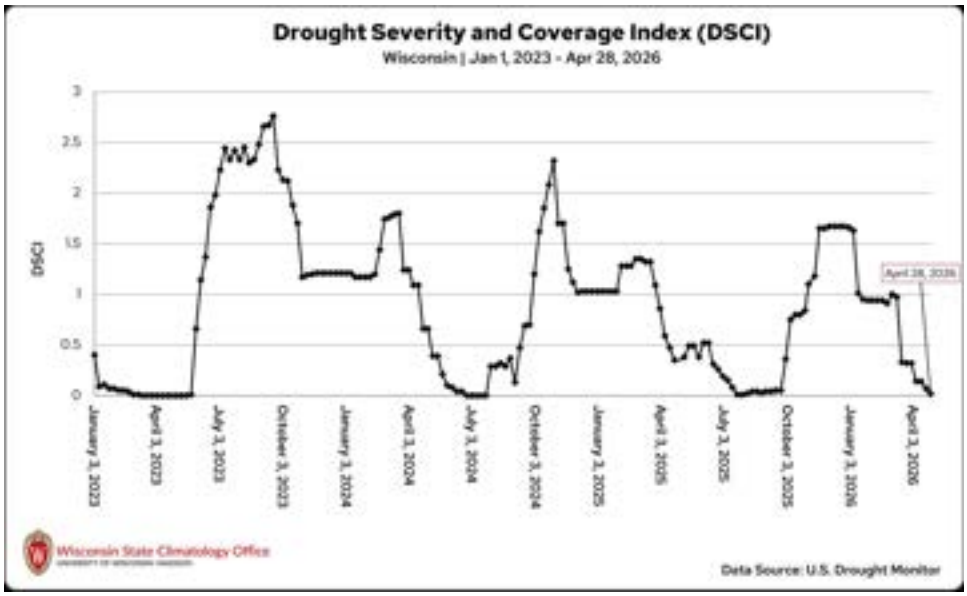

Figure 8. The Drought Severity and Coverage Index (DSCI) for Wisconsin from January 1, 2023, through April 28, 2026. Statistics come from the U.S. Drought Monitor.

Flooded Fields and Frost Concerns

Highly variable weather throughout April created several challenges for Wisconsin agriculture.

Early in the month, an ice storm brought freezing rain to parts of western Wisconsin, coating tree limbs – some with newly emerging buds – and downing branches.

Mid-month severe storms damaged farm infrastructure, including barns, silos, and outbuildings, and strong winds flattened some hay, alfalfa, and cover crop fields. Heavy rain also led to waterlogged soils and areas of erosion, delaying spring fieldwork and planting. However, the rain helped replenish soil moisture and relieve the state from drought.

By late April, warm, dry, and windy conditions allowed farmers across southern Wisconsin to make progress in fieldwork and planting. Farther north, however, colder conditions kept most farmers from planting by month's end.

The month's rapid temperature swings also raised concerns for fruit growers and perennial crops. Unseasonably warm weather throughout most of March and parts of April encouraged plants to break dormancy, or "wake up," by mid-to-late April across parts of southern and central Wisconsin, while vegetation in northern Wisconsin remained dormant.

Once active growth began, these plants and crops became more vulnerable to damage when sub-freezing temperatures returned, especially in the second half of April. By the third weekend of April, some fruit growers had begun taking action to protect their trees from frost. In Door County, cherry trees reportedly began flowering around April 29, increasing concern about potential freeze damage heading into early May.

Early Start to Tick Season

Early-season tick activity in Wisconsin also began sooner than normal, with reports of tick bites increasing earlier this spring compared to recent years. This early emergence is likely linked to the combination of warmer-than-normal conditions throughout March and parts of April, along with a very wet April that supported favorable environmental conditions for tick activity.

Climate Stats by Division

Temperature (degrees Fahrenheit)

	April 2026	
Division	**Avg**	**Dept**
Northwest	43.2	1.9
North Central	43.4	3.0

Record Coolest
Bottom 1/10
Bottom 1/3
Normal
Top 1/3

Northeast	43.5	2.6
West Central	47.6	2.8
Central	48.8	4.6
East Central	46.5	3.2
Southwest	50.6	4.3
South Central	51.7	5.6
Southeast	50.4	5.0
State	46.4	3.3

Top 1/10

Record Warmest

Liquid-Equivalent Precipitation (inches)

	April 2026		**Since Nov. 1, 2025**	
Division	**Avg**	**Dept**	**Avg**	**Dept**
Northwest	4.79	1.98	10.91	1.42
North Central	5.85	2.93	14.27	3.87
Northeast	6.66	3.76	16.27	5.82
West Central	5.29	1.96	12.21	1.76
Central	8.26	4.91	16.54	5.58
East Central	7.81	4.64	16.32	4.88
Southwest	7.72	3.88	15.01	2.79
South Central	7.33	3.68	14.75	2.18
Southeast	8.93	5.26	17.82	4.76

Record Driest

Bottom 1/10

Bottom 1/3

Normal

Top 1/3

Top 1/10

Record Wettest

State	6.53	3.33	14.32	3.44

Snowfall (inches)

	April 2026	
Division	**Avg**	**Dept**
Northwest	2.6	-2.2
North Central	2.2	-4.5
Northeast	1.3	-4.9
West Central	0.1	-3.1
Central	0.0	-3.5
East Central	0.0	-3.0
Southwest	0.0	-1.9
South Central	0.0	-1.5
Southeast	0.0	-1.7
State	1.1	-3.1

Below Normal
Normal
Above Normal

Table 4. April climate statistics by Wisconsin's climate division, including average temperature in degrees Fahrenheit, liquid-equivalent precipitation (rain plus melted snow) in inches, and snowfall in inches. "Avg" indicates the observed average. "Dept" indicates the departure from the 1991 to 2020 normal. Positive departures reflect above-normal conditions, while negative departures mean below-normal conditions. The shading for temperature and liquid-equivalent precipitation depicts the rank from coolest to warmest and driest to wettest, respectively, for the entire period of record (1895 to 2026). The shading for snowfall depicts whether snowfall was above or below normal and is not based on rankings. The temperature and precipitation statistics come from NOAA's National Centers for Environmental

Information Climate at a Glance Tool. The snowfall statistics come from the State Climatology Office's statewide and divisional 12-month averages.

Monthly, seasonal, and annual temperature and precipitation values and rankings published in this report are from NOAA's National Centers for Environmental Information at the time of posting this climate summary. Values and rankings can change after publishing our climate summaries. To check the most recent values and rankings, visit NOAA's National Centers for Environmental Information Climate at a Glance Tool.

This report is a product of the Wisconsin State Climatology Office. For questions and comments, please contact us by email (stclim@aos.wisc.edu) or phone (608-263-2374).