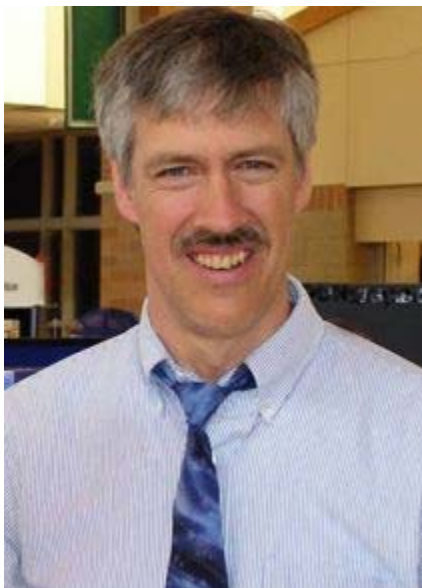


Fort Collins ends year with respectable 11.2 inches of precipitation, state climatologist says



Nolan Doesken, state climatologist and senior research associate at Colorado State University.

The snowstorms that ended 2006 improved Fort Collins' annual precipitation total to **11.2 inches** - a respectable amount, but **still nearly four inches below average**, said **Nolan Doesken**, state climatologist and senior research associate at Colorado State University.

"Even with the late-year improvements, 2006 was still 3.86 inches below average and the 17th driest year on record in the 118 years of continuous weather observations on campus," Doesken said.

The year was on track to be one of the warmest, driest ever in the Fort Collins area with only 5.47 inches of precipitation through September. Precipitation between April and September totaled only 3.39 inches - 7.44 inches below the 1971-2000 average and much less than the previous record low of 4.57 inches in 1939 and 5.04 inches in 2002.

October brought increased precipitation for 2006

Things began to change in October, which totaled 2.27 inches - 1.15 more than average. November, with 0.76 inches, was slightly above normal. Then back-to-back December snowstorms raised the December total to 2.70 inches - 2.24 inches more than average.

The blizzard that began Dec. 20 brought 19.9 inches of snow with 1.91 inches of water content followed by a storm on Dec. 28 that added 8.5 inches with 0.73 inches of moisture.

"Residents should be cautious because this snow will be with us for several weeks," Doesken said. "The storms hit during some of the shortest, coldest days of the year and the lowest sun angle, so

this snow will take a long time to melt."

2006 ended as the second warmest year on record

Ironically, the year ended as the second warmest with only September and October cooler than average. The months of January, April, May, June, August and November were all significantly warmer than average.

For the year as a whole, the average daily maximum temperature was 65.5 degrees, well above the 1971-2000 average of 62.4. The average daily minimum temperature was 37.7 degrees which was 3.9 degrees above average. The mean temperature for the entire year was 51.6 degrees, 3.5 degrees above average, making 2006 the second warmest year since 1889.

The warmest was 2005 with an average of 52.3 degrees.

Other recent years have also been very warm: 51.5 in 2003, and 51.4 in 1999 and 2000. Notably warm years also occurred in 1934 and 1954.

According to Doesken's report, Fort Collins also experienced:

- 39 days with temperatures of 90 degrees or higher
- Two days when the temperature hit 100 degrees (June 14 and July 15)
- 13 days when the temperature stayed at or below 32 degrees all day
- Five days with the temperature dropping to 0 degrees or below.
- 103 clear days, 173 partly cloudy days and 89 cloudy days
- Measurable precipitation (at least 0.01 inch) on 73 days. Only 16 days received 0.25 inches or more and 10 of those days were in the last three months of the year.

The coldest temperature of the year was minus 11 on Feb. 18, and for the first time in recorded history, Fort Collins had two days this past summer when the overnight low temperature failed to drop below 70 degrees. The low on July 17 only dropped to 73 and on July 31 the low was 76 - shattering by several degrees the record warm low for any day of the year.

With more than 200 National Weather Service official weather stations across Colorado, and with Colorado State's Agriculture Weather Network, COAGMET, the Colorado Climate Center is monitoring the state's climate very closely for additional evidence of warming over the Central Rocky Mountains and western Great Plains.

For more information on the Colorado State University **Colorado Climate Center**, <http://ccc.atmos.colostate.edu>.

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