

ILLINOIS WATER AND CLIMATE SUMMARY

February 2003

February 2003 Overview (Bob Scott)

Temperatures in Illinois during February were below average, and precipitation was near average. Soil moisture within the top 40 inches of soil was below the long-term statewide average. Mean streamflows were below median heights. Shallow groundwater levels were well below long-term average depths. Overall, water resources in Illinois remain below average levels.

**Temperatures** across Illinois (Figure 1) for February were below average (a -4.5-degree departure). Crop Reporting District (CRD) temperatures ranged from 3.9 degrees below average (northeast) to 5.3 degrees below average (east-southeast).

**Precipitation** amounts (Figure 1) for the month were near the average values for Illinois as a whole, but large regional variability was observed. The statewide average of 1.95 inches represents a +0.02-inch departure or 101 percent of average. However, CRD precipitation totals varied from 0.40 inches (northeast) to 4.82 inches (southeast), 26 to 165 percent of average, respectively. Six Illinois CRDs are experiencing moderate to severe climatological drought conditions.

**Soil moisture** near the surface at the end of February was near normal to above normal across Illinois. However, soils in much of central and northern Illinois were considerably drier in deeper layers.

**Mean provisional streamflow** statewide was below the median flow, 55 percent of median this month (Figure 1). Rivers in Illinois recorded mean discharges in the much below normal to much above normal range. Peak stages recorded were well below flood stage at stations on the Illinois River and at stations along the Illinois border on the Mississippi River. Conversely, the peak stage recorded on the Ohio River at Cairo was above flood stage.

**Water surface levels** at the end of February were below the normal pool/target operating level at 14 of the 36 reporting reservoirs. Water surface levels at Lake Shelbyville, Carlyle Lake, and Rend Lake were at or above target operating levels. **Lake Michigan's** mean level remains below the long-term average and was just 0.4 feet above the long-term record low level for February.

Statewide, **shallow groundwater levels** were below average levels for February by 2.0 feet. Deviations from January's levels averaged 0.9 feet higher and were approximately 2.9 feet below February levels one year ago.

*Note: Extended network descriptions appear in the January and July issues. Network maps are available upon request.*

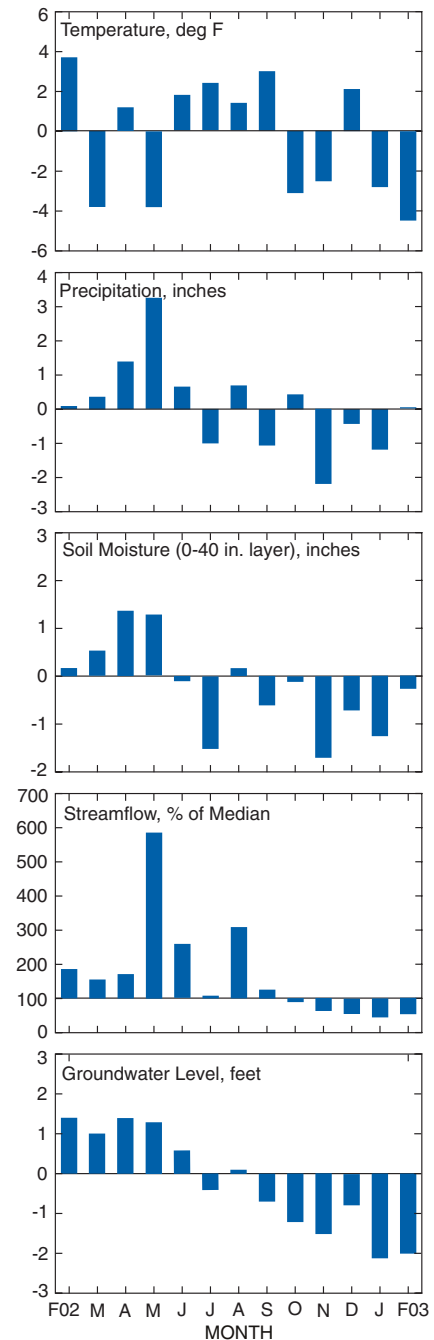


Figure 1. Statewide departures from normal

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## Weather/Climate Information (Jim Angel and Bob Scott)

**Temperatures** across Illinois for February were colder than average across the state (Figure 2 and Table 1), the 28th coldest February since 1895. The warmest reading, 67°F, was reported on February 3 at Grand Tower. The coldest reading, -10°F, was observed on February 25 at Mundelein. Maintaining the relatively cold pattern observed in four of the last five months, this was the 29th coldest December–February and the 25th coldest September–February since 1895.

**Precipitation** for February was near average statewide (Figure 2 and Table 1), but considerable regional variability existed. The northeast CRD was the driest for the month (0.40 inches, 26 percent of average) while the southeast CRD was the wettest (4.82 inches, 165 percent of average). Grayville in southeastern Illinois reported the highest daily precipitation amount, 1.26 inches on February 23, and the highest monthly total, 6.30 inches. Overall, the relatively dry precipitation of recent months continued. This was the 22nd driest December–February and the 15th driest September–February in Illinois since 1895.

The core of these dry conditions was centered over the two northern CRDs. The northwest CRD experienced the 11th driest February, the 2nd driest December–February, and the driest September–February since 1895. The northeast CRD experienced the 6th driest February and December–February, and the 3rd driest September–February.

Precipitation over the last six months varied between 50 and 56 percent of average in four northern CRDs, placing these districts in a severe climatological drought. Precipitation in two central Illinois districts varied between 56 and 70 percent of their average 6-month totals, earning a moderate drought definition. Impacts of these low totals on other water resources in Illinois are lessened because deficient rainfall and snowfall accumulations have occurred primarily outside the growing season, during months that normally have relatively low precipitation amounts. Existing conditions in these areas are noteworthy, however, because Illinois will soon enter the growing season.

Snowfall totals were above average in southern and central Illinois, but below average in the northern third of the state, especially in the northeast CRD (Figure 2). While southern Illinois generally reported sizeable snowfall totals, Sidell (Vermillion County) reported the highest snowfall for February, 18.9 inches, followed by Galesburg, 18.0 inches, and Grayville, 17.9 inches. Concurrently, northeastern Illinois sites received little snow. For example, Antioch reported only 1.9 inches of snow in February compared to an average of 8.8 inches.

**Severe weather** was rare and somewhat unusual during February. Trees, power lines, and street lights were downed by strong winds within a thunder snowstorm in Marshall, Peoria, Tazewell, and Woodford Counties on February 11. A peak wind gust of 62 mph was reported in Roanoke. Small 0.75-inch hail was reported near Lexington, Illinois (no damage) on February 22.

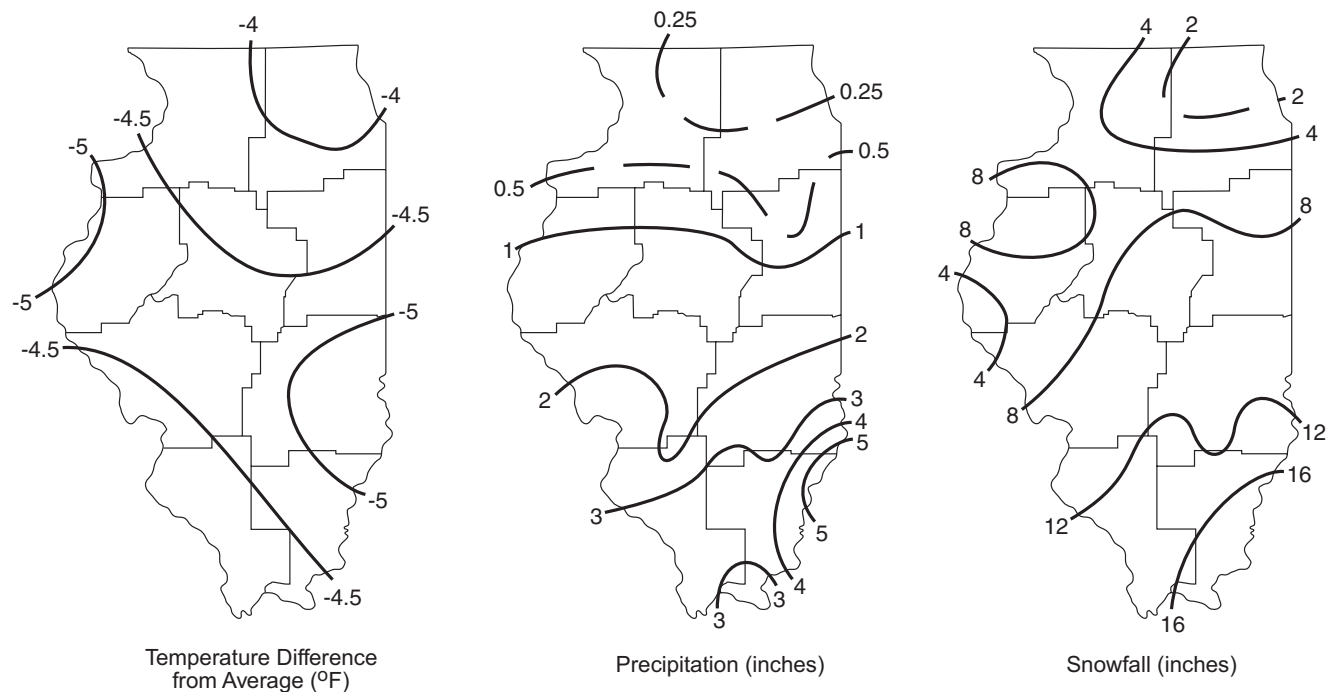


Figure 2. Illinois temperature, precipitation, and snowfall during February 2003

**Table 1. Illinois Precipitation (inches) and Temperature (°F) by Crop Reporting District**

Crop Reporting District	Last Month			Last 3 Months			Last 6 Months			Last 12 Months		
	Feb 03 Amount	% Avg	Temp Dev	Dec 02- Feb 03	% Avg	Temp Dev	Sep 02- Feb 03	% Avg	Temp Dev	Mar 02- Feb 03	% Avg	Temp Dev
Northwest	0.46	32	-4.2	1.85	38	-0.1	6.93	51	-0.3	32.13	89	-0.3
Northeast	0.40	26	-3.9	2.15	39	-0.9	7.19	50	-0.7	30.15	82	-0.4
West	1.40	85	-4.8	3.54	66	-1.0	7.78	53	-1.1	35.07	94	-0.8
Central	1.22	72	-4.5	3.48	60	-1.3	7.42	50	-1.2	32.95	89	-0.8
East	1.34	79	-4.3	3.75	62	-1.9	8.70	58	-1.5	34.30	91	-1.1
West-southwest	2.18	113	-4.6	4.86	75	-1.7	10.99	70	-1.5	40.31	107	-0.8
East-southeast	2.76	121	-5.3	6.20	80	-2.7	13.83	78	-1.6	41.97	102	-0.5
Southwest	3.95	156	-4.3	9.19	108	-2.2	17.88	94	-1.3	43.54	102	-0.3
Southeast	4.82	165	-4.6	11.38	119	-2.5	21.72	109	-1.2	47.80	107	0.1
<b>State Average</b>	<b>1.95</b>	<b>101</b>	<b>-4.5</b>	<b>4.89</b>	<b>75</b>	<b>-1.6</b>	<b>11.01</b>	<b>69</b>	<b>-1.2</b>	<b>37.29</b>	<b>96</b>	<b>-0.6</b>

**Note:** Data are provisional. Complete, quality-controlled data are available about six months after a given month.

**Illinois Climate Network (ICN) Data.** Average daily wind speeds across Illinois for February (Figure 3) ranged from 5 mph at Dixon Springs to 12 mph at Stelle. The highest wind gust for the month, 52 mph on February 11, occurred at Stelle, Bondville, and Monmouth. The prevailing wind direction during February was from the northwest to north-northwest across the state. Wind speeds in excess of 8 mph reflected a seasonal maximum and varied from 124 hours at Rend Lake to 458 hours at Stelle. (February has 672 hours.)

Average air temperatures ranged from 21°F at Freeport to 34°F at Dixon Springs. Solar radiation totals in February in Illinois ranged from 219 Mega-Joules per meter squared (MJ/m<sup>2</sup>) at Dixon Springs to 312 MJ/m<sup>2</sup> at Monmouth. Potential evapotranspiration was seasonally low, varying between 1.1 inches at Dixon Springs and 1.4 inches at Monmouth. Soil temperatures at both the 4- and 8-inch levels ranged from the upper 20s across northern Illinois to the upper 30s across southern Illinois.

**Extended climate outlooks** issued by the U.S. Department of Commerce, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, Climate Prediction Center for March call for a slight to moderate chance of above normal temperatures over northern Illinois and a slight chance of below normal precipitation over eastern Illinois. Outlooks for climatological spring (March–May) call for equal chances of above, below, and normal temperatures across the state and a slight chance of below normal precipitation over eastern Illinois.

### Soil Moisture Information (Bob Scott)

Precipitation for February was below average across northern Illinois and above average in the south, creating near normal to above normal soil moisture conditions for this time of year across the state in the 0- to 6-inch layer (Figure 4). Site values ranged from 86 percent of normal at Stelle to 160 percent of normal at Champaign. However, below average precipitation totals in northern and central Illinois over the last several months have created drier regional conditions in deeper layers. At the end of February, an area of dry soils stretched across northern Illinois throughout the deepest three layers. Dryness also was observed in central Illinois primarily in the deepest layer. Conditions in the 6- to 20- and 20- to 40-inch layers were driest at DeKalb (65 and 30 percent of normal, respectively). However, in the 40- to 72-inch layer, less than 25 percent of normal moisture was measured at Peoria. Conversely, soil moisture in southern Illinois was generally near normal in all layers and well above normal in deeper layers in far southern Illinois. Values totaled 175 to 200 percent of normal at Rend Lake in the 20- to 40- and 40- to 72-inch layers, respectively. Nevertheless, statewide soil moisture in Illinois at the end of February was below normal (Figure 1).

Compared to last month, soil moisture increased in all layers (Table 2). Increases in the 0- to 6-inch layer were 15 to 35 percent across the state. Increases in the 6- to 20-inch layer were universal as well, and generally ranged from 10 to 25 percent. Soil moisture changes in the 20- to 40-inch layer maximized in south-central Illinois (a 22-percent increase at Brownstown), but changes in most other regions were less than 10 percent.

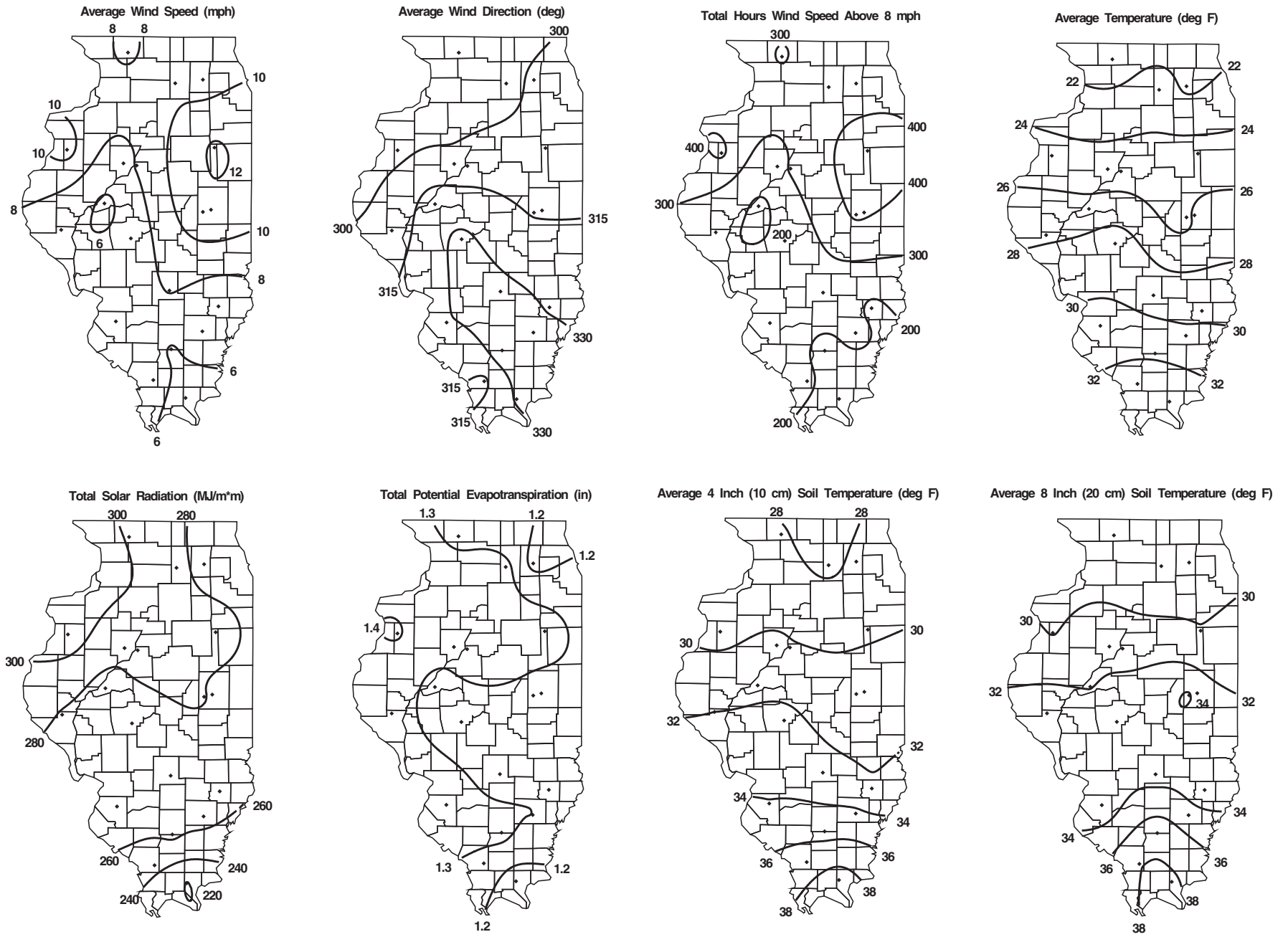


Figure 3. February monthly averages and totals as collected by the Illinois Climate Network



Figure 4. March 1 observed percent-of-normal soil moisture based on 1985-1995 mean

**Table 2. Soil Moisture in Various Layers on March 1, 2003**

<i>Location</i>	<i>Mar 1 0 - 6 (inches)</i>	<i>Change from Feb 1 (%)</i>	<i>Mar 1 6 - 20 (inches)</i>	<i>Change from Feb 1 (%)</i>	<i>Mar 1 20 - 40 (inches)</i>	<i>Change from Feb 1 (%)</i>
Freeport (NW)	2.3	10	4.3	3	5.7	-4
DeKalb (NE)	2.3	20	4.2	14	5.7	-2
Monmouth (W)	2.4	33	4.2	3	5.9	0
East Peoria (C)	2.2	19	5.0	7	7.1	-2
Topeka (C)	1.8	37	2.7	14	3.4	10
Stelle (E)	2.2	18	4.8	1	6.2	-1
Champaign (E)	2.9	27	5.1	3	6.2	1
Bondville (E)	2.7	36	5.0	11	7.8	-1
Perry (WSW)	2.5	2	5.3	2	7.8	0
Springfield (WSW)	2.4	7	5.1	11	7.7	17
Brownstown (ESE)	2.5	14	4.4	24	8.1	22
Olney (ESE)	2.9	20	4.8	10	7.1	4
Belleville (SW)	2.3	16	5.3	23	8.6	16
Carbondale (SW)	2.9	32	5.8	17	8.1	2
Ina (SE)	3.1	13	6.0	21	8.3	8
Fairfield (SE)	3.0	25	5.5	15	7.5	3
Dixon Springs (SE)	2.8	19	5.6	11	8.3	1

### Surface Water Information (Sally McConkey)

**River and stream discharge and stage data** are obtained from gaging stations operated by the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) or the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE). The USGS gaging station network is supported in part by the Illinois Department of Natural Resources, Office of Water Resources and the Illinois State Water Survey, and the USACE. Provisional discharge data are obtained from direct computer access to the USGS.

Table 3 lists selected streamgaging stations located on the Illinois, Mississippi, and Ohio Rivers, flood stage, and the provisional peak stage for the current month. The peak stage is determined from the daily morning reading posted by the National Weather Service and/or the USACE. Stations on the Illinois River recorded peak stage below flood stage this month. Similarly, stations on the Mississippi River along the Illinois border recorded peak stages below flood stage. Due to low water levels at St. Louis (peak stage -0.1 feet), a 20-barge limit restriction has been placed on all tows. Barge draft can be only 8.5 feet instead of 9 to 10 feet. When the stage is at -2.5 feet and below, a 16-barge limit is in effect. At stages -4.0 feet and below, an 8.0-foot draft restriction is in place. All navigation halts at stages -4.5 feet and below. Historically, low water events on the Mississippi River at St. Louis include: -6.1 feet on 01/16/1940, -5.7 feet on 01/26/1963, -5.1 feet on 12/26/1989, and -5.0 feet on 12/12/1937. In contrast to the Mississippi River, the Ohio River at Cairo peaked 6 feet above flood stage on the last day of the month.

Table 4 lists 26 streamgaging stations located throughout Illinois. Provisional monthly mean flows posted by the USGS are listed if available; otherwise, daily mean discharge data posted by the USGS were used to estimate the mean flow for the month. Long-term mean flows for each month are published by the USGS. The month's median flow for each station listed in Table 4 was determined by ranking the February mean flow for each year of record and selecting the middle value, 50 percent exceedence probability.

**Mean provisional flow** statewide was below the median this month (55 percent of the median) and below the mean (39 percent of the mean). Throughout much of northern and central Illinois, flows were below normal to much below normal. Flows were in the normal range at: Kankakee River at Momence, Fox River at Dayton, Bear Creek near Marceline, and Macoupin Creek near Kane. In dramatic contrast to the northern two-thirds of the state, river flows in southern Illinois were in the normal to above normal range. The Cache River at Forman, which joins the Ohio River above Cairo, recorded a mean flow much above normal.

**Water-Supply Lakes and Major Reservoirs.** Table 5 lists reservoirs in Illinois, their normal pool or target water surface elevation, and other data related to observed variations in water surface elevations. Reservoir levels are

**Table 3. Peak Stages for Major Rivers, February 2003**

<i>River</i>	<i>Station</i>	<i>River mile*</i>	<i>Flood stage (feet)*</i>	<i>Peak stage (feet)**</i>	<i>Date</i>
Illinois	Morris	263.1	13	5.2	12
	La Salle	224.7	20	11.9	08
	Peoria	164.6	18	12.3	03
	Havana	119.6	14	6.0	22
	Beardstown	88.6	14	9.7	22
	Hardin	21.5	25	20.1	16
Mississippi	Dubuque	579.9	17	8.2	26
	Keokuk	364.2	16	3.0	07
	Quincy	325.0	17	11.9	18
	Grafton	218.0	18	16.2	16
	St. Louis	180.0	30	-0.1	23
	Chester	109.9	27	4.3	23
	Thebes	43.7	33	17.7	28
Ohio	Cairo	2.0	40	46.0	28

**Notes:**

\*River mile and flood stage from *River Stages in Illinois: Flood and Damage Data*, Illinois Department of Natural Resources, Office of Water Resources, July 1998.

\*\*Peak stage based on daily a.m. readings, not instantaneous peak.

reported in terms of their difference from normal pool (or target level). Reservoir levels are obtained from a network of cooperating reservoir operators who are contacted each month by Water Survey staff for the current water levels. The average of the month-end readings for the period of record is reported in terms of the difference from normal pool or target level in column 6 of Table 5. The number of years of record for each reservoir is given in column 7. Most of the reservoirs listed in Table 5 serve as public water supplies with the exceptions noted in the last column.

Compared to levels at the end of January at 34 reservoirs, the water surface elevations at the end of February had risen at 23 reservoirs, remained the same as last month at 8 reservoirs, and decreased at 3 reservoirs. For the 36 reservoirs reporting at the end of February, 9 reservoirs had water surface levels above the normal pool (or target operating level), 13 reservoirs were at normal pool, and 14 reservoirs were below normal pool. Five reservoirs were 3 feet or more below normal/target pool compared to 8 reservoirs last month.

The water level at Kinkaid reservoir has been lowered to accommodate spillway work and is expected to remain at a reduced level until March. Water levels at White Hall reservoir no longer will be reported in Table 5. This reservoir has not been used for public water supply since 1997, and staff are no longer taking readings. Starting in January 2003, data for Sorento reservoir were removed from Table 5, but a record of occasional observations will be maintained in Water Survey data files.

*Major Reservoirs.* Water levels were the same as at the end of last month at Lake Shelbyville and increased slightly at Carlyle Lake. The water level at Rend Lake increased 2.5 feet from the level reported at the end of January.

**Great Lakes.** Current month mean and end-of-month values are provisional and are relative to International Great Lakes Datum 1985. The February mean level for Lake Michigan was 576.6 feet, compared to a mean level of 577.3 feet in 2002. The long-term average lake level for February is 578.5 feet, based on 1918–1998 data. Historically, the lowest mean level for Lake Michigan in February occurred in 1964 at 576.1 feet, and the highest level occurred in 1986 at 581.1 feet. The month-end level of Lake Michigan was 576.5 feet, only 0.4 feet higher than the record low.

**Table 4. Provisional Mean Flows, February 2003**

Station	Drainage area (sq mi)	Years of record	2003 mean flow (cfs)	<u>Long-term flows</u>		Flow condition	Percent chance of exceedence	Days of data this month
				Mean*	Median			
Rock River at Rockton	6,363	67	2,480	3,887	3,346	below normal	74	24
Rock River near Joslin	9,549	59	3,321	6,450	5,538	below normal	77	28
Pecatonica River at Freeport	1,326	83	557	1,127	909	below normal	76	28
Green River near Geneseo	1,003	63	251	769	720	below normal	86	26
Edwards River near New Boston	445	64	33	375	311	much below normal	97	28
Kankakee River at Momence	2,294	84	2,696	2,503	2,491	normal	44	28
Iroquois River near Chebanse	2,091	78	595	2,541	2,180	below normal	80	28
Fox River at Dayton	2,642	82	1,433	2,079	1,700	normal	55	28
Vemilion River at Pontiac	579	58	27	513	363	much below normal	90	28
Spoon River at Seville	1,636	85	233	1,474	1,357	much below normal	91	26
LaMoine River at Ripley	1,293	78	236	1,057	762	below normal	80	26
Bear Creek near Marceline	349	57	90	270	168	normal	69	28
Mackinaw River near Congerville	767	53	27	641	531	much below normal	93	28
Salt Creek near Greenview	1,804	60	414	1,682	1,349	below normal	81	28
Sangamon River at Monticello	550	89	33	580	434	much below normal	92	28
South Fork Sangamon near Rochester	867	52	25	888	601	much below normal	94	28
Illinois River at Valley City	26,743	63	6,194	24,730	23,032	much below normal	97	28
Macoupin Creek near Kane	868	73	369	754	455	normal	55	28
Vemilion River near Danville	1,290	58	381	1,431	1,056	below normal	77	27
Kaskaskia River at Vandalia	1,940	32	322	2,750	2,091	much below normal	94	28
Shoal Creek near Breese	735	58	227	920	536	below normal	75	28
Embarras River at Ste. Marie	1,516	88	314	1,936	1,580	below normal	84	28
Skillet Fork at Wayne City	464	82	851	648	481	above normal	30	28
Little Wabash below Clay City	1,131	87	1,113	1,529	1,102	normal	49	25
Big Muddy at Plumfield	794	87	606	1,054	941	normal	60	25
Cache River at Forman	244	78	1,008	1,813	434	much above normal	8	28

**Notes:**

Much below normal flow = 90-100% chance of exceedence.

Below normal flow = 70-90% chance of exceedence.

Normal flow = 30-70% chance of exceedence.

Above normal flow = 10-30% chance of exceedence.

Much above normal flow = 0-10% chance of exceedence.

\*As reported in U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) Water Resources Data, Illinois, Water Year 2001.

**Table 5. Reservoir Levels in Illinois, January 2003**

**For security considerations, statewide tabular reservoir data are not available on the Internet. Specific data requests may be made to Sally McConkey at: [sally@sws.uiuc.edu](mailto:sally@sws.uiuc.edu).**

## Groundwater Information (Ken Hlinka)

**Comparison to Average Levels.** Shallow groundwater levels in 15 observation wells, which are remote from pumping centers, were below average levels for February by 2.0 feet and ranged from 7.0 feet below average to 0.9 feet above average (Table 6). All but extreme northwestern and southeastern Illinois recorded below normal levels. One well, Fermi Lab (DuPage County), reported its all time lowest water level for its period of record.

**Comparison to Previous Month.** Shallow groundwater levels in February were above those of January. Levels averaged 0.9 feet above those of last month and ranged from 0.8 feet lower to 3.5 feet higher. The entire southern half of Illinois reported levels above those of last month.

**Comparison to Same Month, Previous Year.** Shallow groundwater levels in February were below levels of February 2002. Levels averaged 2.9 feet lower and ranged from 13.1 feet lower to 2.4 feet above levels of last year.

**Table 6. Month-End Shallow Groundwater Level Data Sites, February 2003**

Number	Well name	County	Well depth (feet)	This month's reading (depth to water, feet)	Deviation from			
					15-year avg. level (feet)	Period of record avg. (feet)	Previous month (feet)	Previous year (feet)
1	Galena	JoDaviess	25.00	21.27	+0.34	+0.51	-0.18	+0.69
2	Mt. Morris	Ogle	55.00	26.20	-7.57	-6.17	-0.79	N/A
3	Crystal Lake	McHenry	18.00	6.82	-2.27	-1.54	-0.24	N/A
4	Cambridge	Henry	42.00	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
5	Fermi Lab	DuPage	17.00	11.80	-6.37	-6.37	-0.43	-8.89
6	Good Hope	McDonough	30.00	11.22	-2.58	-3.99	-0.18	NA
7	Snicarte	Mason	42.00	38.13	-0.65	-0.85	-0.19	-0.75
8	Coffman	Pike	28.00	14.06	-4.81	-2.99	+0.92	-6.05
9	Greenfield	Greene	20.70	16.35	-6.86	-7.01	+1.01	-13.06
10	Janesville	Cumberland	11.00	5.35	-0.91	-0.77	+0.88	-1.71
11	St. Peter	Fayette	15.00	1.23	+0.23	+0.48	+2.40	-0.15
12	SWS #2	St. Clair	80.00	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
13	Boyleston	Wayne	23.00	1.28	+0.55	+0.83	+2.59	+0.59
14	Sparta	Randolph	27.00	7.47	-2.50	-1.39	+1.72	-3.61
15	SE College	Saline	10.19	0.44	+0.99	+0.94	+3.54	+2.35
16	Dixon Springs	Pope	8.63	1.14	+0.61	+0.54	+1.50	+0.24
17	Bondville	Champaign	21.00	4.71	-1.96	-1.93	+1.26	-3.91
<b>Averages</b>					<b>-2.25</b>	<b>-1.98</b>	<b>+0.92</b>	<b>-2.86</b>

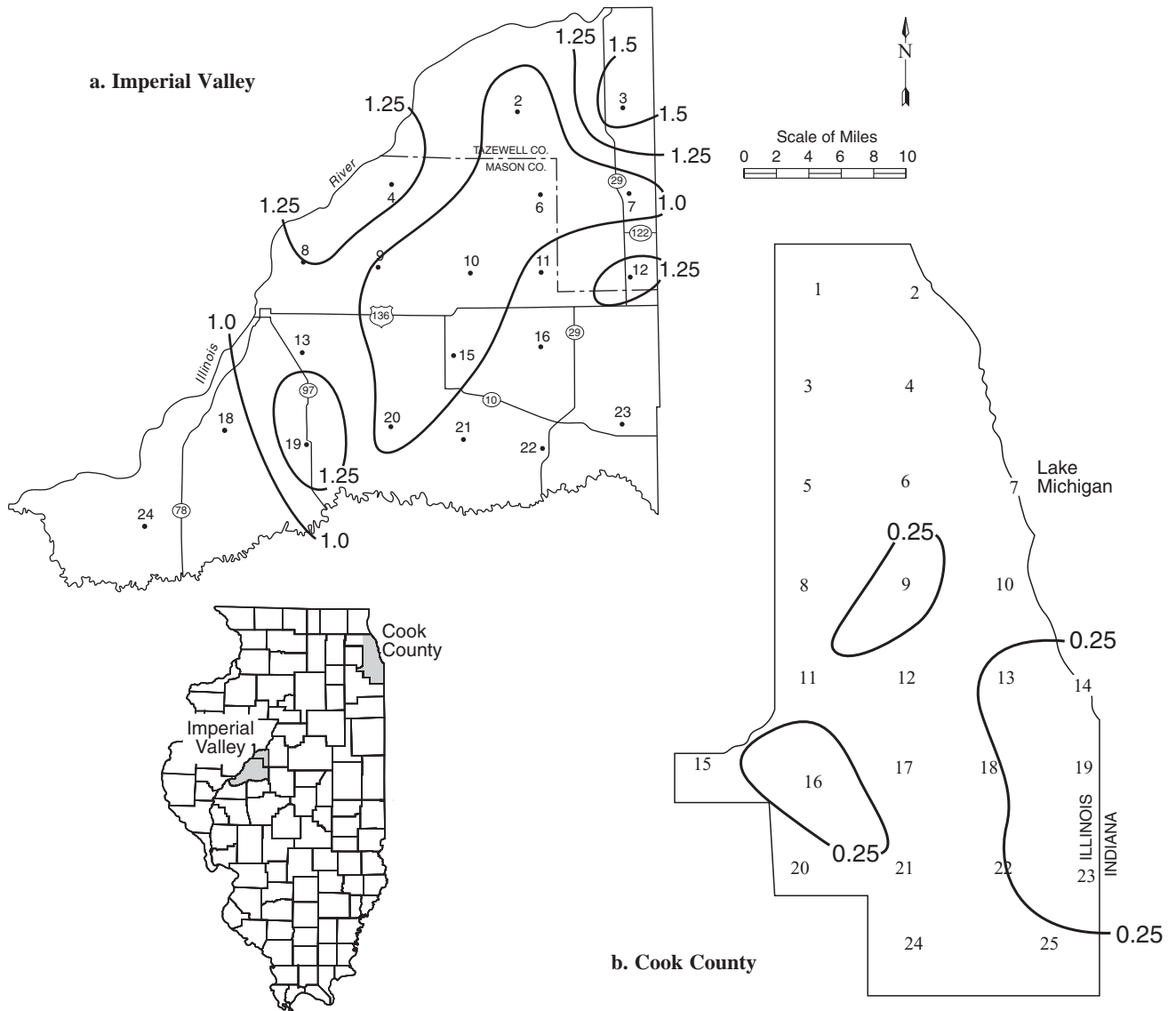
**Note:**  
NA - Data not available

## Addendum

### Long-Term Precipitation Networks (Nancy Westcott)

**Imperial Valley Precipitation.** February 2003 precipitation amounts (Figure 5a) were light. Gage amounts were heaviest in the southwestern and northeastern portions of the network, and precipitation was lightest in the central region of the network. Individual gage totals ranged from 1.56 inches at site # 3 to 0.91 inches at sites #2, #6, and #10. The 30-year, 1971-2000, average precipitation amounts for February at Havana and Mason City are 1.94 and 1.53 inches, respectively. The February 2003 network average of 1.09 inches is about 59 percent of the 10-year (1993–2002) IVWA February network average of 1.86 inches.

**Cook County Precipitation.** February 2003 precipitation amounts (Figure 5b) were extremely light. Precipitation was heaviest in the southern half of the network, and lightest in the northern portion of the network. Precipitation values ranged from 0.34 inches at site #19 (Avenue O) to 0.04 inches at site #1 (Northbrook). The February 2003 network average of 0.19 inches is about 10 percent of the thirteen-year (1990–2002) February network average of 1.88 inches.



**Figure 5. Long-term raingage network precipitation totals (inches) for February 2003**

Data sources for information in this publication include the following:

CPC - Climate Prediction Center, <http://www.cpc.ncep.noaa.gov/products/predictions/>

ISWS - Illinois State Water Survey, <http://www.sws.uiuc.edu/>

MRCC - Midwestern Regional Climate Center, <http://mrcc.sws.uiuc.edu/>

NCDC - National Climate Data Center, <http://www.ncdc.noaa.gov/>

NWS - National Weather Service, <http://www.nws.noaa.gov/>

USACE - U.S. Army Corp of Engineers, <http://water.mvr.usace.army.mil/>

USGS - U.S. Geological Survey, <http://water.usgs.gov/>

WARM - Water and Atmospheric Resources Monitoring Program, <http://www.sws.uiuc.edu/warm/>

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