TEAM KENTUCKY
ENERGY AND ENVIRONMENT CABINET

MONTHLY WATER RESOURCE REPORT

Kentucky Division of Water
Water Supply Section

February 2026

Precipitation

Much like the previous three months, precipitation in February was below normal for Kentucky. The month started out cold with a snow/ice pack on the ground across much of the state. The middle of the month featured two precipitation events, which brought the most significant precipitation to southern and eastern Kentucky. These were the only notable widespread precipitation events during the month. The driest conditions were in western Kentucky, where numerous locations recorded less than 1 inch of precipitation. Johnson County was the only location that averaged above normal precipitation for the month.

Preliminary data shows the Commonwealth averaged 1.68 inches of precipitation in February, 2.18 inches below normal. This was the 12th driest February on record. Paducah officially ended the month with the driest winter (December through February) in recorded history, recording only 3.27 inches of precipitation. That is only 27% of the normal winter precipitation. It was also the 4th driest winter on record for the entire state with only 6.12" inches of precipitation, 5.88 inches below normal.

As of the March 3rd U.S. Drought Monitor, parts of western Kentucky were depicted as being in Moderate Drought (D1) or Abnormally Dry (D0).

According to the Kentucky Mesonet, Johnson County recorded the highest monthly rainfall at 4.00 inches, while Henderson County had the lowest at 0.35 inches.

Table 1. *Regional precipitation patterns.*

Climate Region	Departure From Normal (inches)					Palmer Drought Severity Index*
	This Month	Past 2 Mos.	Past 3 Mos	Past 6 Mos	Past 12 Mos	
Western	-3.12	-4.90	-8.00	-7.59	0.24	-0.63
Central	-2.39	-3.47	-5.59	-4.21	3.86	0.54
Bluegrass	-2.17	-3.37	-4.68	-2.41	3.47	0.92
Eastern	-1.33	-1.80	-3.84	-2.42	-0.09	-0.11

*4.0 and above (Extremely Moist)
3.0 to 3.9 (Very Moist Spell)
2.0 to 2.9 (Unusual Moist Spell)
-1.9 to 1.9 (Near Normal)
-2.0 to -2.9 (Moderate Drought)
-3.0 to -3.9 (Severe Drought)
-4.0 or less (Extreme Drought)

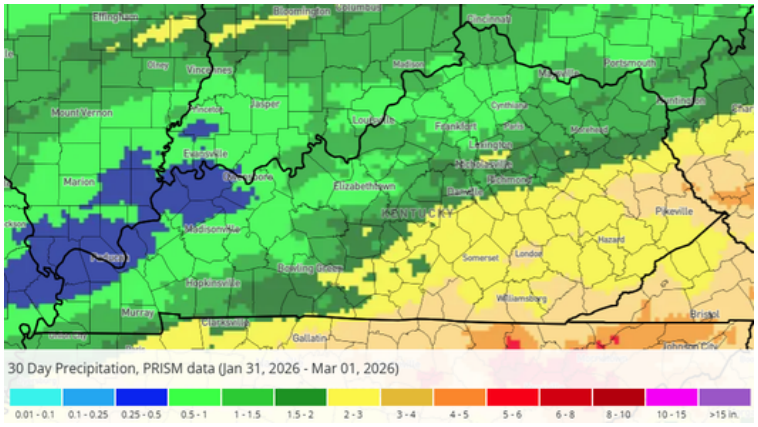

Figure 1. *Monthly precipitation map.*

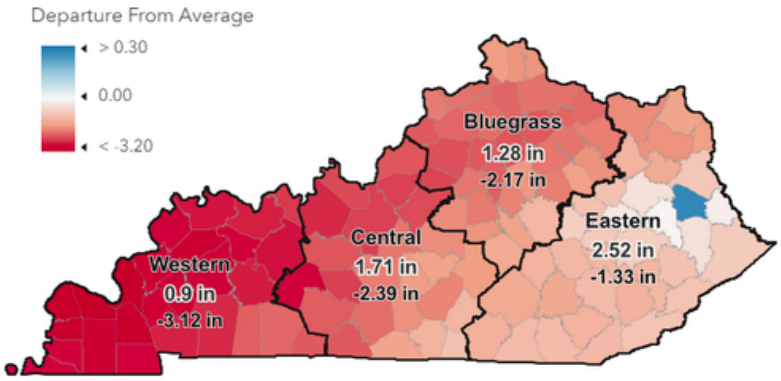

Figure 2. *Departure from normal precipitation by county and climate division.*

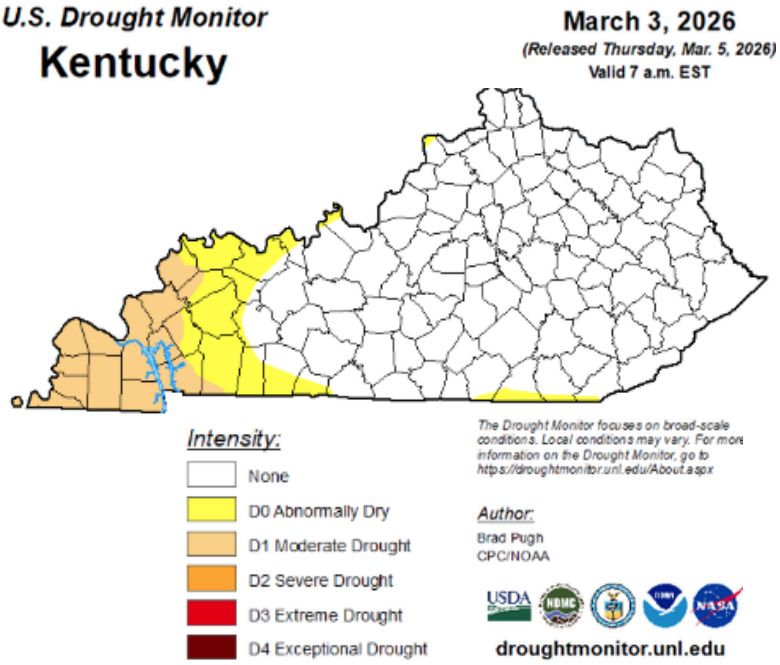

Figure 3. *Current US Drought Monitor Map.*

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Streamflow

Streamflow in February started the month low due to the cold and ice. As temperatures warmed during the second week of the month, streamflows returned and spiked in many locations due to snow melt. Despite the dry conditions this month, flows across much of the state remained at or near normal. This was due to timely precipitation and good soil moisture levels. The time of year also helped as the low evapotranspiration rates limit water loss, dampening the impacts of the below normal precipitation.

Flows in western Kentucky, especially in the Purchase Region and Tradewater River watershed finished the month below normal. Despite the below normal flows, there are no concerns. Average flows this time of year are significantly higher than they are in summer and fall. However, as we move into the growing season, we will need increased precipitation rates to prevent conditions from worsening.

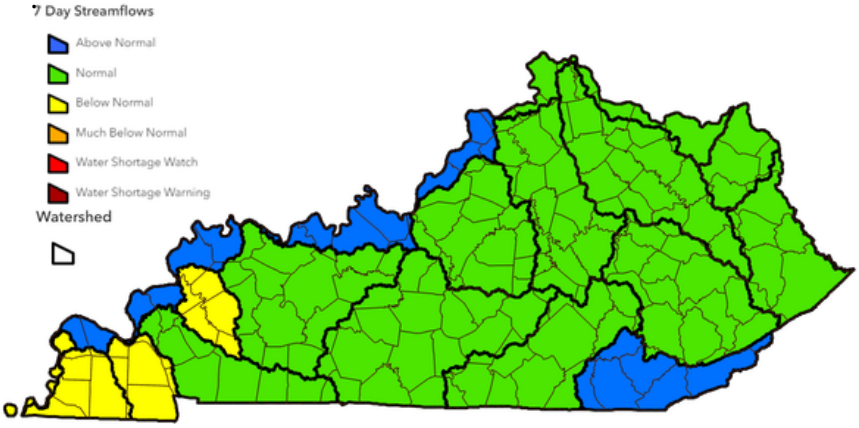

Figure 5. *Average streamflow by watershed over the past 7-days (February 22-28).*

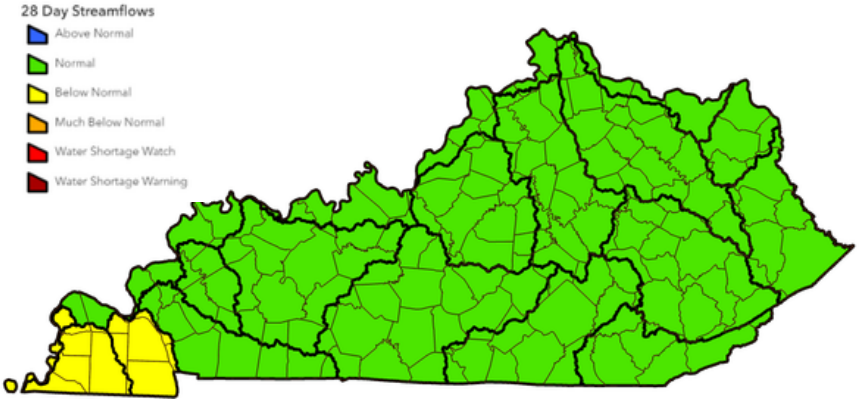

Figure 6. *Average streamflow by watershed over the past 28-days (February 1-28).*

Table 2. *Mean Stream Discharge select stream gages.*

River and Location	Drainage Area (mi2)	7 Day Average Flow (cfs)	7 Day % of Normal*	28 Day Average Flow (cfs)	28 Day % of Normal*
Levisa Fork at Pikeville	2,144	1537.5	121	1,379	102
Little Sandy River near Grayson	400	445	134	612	133
Licking River at Blue Lick Springs	1,785	4080	174	3419	139.0
North Fork Kentucky River at Jackson	1,101	1620	136	1759	137
Kentucky River at Lock 10	2,950	1,939	32	2,654	44
Cumberland River at Cumberland Falls	1,977	5,566	195	3,902	126
Beaver Creek near Monticello	43	70	149	54	105
Beech Fork at Bardstown	669	636	73	1225	132
Barren River at Bowling Green	1,849	1,893	82	2,501	102
Green River at Calhoun	7,566	10,551	108	11,366	109
Tradewater River at Olney	255	55	18	207	62
Clarks River at Almo	134	31	19	46	26
Bayou De Chien near Clinton	69	29	32	40	41
Ohio River at Greenup Dam	62,000	131,271	163	85,307	102
Ohio River at Cannelton Dam	97,000	268,200	221	145,950	116
Mississippi River @ Thebes, IL	713,200	110,875	44	95,738	38

* Base Period 1980-2023

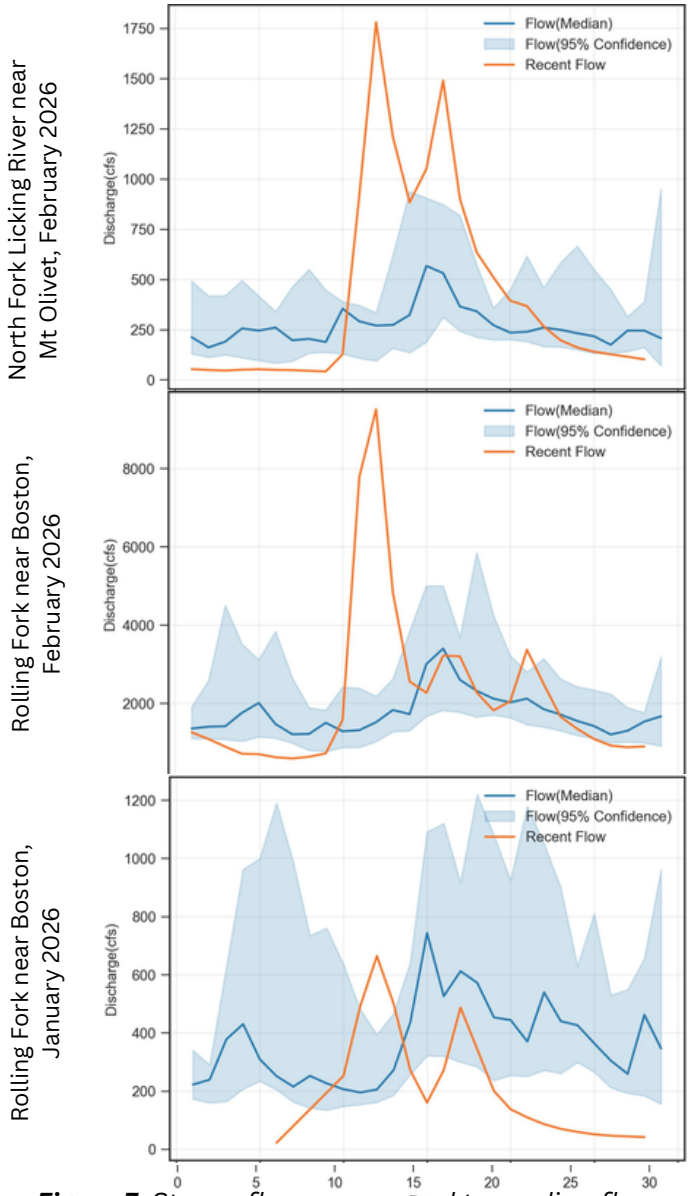

Figure 7. *Streamflows compared to median flows for the month.*

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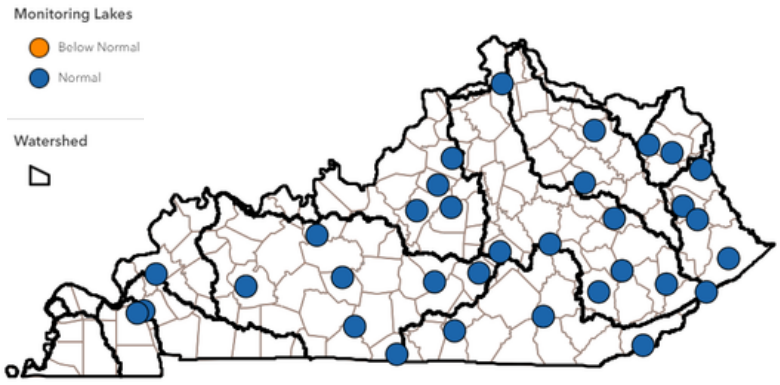
Reservoir Storage

Reservoir storage for water supply lakes remain normal for the entire state.

We are in the time of year when reservoirs typically recharge, as inflow increases and outpaces withdrawals and evaporation. The drier conditions limited this recharge. Reservoirs have continued to recharge, but at a slower rate. The recharge stage should continue until late spring and into summer, leaving plenty of time for reservoirs to return to normal pool.

There are no concerns with reservoir water supplies and none are expected to develop at this time.

Figure 8. *Locations of reference reservoirs across the state. Status of reservoir levels indicated by color.*



Groundwater

General Statement: Kentucky is a geologically, and hydrogeologically, diverse state. Groundwater data is limited in availability and where available may only be applicable to the immediate area given regional geologic variability. Local conditions may not be accurately reflected by the reference locations selected and local rainfall and surface water conditions may provide additional or more representative information. Current data is compared to a 30-year reference period (1980 – 2010) or the longest available period of continuous data.

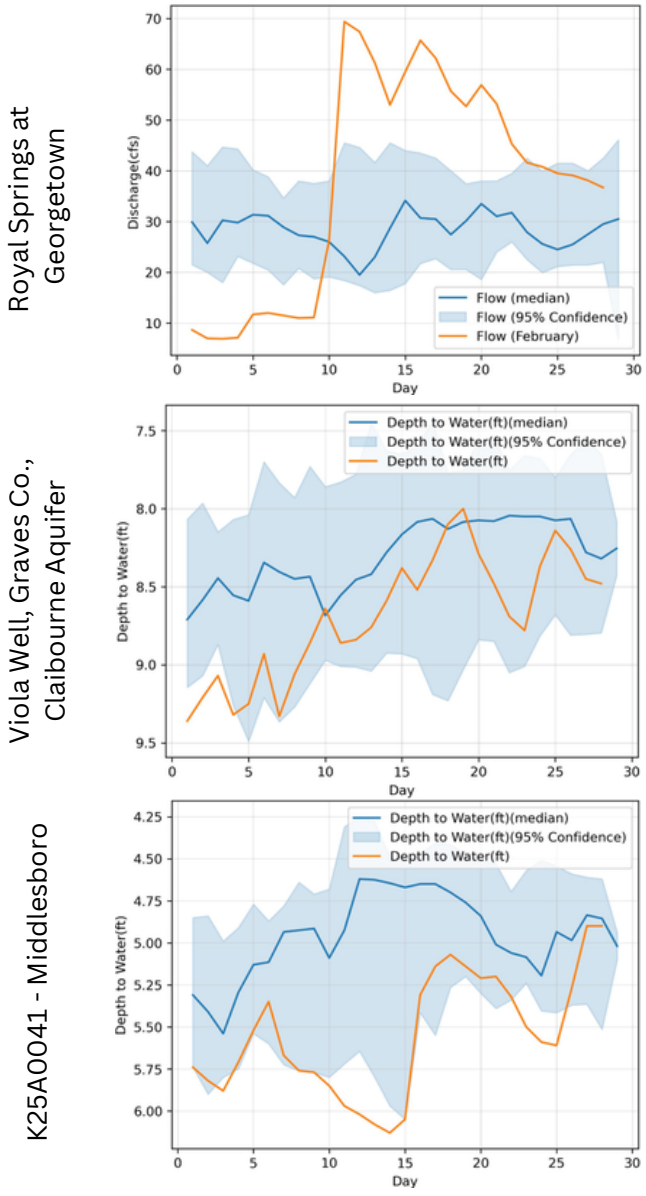
Inner Bluegrass: Flow at Royal Springs (Scott Co.) rose rapidly following snowmelt and rainfall and remained above the reference across the month. Peak flow occurred February 11th and ended the month above 35cfs.

Jackson Purchase: Following snowmelt, water levels in the Viola Well (Graves Co.) rose but remained below the reference median across the month. Groundwater levels are expected to rise following seasonal recharge but given the historical rise in groundwater levels observed, groundwater may be lower than expected for the time of year.

Middlesboro: Water levels within the Middlesboro well (Bell Co.) rose in similarly to the reference median, and rising to the reference. Overall, levels were below or at the low-end of the monthly normal but are expected to rise as spring begins.

Additional data can be found at:
https://www.uky.edu/KGS/water/water-groundwater-monitoring.php

Figure 9. *Groundwater observations compared to normal for the month.*



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Forecast

The Climate Prediction Center (CPC) is currently predicting above normal chances for above normal precipitation during March, with the highest probability being in western and northern Kentucky. The seasonal forecast (March through May) is for a slightly above normal chance for above normal precipitation for most of Kentucky. Short-term forecasts show an active pattern during the first half of March with the potential for heavy rain and even flooding. Parts of western Kentucky could receive more precipitation during the next one to two weeks than the previous three months.

The current U.S. Monthly Drought Outlook shows drought conditions in western Kentucky are not expected to improve during March.

Note: these forecasts do not provide the quantity above or below normal, just the probability it will occur.

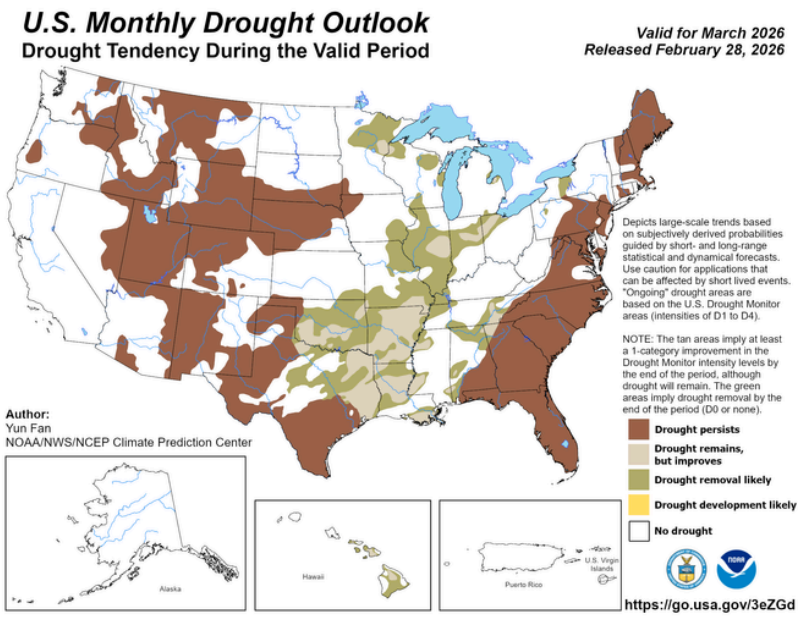

Figure 10. *Monthly drought outlook.*

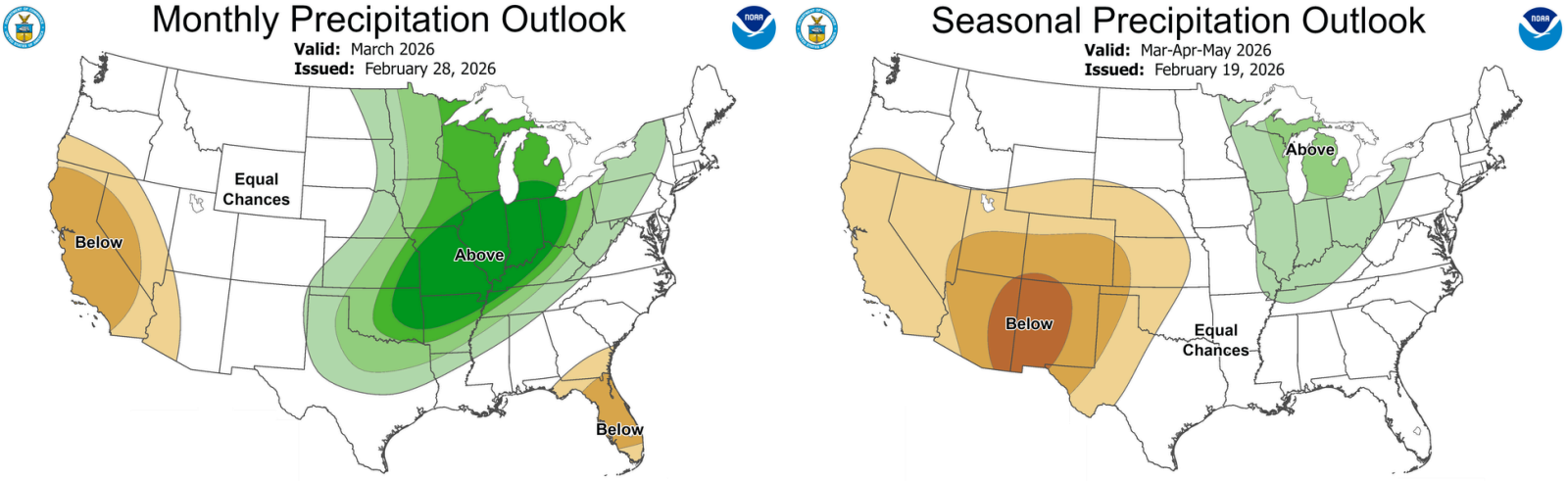

Figure 11. *Monthly and seasonal precipitation outlooks.*

Contact Us

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Report Drought Conditions

Acknowledgments

Precipitation Data:
U.S. Department of Commerce, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, National Centers for Environmental Information; Kentucky Mesonet; Midwest Regional Climate Center; Southern Regional Climate Center.

Streamflow Data:
U.S. Geological Survey, Water Resources Division.

Reservoir Data:
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Huntington, Louisville, and Nashville Districts; Kentucky Division of Water, Water Supply Section.

Forecast Data:
U.S. Department of Commerce, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, Climate Prediction Center.