

Southeast Region: (Information provided by the Southeast Regional Climate Center)

- Temperatures were above average across much of the Southeast region and Puerto Rico for the month of October. Monthly mean temperatures were at least 3 degrees F (1.7 degrees C) above average for over 60 percent of the 149 long-term (i.e., period of record equaling or exceeding 50 years) stations across the region. There were four stations that observed their warmest October on record including, Tampa, FL (1890-2020) and Clayton, NC (1955-2020). Maximum temperatures ranged from 4.9 degrees F (2.7 degrees C) above normal in Eastman, GA (1891-2020) to 2.6 degrees F (1.4 degrees C) below normal in Oneonta, AL (1894-2020). Daily temperature minimums ranged from 10 degrees F (5.6 degrees C) above normal in Marion, NC (1893-2020) to 0.6 degrees F (0.3 degrees C) below normal in Roosevelt Roads, PR (1942-2020). More than 77 percent of the long-term stations observed monthly minimum temperatures that were at least 3 degrees F (1.7 degrees C) above average. Nighttime cooling was suppressed on a number of days due to the presence of clouds and tropical moisture. Indeed, there were a few stations in Florida that saw average minimum temperatures above 75 degrees F (23 degrees C) for the month including, West Palm Beach, FL (1888-2020; 2nd warmest) at 75.8 degrees F (24 degrees C) and Miami, FL (1895-2020; 2nd warmest) at 76.8 degrees F (25 degrees C). The warmest weather of the month occurred from the 7th through the 9th, as the circulation around the Bermuda High, situated off the Atlantic coast, transported warm, humid air over much of the Southeast region. Daily maximum temperatures exceeded 80 degrees F (27 degrees C) across portions of every state, with parts of Florida exceeding 90 degrees F (32 degrees C). Indeed Tampa, FL (1890-2020), had a daily maximum temperature of 95 degrees F (35 degrees C) on the 8th setting a daily record. In contrast, the coolest weather of the month across the Southeast occurred on the 17th and 18th, as the circulation around a departing mid-latitude cyclone ushered in relatively cooler and drier air from Canada. Daily minimum temperatures fell below 40 degrees F (4.4 degrees C) across portions of every state north of Florida, with a few locations in the higher elevations of North Carolina and Virginia falling below 30 degrees F (-1.1 degrees C), prompting frost and freeze advisories. Indeed, Mt Mitchell (1925-2020) had a minimum temperature of 24 degrees F (-4.4 degrees C).
- Precipitation was variable across the Southeast region during October, with a few wet and dry extremes recorded. The driest locations were found across eastern Georgia, central South Carolina, eastern North Carolina, and the Panhandle of Florida. Monthly precipitation totals ranged from 50 to less than 25 percent of normal across these locations. Laurinburg, NC (1946-2020; 4th driest) only received 0.43 inches (11 mm) of precipitation, over 3 inches (76 mm) below normal for the month. In contrast, the wettest locations were located across central Alabama, northern Georgia, western North Carolina, and central Virginia. Precipitation totals ranged from 150 to 300 percent of normal. Indeed, Gainesville, GA (1891-2020) received 10.76 inches (273 mm) of precipitation, which was more than 6 inches (152 mm) above average, making this the 1st wettest October on record. Most of Puerto Rico and the US Virgin Islands received normal amounts of precipitation for the month. Hurricane Delta was the ninth hurricane of the Atlantic 2020 season and made landfall near Creole, LA on October 9th. From the 10th - 11th, precipitation from the remnants of Hurricane Delta impacted parts of the Southeast with numerous reports of localized flooding. Atlanta, GA (1878-2020) received 4.55 inches (116 mm) of rain from the storm in a single day, making it the 2nd wettest October day on record. Towards the end of the month Hurricane Zeta made landfall near Cocodrie, LA on October 28th, and over the next two days dropped 3-5 inches (76-127 mm) of precipitation across parts of the Southeast. Highlands, NC (1877-2020) reported 6.18 inches (157 mm) of rainfall from the storm.

- There were 30 reports of severe weather across the Southeast during October, which is 65 percent of the median monthly frequency of 46 reports during 2000-2018. There were 13 confirmed tornadoes reported for the month (9 EF-0, 4 EF-1), about 130 percent of the monthly average of 10. All of these tornadoes were associated with Hurricane Delta. The strongest of these tornadoes was rated EF-1 with winds of 105 mph (47 m/s), and occurred in Dillon County, SC on October 11th. This tornado destroyed a storage shed and snapped several large pine trees in its path. No injuries or fatalities were reported. Another EF-1 tornado with winds of 90 mph (40 m/s) occurred in Newton County, GA on October 10th. This tornado damaged the roof and walls of a homeless shelter causing 2 injuries. There were no reports of hail for the month and only 17 wind reports for the month, which is 53 percent of the average (32 reports). Hurricane Zeta made landfall near Cocodrie, LA on October 28th, with peak winds of 110 mph (49 m/s). A wind gust of 91 mph (41 m/s) was reported in Mobile, AL. Farther inland, winds gusted over 50 mph (22 m/s) in parts of northern GA, upstate SC, and NC, including a 57 mph (25 m/s) gust reported in Columbus, GA and a 55 mph (24 m/s) gust in Hickory, NC. Widespread power outages were reported with Hurricane Zeta as well as numerous reports of damaged or downed trees. Unfortunately, there were 8 fatalities from Hurricane Zeta, including in Acworth, GA where a large oak tree was uprooted and fell on a mobile home killing a man.
- The entire Southeast region and Puerto Rico remained drought-free for the month of October. At the beginning of the month, small pockets of abnormally dry conditions (D0) were found in Georgia, Alabama, and southern Puerto Rico. By the end of the month these pockets of dryness (D0) expanded slightly in Georgia, South Carolina, and southern Puerto Rico. Many farmers in the Florida Panhandle reported a loss of cotton due to the heavy rains and wind brought by Hurricane Zeta. While most peanuts were dug and harvested, many farmers in the Panhandle also noted fungal issues. Growers had to irrigate the groves, as modest amounts of precipitation fell in the citrus growing region of Florida. In Alabama, greenhouses and plastic bedding on vegetables were significantly damaged or destroyed by Hurricane Zeta. High soil moisture after the hurricane prevented fieldwork in many areas. Soybean condition declined and cotton was damaged depending on where in the state it was located. Farmers in Georgia noted an increase in boll rot in cotton as a result of the rain from Hurricane Zeta. The rain, however, kept livestock pastures in good condition. Abnormally dry conditions expanded slightly in the Midlands and Lowcountry of South Carolina and although the young strawberry crop looked good, there were some reports of spider mites. Overall, however, vegetables were growing well.