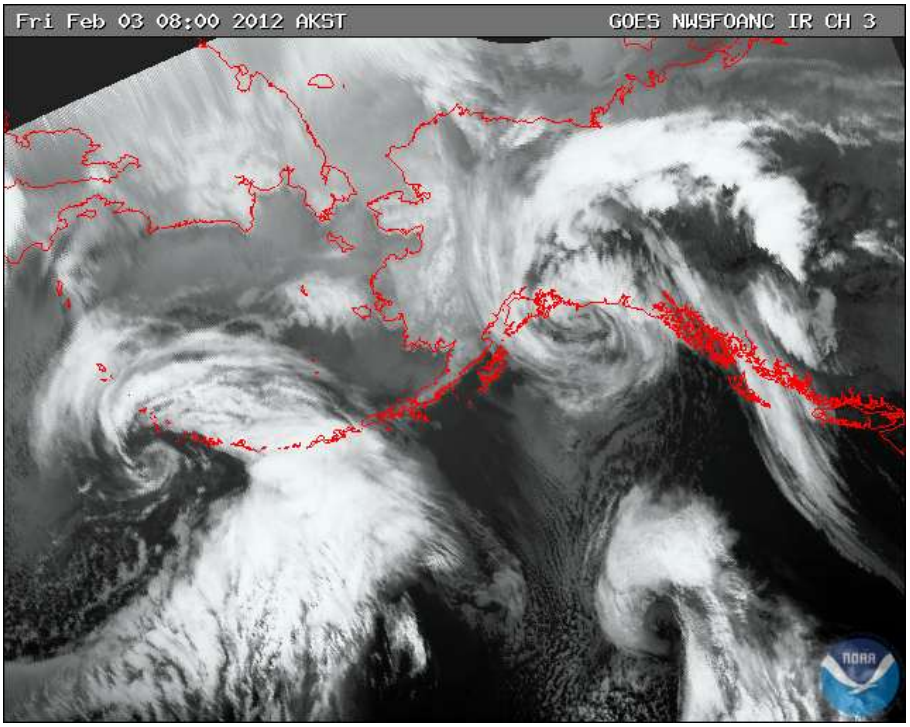
February 2012 Weather Summary

February kicked-off with a series of low pressure systems that brought warmer temperatures, snow, and strong, gusty winds to the Kenai Fjords area resulting in blizzard conditions and multiple avalanches on the Seward Highway. The Exit Glacier Coop weather station recorded 76" of new snowfall during the month. As of February 29th, seasonal snowfall amounts at Exit Glacier totaled 213".

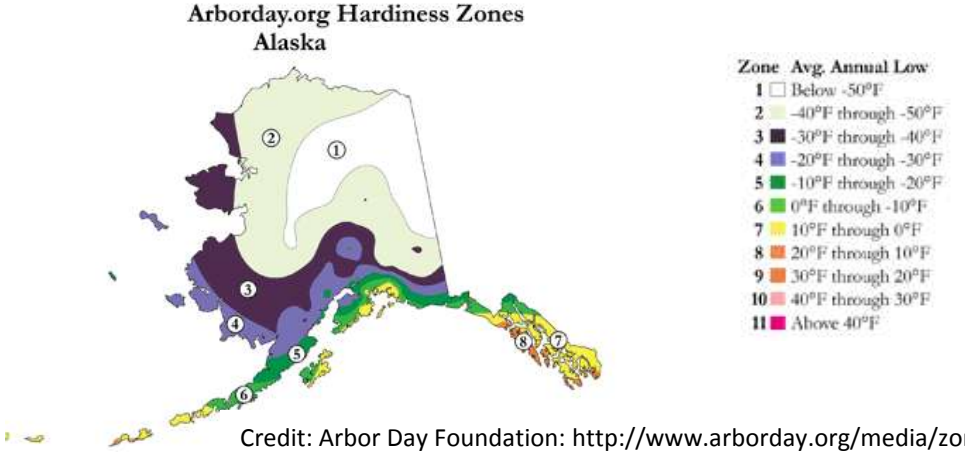
As recorded at the Seward airport, total precipitation for the month was 8.1 inches (134% of normal), 2.05 inches above the average monthly precipitation. The monthly average temperature was 31.1 degrees F; 2.8 degrees F above the 30- year average (1981-2010) for this month. February 6th was the warmest day of the month with a high of 43 degrees F; February 4th was the coldest day with a low of 12 degrees F. The highest wind gusts of the month were recorded on February 2nd when the Seward airport recorded a maximum wind gust of 49 mph and the Harding Icefield RAWS recorded a maximum wind gust of 119.5 mph (the second highest wind gust observed at this station). The windiest day of the month at the Seward airport was February 28th with an average wind speed of 24.5 mph.



Multiple low pressure systems as observed from a NOAA GOES satellite radar on February 3, 2012. Weather associated with these systems brought the biggest wind gusts of the month on February 2nd and the coldest temperature of the month on February 4th.

Also of note:

- As a result of changes in wintertime minimum temperatures in recent decades, the United States Department of Agriculture updated their Plant Hardiness Zone Map to help gardeners determine what plants are best for their area. Many zone boundaries have shifted and, overall, the new version is generally one 5-degree F half-zone warmer than the previous map.

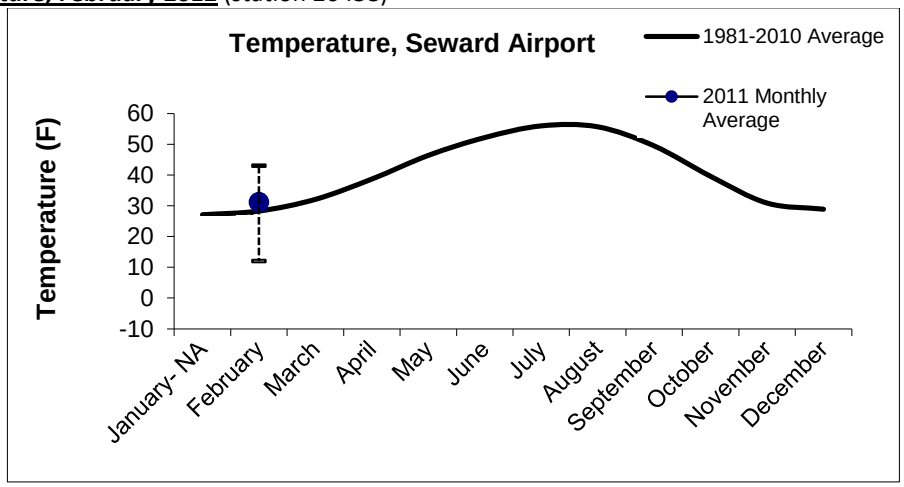


Credit: Arbor Day Foundation: http://www.arborday.org/media/zones_akhi.cfm

- The National Weather Service Climate Prediction Center's one month weather outlook (March 2012) favors below normal temperatures and normal precipitation for the Kenai Fjords area. The three month outlook (Mar-Apr-May) favors below normal temperatures and below normal precipitation.
- Alaska's precipitation frequency estimates, used by hydrologists, engineers and others when designing infrastructure built to cope with runoff, were updated in February and are available in an electronic format through NOAA's Precipitation Frequency Data Server (http://hdsc.nws.noaa.gov/hdsc/pfds).
- According to NASA scientists, the global average surface temperature in 2011 was the ninth warmest since 1880. To read more and to watch a video illustrating global temperature changes, click here.
- A new report in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences shows that melting Arctic sea ice may lead to colder, snowier winters in northern latitudes. Read more…
- Want to learn more about the underlying causes of the unusual weather this winter? The Alaska Dispatch reports on the negative mode of a weather pattern called the Arctic Oscillation and its effects on sea ice and snowfall.
- Research from MIT and Princeton University suggests that climate change may increase the frequency of large storm events, resulting in '100-year floods' occurring once every three to 20 years.
- NOAA climate services portal serves as a single point-of-entry for NOAA's extensive climate information, data, products, services, and the climate science magazine *ClimateWatch.*
- Additional, detailed climate information is available from the UAF Alaska Climate Research Center monthly state-wide summaries http://akclimate.org/Summary/current_sum.html

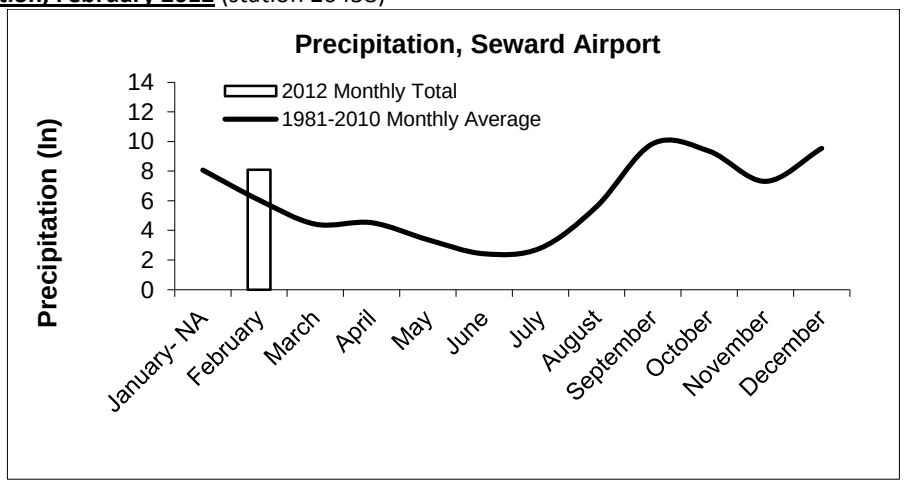
Read more to find out about the local climate for February 2012

Seward Airport Temperature, February 2012 (station 26438)



Monthly and 30-year average temperature (F) at Seward airport. 2012 monthly average values are shown with thin solid line. The range of maximum and minimum daily temperatures for each month are shown with dashed vertical lines.

Seward Airport Precipitation, February 2012 (station 26438)



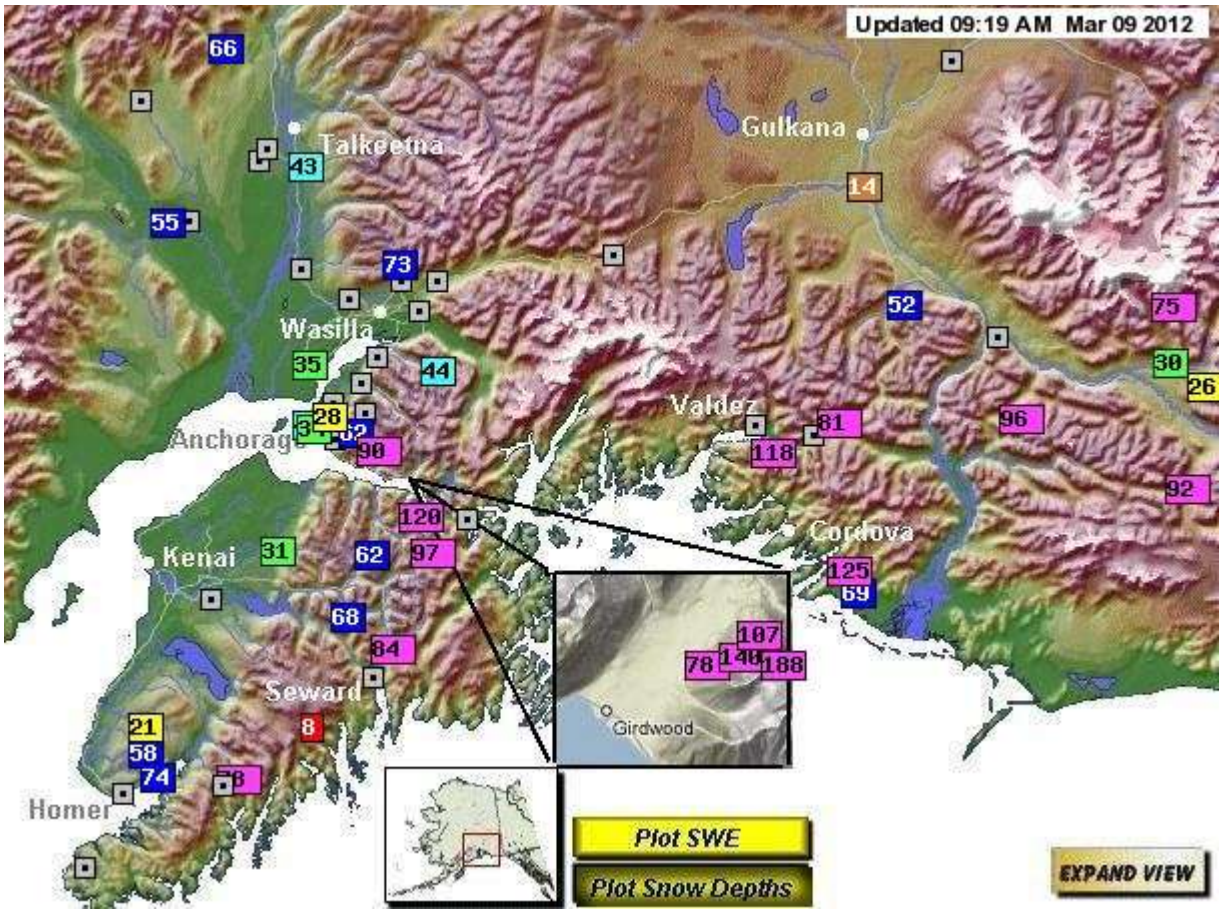
Monthly and 30-year average precipitation (inches) at Seward airport.

Rivers

Resurrection River *at Exit Glacier Bridge is monitored by the Alaska-Pacific River Forecast Center: http://water.weather.gov/ahps2/index.php?wfo=pafc. Resurrection River stage height is currently well below the flood action stage.*

Exit Creek *water level (stage height) data is not collected in winter.*

Snow & Ice



Snow depths reported across southcentral Alaska on March 9th: http://aprfc.arh.noaa.gov/sd_pafc_sites.html. Snow is monitored by the Natural Resources Conservation Service: http://www.ambcs.org/ with most measurements and reporting taking place December to May.

Snow depth at Exit Glacier on February 29th was 95 inches, 50 inches more than last year on February 28th.

Weather Station data (map of [some] stations Western Region Climate Center or MesoWest)

Seward Airport
Grouse Crk Divide
Exit Glacier SNOTEL
McArthur Pass
Pilot Rock
Seward Hwy MP#12
Exit Glacier
Harding Icefield
Nuka Glacier
Buoy 76-Cape Cleare

Weather Forecasts

Seward Summary
Marine Forecast
Surface Map
Graphical Forecast
4-8 Day Forecast