

March 2012 Weather Summary

With all the snow we shoveled and plowed and plodded through this season, everyone is asking: Did we have record-breaking snowfall around Kenai Fjords this year? This winter we had an excellent record of data collection for the entire season with few missing days at the Exit Glacier Coop weather station. As of March 31st, snowfall totals at Exit Glacier were 243 inches and there were 83 inches of snow on the ground. However, this was not enough snow to break any seasonal snowfall totals at Exit Glacier. The documented big winters since 1990 that we have yet to beat include 1991-92 (308 inches) and 1999-2000 (267 inches). This comparison only included seasons that had good datasets, which can be difficult to obtain as cumulative snowfall is measured and tallied by hand.

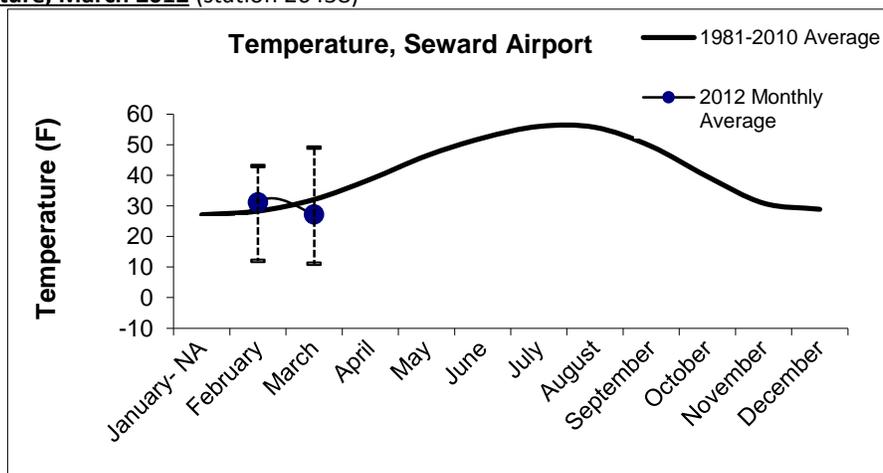
March's cooler than normal temperatures have helped the snowpack persist, but less than normal precipitation gave it a chance to settle. As recorded at the Seward airport, total precipitation for the month was 2.09 inches (47% of normal), 2.33 inches below the average monthly precipitation. The monthly average temperature was 27.2 degrees F; 4.9 degrees F below the 30- year average (1981-2010) for this month. March 30th was the warmest day of the month with a high of 49 degrees F; March 5th was the coldest day with a low of 11 degrees F. The highest wind gusts of the month were recorded on March 11th when the Seward airport recorded a maximum wind gust of 30.6 mph. This was also the windiest day of the month at the Seward airport with an average wind speed of 30.1 mph.

Also of note:

- The [National Weather Service Climate Prediction Center's](#) one month weather outlook (April 2012) favors below normal temperatures and below normal precipitation for the Kenai Fjords area. The three month outlook (Apr-May-June) also favors below normal temperatures and below normal precipitation.
- New research published in Environmental Research Letters reports that [shrub height will affect future Arctic climate](#) and permafrost through changes in surface albedo and atmospheric water vapor content.
- Researchers report in [New Scientist](#) that Arctic sea ice may have decreased to the point that ice-free summers will be more regular across most of the Arctic Ocean.
- The EPA has a new website on climate change and water. [Click here](#) to read or submit a comment on the draft "National Water Program 2012 Strategy: Response to Climate Change"
- Check out the Spring issue of the [Alaska Climate Dispatch](#) to learn more about the extreme weather departures across the state in winter 2011-12.
- 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

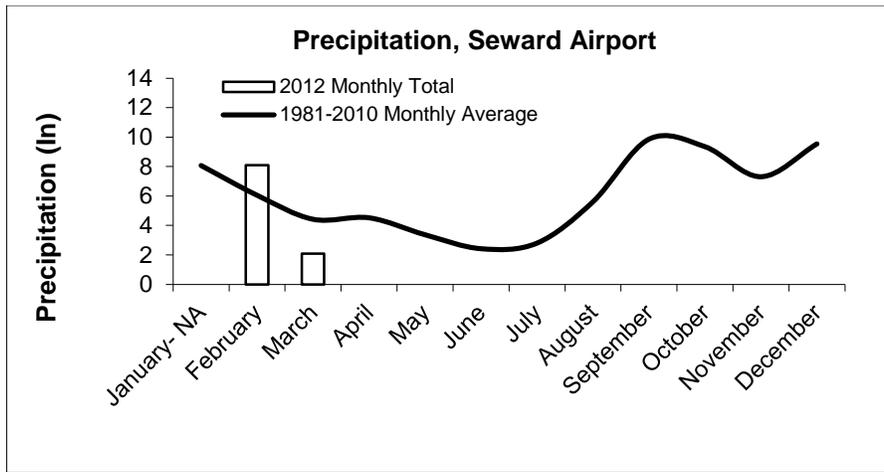
Read more to find out about the local climate for March 2012

Seward Airport Temperature, March 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, March 2012 (station 26438)



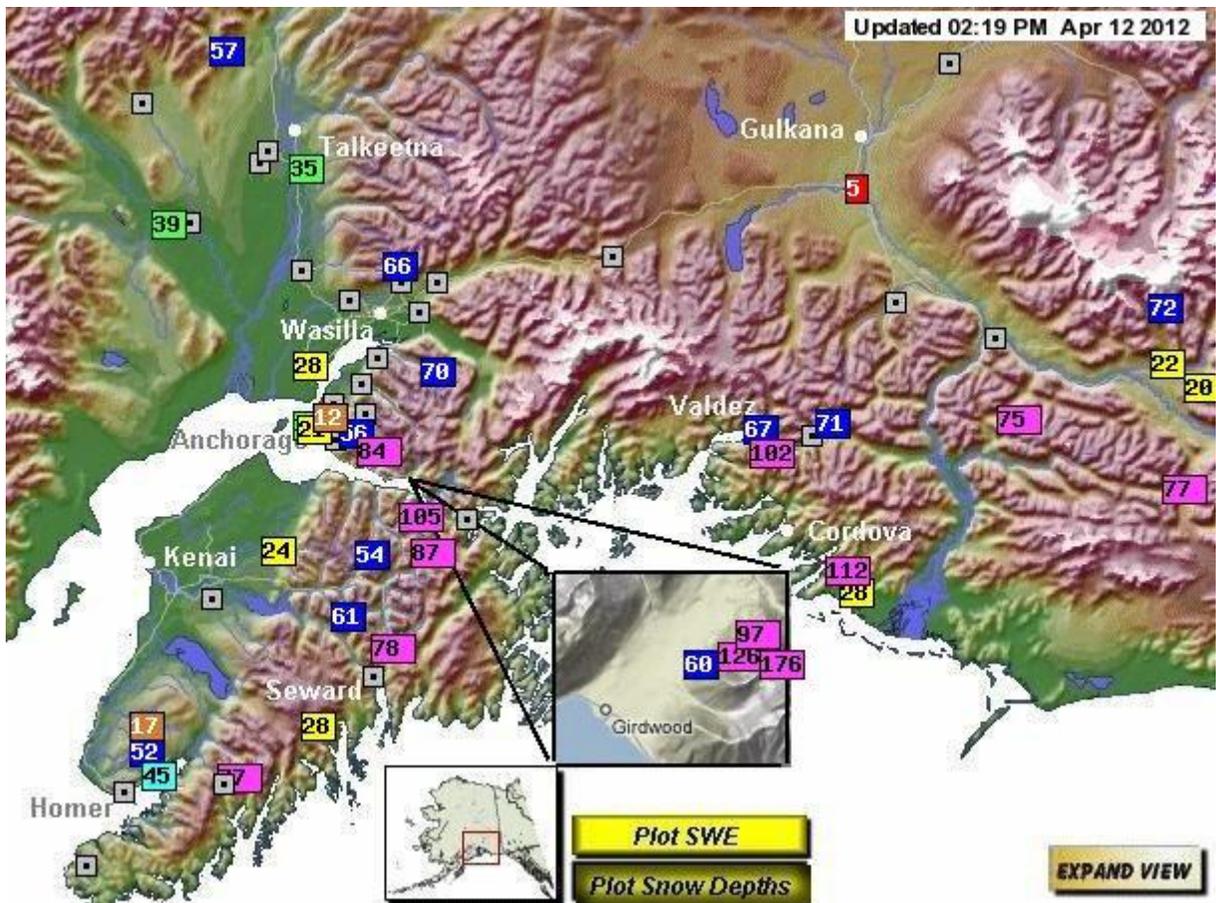
Monthly and 30-year average precipitation (inches) at Seward airport.

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 April 12th: http://aprfc.arh.noaa.gov/sd_pafc_sites.html. Snow is monitored by the Natural Resources Conservation Service: <http://www.ambc.org/> with most measurements and reporting taking place December to May.

Snow depth at Exit Glacier on April 1st was 78 inches with 26.9 inches snow water equivalent. This is 38 inches more snow (15.5 inches more water content) than the same date last year.

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 Clear](#)

[Pedersen Lagoon](#)

Weather Forecasts

[Seward Summary](#)
[Marine Forecast](#)
[Surface Map](#)
[Graphical Forecast](#)
[4-8 Day Forecast](#)