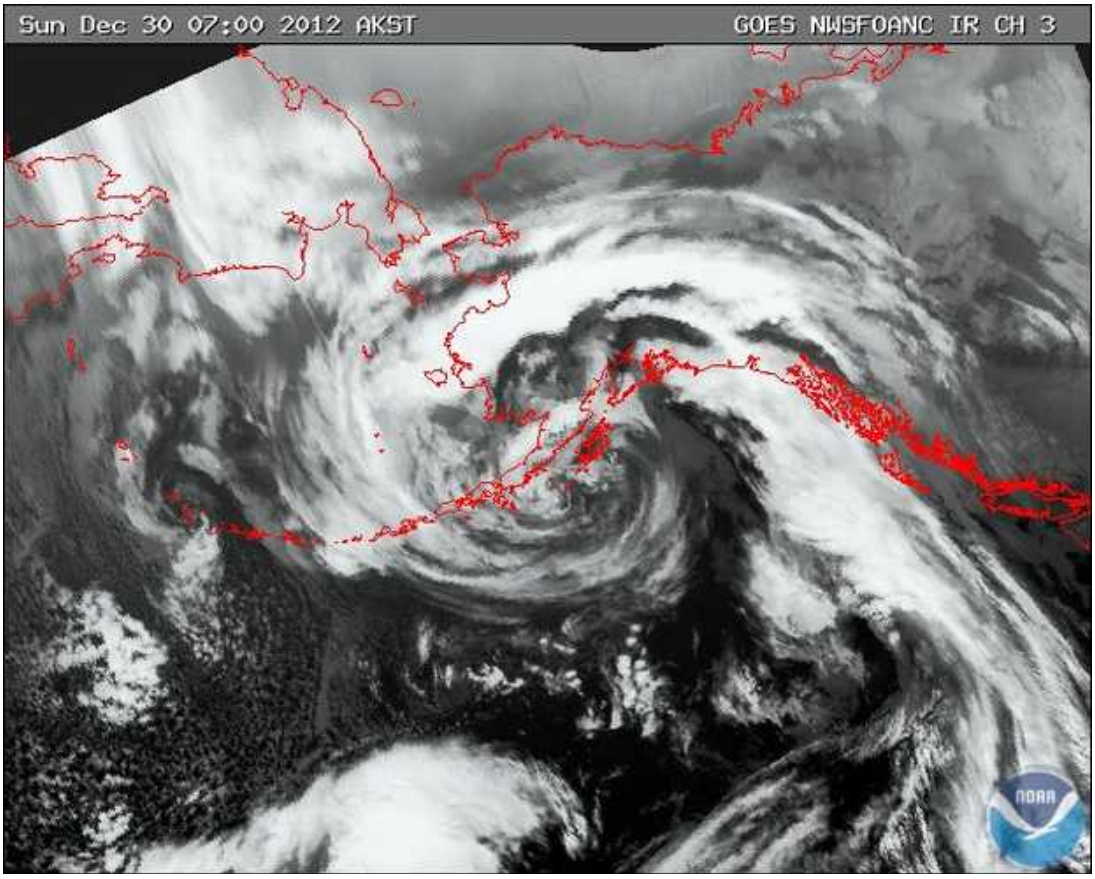
December 2012 Weather Summary

Most of December saw a continuation of the cold, dry weather pattern that characterized October and November. That ended abruptly during the last week of the month when multiple storms passed over the area and delivered 95% of the month's precipitation during the final week of the year. These storms (particularly the subtropical cyclone in the image below) brought unseasonably warm temperatures and high winds to accompany the precipitation which fell as a mix of rain, snow, and everything in-between. At the peak of the largest storm on December 30th, wind speeds of 116 mph were recorded at the McArthur Pass weather station located on the outer coast of Kenai Fjords National Park. In advance of the storm, temperatures maxed out at the Seward airport at 47 degrees F on December 29th. Unfortunately, data from the Seward airport was not available for December 30th.

As recorded at the Seward airport, total precipitation for the month was 5.6 inches (58% of normal), 3.94 inches below the 30-year average (1981-2010) for the month. The monthly average temperature for December was 23.9 degrees F; 5.0 degrees F below the 30-year average. December 19th was the gustiest day of the month reported at the Seward airport with a 5-second wind gust of 51 mph. These statistics do not incorporate weather for December 30th as no data was reported for the Seward airport for this day.



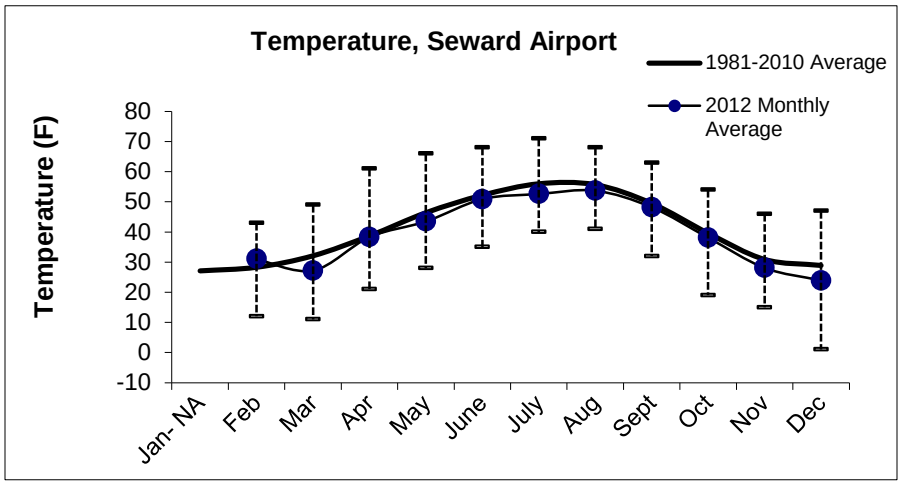
Thermal infrared image of the December 30, 2012 storm. National Weather Service.

Also of note:

- The National Weather Service Climate Prediction Center's three month weather outlook (January-February-March) favors below normal temperatures and below normal precipitation for the Kenai Fjords area, indicating a continuation of cool and dry conditions throughout the 2012-13 winter.
- Winter 2012-13 is exhibiting "ENSO neutral" conditions, neither La Niña nor El Niño weather patterns. To learn more about the El Niño/ Southern Oscillation and Climate Variability, visit the Pacific ENSO Applications Climate Center.
- Are you concerned about what happens to slope stability when a lot of heavy wet snow accumulates onto a thin layer of hoar frost, such as occurred in December? Me too! To learn more about local avalanche conditions and to track how the snowpack changes throughout the season, visit the Chugach National Forest Avalanche Information Center.
- NOAA recently published a report on Global Sea Level Rise Scenarios for the United States National Climate Assessment.
- Climate Central reports that November was the Earth's 333rd straight month of warm temperatures.
- 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.*

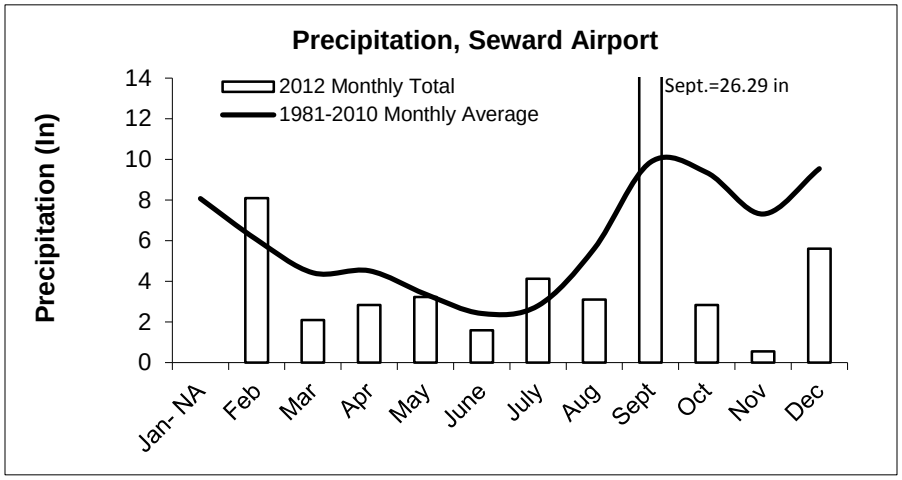
Read more to find out about the local climate for December 2012

Seward Airport Temperature, December 2012 (station 26438)



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

Seward Airport Precipitation, December 2012 (station 26438)

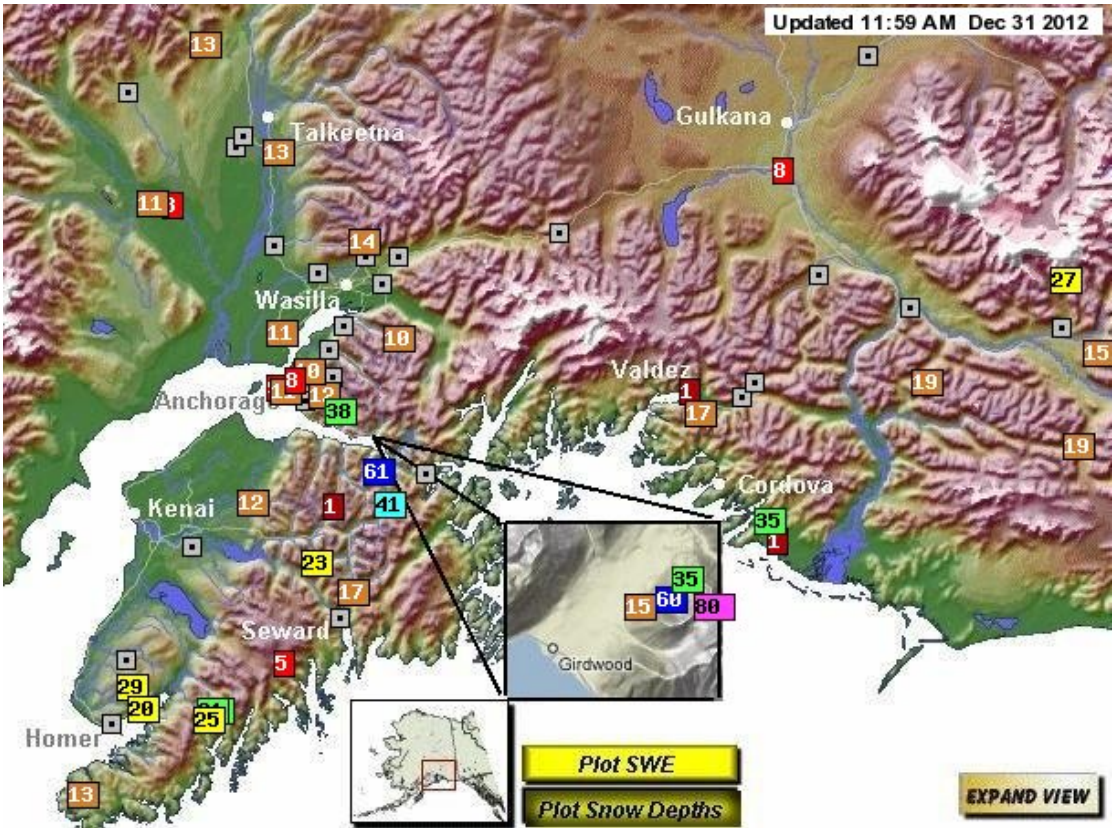


Monthly and 30-year average precipitation (inches) at Seward airport. While September's precipitation was off the chart, precipitation was below average for the remaining months of the year.

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 is currently below the flood action stage.*
Exit Creek *water level (stage height) data is not collected in the winter.*

Snow & Ice



Snow depths reported across southcentral Alaska on Dec. 31st: http://aprfc.arh.noaa.gov/index_snow.php. Snow is monitored by the Natural Resources Conservation Service: http://www.ambcs.org/ with most measurements and reporting taking place December to May.

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
Pedersen Lagoon

Weather Forecasts

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