

April 2012 Weather Summary

April led Kenai Fjords further into spring with near normal temperatures and below normal precipitation. As recorded at the Seward airport, total precipitation for the month was 2.84 inches (63% of normal), 1.68 inches below the monthly average. The monthly average temperature was 38.3 degrees F; only 0.4 degrees F below the 30- year average (1981-2010) for this month. April 26th was the warmest day of the month with a high of 61 degrees F; April 8th was the coldest day with a low of 21 degrees F. The highest wind gusts of the month were recorded on April 2nd when the Seward airport recorded a maximum wind gust of 36 mph. This was also the windiest day of the month at the Seward airport with an average wind speed of 14.4 mph.

Although Sewardites are looking forward to the longer, warmer days of summer and all the activities they bring, the remnant snow piles in town and the buried lawns outside of town remind us of the recent snowy winter that felt like a record-breaker. Based on the persistent snowpack at lower elevations (54 inches at Exit Glacier on May 4th), researchers conducting field work on the Harding Icefield last month anticipated a deeper snowpack at high elevations as well. However, spring snowpack at sites on the northern end of the icefield were normal for the three years the study has been in progress; snow samples revealed more snow and water equivalent than spring 2011, but not as much as spring 2010. This led one to ponder, "Why wouldn't there be a proportionately greater snowpack at high elevations as at low elevations?" Previous tallies of this winter's precipitation focused on snowfall, which were discussed in the March weather summary. A second look at temperature and precipitation, (measured in water equivalent, not as snowfall) at the Seward airport revealed that this past winter was generally dryer and cooler than normal. Without complete data for January, a seasonal average or seasonal departure from normal cannot be calculated. However, the table to the right summarizes monthly temperature and precipitation departures for months with measurable snowfall.

The table below indicates monthly temperature and precipitation departures from the 30-year average (1981-2010).

Winter 2011-12 Monthly Departure from Normal		
	Temperature	Precipitation
November	-7.4 degrees F	-4.4 inches
December	-2.7 degrees F	-0.96 inches
January	Insufficient data	Insufficient data
February	+2.8 degrees F	+2.05 inches
March	-4.9 degrees F	-2.33 inches

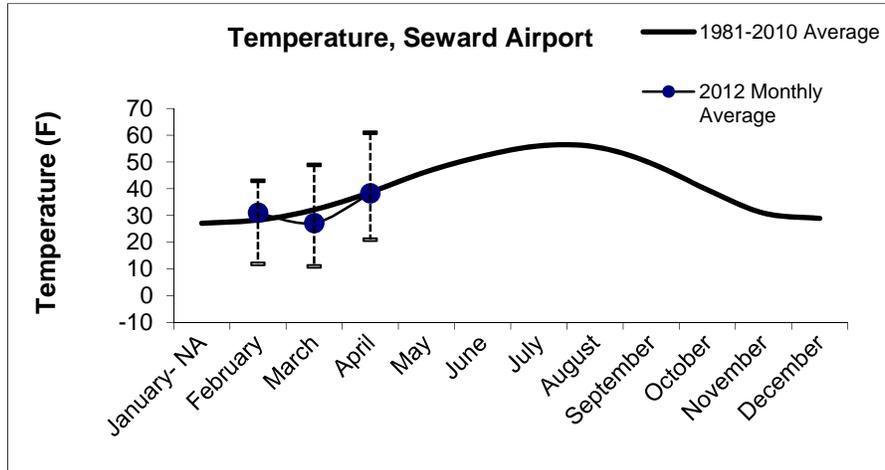
In summary, all of the winter months (except February) in which precipitation data was sufficiently recorded at the Seward airport experienced drier than normal conditions but, because of the colder than normal temperatures, that which fell arrived mostly as snow and was able to persist and accumulate throughout the season. The end result was an impressive snowpack that, regardless of whether it broke records, indeed made for a memorable winter. Without the cold temperatures, this probably would have seemed more like a typical Seward winter. Therefore, although it was the snow that made the memory, it was the temperature that made the difference.

Also of note:

- The [National Weather Service Climate Prediction Center's](#) three month weather outlook (May-June-July) favors normal temperatures and normal precipitation for the Kenai Fjords area.
- [Science Daily](#) reports on new research indicating that ecosystems dependent on snowy winters are most threatened by climate change.
- [National Geographic](#) reports on increased threats to water quality in Inuit communities in northern Canada as a result of climate change.
- Melting permafrost may not be the only northern source of methane. NASA researchers have discovered that the Arctic Ocean is contributing to increased levels of methane in the lower atmosphere over the Arctic. Read more in [Bits of Science](#)
- 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

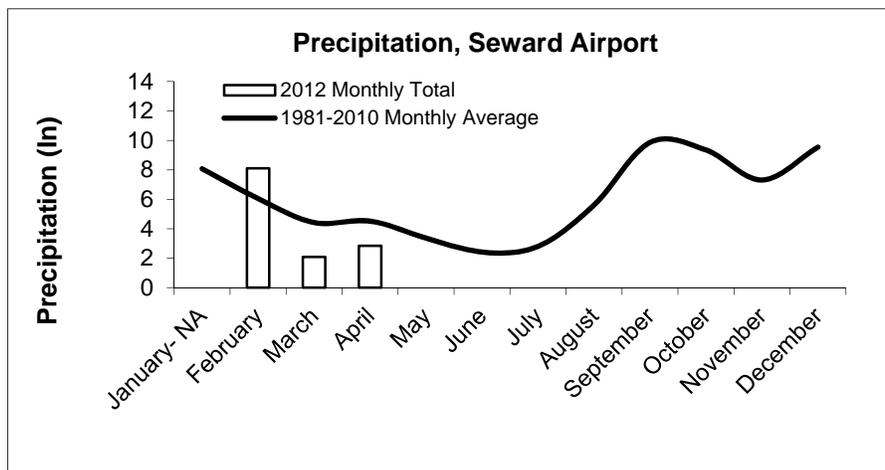
Read more to find out about the local climate for April 2012

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



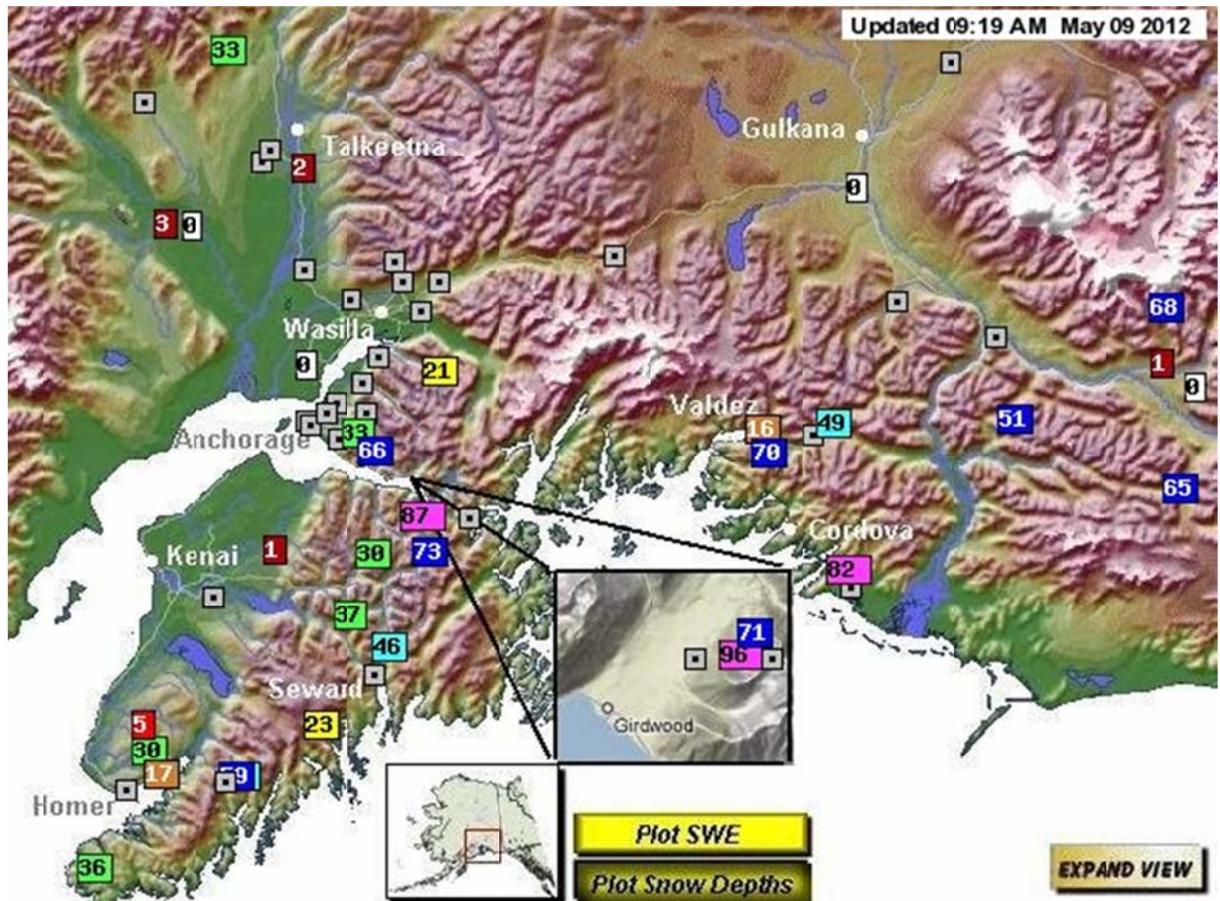
Monthly and 30-year average precipitation (inches) at Seward airport.

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 May 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 the Exit Glacier COOP weather station was 54 inches on May 4th. This is 28 inches more snow 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 Cleare](#)

[Pedersen Lagoon](#)

Weather Forecasts

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