

THE ATMOSPHERIC RESERVOIR

Examining the Atmosphere and Atmospheric Resource Management

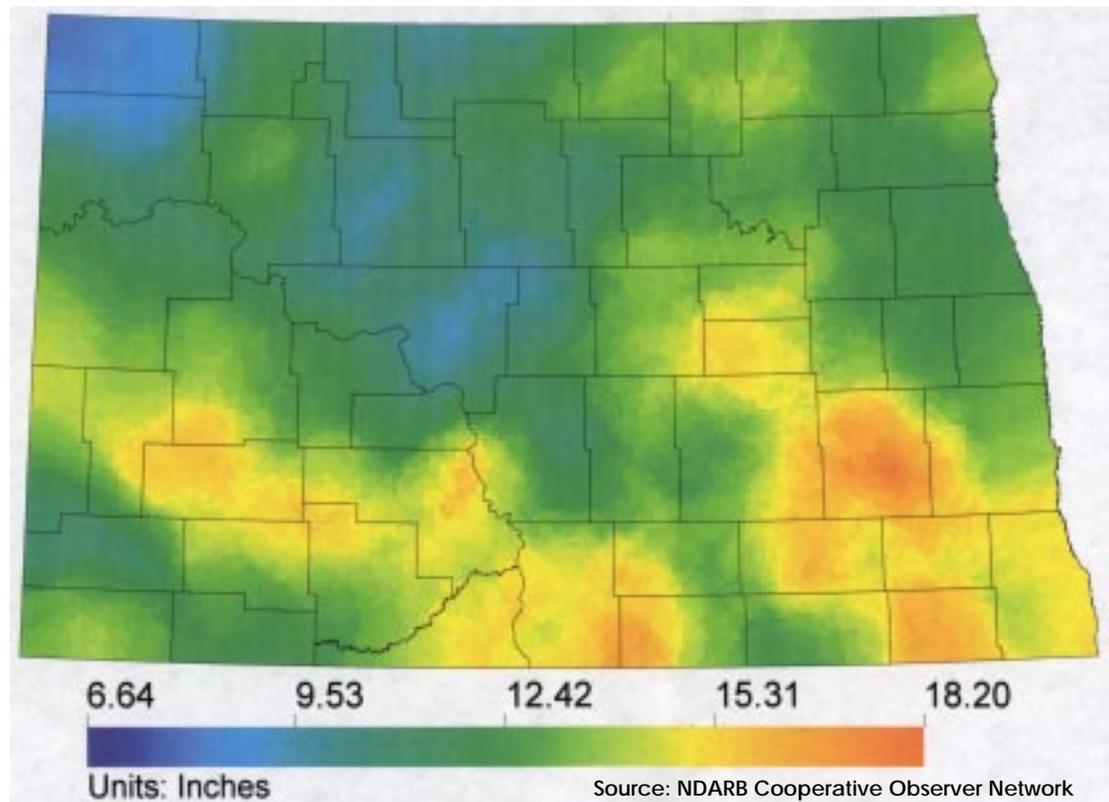
Old Man Winter Approaches

By Aaron Gilstad

The 2001 harvest has been completed in most areas, with only a few remnants remaining. Leaves have fallen, days are getting progressively shorter and colder, thoughts are again drifting to snow and blizzards with a mixture of dread and awe, and most are already hoping for an "Indian Summer" sometime soon. Once again, our all too short summer has come to an end and with it the 25th year of coordinating the Atmospheric Resource Board Cooperative Observer Network (ARBCON), the state-wide rain gauge network comprised of approximately 800 observers.

The 2001 season, running from April 1 to September 30, saw several extremes, which we North Dakotans have come to accept, if not expect; from a cold spring that brought snow and freezing rains to some areas in April, to a very wet June and July with reported two-month totals exceeding twelve inches, and finally, a very dry August, which yielded a total of zero inches in Bismarck. These very extremes helped to mitigate some of the problems expected on Lake Sakakawea and in the Devils Lake basin at the beginning of the summer. The cold spring allowed for late season snows in Montana and an extended runoff period combined

North Dakota Rainfall — May - September 2001



with heavy rains in June and July to help maintain water levels on Sakakawea. On the other end of the spectrum, relatively dry conditions in spring and early summer, and again in August in eastern North Dakota kept floodwaters lower than expected through much of the summer.

All of the ARBCON data received is recorded in a computer database and is used to provide support data throughout the year to any interested parties for any number of purposes. The ARBCON database is available via the Internet through a user interface on our web site. Just enter the proper information into the search engine, and our database will

extract the data for you. Or, if you're more interested in rainfall patterns and totals for your area in a graphical format, you can view our archive of rainfall maps from 1977 through 2000. Finally, if you're interested in becoming a volunteer, you can e-mail us from the web site, or call our offices at (701) 328-2788. We would be happy to have you! ■

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