

Moisture Situation Update – May 15, 2018

Synopsis:

“Average” weather is simply the number generated as we move abruptly between the extremes of the actual weather that we experience. This winter and spring, has been a perfect example of this. Throughout most of December 2017, well above average temperatures dominated, followed by much cooler than average temperatures in January 2018. This below average cold persisted for several months, lasting well into the third week in April (**see map 1**). Following this cold snap, “average” weather lasted about a week, and on or about the 24th of April it gave way abruptly to the unseasonably warm and dry weather that has prevailed for nearly a month. In fact, for much of the province, the first half of May was one of the warmest looking back as far as 1961 (**see map 2**), with most areas receiving less than 10 mm of moisture (**see map 3**).

Such conditions were ideal in the face of delayed seeding operations, and resulted in rapid drying of the land and quickly thawed frozen soils allowing seeding activities to get into full swing. However, the lack of rain and above average temperatures have meant a slow start to pasture growth in some areas. As a result, rain will be needed soon to quell the dust, stimulate vigorous vegetative growth, and reduce fire danger.

As the growing season gets underway, soil moisture reserves are highly variable across the province. Very dry conditions exist across the northern Peace Region, and across some parts of southern Alberta. Elsewhere, near normal conditions prevail across much of the south-half of the Peace Region, throughout much of the North West, North East, and along the eastern edge of the province (**see map 4**).

Perspective

Our weather naturally oscillates between extremes of hot/cold and dry/wet. It's very difficult to predict the weather accurately beyond about 7-days, and recent weather patterns are often not a good predictor of the weather patterns several weeks into the future.

For now, fortunately rain is forecast to be on the way for much of the south half of the province, over the next few days, with greatest amounts predicted as one heads west towards the foothills.

Looking at the meteorological record, usually the second half of May marks the start of the wet season across the province. And interestingly enough, the May long weekend does show up as a wet anomaly in the historical record. For those lands south of about Olds the wettest weather typically occurs during the month of June (**see map 5**). North of this, up as far as the southern Peace region, wettest weather occurs during the last half of June and first half of July. For the Northern Peace, the month of July typically marks the wettest time of the year.

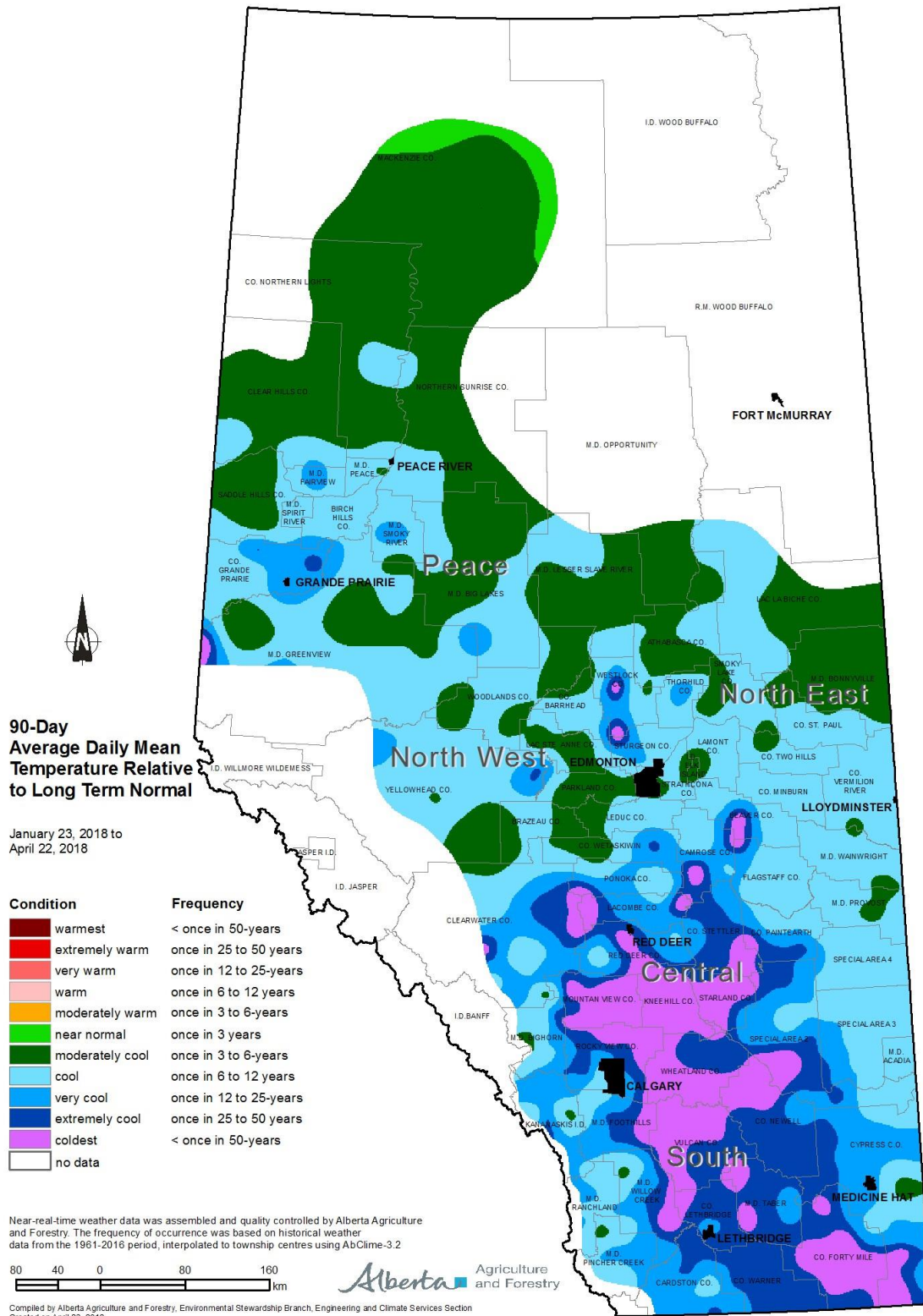
Near-real-time hourly station data can be viewed/downloaded at www.agriculture.alberta.ca/stations

Note: Data has about a two hour lag and is displayed in MST.

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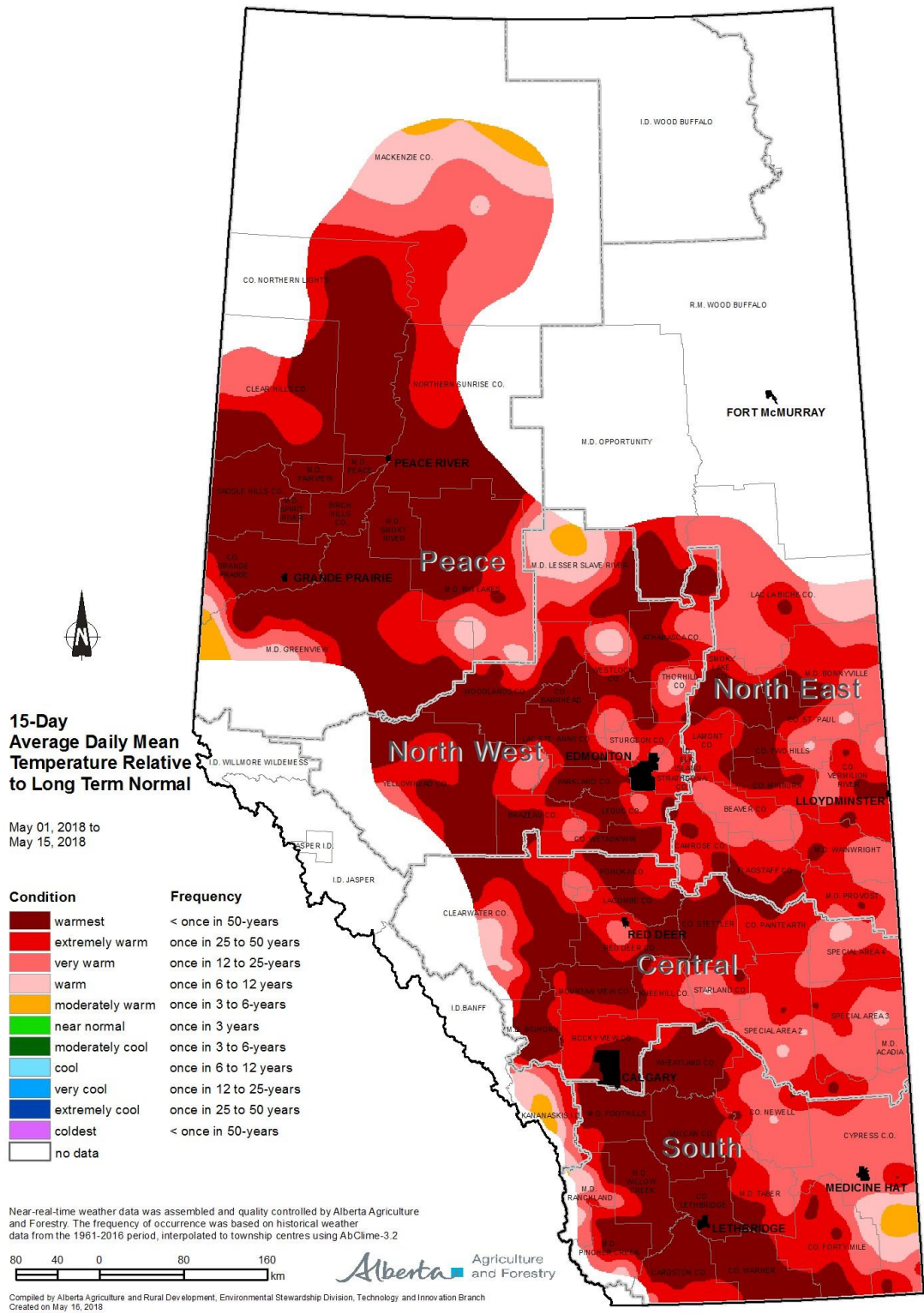
Map 1



Visit weatherdata.ca for additional maps and meteorological data

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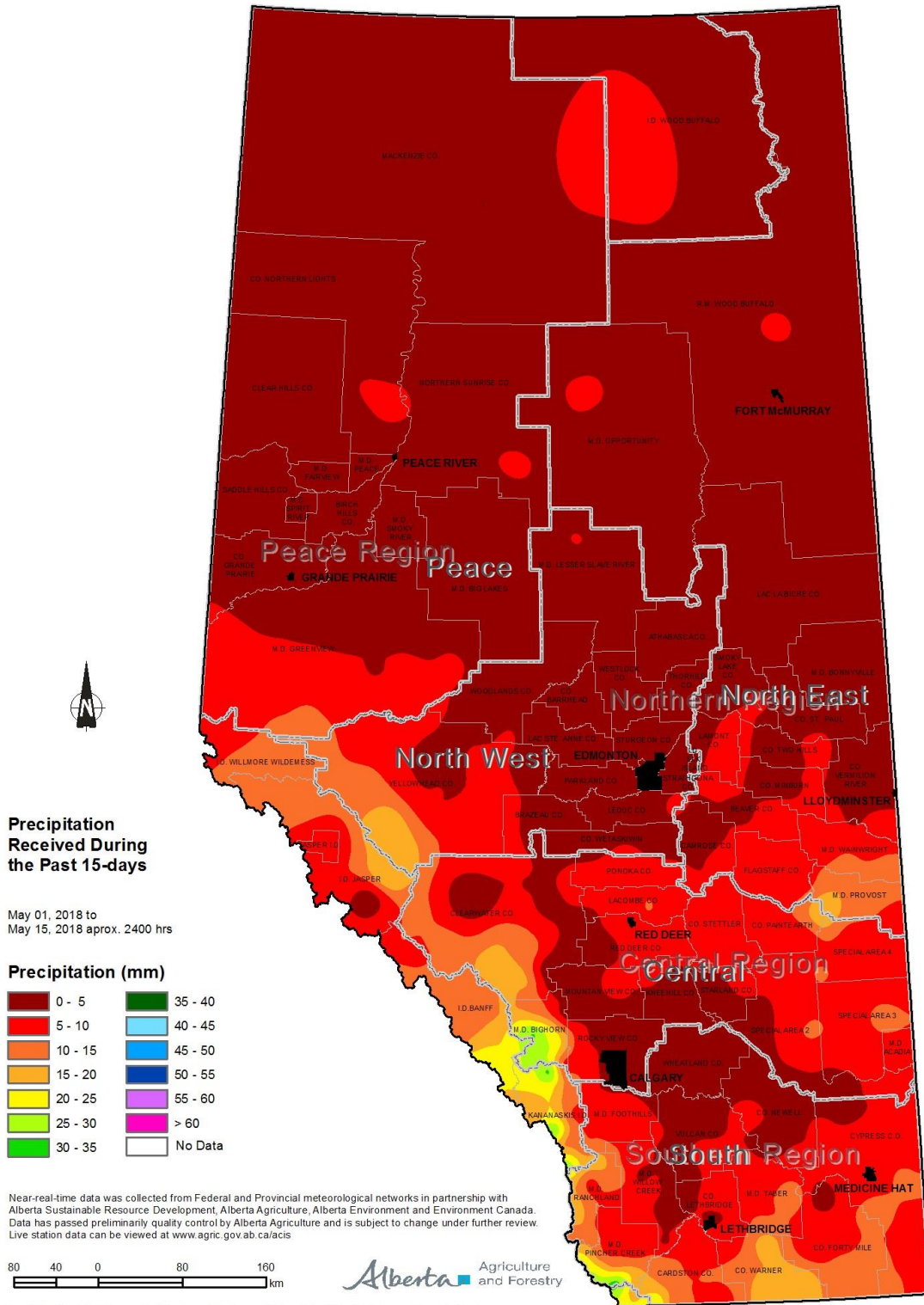
Map 2



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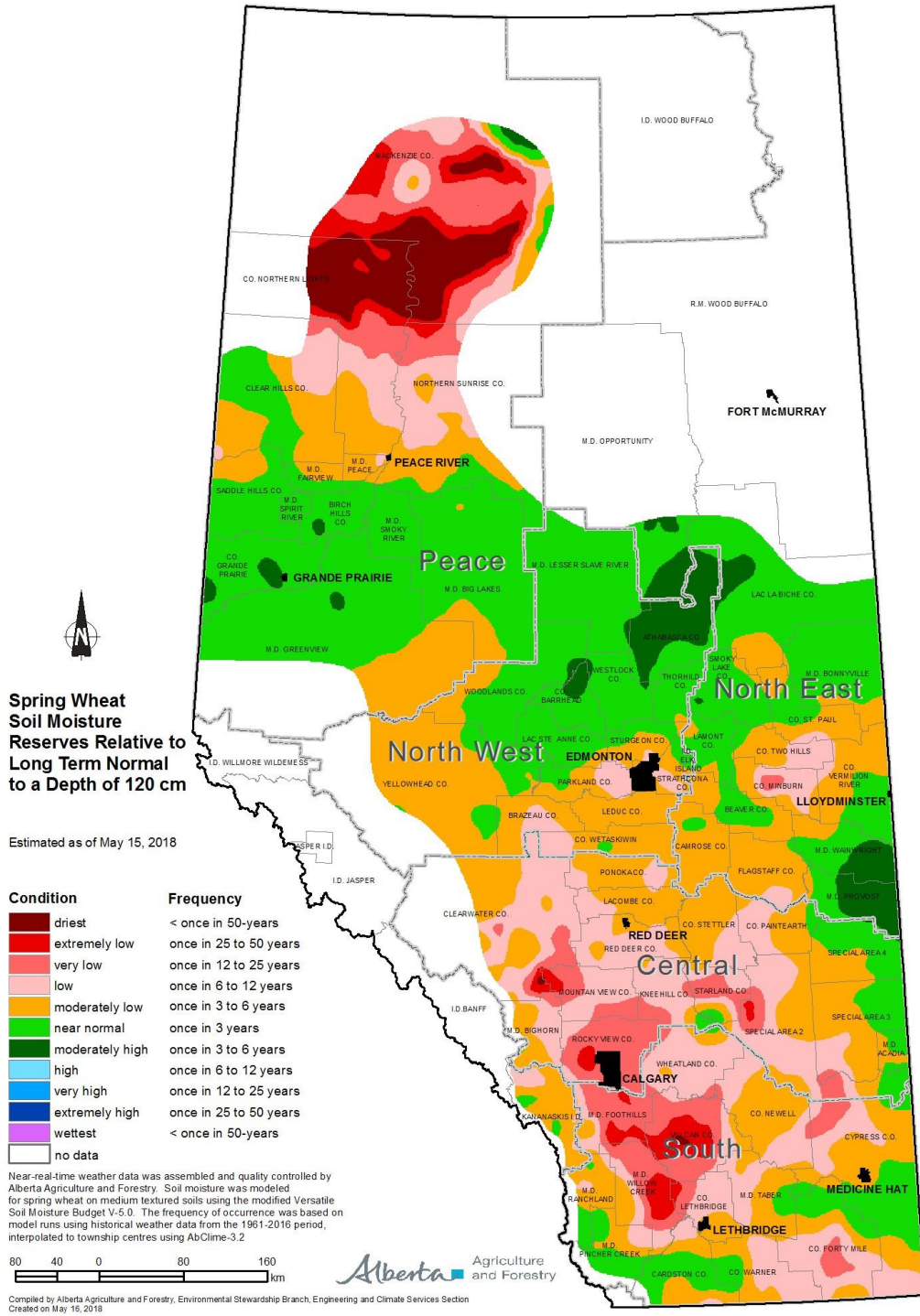
Map 3



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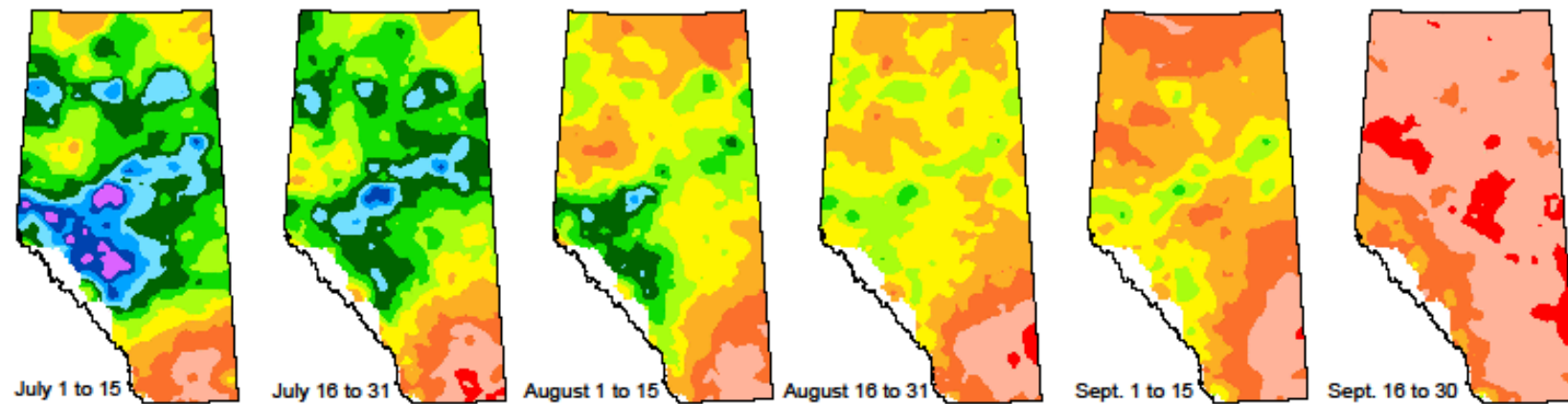
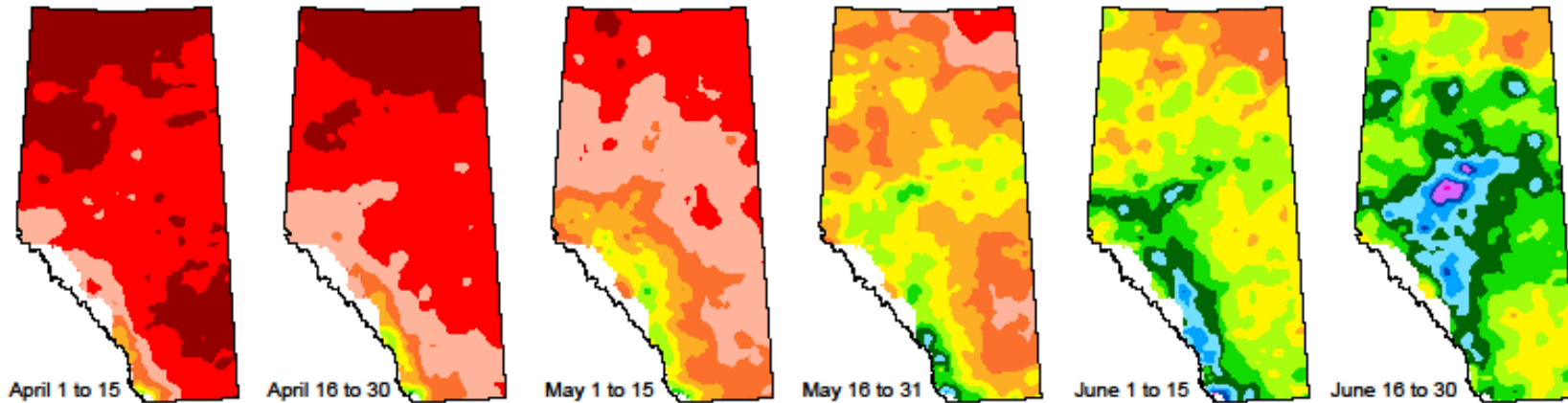
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Map 4



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Map 5



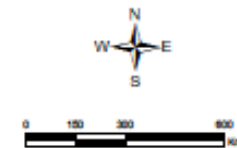
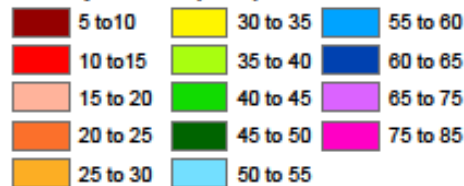
**Average Semi-Monthly
 Growing Season
 Precipitation in Alberta**

for the period 1961-2010

Average based on historical weather data from the 1961-2010 period, interpolated to township centers using AbClim-3.1.

Compiled by Alberta Agriculture and Rural Development, Environmental Stewardship Division, Technology and Innovation Branch
 Created on December 08, 2011

Precipitation (mm)



Government of Alberta
 Agriculture and Rural Development