

May 2008 Climate Narrative For Southwest Lower Michigan

By Brandon Hoving

Overview

The month of May featured largely cooler and drier than normal weather across southwestern Lower Michigan. Grand Rapids, Lansing, and Muskegon all recorded below normal temperatures and below normal rainfall for May as clearly shown in Figure 1. Showers and thunderstorms overspread the area on May 2nd. Numerous reports of hail around half an inch were common. Temperatures behind the system responsible for the rain eventually warmed into the upper 70s by May 6. However, temperatures would not get that warm again until May 25. In fact, most areas experienced high temperatures below 70 for at least a ten day stretch from May 14-23. The most significant rainfall during this period occurred on May 7th, 11th, and 14th.

In general, many locations only experienced a handful of days with any measurable precipitation. Figure 2 shows the total precipitation for the month, while Figure 3 reveals that the monthly totals were below normal for all locations across West Michigan. Morning rain on May 30 provided Grand Rapids and Muskegon with the greatest single day precipitation totals for the month. As for severe weather, there was very little to speak of. It is unusual for West Michigan to be spared the entire month of May from any significant severe weather, but that is what happened as most of the threatening weather stayed south and west of our area.

All of West Michigan experienced average temperatures some two to three degrees below normal or more, as seen in Figure 4. In addition, both Grand Rapids and Muskegon failed to reach 80° the entire month. Figure 5 demonstrates how cool the average high temperatures were compared to normal.

The general dryness of the month led to an increased fire danger threat across the area. A red flag warning was issued on May 25 to warn the public of a high fire danger. An isolated fire or two was even reported toward the end of the month. However, May will perhaps be remembered for the late frosts and freezes across southwestern Lower Michigan, particularly over the interior locations. Figure 6 shows the negative departures from the mean low temperatures across Michigan. Cities and towns northeast of Grand Rapids experienced some especially frosty mornings that posed a hazard to sensitive vegetation. Many residents still had to cover their plants even into the final days of May.

Location		Temperature (degrees F)	Precipitation (inches)	Snowfall (inches)
Grand Rapids	<i>Reported</i>	55.5	2.13	0.0
	<i>Normal</i>	58.1	3.35	T
	<i>Departure</i>	-2.6	-1.22	0.0
Lansing	<i>Reported</i>	54.7	1.29	0.0
	<i>Normal</i>	57.1	2.71	T
	<i>Departure</i>	-2.4	-1.42	0.0
Muskegon	<i>Reported</i>	52.7	1.95	0.0
	<i>Normal</i>	56.1	2.95	T
	<i>Departure</i>	-3.4	-1.00	0.0

Figure 1. Temperature, precipitation, and snowfall totals and averages for May 2008.

Total Precipitation in Inches
May 1, 2008 to May 31, 2008

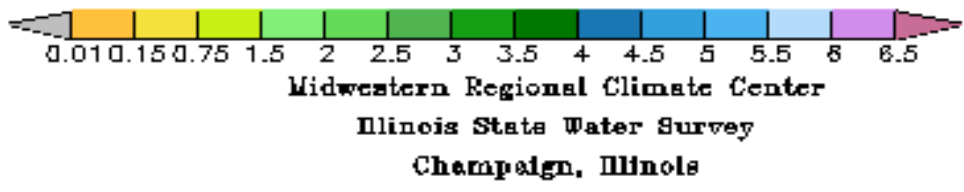
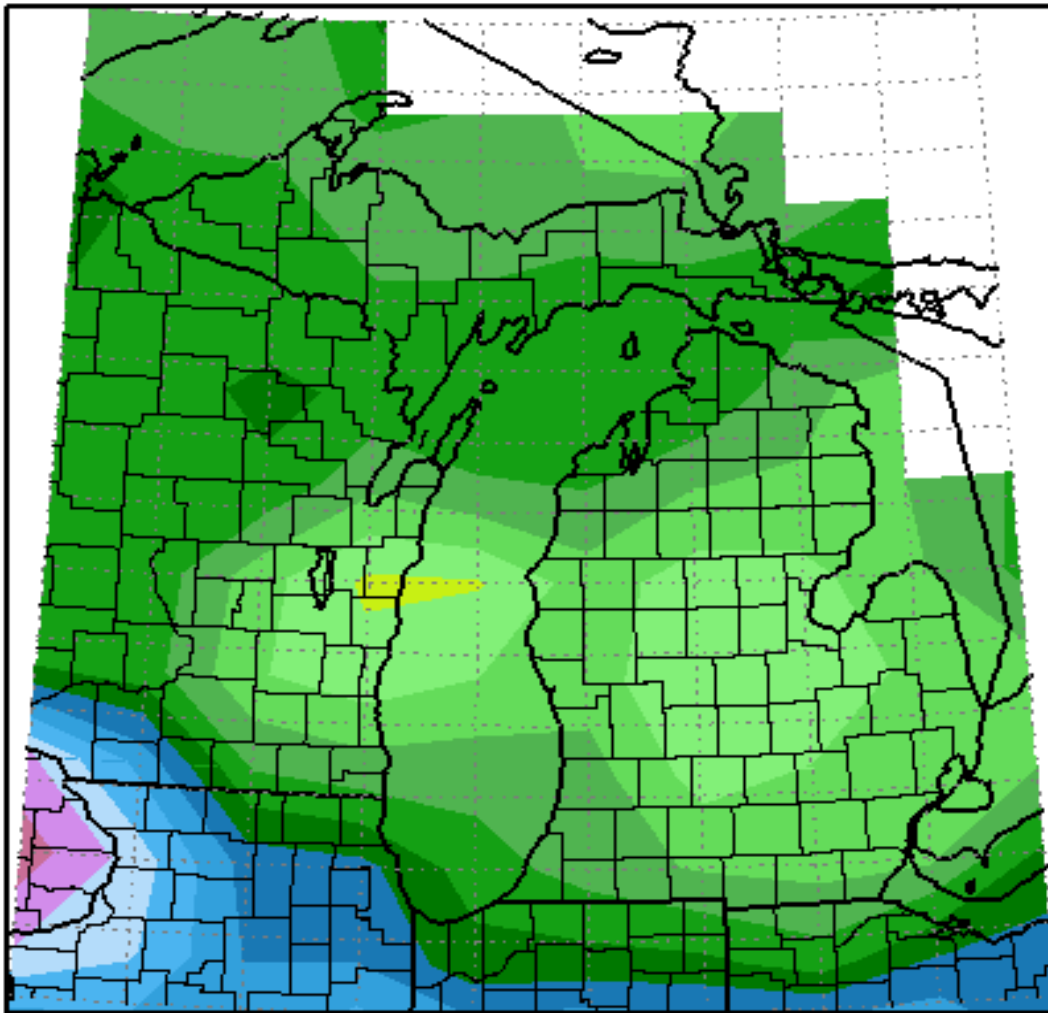
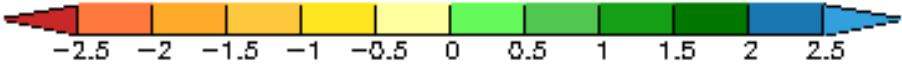
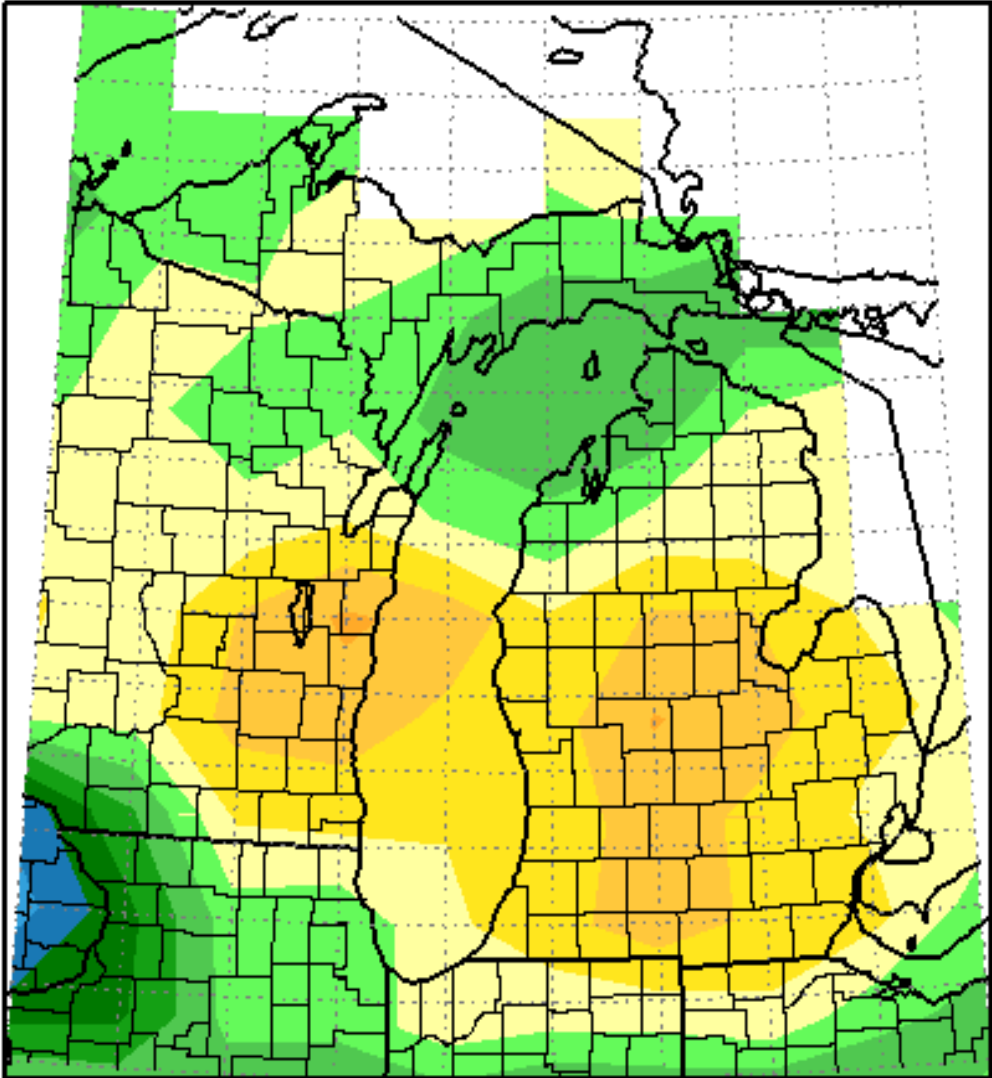


Figure 2. Precipitation totals

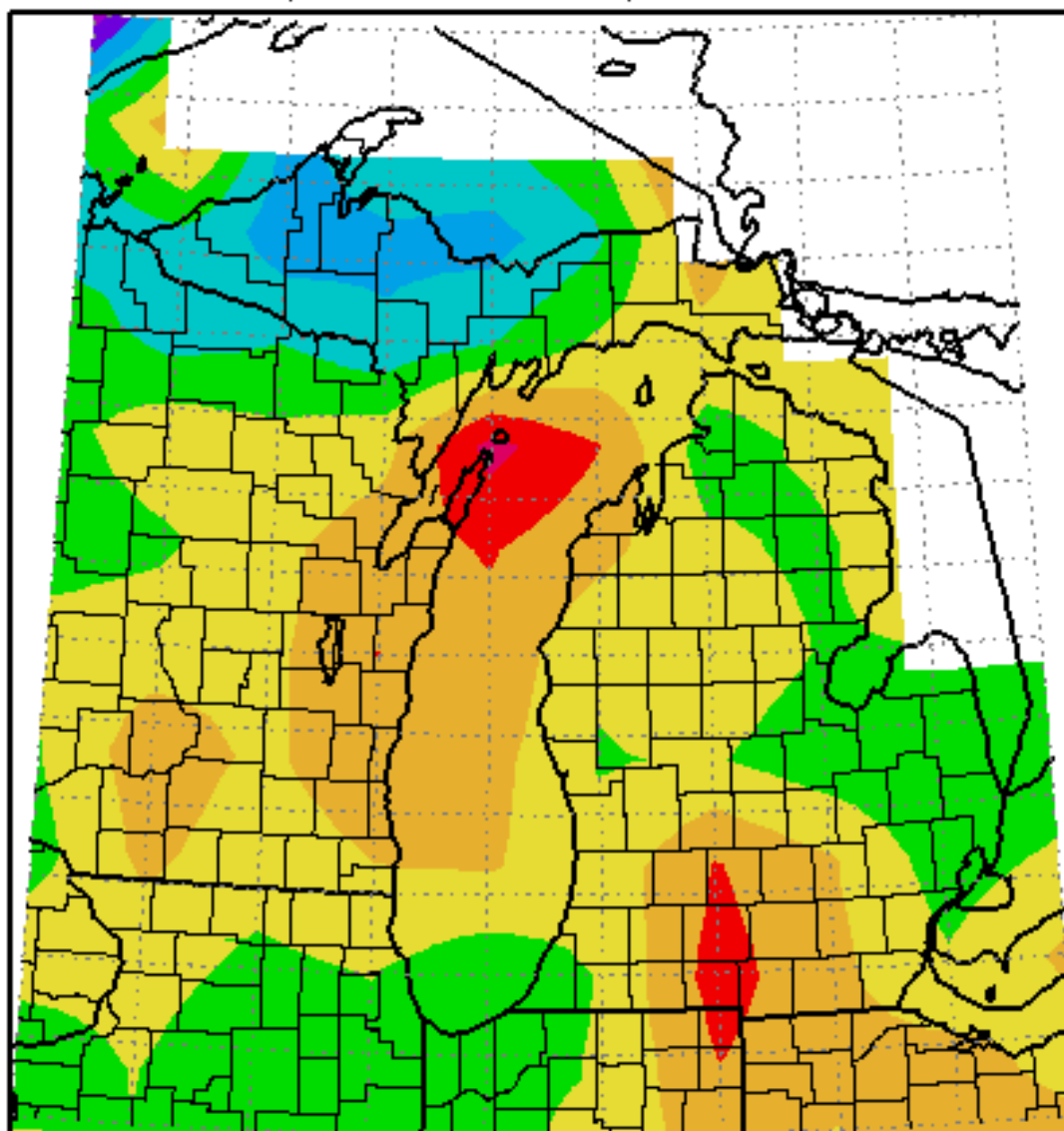
**Total Precipitation Departure from Mean in Inches
May 1, 2008 to May 31, 2008**



**Midwestern Regional Climate Center
Illinois State Water Survey
Champaign, Illinois**

Figure 3. Total precipitation departure from mean

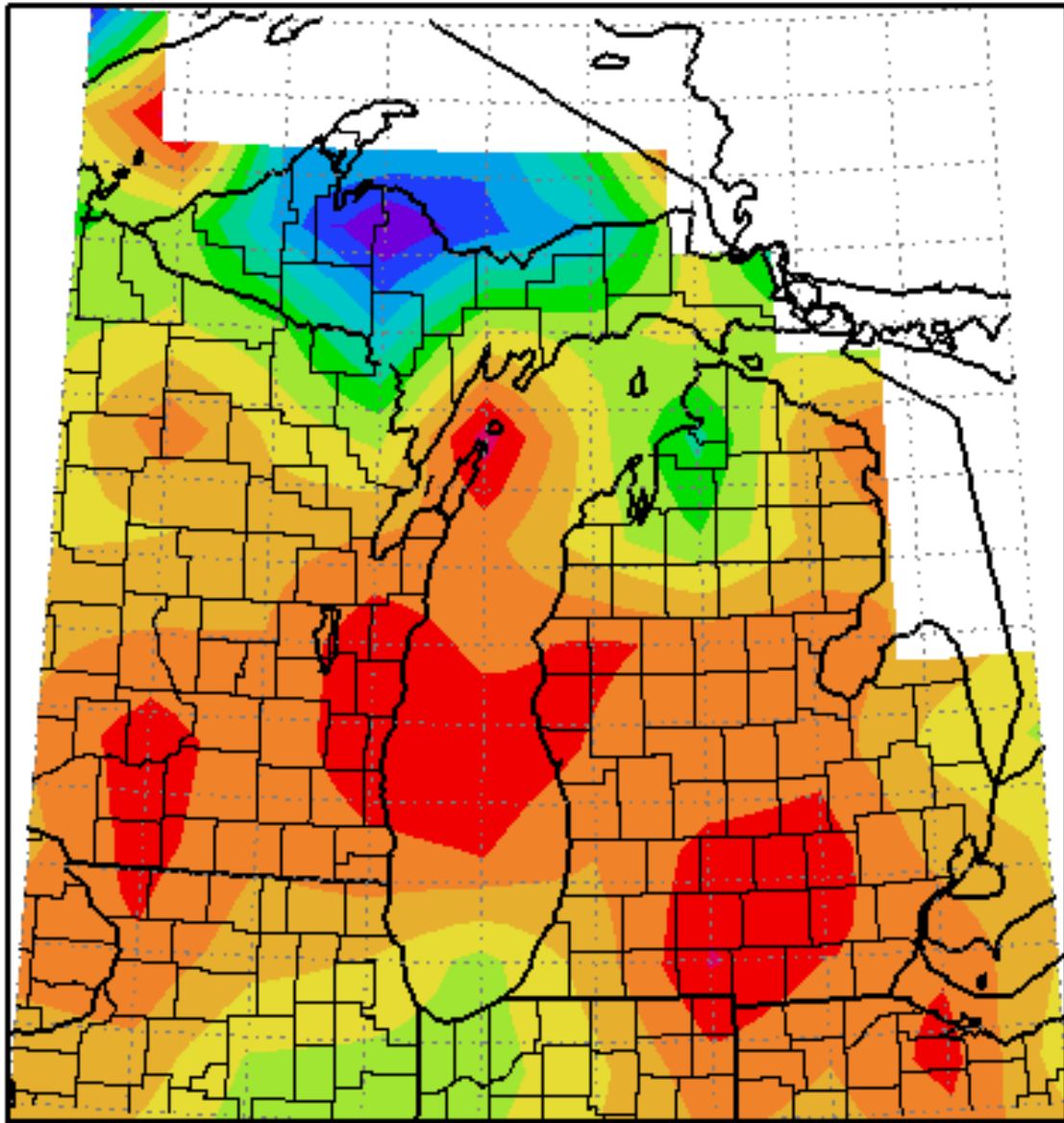
Average Temperature Departure from Mean in Degrees F
May 1, 2008 to May 31, 2008



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Illinois State Water Survey
Champaign, Illinois

Figure 4. Average temperature departure from mean

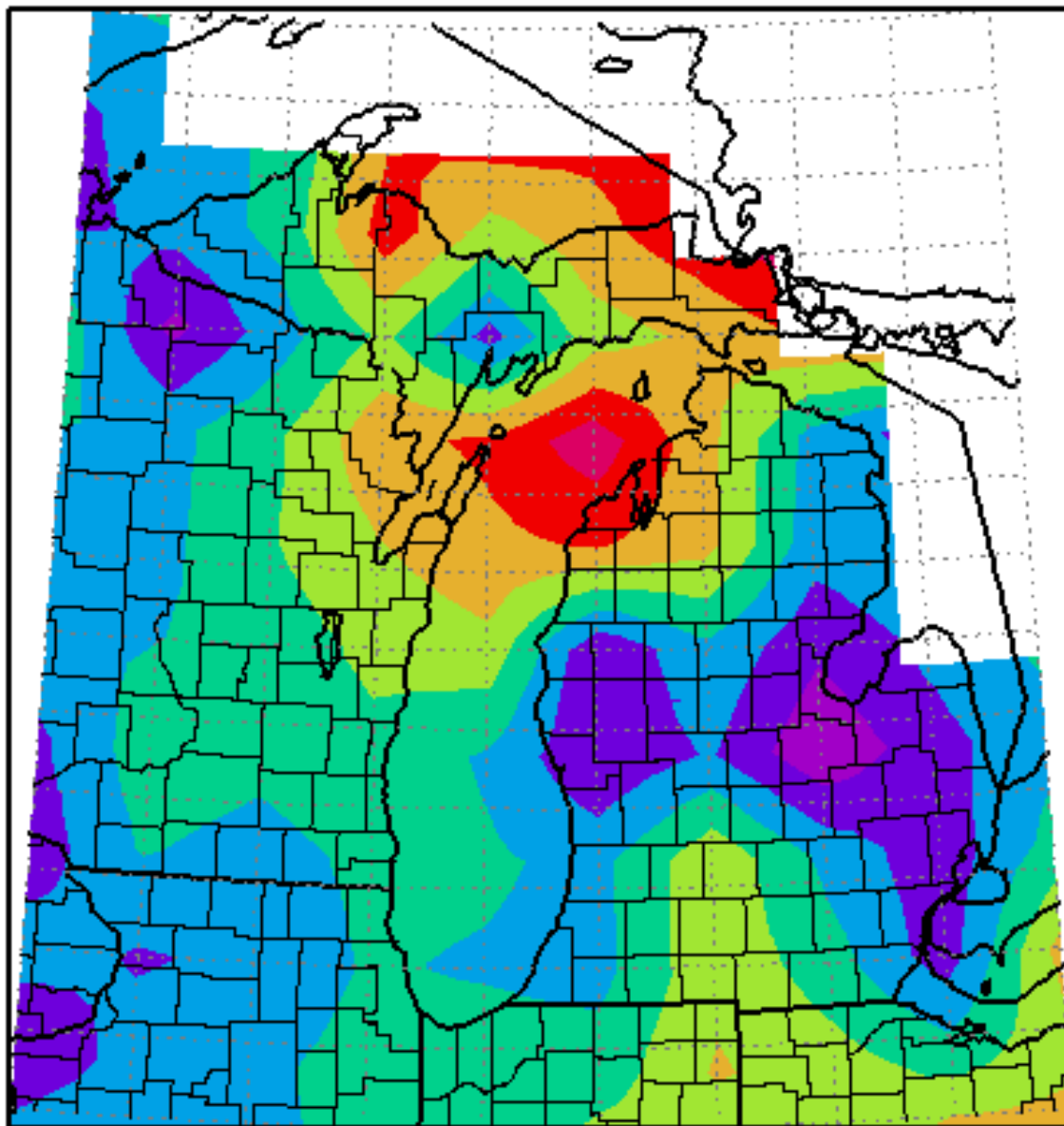
Average High Temp Departure from Mean in Degrees F
May 1, 2008 to May 31, 2008



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Champaign, Illinois

Figure 5. Average high temperature departure from mean

Average Low Temp Departure from Mean in Degrees F
May 1, 2008 to May 31, 2008



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Champaign, Illinois

Figure 6. Average low temperature departure from mean