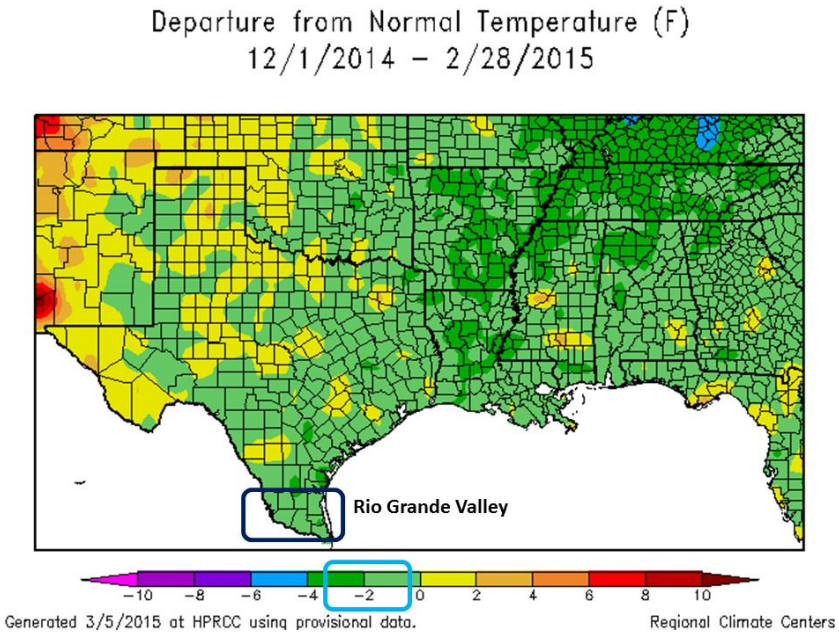
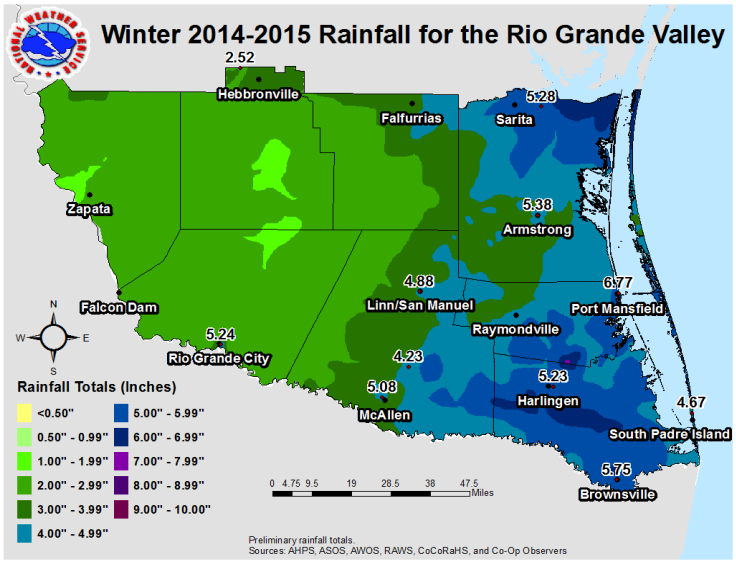
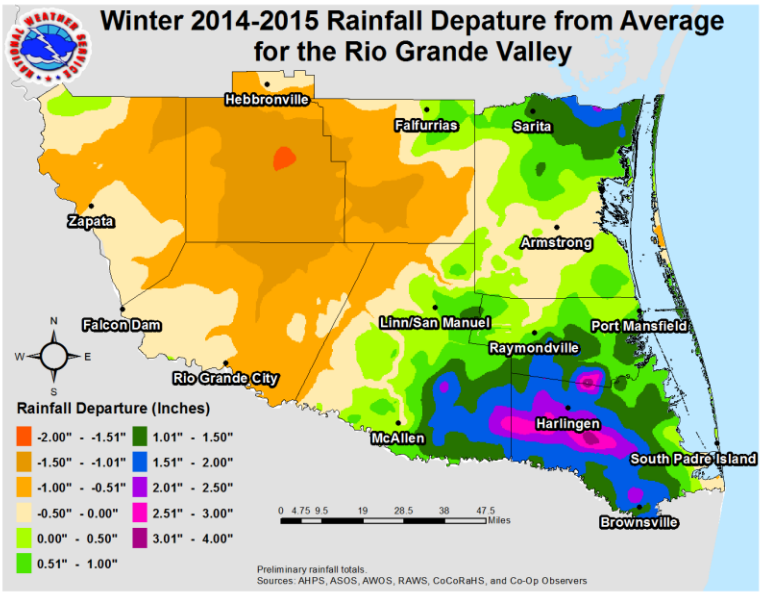
Winter 2014/15 in Brief







Winter 2014/2015 in Brief

Warm Start, Chilly Finish; RGV Stays Green

December's Warmth Fades to Winter; Forecast Bears Fruit

There were no earth-shattering weather events during the winter of 2014/2015 across the southern tip of Texas. However, cloudy skies dominated the season, with at least 75% of days (estimated) having mostly cloudy to overcast conditions. The clouds birthed steady rains in early December and again between January 9th and 11th ; January 10th featured the coldest "feeling" temperatures of the winter, with morning wind chill in the 20s for many. Early February saw modest rainfall; a short lived mid-month warmup was followed by a late month roller-coaster dominated by chilly, brisk days with nuisance light rain or drizzle. For the second season in a row, the populated part of the Valley saw the most rainfall (third graphic, above).

Despite a winter that ranked among the Top 25 coldest in most areas, just a fraction warmer than the chill of winter 2013/14, there were no widespread freezes anywhere in the Valley. On two days, there were local pockets of frost – Christmas morning, and February 18th. Winter 2014/2015 temperatures ranged from the upper 50s to around 60 for the season, roughly 1 to 3°F below 1981-2010 averages in the lower 60s. The big story was a good story: The Valley started green in December, courtesy of well above normal rain during the autumn of 2014. December brought ***growth*** of brush and grasses as Mother Nature was "fooled" into thinking the month was April based on warm, humid nights. January and February held the green with the clouds and just enough rain, along with plenty of drizzle. Colder temperatures limited growth, however.

Cold and wet weather was relative for the Valley compared with our neighbors to the north. North and Central Texas saw a share of ice and snow, especially in February, which continued through the first week of March. Dixie saw repeated ice and snow events, with Tennessee and Kentucky getting walloped in February and again in early March. And few will forget "Blizzardruary" in Boston, which crushed its February snow record by nearly 25 inches (64.8" vs. 41.6", set in 2003)! As of this writing (March 6), Boston was just 3 inches away from an all-time seasonal record for snowfall. The pattern map below tells the tale: A deep trough of low pressure (red L) high in the atmosphere helped transport frequent intrusions of air from the North Pole from the Upper Midwest through the Mid Atlantic region; this southward extension of the Circumpolar Vortex combined with Atlantic and some Gulf moisture to provide the near record snow. Texas was on the southern and back edge of the cold surge, which helped explain why freezes came close, but not all the way, to the Valley.