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2020 Weather in Review: Booker T. Washington National Monument

In all, 2020 was much warmer and wetter than average. Of particular note, it was the wettest year ever recorded in Franklin County, VA. It was also the 7th warmest year on record.

Weather data collected from surrounding areas also indicate that annual average temperature and annual total precipitation have both increased over the last century

(+0.10 °F per decade and +0.35 inches per decade, respectively).

This brief provides county-scale weather data for Franklin County, VA, including data from 1895–2020 (i.e. period of record). Individual weather station data may vary from what is reported here.

Temperature

In total, 2020 was the 7th warmest year at the park since 1895 with a very warm winter and a very cold spring (Figure 1). Eight months had higher than normal temperatures with February, March and November all being more than 5.0 °F above long-term averages (Table 1).

Table 1. Average monthly, average annual, and departures from long-term average temperatures. Departures from average are based on a comparison of 2020 average temperatures to relevant averages from 1895-2019. Data are available at <https://www.ncdc.noaa.gov/cag/county/time-series>.

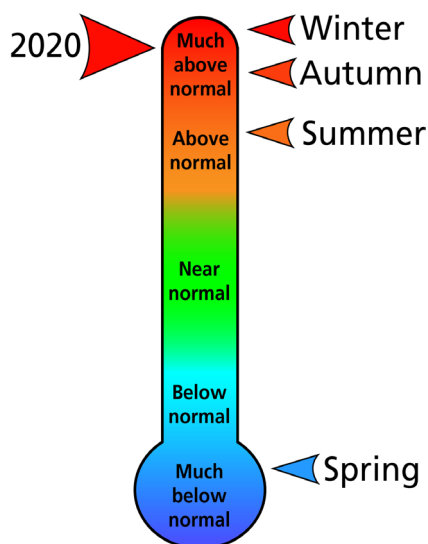


Figure 1. Seasonal and annual temperature rankings. An arrow at the top of the figure would represent the warmest year/season on record (since 1895); at the bottom, the coldest year/season on record. Data are available at <https://www.ncdc.noaa.gov/cag/county/rankings>.

Month/ Year	Average temperature (°F)	Departure from average (°F)
January	40.4	+4.9
February	42.8	+5.2
March	53.0	+7.4
April	53.9	-1.2
May	60.4	-3.5
June	71.0	-0.3
July	78.6	+3.8
August	75.4	+1.9
September	65.8	-1.6
October	58.8	+2.4
November	51.1	+5.1
December	38.3	+0.5
2020	57.5	2.0

Precipitation

It was a record-setting year in Franklin County as 2020 was the wettest year ever recorded (Figure 2). In total, 72.3 inches of precipitation fell, over 28 inches more than the long-term average (Table 2).

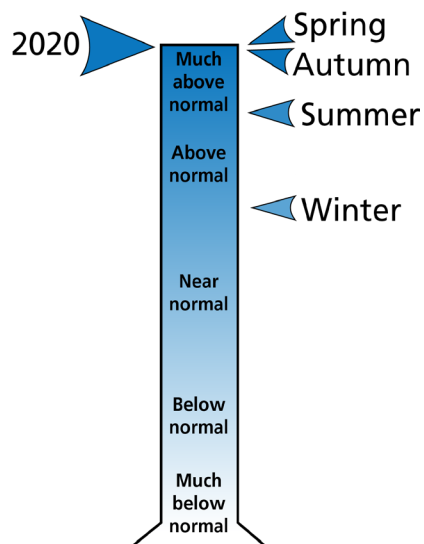


Figure 2. Seasonal and annual precipitation rankings. An arrow at the top of the figure would represent the wettest year/season on record (since 1895); at the bottom, the driest year/season on record. Data are available at <https://www.ncdc.noaa.gov/cag/county/rankings>.

Table 2. Monthly and annual total precipitation and departure from long-term averages. Departures from average are based on a comparison of 2020 precipitation to relevant averages from 1895–2019. Data are available at <https://www.ncdc.noaa.gov/cag/county/time-series>.

Month/ Year	Total precipitation (in.)	Departure from average (in.)
January	3.5	+0.2
February	5.6	+2.5
March	2.5	-1.3
April	7.6	+4.2
May	10.9	+6.9
June	6.6	+2.5
July	2.6	-1.8
August	7.4	+3.3
September	6.7	+2.8
October	6.1	+2.5
November	8.0	+5.0
December	4.8	+1.5
2020	72.3	+28.3

Temperature and Precipitation (1895–2020)

Data for Franklin County, VA indicate that annual average temperature has increased approximately $+0.10^{\circ}\text{F}$ per decade and annual total precipitation has increased approximately $+0.35$ inches per decade since 1895 (Figure 3).

National Park Service scientists have forecast future changes in climate too. Models estimate that by 2100, annual average temperature at the park will increase by $2.9\text{--}8.5^{\circ}\text{F}$ (from a best-case to worst-case scenario, respectively). Annual total precipitation is expected to increase by $8\text{--}14\%$ (see Gonzalez et al., 2018 for details).

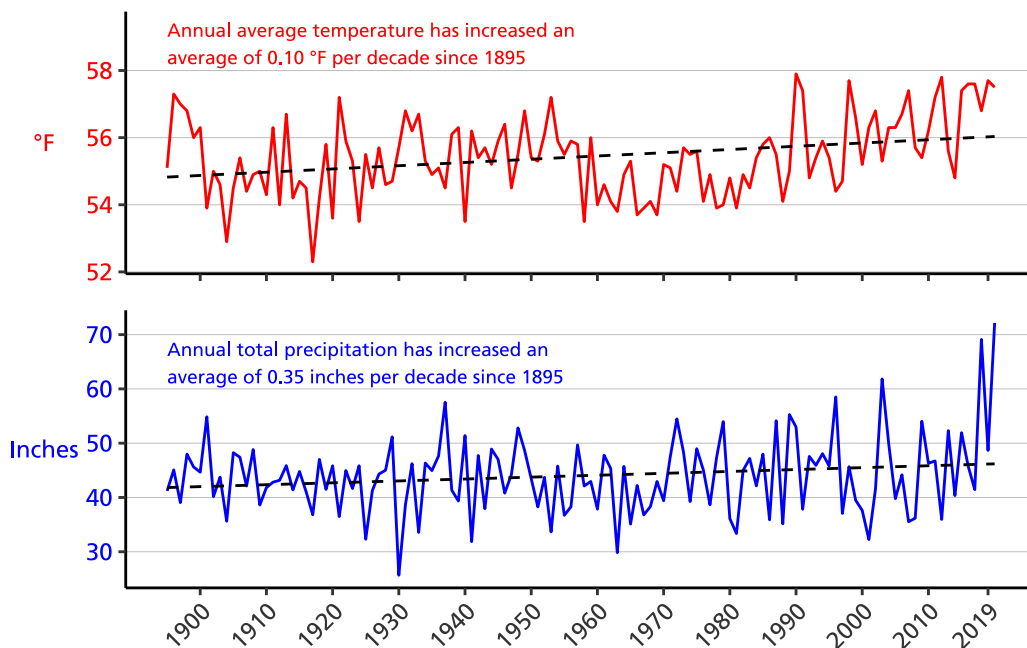


Figure 3. Annual average temperature ($^{\circ}\text{F}$) and annual total precipitation (in.) from 1895–2020 for Franklin County, VA. Dashed lines represent linear estimates of change. Data are available at <https://www.ncdc.noaa.gov/cag/county/time-series>.

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Parks monitored: Appomattox Court House NHP • Booker T. Washington NM • Eisenhower NHS • Fredericksburg & Spotsylvania NMP • Gettysburg NMP • Hopewell Furnace NHS • Petersburg NB • Richmond NBP • Shenandoah NP • Valley Forge NHP