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2020 Weather in Review: New River Gorge National Park and Preserve

In all, 2020 was very warm and also had much higher than normal precipitation. The year ended as the 10th warmest and 4th wettest on record.

Weather data collected from surrounding areas indicate that annual average temperature and annual total precipitation have both increased over the last century (+0.04 °F per decade and +0.05 inches per decade, respectively).

This brief provides county-scale weather data averaged from all of the counties surrounding the park, including data from 1895–2020 (i.e. period of record). These counties include Fayette, Raleigh, and Summers counties, West Virginia. Individual weather station data may vary from what is reported here.

Temperature

In total, 2020 was the 10th warmest year ever recorded at the park. All of the seasons were warmer than normal except the spring, which was very cold (Figure 1). Eight months had higher than normal temperatures with January, February, March, and November all being more than 4.9 °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>.

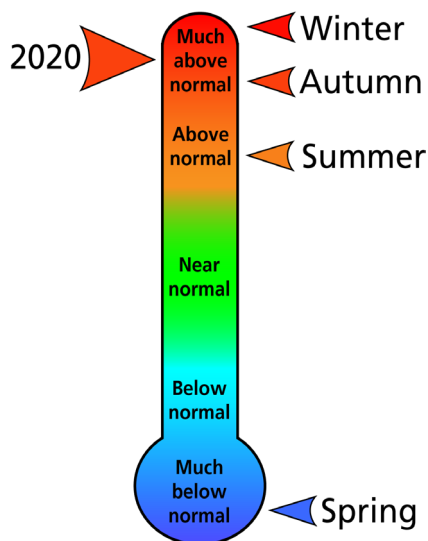


Figure 1. Seasonal and annual temperature rankings. An arrow at the top of the figure would represent the warmest year/season on record (since 1895); at the bottom, the coldest year/season on record. Data are available at <https://www.ncdc.noaa.gov/cag/county/rankings>.

Month/ Year	Average temperature (°F)	Departure from average (°F)
January	37.1	+5.7
February	38.6	+4.9
March	48.5	+6.5
April	48.7	-3.1
May	58.1	-2.7
June	66.8	-1.0
July	74.2	+2.9
August	71.5	+1.3
September	63.3	-1.2
October	55.9	+2.2
November	47.8	+4.9
December	34.0	+0.1
2020	53.7	+1.7

Precipitation

It was a very wet year, ranking as the 4th wettest on record for the three counties surrounding the park (Figure 2). In total, 56.9 inches of precipitation fell, almost 13 inches more than the long-term average (Table 2).

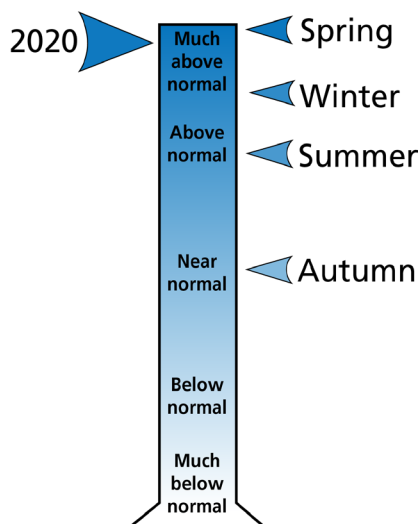


Figure 2. Seasonal and annual precipitation rankings. An arrow at the top of the figure would represent the wettest year/season on record (since 1895); at the bottom, the driest year/season on record. Data are available at <https://www.ncdc.noaa.gov/cag/county/rankings>.

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	3.1	-0.5
February	6.5	+3.4
March	4.4	+0.3
April	7.0	+3.3
May	6.2	+2.0
June	6.3	+2.0
July	4.0	-0.9
August	6.5	+2.4
September	3.6	+0.5
October	3.3	+0.4
November	2.3	-0.6
December	3.7	+0.4
2020	56.9	+12.7

Temperature and Precipitation (1895–2020)

Data for Fayette, Raleigh, and Summers counties, WV indicate that annual average temperature has increased approximately +0.04 °F per decade and annual total precipitation has increased approximately +0.05 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 2.9–8.6 °F (from a best-case to worst-case scenario, respectively). Annual total precipitation is expected to increase by 6–11% (see [Gonzalez et al., 2018](#) for details).

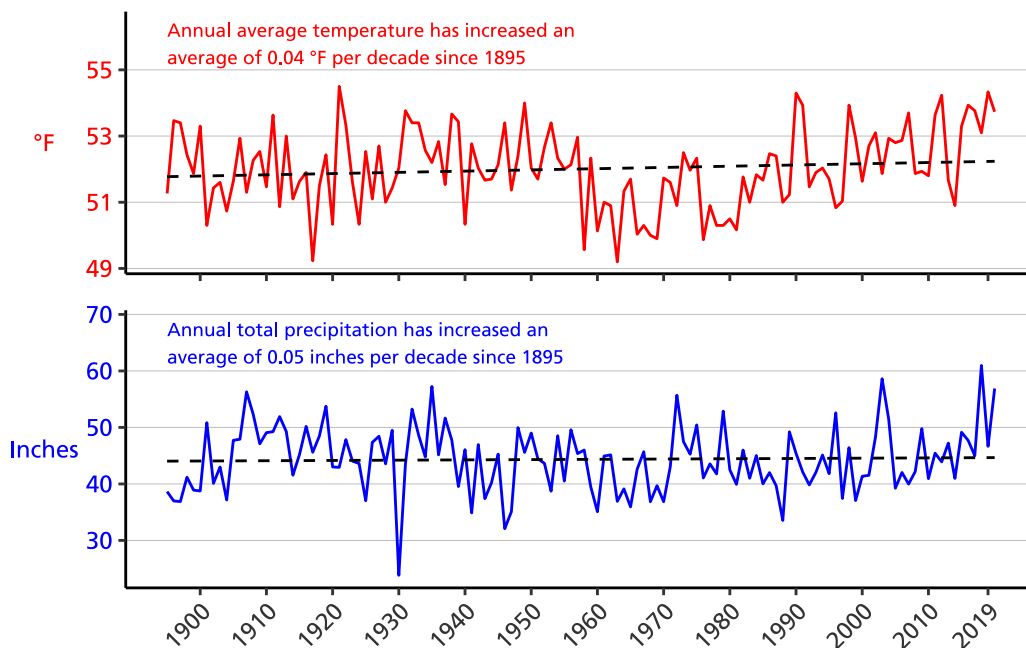


Figure 3. Annual average temperature (°F) and annual total precipitation (in.) from 1895–2020 for Fayette, Raleigh, and Summers counties, WV. Dashed lines represent linear estimates of change. Data are available at <https://www.ncdc.noaa.gov/cag/county/time-series>.

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Parks monitored: Allegheny Portage Railroad NHS • Bluestone NSR • Delaware Water Gap NRA • Flight 93 NMem • Fort Necessity NB • Friendship Hill NHS • Gauley River NRA • Johnstown Flood NMem • New River Gorge NP & PRES • Upper Delaware SRR