



Weather & Climate Summary Gates of the Arctic National Park & Preserve Winter 2026

Brooks Range, Gates of the Arctic NP & Pres. NPS Photo/Ken Hill.

Bettles Winter Weather 2026

Overall, the winter season was colder and drier than normal in Bettles. Weather highlights for the season include a cold December and a lack of snow for both December and January. The average temperature for the winter season was -15.3°F, which is -8.7°F colder than the 1991-2020 normal. The winter snowfall accumulation between December and February was 34.2 inches, 71% of normal. Most of the snow fell in February. December and January monthly snowfall totals were about half as much as normal (Table 1, 2 and Figure 1, 2).

December

December was much colder and much drier than normal. It was the fifth coldest December on record and the coldest since 1980. The average monthly temperature was 18.2°F cooler than normal at -24.2°F. The first few days of the month were the only days that were warmer than normal, with high temperatures

near 20°F. From December 4th until the end of the month, the temperatures were well below normal. There were 12 days in December with a daily average temperature at or below -30°F. The coldest days of the month were December 27th and 30th with minimum temperatures on both days bottoming out at -46°F. A total of 10.3 inches of snow was recorded in Bettles in December, normal is 18.2 inches.

January

January was cooler and drier than normal. The first two weeks were much cooler than normal, as the statewide cold spell continued. The low temperature for the month, and the winter season, was -52°F on January 14th (the record low is -59°F in 1972). The pattern shifted mid-month, and the daily high temperatures reached into the upper teens, well above average for mid-winter. Temperatures for the second half of January

were near to above normal. Overall, the monthly temperature was 1.5°F cooler than normal. Snowfall total for January was 6.8 inches, normal is 14 inches.

February

February was colder than normal with above normal snowfall accumulation. The average monthly temperature was -9.7°F. The high temperature for the month was 17°F on February 6th and the low temperature was -43°F on February 26th and 27th. The last four days of the month were the coldest with daily temperatures averaging 29°F colder than normal. February was the only winter month with substantial snowfall. A total of 17.1 inches of snow fell during the month, most of that between February 18th and 24th. Normal snowfall is 15.9 inches.

Table 1. Bettles average monthly temperature totals compared to normal.

Winter 2026	Average Monthly Temp (°F)	1991-2020 Normal (°F)	Departure from Normal (°F)
December	-24.2	-6.0	-18.2
January	-12.1	-10.6	-1.5
February	-9.7	-3.4	-6.3

Winter temperature departure from normal: -8.7°F

Table 2. Bettles monthly snowfall totals compared to normal.

Winter 2026	Total Monthly Snowfall (in.)	1991-2020 Normal (in.)	Departure from Normal (in.)
December	10.3	18.2	-7.9
January	6.8	14	-7.2
February	17.1	15.9	+1.2

Winter snowfall departure from normal: -13.9 in. (71% of normal).

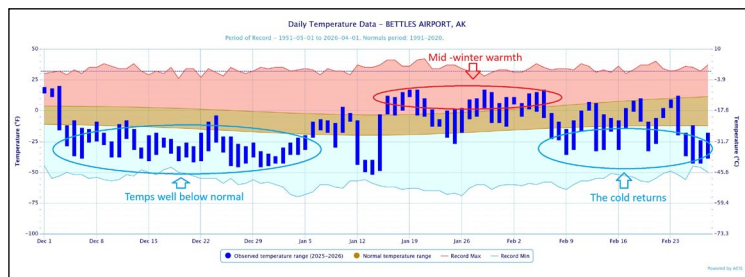


Figure 1. Winter 2026 daily temperatures at Bettles showing record maximum (red), record minimum (blue), normal (brown) and observed range (blue bars). <http://xmacis.rcc-acis.org/>



Figure 2. Winter 2026 accumulated snowfall at Bettles (green) compared to normal (brown line). <http://xmacis.rcc-acis.org/>

Cold Winter in Interior Alaska

Gates of the Arctic National Park and Preserve experienced a deep chill for most of the winter, along with most of Interior Alaska (pink shading Figure 3). A persistent upper-level weather pattern was the culprit. Near record high pressure centered over the western Bering Sea (spinning clockwise) and an intense low pressure centered over northern Canada (spinning counterclockwise) led to persistent northerly flow of cold air down through Interior Alaska.

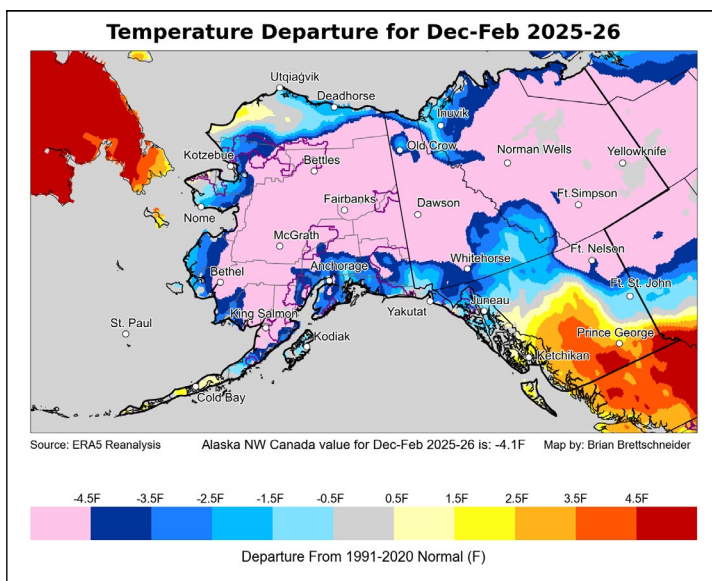


Figure 3. Statewide temperature departure for December 2025 – February 2026 (back to 1940). Map courtesy of Brian Brettschneider using ERA5 reanalysis data.

Winter Temperatures in Gates of the Arctic

At our mountain sites in Gates of the Arctic, the coldest temperatures of the winter occurred in mid-January with low temperatures between -29°F and -32°F . During this same period the low temperature at Bettles was -52°F , highlighting the classic winter temperature inversion where colder air pools in low valleys.

At our Chimney Lake station this was the coldest winter season to date (since 2013). The December average temperature was -3.9°F , which is -7.7°F colder than the site average. Last winter (2025) was the third warmest winter (5°F warmer than average), highlighting the remarkable variability in winter temperatures from year-to-year. The warmest winter season to date was 2018 with an average temperature of 9.9°F , about 14°F warmer than this cold winter.

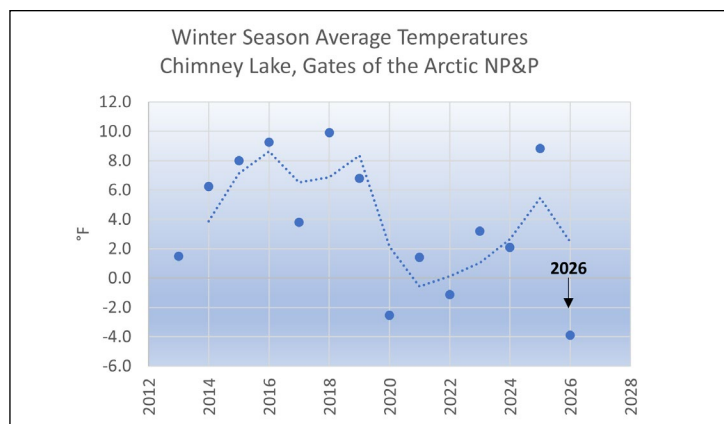


Figure 4. Winter season average temperatures at the Chimney Lake climate station in Gates of the Arctic National Park and Preserve.

Low Snow Year

Back in October the snow accumulation was tracking close to normal in Bettles, but from November through January there was little snow accumulation. At the Bettles Field Snotel site the snow depth was well below the median value for most of the season. The snow depth peaked in late February with 25 inches on the ground, but by mid-April it was down to 18 inches; the median for mid-April is 34 inches (Figure 5). The Bettles snowpack usually increases throughout the month of April, with peak snow occurring the first week, just before the onset of the rapid spring melt.

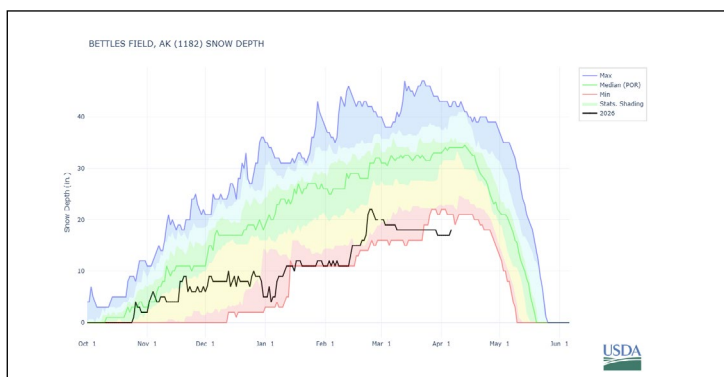


Figure 5. Bettles snow depth October 2025 - April 2026 (black line). Green line is the median. Data from the Bettles Field Snotel site.

[Click here](#) to view the current weather from the climate stations in for Gates of the Arctic NP & Preserve.

More Information

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<https://www.nps.gov/im/arcn/climate.htm>

Data disclaimer: Please note that the near-real time data used to generate these reports is subject to change. QA/QC data from the NPS CAKN/ARCN climate stations are available at [nps data store](#)