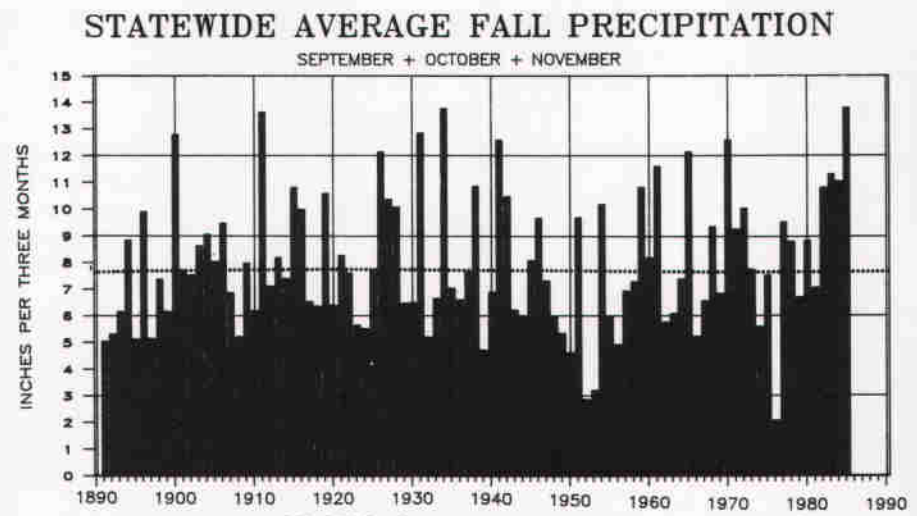
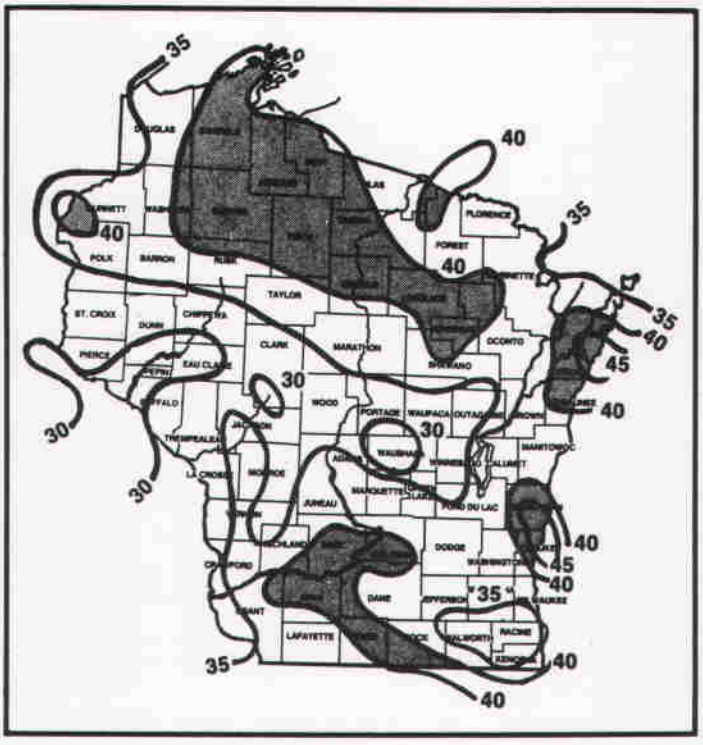
GET YOUR CONSTRUCTION WORK DONE EARLY — THE WEATHER TREND FOR FALL IS WET



An average three-month state rainfall of 13.8 inches gave Wisconsin its wettest autumn season in 95 years.

— Graph from state climatologist Douglas Clark

1985 rainfall



Wisconsin's average statewide precipitation in 1985 was 36.99 inches, much wetter than the statewide average of 31.27 inches (since 1931). The gradient map above shows rainfall ranges for 1985. The total of Lafayette County, for example, was between 35 and 40 inches. The shaded areas show parts of the state with more than 40 inches of rainfall for the year. Western Wisconsin was drier than most of the state, with three pockets where rainfall was 30 inches or less — one centered in Waushara County, a second in Clark County, and a third in Pepin, Buffalo, Eau Claire and Dunn counties. The two wettest pockets in the state, with more than 45 inches of rainfall, were on the Lake Michigan shore — one at Sturgeon Bay in Door County and the second in Ozaukee and Sheboygan counties.

— Map by Douglas Clark

State Climatologist Douglas Clark has reported that last fall was the wettest in Wisconsin in the 95 years official records of statewide rainfall have been kept. Looking back into the record book revealed that the fall of 1985 rainfall total was the largest since 1881, an extraordinary year with fall precipitation approaching 17 inches.

Last fall's statewide average rainfall was 13.8 inches; normal autumn rainfall is 7.67 inches. It was the fourth fall in a row with above normal precipitation. In addition to that, the four-year average rainfall has been increasing the past nine years. This pattern of wet, consecutive autumns is a pattern not seen since the 1880s, according to Clark. It will require some review of past years since the National Weather Service uses 30 year averages to define "normal" precipitation.

The question most Wisconsin Golf Course Superintendents have in mind is, "Are we in for another wet fall this year?" There are two ways to forecast that. One is the probability of this autumn being above normal. The average value is the best guess at the succeeding year. When you look at patterns of changing rainfall from year to year over a long period of time, cycles of greater or less precipitation emerge, and these cycles can be used to make a forecast. Clark believes we may indeed be getting into a seasonal pattern that looks more like the 1880s than anything we've experienced in the 100 years since then. There is danger in using the recent record to predict the future because the atmosphere may be entering a new regime. You may end up extrapolating from a record of "recent" years that doesn't apply to the new pattern.

I have a few construction projects planned for 1986, and the chance for a new pattern in the weather notwithstanding, I think we'll do our best to wrap them up by Labor Day.

.MSM