

Rainfall totals below average in Anniston area

By Adam Higgins, Special to The Star | Posted: Friday, April 1, 2016 4:06 pm

Rainfall totals were below average in Anniston for the first quarter of 2016, but the area is free of any drought-like conditions.

Anniston had 12.13 inches of rain for the first three months of 2016; the normal average for the first quarter is 14.56 inches, according to records from the National Weather Service.

“We’re not in any trouble right now. There are no drought warnings for the area,” said Roger McNeil, a hydrologist with the National Weather Service office in Calera.

John Christy, a state climatologist at the University of Alabama in Huntsville, said Monday that he had recently performed a drought test. He said then that the last 30 days had been fairly dry, but that the rain from last winter is keeping the soil saturated.

“The soil is drying rapidly right now because the trees and any type of vegetation are drawing the maximum amount of water. If that is not replenished with adequate rain, then the trees and vegetation will come under stress,” Christy said.

David West, coordinator of the Calhoun County Extension Office, said that he was surprised the area is behind on rainfall.

Ed Turner, general manager for the Anniston Water Works and Sewer Board, said the shortage would not affect the city’s water supply, which comes primarily from Coldwater Spring.

“It flows an average of 32 million gallons of water per day. A couple of years of normal rain helps keep the supply steady,” Turner said.

He said the spring started flowing less than normal during a drought in 2007. Local farmers remember that drought very well.

“It was one of the worst years that we had. Yields were reduced quite a bit and we had a limited amount of hay for livestock,” said Wendell Wilson, a 25-year farmer from Jacksonville.



Trantham Farms

Daniel Trantham works on getting a corn planter ready to plant as he and his dad Doug prepare to starting planting their spring crop.

Doug Trantham of Trantham Farms in Alexandria said that he now plants multiple crops that can be harvested throughout the season in case of droughts. He grows corn, soybeans, cotton and wheat that he harvests from June to November.

“We made that choice back in the late ’70s after we had a couple of droughts that devastated us. We realized we needed to diversify what we plant,” Trantham said.

West said he is concerned that the soil could become too wet this year. Too much rain can prevent farmers from getting their equipment into fields to spread fertilizer or plant and harvest crops without getting stuck, he said.

Both farmers agree that soil conditions are favorable so far.

“I haven’t planted anything yet, but the water table appears to be looking good right now,” Wilson said.