

Moisture Situation Update – May 16, 2016

Synopsis:

During the second week of May (May 10-May 16), unusually warm spring weather was interrupted briefly as heavy frost descended on the province with the coldest temperatures occurring on or about May 13, 2016 (**see map 1**). During this time, some agricultural areas lying in a large areas stretching north of Calgary and south of the Swan Hills saw temperatures dip below -8°C. Meanwhile, south of Calgary frosts of -2 to -3° C were widespread, with some areas south of the Cypress Hills and through parts of Cardston County dipping below -6°C. Note that it is estimated that -5°C frost across southern Alberta (south of the Trans-Canada Highway), on or after May 13, occurs on average only about once in 25 to 50 years.

The spring has been unusually warm and dry, with concern mounting for pastures and hay crops that are greening up and require moisture immediately. In greatest need are large areas north of Calgary and generally west of Highway 2, stretching well north of Edmonton (**See Map 2**). Here many lands have seen less than 10 mm fall since April 1 (**see Map 3**) despite the fact that temperatures have been warm enough to initiate good growth. In contrast, much of southern Alberta and most areas east along the Saskatchewan border, as far north as Wainwright have seen near normal precipitation accumulations, with some areas south of the Cypress Hills estimated to be well above normal. Fortunately for producers, as the May long weekend approaches so does the wet weather, as several days of cool rainy weather are forecast across most of the province.

Forecast from AF's fire weather section (special thanks to Paul Kruger)

This week's forecast is promising wide spread rain with upwards of 10-15 mm expected for most of the agricultural lands south of Edmonton, with totals potentially reaching up to 20-25 mm west of Highway 2. This should be adequate to provide much needed moisture to both perennial crops, as well as recently seeded crops. As the system moves through the province, the Peace Region is expected to receive a large amount of moisture with 60-80 mm likely to fall as a mix of rain and wet snow to lands south of the town of Peace River. North of Peace River, the accumulations will be less, with amounts upwards of 5-10 mm expected through the Fort Vermillion area. Along with this wet snow, for much of the Peace Region, there is a risk of frost. Note that areas south of Edmonton, province wide, are not expected to see frost as a result of this system.

It may be too early to tell, but currently our best "guess" is suggesting that this system has the potential to mark the end of a long dry spell and in its wake, usher in a change to more seasonal weather patterns, at least for the foreseeable future.

Additional maps can be found at www.agriculture.alberta.ca/maps

Near-real-time hourly station data can be viewed/downloaded at www.agriculture.alberta.ca/stations

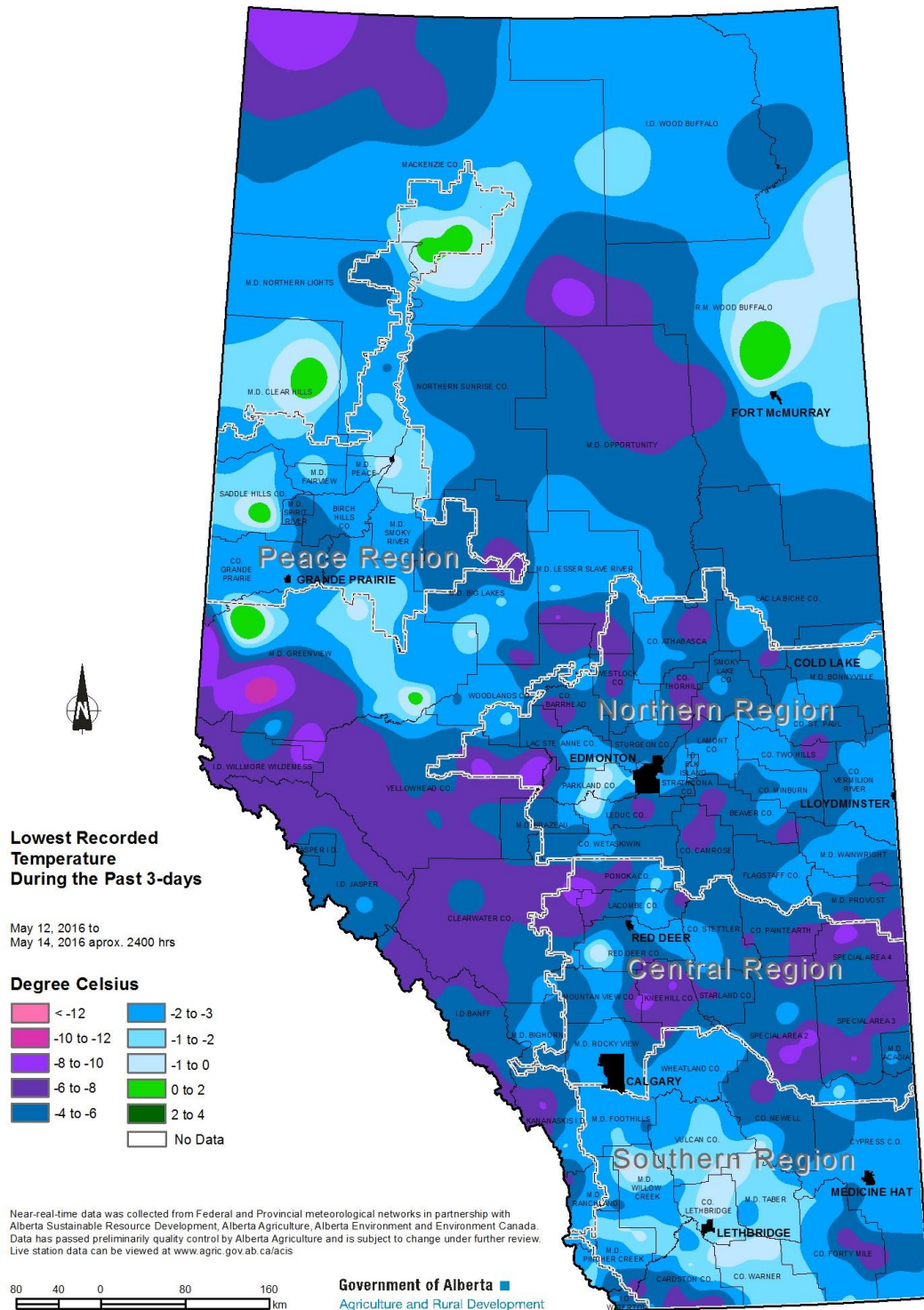
For frost probabilities in your area log on to <http://agriculture.alberta.ca/acis/alberta-weather-data-viewer.jsp> and, select the "normals" tab.

Note: Data has about a two hour lag and is displayed in MST.

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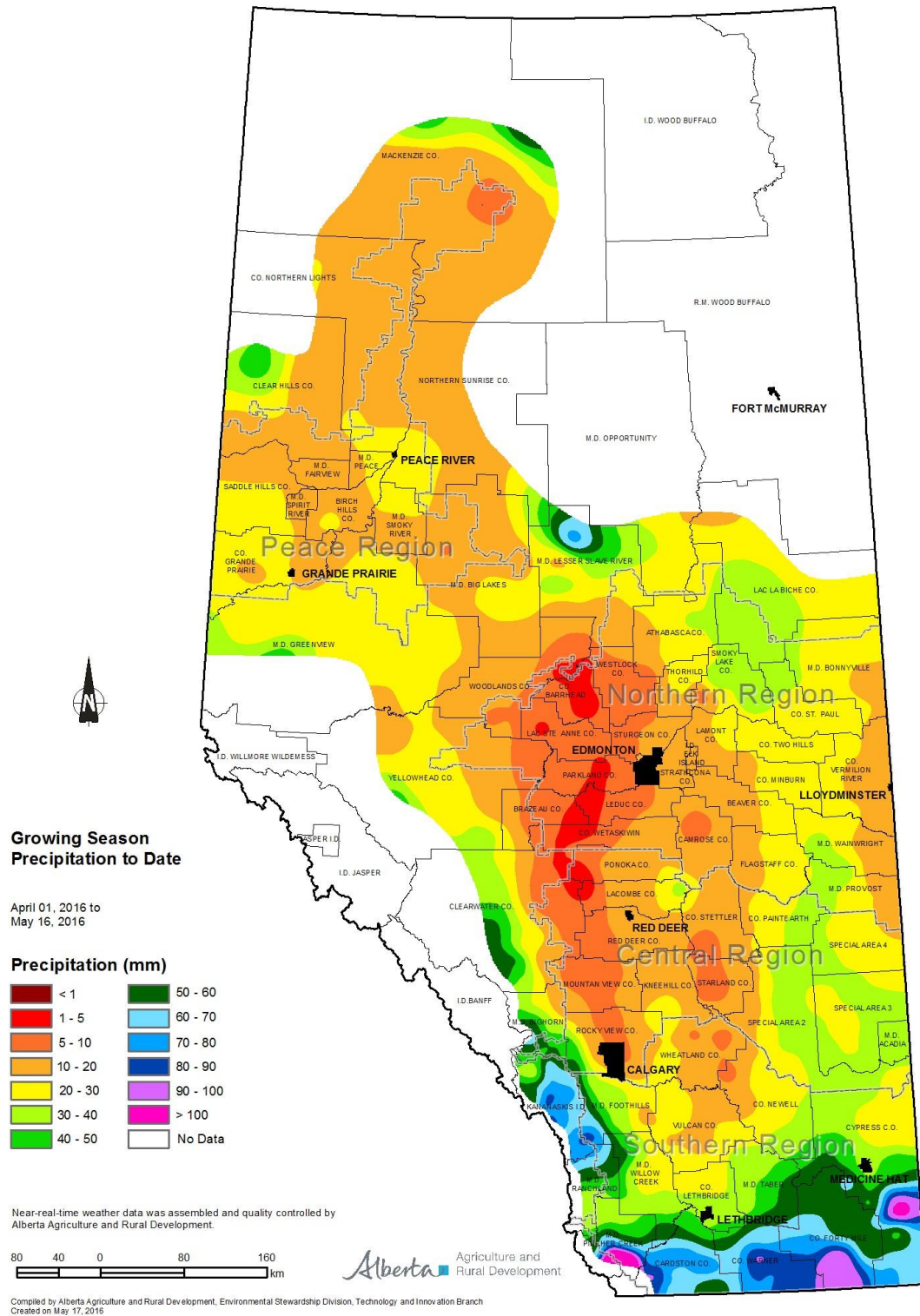
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Map 1



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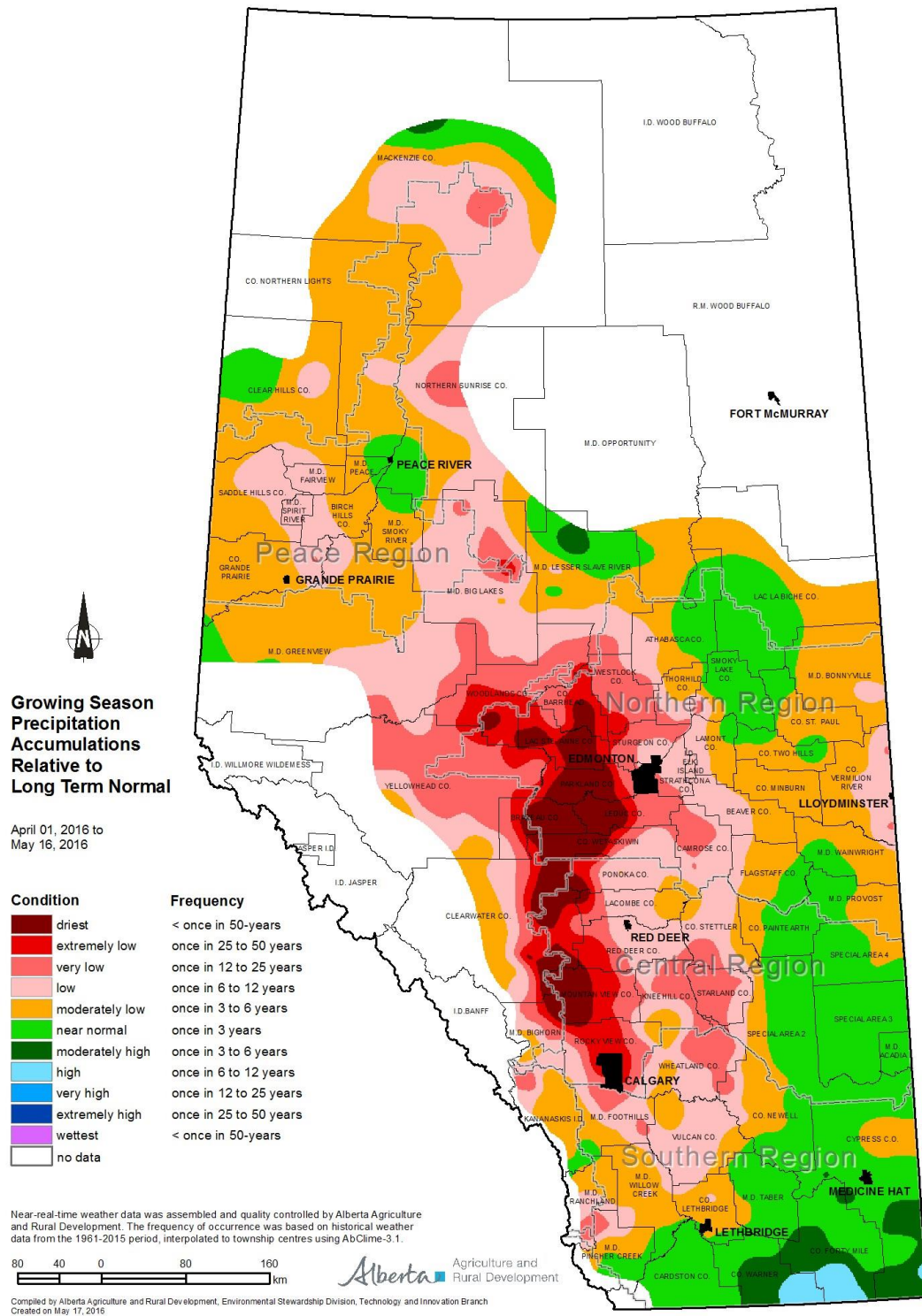
Map 2



Visit weatherdata.ca for additional maps and meteorological data

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Map 3



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