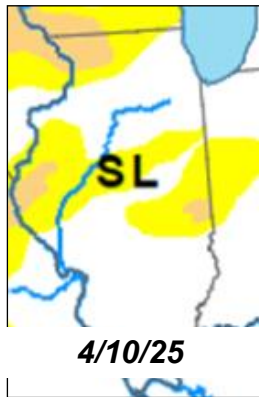
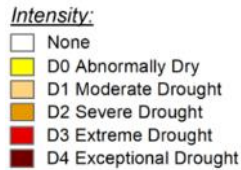
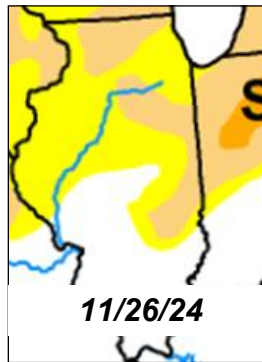


April 2025

What would a farming-related newsletter be without discussing the weather, especially during the springtime? This spring thus far has not disappointed in varying degrees of drastic weather conditions. From daytime highs ranging from the 40s to the 80s. Upper soil profile moisture conditions have varied quite a bit at times, but generally lower soil profiles have remained dry.

This reminds us that we never recharged the soil moisture from last year's fall harvest. The maps at the right show the change from last fall to mid-April.

One other aspect of the weather that is worth mentioning is the WIND. If you are thinking, it seems windier than it used to. You are correct. The graph below illustrates how windy east-central Illinois has been during the last 30 years. With only one other year being windier than 2024 was 1996. However, we have seen a trend since 2020 of windy conditions increasing each year. Illustrating that considera-



Agronomist Notebook

By Eric Beckett, CCA 4RNMS
Field Agronomist, Illini FS
217-318-9100
ebeckett@illinifs.com



A dust storm led to near blackout conditions along I-55 in Illinois May 1, 2023, resulting in 8 deaths, 32 hospitalizations and 72 destroyed vehicles. Photo: WICS-TV Springfield, Illinois

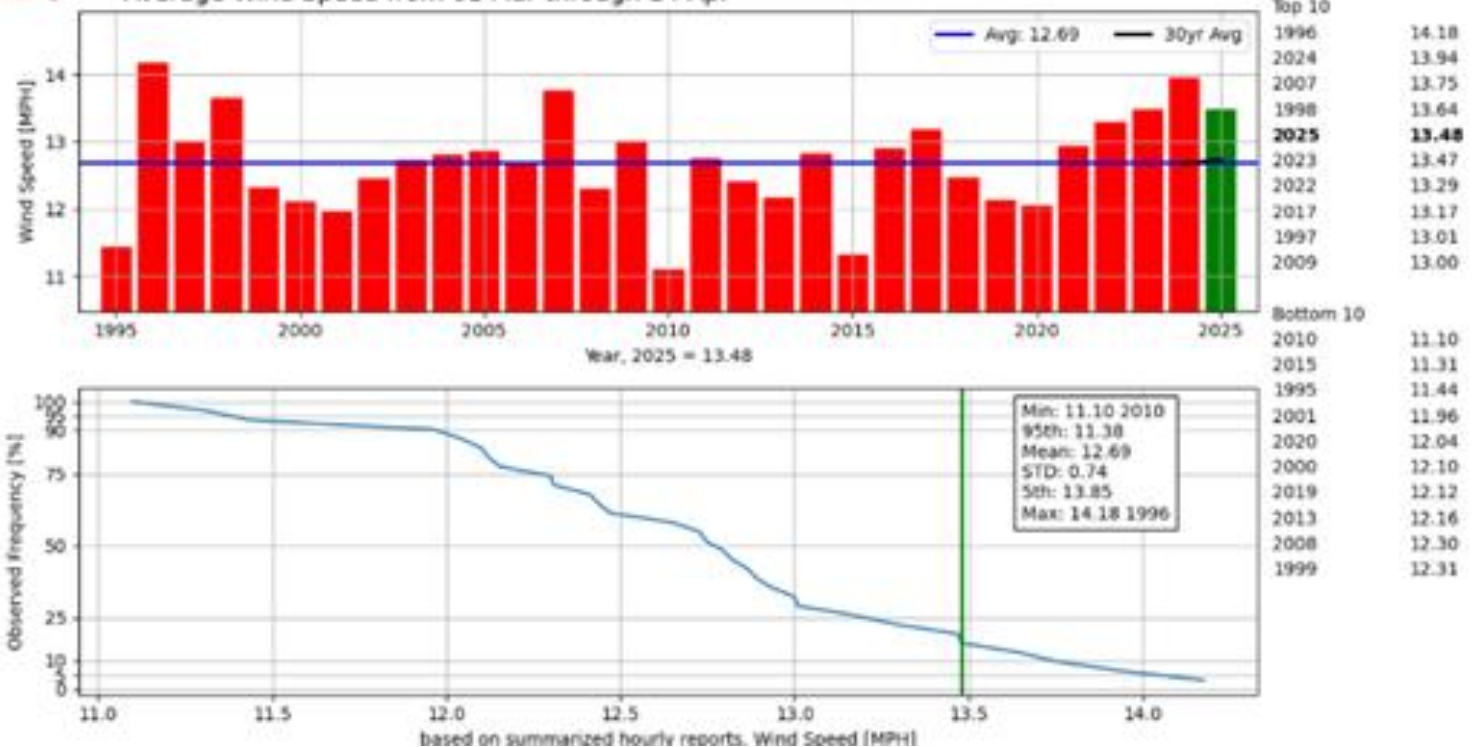
tions may be needed to address current cropping practices.

Many of the original conservation practices from the 1930s are still in practice today, but maybe it's time to rethink some tillage practices. To avoid issues with loss of topsoil from these areas that seem to be windier in Illinois.

These are examples of worst-case scenarios that I think we can all agree we should avoid as an industry. A few items to consider as we continue this spring.



[CMI] Champaign - Willard
Average Wind Speed from 01 Mar through 14 Apr



- Is the tillage pass necessary to complete planting ops?
- Is there a better tool for the job?
- What conservation practices could be implemented?

Beyond the concerns with tillage and windy conditions, what about nutrient and pesticide applications? Are those applications reaching the desired target? We have seen new legislation on pesticide labels to address off-target movement of pesticides beyond dicamba and 2,4-D. As new labels are developed, you will see more requirements for considering wind speeds at the time of application.

New legislation has also been introduced to address off-target movement around schools, parks, bike trails, and home daycares. Last year in April, we saw a lot of scrutiny from local environmental groups following around applicators and sprayers trying to make examples and then pressuring the IL Department of Ag to administer fines.

Beyond the motivation to avoid public scrutiny from local environmental groups and becoming news headlines, what about the loss of goods and services when applying inputs in windy conditions? One item I often notice is that when the spinner bed fertilizer applicator shuts down because of windy conditions, I still see air flow machines running. I realize that these machines have a wider range of operations, but oftentimes it seems as if this gives operators a false sense of appropriate operating conditions.

Below is my recommendation for the Ag Retail community, including the FS Growmark system that Illini FS is a part of and local growers.

- Read and follow Pesticide labels and understand wind limitations.
- Understand best management practices for sprayers and nutrient applicators concerning windy conditions.
- Growers and/or AG Retail don't pressure applicators to make applications in less-than-ideal conditions.
- Applicators stay aware of changing weather conditions and avoid less than ideal conditions.
- Good documentation of applications for both pesticide and nutrient is key in case applications are ever questioned due to adverse windy conditions.



John Pike · Following
Agronomist/So. IL IFCA Nitrogen Research Coo...
6h · Edited · 🌐



"Mud Rains"

A lot of dust has been in the air here in Southern IL and surrounding states lately. It's not local dust but seems to be coming from the direction of Texas and Oklahoma. This has resulted in 3 rains where it seemed like more mud was falling than water, as can be seen in the picture of my dirty truck hood. I hadn't seen anything to this extent before so I weighed a cloth and wiped the mud off to see how much soil was blowing around. I calculated that from what I cleaned off, it amounts to about 42.5 pounds per acre. This "deposit" conservatively happened over an area larger than 1/3 of the state of IL, which amounts to about 262,000 tons or 13,000 semi loads of soil in just one rain event. And we have seen 3 events like this. Imagine the cost to buy 39,000 loads of topsoil. That's a lot of soil moving around.



In an era where most everyone has a cell phone camera within arm's reach, I ask everyone to avoid making decisions that might result in a headline during what seems like a windier Illinois.

If growers or readers of this newsletter have questions or concerns about management strategies for this year, Illini FS or I would welcome the opportunity to partner with you. You can contact me personally with my information in the newsletter header.



www.illinifs.com

217-384-8300