

Warmest September on record, worldwide

By Randolph E. Schmid, Associated Press, 10/17/2003 13:33

WASHINGTON (AP) Last month was the warmest September on record, federal climate experts said Friday.

Worldwide, the average temperature for the month was about 60 degrees Fahrenheit (15 degrees Celsius), according to Jay Lawrimore of the National

Climate Data Center. That's 1.0 degree Fahrenheit above average on records

going back to 1880.

The second and third warmest Septembers on record occurred in 1997 and 1998,

respectively.

It was a different story in the United States, with some states warmer than

average and some cooler, averaging out to an about-average month, temperature wise.

The mean temperature in Maine, Vermont, Nevada and California was much above

average, and several other states were significantly warmer than average.

On the other hand, significantly cooler than average temperatures occurred

in 17 states, primarily in the Central and Southern Plains, the central Mississippi Valley, the Ohio Valley and parts of the Southeast, according to

NCDC, a part of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

Overall, precipitation for the contiguous U.S. was near average, but the western United States remained drier than average, while it was much wetter

than normal from the Mississippi Valley to the mid-Atlantic and Northeast.

Hurricane Isabel provided much of the rainfall in states from North Carolina to Maine.

But that drenching, starting Sept. 18, was on top of already wet soil.

Indeed, Virginia had its wettest October-September on record, with rainfall

exceeding the next wettest October-September by 10 inches.

More than 65 inches of rain fell in Virginia from October 2002 to September

2003, more than twice the amount that fell during the previous 12-month period.

Three other states had their wettest such 12 months on record Delaware, Maryland and North Carolina and the Southeast as a whole was the wettest

in

108 years of record keeping for that 12-month period.

In contrast, drought continued to affect many parts of the West. While

some

improvement occurred early in 2003, drought severity worsened in the succeeding months. At the end of September 2003, 76 percent of the

western

United States was in moderate-to-extreme drought.

Worldwide, land surface temperatures were the second warmest for

September.

Temperatures were extremely warm throughout much of eastern Canada and readings were unusually warm over much of Asia and Europe.

The global ocean surface temperature was warmest on record, although temperatures in much of the central and eastern equatorial Pacific were

near

the 1971-2000 average.

Rising temperatures in recent years have led to concern that changes in atmospheric chemistry caused by human-induced pollution is warming the

globe

in a process known as the greenhouse effect.