Wild weather extremes mark

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Crazy extremes of wet and dry weather have both drenched and scorched the USA in the first half of the year.

How crazy? Waterlogged Pensacola, Fla., has received more than 200 times as much rain as bone-dry Las Vegas, which has had only one rainy day this year, Feb. 28, when about one-third of an inch fell.

The entire state of California slipped into drought conditions this spring, with nearly a third of the state in "exceptional" drought, the worst level.

On the flip side, torrential rain swamped the Southeast this spring. Mobile, Ala., had its wettest April ever, with a foot and a half of rain. The worst of the rain in Pensacola, bordering Alabama, was in late April, when almost 2 feet fell in two days, leading to flooding, sinkholes, road closures and record-high river levels.

Overall, the reason for the split weather pattern was a persistent ridge of high pressure over the western half of the USA, balanced by a trough of low pressure in the East, climate scientist Jake Crouch of the National Climatic Data Center said.

Other wild weather from the year's first six months:

- The brutally cold winter brought near-record levels of ice to the Great Lakes, wreaking havoc with shipping and wildlife. The ice persisted into June in Lake Superior, the latest on record.
- 2 inches of snow in Atlanta in late January brought the city to its knees, stranding motorists and school buses overnight.
- Through the end of May, Alaska was baking through its second-warmest year on record.

Sources: National Climatic Data Center, National Weather Service

USA's first half of 2014

WARM WEST, SOGGY SOUTHEAST

DROUGHT Bone-dry weather and extreme heat in the West have left California in a statewide drought and fueled unusual spring wildfires. Las Vegas has had only one rainy day this year, on Feb. 28, when 1/3 of an inch fell.



RAIN The Southeast has seen a very wet 2014: For instance, Pensacola has received almost 5 feet of rain this year, more than twice the average.



Source National Weather Service
JULIE SNIDER, USA TODAY