

Monthly Environmental Report

Environmental Science Report



February 2026

As summer came to an end, February kept the region in the continued run of wetter than average conditions seen so far this year. By the month's end, regional rainfall totals sat at 124% of the long term average, with Southern Hawke's Bay (161%), Northern Hawke's Bay (144%), and Waikaremoana (140%) all recording well above normal rainfall totals. River flows across most sites followed this pattern, with some northern and southern catchments registering particularly high flows. Soil moisture levels also remained above median levels across the region, reflecting the sustained wet conditions of the past two months. Groundwater levels across the region were assessed as "Normal" for February, with both the Ruataniwha Plains and Heretaunga Plains recording marked improvement and continuing their upward trajectory.

Temperatures were near normal across the region, with maximum temperatures sitting 0.3°C above normal and minimum temperatures 0.41°C above normal. The wet conditions also influenced recreational water quality, with several sites—particularly central locations—exceeding guideline thresholds throughout the month. Despite this, many coastal beaches maintained good conditions even with the unsettled weather. Air quality remained excellent throughout February, with no PM₁₀ exceedances recorded in any of the airsheds.

Nithin Bala Murali
Climate Scientist

Short summary

Above average rainfall across the region.

March to May Forecast

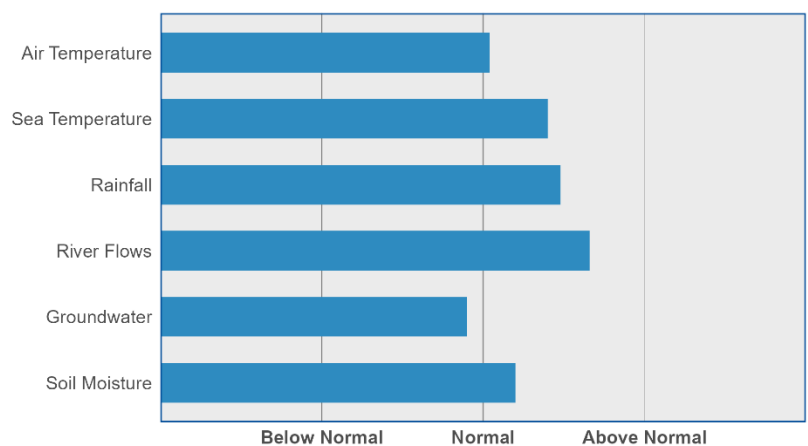
Temperature Near average
Rain Above average
River flows Near or above average
Soil moisture Near or above average

Source: ESNZ (formerly NIWA)

For more information

www.hbrc.govt.nz

Ph: 06 835 9200



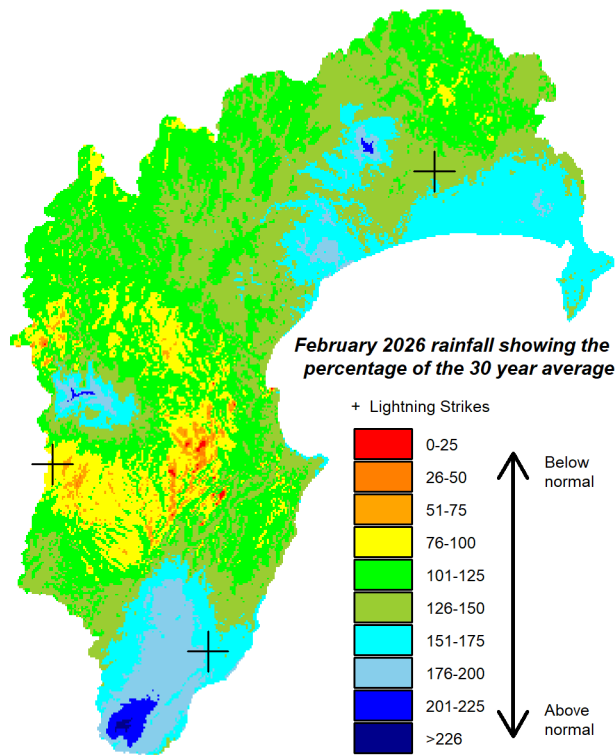
RAINFALL

Above normal. 3 cloud to ground lightning strikes.

Lightning counts come from the Blitzortung.org lightning network to which HBRC contributes.

Percentage of normal December rainfall (30 year average) for areas in the region:

Waikaremoana	140%
Northern HB	144%
Tangoio	117%
Kaweka	107%
Ruahine	99%
Heretaunga Plains	93%
Ruataniwha Plains	128%
Southern HB	161%
Hawke's Bay Region	124%



For a more detailed rainfall report click [here](#).
and for a five-year monthly summary click [here](#).

AIR TEMPERATURES

Near normal temperature for the region.

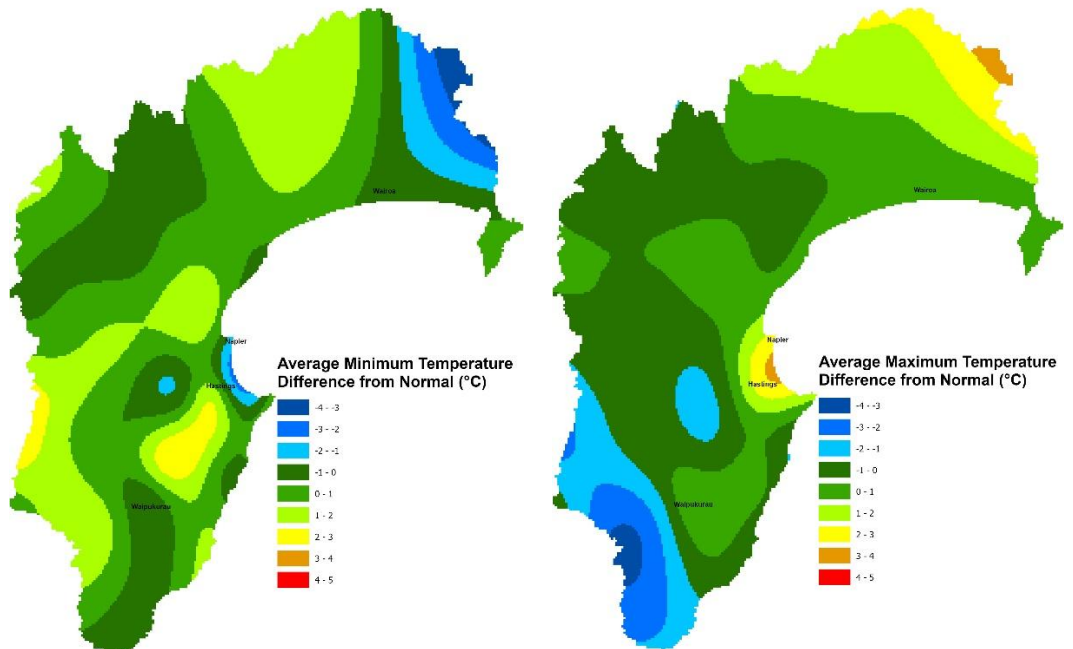
Mean Difference from Normal

Maximum Temperature: **0.3°C**
Minimum Temperature: **0.4°C**

Mean Daily Maximum: **22.4°C**
Mean Daily Minimum: **12.5°C**

Highest Daily: **32.9°C**
Location: **Whakatu**

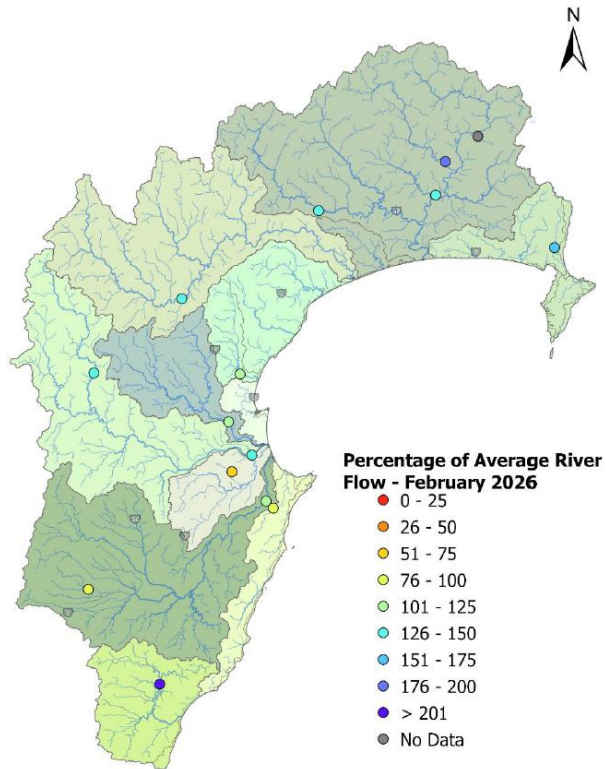
Lowest Daily: **1.1°C**
Location: **Taharua**



RIVER FLOW

Percentage of average February flows for areas in the region:

Northern Coast – Mahia	173%
Northern HB – Hangaroa River	No data
Northern HB – Raukīturi River	200%
Northern HB – Wairoa River	148%
Northern HB – Waiau River	148%
Mohaka	141%
Esk-Central Coast	113%
Tūtaekuri	102%
Karamu	70%
Ngaruroro – Chesterhope	126%
Ngaruroro - Kuripapango	131%
Southern Coast	89%
Tukituki – Tukipo River	87%
Tukituki – Red Bridge	125%
Porangahau	215%
Hawke’s Bay Region	133%



For a more detailed river flow report click [here](#).

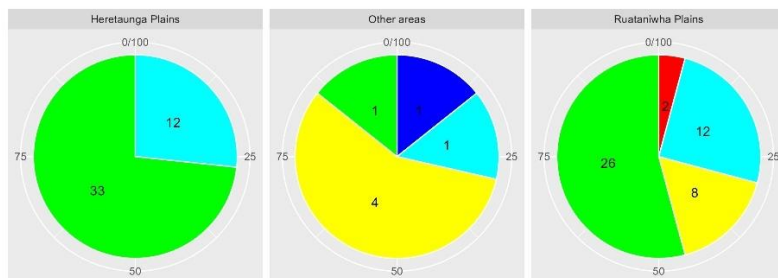
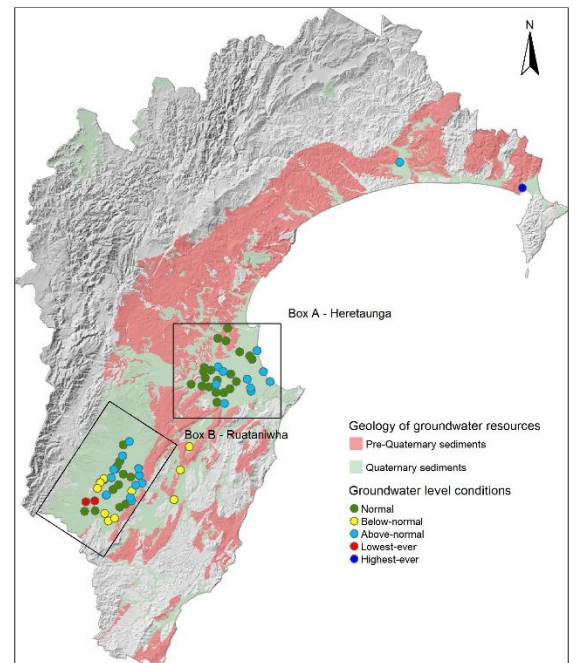
GROUNDWATER & SOIL MOISTURE

Soil Moisture: Above normal.

For a more detailed soil moisture report click [here](#).

Current state of Groundwater levels:

This report compares groundwater levels measured in February with historic readings to evaluate current monthly conditions. To assess these conditions, we have grouped groundwater levels at each well relative to their monthly percentiles. Groundwater levels measuring between their monthly minimum and 25th percentile are considered below-normal, groundwater levels measuring between the 25th and 75th percentiles are classed as normal, and groundwater levels measuring between the 75th-maximum are considered above normal. Wells with less than 5 years of record are excluded from the analysis.



■ Normal
 ■ Below-normal
 ■ Above-normal
 ■ Lowest-ever
 ■ Highest-ever

RECREATIONAL WATER QUALITY

A very wet February saw many of our sites exceed recreational water quality guidelines. While many of our high performing beaches remained unaffected, the more central sites were impacted by this increase in wet weather.



SEA SURFACE TEMPERATURES

Average sea surface temperature for Hawke's Bay: 20.8°C

The average sea surface temperature (SST) for Hawke's Bay in February 2026 was 20.8°C. This was 0.5°C higher than the long term average for this month*. This data was collected from the HBRC coastal water quality monitoring buoy HAWQi which has been located 4km off the coast of Whirinaki since December 2012. HAWQi collects data on water temperature, salinity and clarity at a range of depths as well as weather information. Check out real time data from HAWQi here.

*Note that long term data has experienced some patchiness due to the challenges of electronic devices interacting with salt water and servicing requirements so the long term average in this instance only includes 10 prior February's.

LONGER FORECAST

We've largely moved from La Niña to neutral conditions and the next move might be to an El Niño later in the year. Sea surface temperatures are currently warmer than average to the northeast of New Zealand but cooler than average around the country's coast. The tropical cyclone season continues and the possibility of a tropical influence on our weather remains.

The predicted pattern is higher than normal pressure south of the country and lower than normal over northern New Zealand. That situation brings us an easterly flow and exposes us, especially northern parts of the region, to tropical systems making their way south. Autumn could therefore continue our recent theme of higher than normal rainfall, while the onshore wind flow and sea temperatures are likely to bring average air temperatures. Hopefully the season is more pleasant than it sounds.

Dr Kathleen Kozyniak

Team Leader Air and Land Science