

The Atmospheric River and the Stats

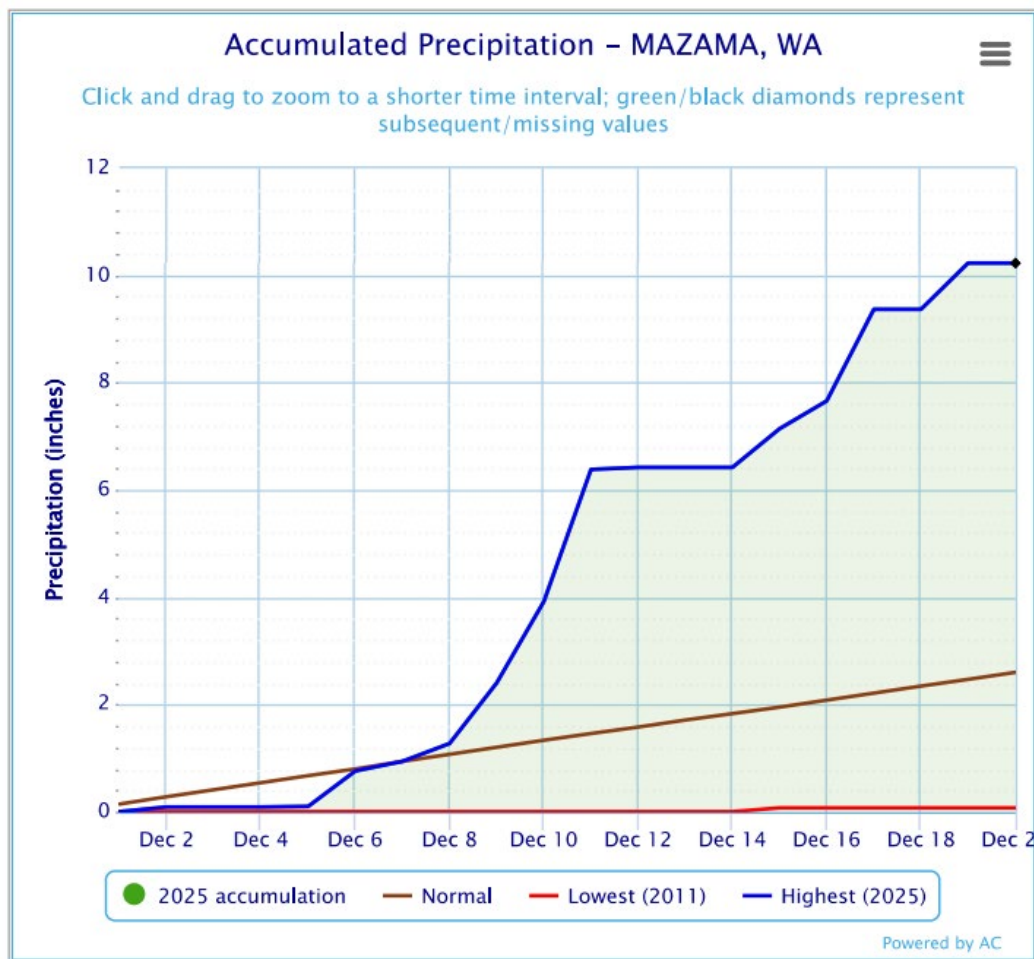
January 2026

by Julie Grialou, Senior Ecologist for the Methow Conservancy

In trying to get a grasp on the “atmospheric river” event that occurred this past month, I’ve summarized various indicators and how they compare to the “average”. For the time period from Dec 1st through Dec 20th, I compared accumulated precipitation (rain plus snow as water equivalent), accumulated snowfall, and temperature for Mazama; peak riverflows for the Methow River at Winthrop; and high-elevation (Hart’s Pass) snowpack to average values for this time period.

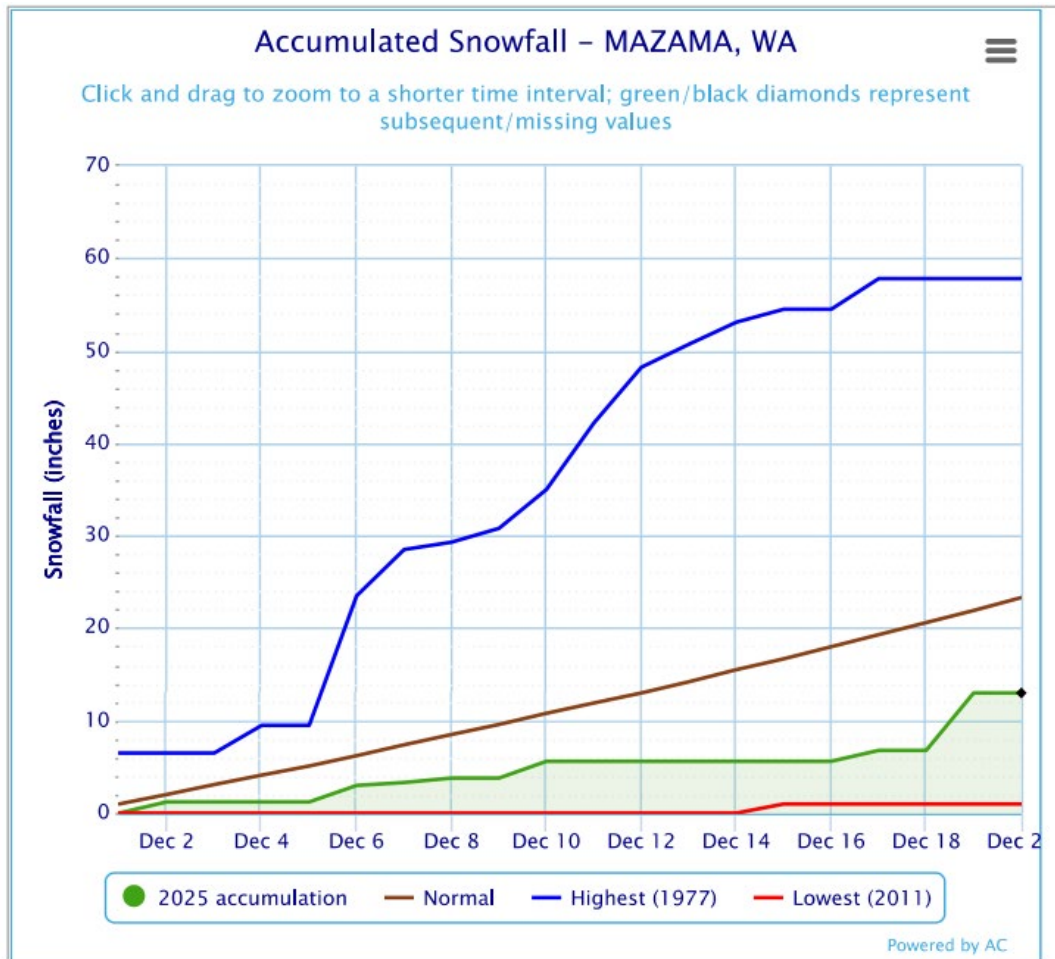
1. Accumulated Precipitation (Mazama station)

The Dec 1st – 20th total precipitation for Mazama is the highest on record, at 10.23 inches, about 4 times the average of 2.6 inches for this time period.



2. Accumulated Snowfall (Mazama Station)

Unlike precipitation as a whole (rain plus snow as water equivalent), the snowfall amounts we received during the time period were much lower than normal (13.0 inches vs 23.3 inches, respectively).



Source: NOAA Regional Climate Center, NOWData.

3. Temperature (Mazama Station)

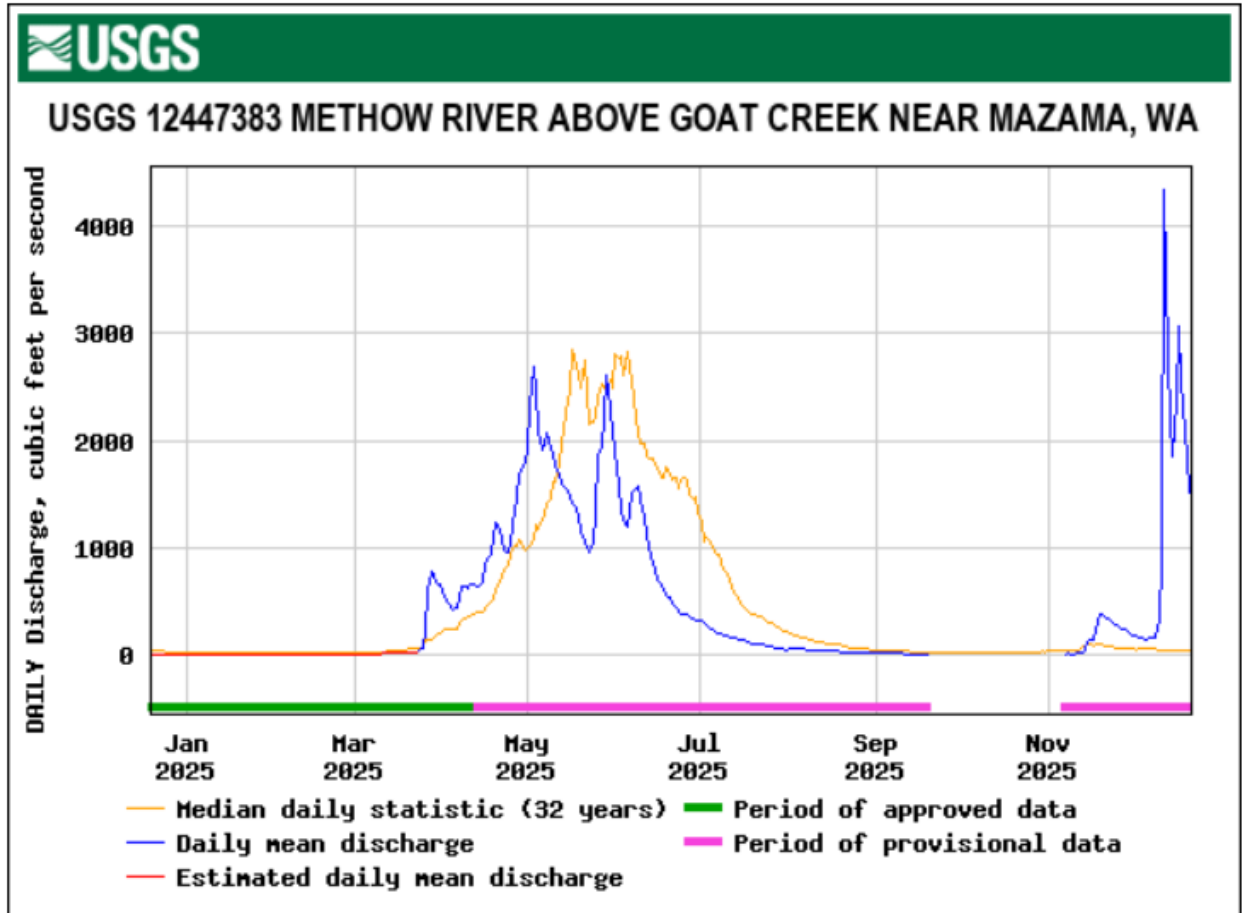
Temperatures were well above average for much of the time period.

Date	Temperature			
	Maximum	Minimum	Average	Departure
2025-12-01	33	19	26.0	-0.2
2025-12-02	32	24	28.0	2.2
2025-12-03	32	19	25.5	0.0
2025-12-04	30	24	27.0	1.9
2025-12-05	33	29	31.0	6.2
2025-12-06	32	29	30.5	6.0
2025-12-07	34	31	32.5	8.3
2025-12-08	33	31	32.0	8.1
2025-12-09	40	32	36.0	12.4
2025-12-10	44	32	38.0	14.7
2025-12-11	41	32	36.5	13.5
2025-12-12	44	32	38.0	15.3
2025-12-13	42	27	34.5	12.0
2025-12-14	34	28	31.0	8.8
2025-12-15	41	33	37.0	15.0
2025-12-16	40	33	36.5	14.8
2025-12-17	36	32	34.0	12.5
2025-12-18	39	30	34.5	13.1
2025-12-19	32	23	27.5	6.3
2025-12-20	M	M	M	M

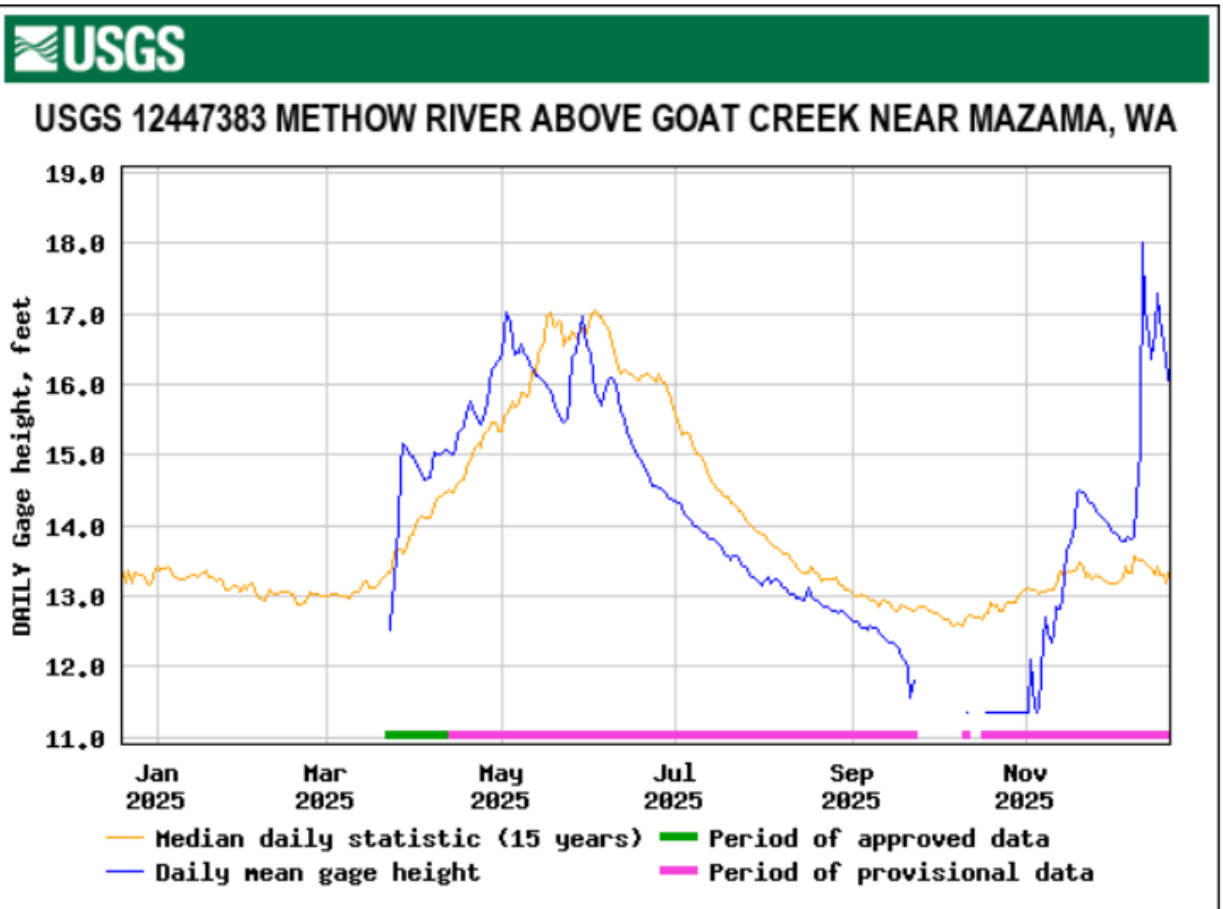
Source: NOAA Regional Climate Center, NOWData.

4. River Flows

The Methow River at Mazama reached its highest mean daily riverflow (cfs) and gage height in December for the year. In contrast, peak flows and peak gage height are typically in May or June. Also, note that these Dec 2025 values were higher than the median spring peak values over the last 32 years.



Source: USGS



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5. High-elevation (Harts Pass) Snowpack

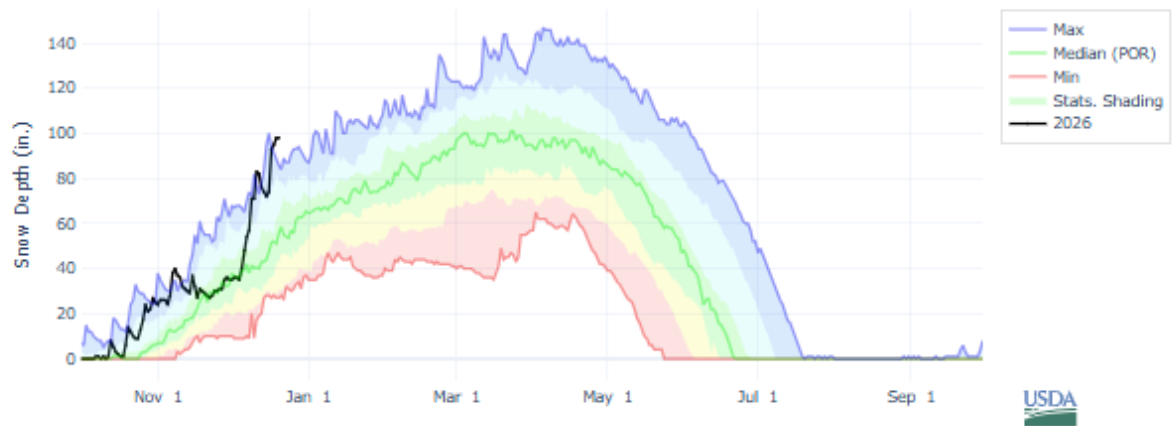
Unlike the valley floor, temperatures at high elevations remained low enough to accumulate well-above average levels of snow. As of Dec. 20th, the snowdepth was 98 inches at Harts Pass, about double the average snowdepth for that date (over the past approximately 30 years).

Harts Pass SNOTEL 6,490 ft.

Snow Depth

Percent NRCS 1991-2020 Average

End of December, 2025



Source: NRCS, National Water and Climate Center