

Annual Precipitation

Oregon precipitation originates in the Pacific Ocean, where water evaporates from the surface, becoming water vapor. This vapor is transported by the prevailing winds, which blow from west to east during most of the year. Active Pacific storms with strong winds, clouds and rain blow ashore in Oregon with the greatest frequency and intensity between

October and March.

If it were possible to station a rain gauge 50 miles off the Oregon Coast, the instrument would likely receive about 30 inches of rainfall per year. Much more rain falls onshore due to the effects of terrain. Not far inland, the eastward-moving storms meet the slopes of the Coast Range, which force the storms to

ascend. As air rises, it cools; as it cools, its capacity to retain water (in the form of water vapor) diminishes. Some of the water vapor in the cooling air turns to liquid in a process known as "condensation." When water condenses, clouds form, and when the condensation reaches a critical point, precipitation begins to fall. Because the air

Average Annual Precipitation 1961-1990

