

MARCH 2006 DROUGHT AND FLOOD UPDATE

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For a complete summary of the March 14, 2006 Joint Meeting of the Water Availability and Flood Task Forces, please visit the CWCB website at www.cwcb.state.co.us.

Executive Summary

In Colorado, the dividing line between parts of the state that are experiencing above average precipitation conditions and those with below average conditions is the Gunnison basin on the west slope and the Arkansas basin on the east.

- According to NOAA's Climate Prediction Center, extreme southern Colorado is currently in a moderate drought now. Despite the short-term relief, there are indications that the spring will be dry and warm for Colorado. As a result, the drought is expected to persist, expanding into eastern Colorado.
- The mountain basins along & north of I-70 will maintain 115% -150% of normal precipitation. Mountain basins south of I-70 will play "catch-up" with more frequent spring storms but still fall below normal (65-80%) for the year.
- In the southwest portion of the state, from south of Hwy 50 and west of I-25 to the Colorado/Utah border, Rio Grande basin farmers & ranchers are preparing for another 2002 drought year. The southeast areas of the Arkansas basin, south of Hwy 50 and east of I-25, are showing similar drought conditions.
- The water supply outlook for 2006 indicates that parts of the Arkansas, Rio Grande and combined San Juan, Animas, Dolores, and San Miguel River basins are projected to have water supplies below 50% of average this year.
- The National Interagency Fire Center's Wildland Fire Outlook indicates an above normal fire potential on the eastern plains, and southeast portion of Colorado due to low moisture levels and high winds. Persistent dry and windy conditions on the eastern plains are also creating concern for the agricultural sector in that region.
- For the next six months the majority of the state is predicted to have a mixture of wet and dry conditions with the southern part of the state remaining extremely dry. The eastern plains are predicted to have below normal precipitation during the spring and early summer.

This water year, Colorado appears to have an overall low flood risk from snowmelt runoff streamflows. However, there is a significant chance of an extended hot spell (5-7 days) during mid to late May that could produce some flooding flows in portions of the state. It is important to note that many of Colorado's intense and damaging floods are historically due to general rainstorms or flash floods. Currently the areas of Colorado at greater risks for flooding are as follows:

- The Roaring Fork River
- Yampa White --Spring/May snowmelt runoff
- Colorado basin south tributaries--Spring/May snowmelt runoff
- Front Range--flash floods
- Southwest mountains flash flood --possibly from a late July monsoon season
- Below Dillon Reservoir
- Areas near Craig, CO

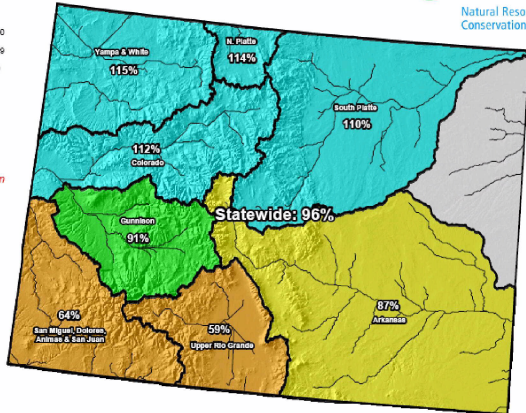
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Colorado SNOTEL Snowpack Update Map

Percent of Average



Provisional Data
Subject to Revision



Current as of Mar 20, 2006

*Data may not provide a valid measure of conditions



The Yampa/White, North Platte, Colorado, and the South Platte basins are experiencing above average snowpack conditions, while the Gunnison and the Arkansas basins have average to below average snowpacks. The San Miguel, Dolores, Animas & San Juan, and Rio Grande basins are experiencing snowpack levels that are well below average thus setting these basins up for drought conditions similar to 2002.

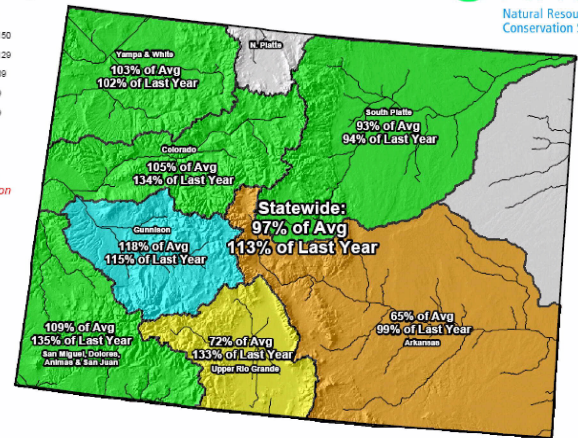
Reservoir storage around the State is close to average and above 2005 levels for the same time. Gunnison basin reservoir levels are well above average, prompting Denver Water to consider pre-springtime releases from Dillon Reservoir. Arkansas basin reservoir levels are below average. This can be attributed in part to reservoir operations, particularly John Martin Reservoir. Reservoirs are an important component of flood control in Colorado.

Colorado Reservoir Storage Map

Percent of Average



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End of February 2006

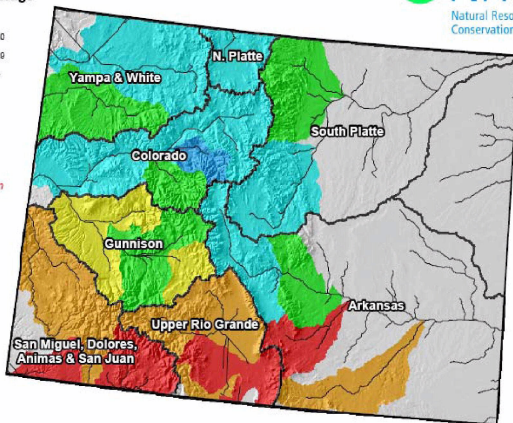
The percent of average streamflow for each of the basins ranges from a high of 130-150% to less than 50% in parts of the Rio Grande basin and the southern tributaries. The Blue and Eagle rivers in the Colorado basin have the highest volume runoff currently. As spring begins, and snowpacks start to melt and runoff into streams, rivers, & reservoirs, resulting streamflow will be closely monitored to ascertain water availability conditions and flood potential around the State.

Colorado Streamflow Forecast Map

Percent of Average



Provisional Data
Subject to Revision



Current as of March 1, 2006



Long Term Forecast Summary

La Nina conditions have been present since last fall, hence the characteristically distinct south to north gradient in snowpack levels. NOAA's Climate Prediction Center forecasts for the next 6 months are undecided, showing an equal chance of dry conditions or wet conditions for much of

the State. Although and increased tilt towards dry conditions in southern Colorado is consistent with weak La Nina conditions. The southern portion of the State will continue to be dry. Weather forecasts for the next 6-8 weeks show cooler temperatures with above normal precipitation. The mountain basins along & north of I-70 will maintain 115% - 150% of normal. Mountain basins south of I-70 will play "catch-up" with more frequent spring storms but still fall below normal (65-80%) for the year.

NOTE: The most current NRCS maps are depicted in this report and may have been updated since the March 14, 2006 meeting.