

APRIL 2006 DROUGHT UPDATE

Water Availability Task Force Co-Chairs

Veva McCaig, CWCB - 303-866-3339
Email - genoveva.mccaig@state.co.us

Jack Byers, DWR - 303-866-3581
Email - jack.byers@state.co.us

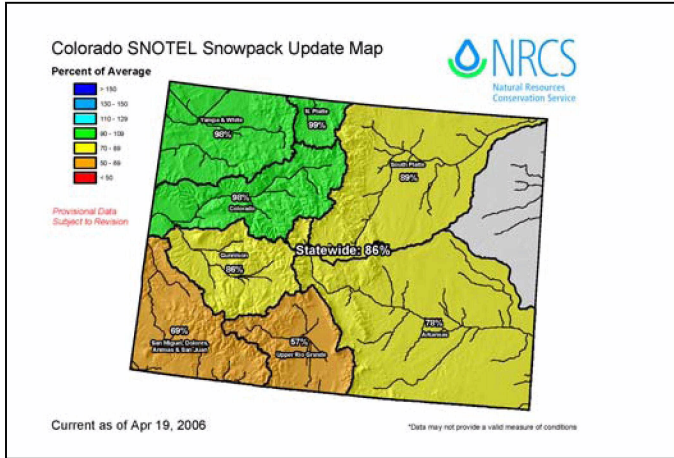
For a complete summary of the April 20, 2006 Meeting of the Water Availability Force, please visit the CWCB website at www.cwcb.state.co.us.

Executive Summary

Generally, the northern 2/3 of Colorado is experiencing snowpack and snow water equivalent (SWE) values above average, and the lower 1/3 of the state continues to be below average, with some improvement in the southwest.

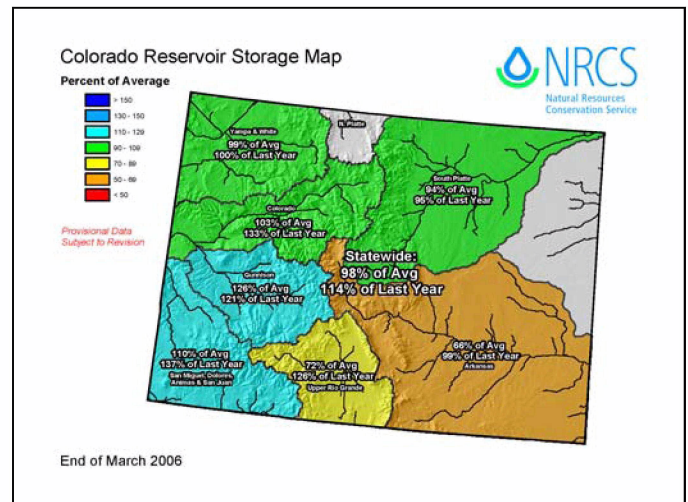
- Colorado's State Climatologist indicated that April's distribution of temperatures and precipitation was mixed with no clear trend.
- The Natural Resource Conservation Service data indicated that while the statewide snowpack declined slightly from last month, snowpack in the southwest improved. On April 1 the snowpack was 94% of average statewide. This is an improvement over March 2006 due to the March snowstorms in the southwest areas of the state that actually doubled their snowpack. Normal peak snowpack has now occurred and is beginning to decline.
- Statewide SNOTEL snowpack was 86% of average for April 19, 2006, and is declining daily because of snow meltout that is currently occurring statewide. The peak snowmelt runoff generally occurs June 7 through June 10th. Some local flooding may occur.
- Colorado's reservoir levels are at 98% of average statewide and 114% of last year. Reservoir storage in the southern part of the State is currently 66% - 110% of average and slightly above last year's storage. However, much of the current storage is carryover storage from last year due low precipitation this year.
- The Long-Term Weather Outlook is indicating Colorado may have a better chance of moisture April into the beginning of May and a heat wave from May 8 through the 18th that could cause a meltout problem in parts of the State.
- In June through July, Ft. Collins, and Denver's Front Range could have extreme storm events resulting in increased flash flood potential. The monsoon season is predicted from June 30 until after July 4th.
- A concern for high fire danger is predicted for the lower Front Range foothills, below 7,000 feet, and in the southern mountains and San Luis Valley.
- South of the Highway 50 corridor it is extremely dry. In the southern part of the State and the San Luis Valley, farmers and ranchers have moved cattle from grazing pastures because of blowing dust and are buying hay to prepare for reduced pasture acreage due to drought conditions. Farmers are considering planting fewer crops due to the dry conditions and the potential for no water in the smaller ditches.
- Colorado State University Cooperative Extension has activated their drought task force to prepare for conducting educational programs for farmers and ranchers so they can make good management decisions regarding crops and pastures during potential drought conditions.

APRIL 2006 DROUGHT UPDATE



The Colorado, Yampa/White and North Platte basins are currently experiencing above average snowpack conditions. The Arkansas, Gunnison and South Platte Basins are experiencing slightly below average snowpacks, while the Rio Grande and San Juan/Dolores basins are presently well below average. NRCS data shows that most basins reached their snow peak two to three weeks early, which means that the southern portion of the State, which is already experiencing drought conditions, will be unable to make up for the deficit and continue to decline.

Statewide reservoir storage is normal for this time of the year at 98% of average and 114% of last year's average. The Gunnison Basin has the highest reservoir storage, while the Arkansas Basin has the lowest. Reservoirs around the state continue to show improvement over record low levels in 2002 and 2003. While storage levels are recovering, levels in the south and southeast continue to benefit from last year's water storage in spite of the dry conditions and low precipitation levels.



Streamflows are forecasted to be average to above average in the northern part of the State due to the early snow meltout, which may increase the potential for flooding in this part of the State. Muddy Creek and the Blue and Eagle Rivers in the Colorado Basin are already flowing at normal or above normal averages for this time of year, and the peak snowmelt runoff isn't generally until June 7th through June 10th.

Long Term Forecast Summary

La Niña conditions have weakened rapidly and are not forecasted to be a major factor in climate for the

summer. NOAA's Climate Prediction Center (CPC) precipitation forecasts for the next 6 months are undecided, showing an equal chance of dry conditions or wet conditions for much of the State. However temperature forecasts for the same time period indicate above normal temperatures. The CPC's U.S. Seasonal Drought Outlook through July 2006 indicates persisting and intensifying drought conditions in the south and southeastern portions of Colorado. There is a strong possibility for significant late summer water supply shortages across southern Colorado. The National Interagency Fire Center's Seasonal Wildland Fire Potential Outlook through August 2006 indicates an above normal significant fire potential throughout the southern and eastern portions of the State.

NOTE: The NRCS maps depicted in this report were those presented at the April 20, 2006 meeting and may have been updated since the meeting.

