

MAY 2006 DROUGHT UPDATE

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For a complete summary of the May 16, 2006 Meeting of the Water Availability Force, please visit the CWCB website at www.cwcb.state.co.us.

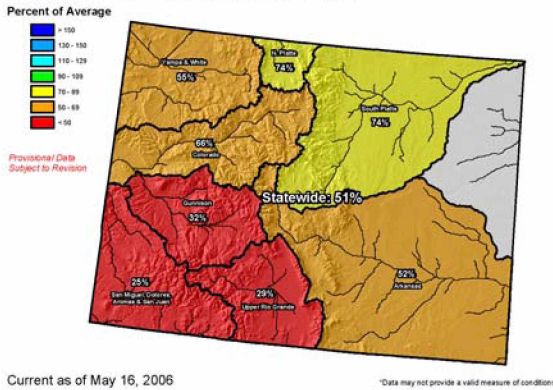
Executive Summary

The state is experiencing drought conditions in the South Platte River Basin, Arkansas River Basin, Rio Grande River Basin and parts of the Southwest. The Dry conditions are having a significant impact on the wildfire conditions and agriculture. The potential for the general dry conditions with increasing drought conditions to expand exists due to the generally dry and hot forecasts. Although high elevation snow pack has helped delay the onset of drier conditions the early melt, low stream flow and lack of precipitation has raised significant concern.

- Colorado State University's (CSU) Colorado Climate Center data indicates precipitation is below average statewide. Significant precipitation has not occurred since October over much of the state. Snow water equivalent (SWE) levels are at 51% statewide and are deteriorating rapidly.
- April is usually the wettest month for Colorado however April 2006 had lower than usual precipitation and warm temperatures. NRCS data shows Colorado has only nine inches more precipitation on this date compared to 2002.
- The Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) indicates the snowpack has diminished quickly from April 1 to May 1 due to the current snow meltout. The May 1, 2006 snowpack is only 65% of average.
- Reservoir storage is above average statewide with a few notable exceptions, John Martin and Pueblo Reservoirs in the Arkansas River Basin and Platoro Reservoir in the Rio Grande Basin.
- Streamflow conditions generally reflect the SWE associated with the snowpack conditions. However in some locations the dry soil conditions and high temperatures have resulted in lower stream flow than expected.
- NOAA's Climate Prediction Center has indicated that La Nina is transitioning to a neutral condition. May is predicted to be dry. A slight chance for cooler temperatures and more moisture for June exists, and a variable, near normal weather pattern is forecast for late summer.
- Dry, warm, and windy weather has resulted in substantial impacts on agriculture. The poor pasture conditions have resulted in modifications to CRP grazing controls. The low moisture condition will impact the wheat crop yield and irrigation demands for other crops will likely occur sooner than normal with potential shortages possible in meeting late season water requirements. There is a great concern about the dry conditions in the San Luis Valley, and impacts to the groundwater pumping.
- Wildfire is a significant concern from 5,000 to 7,000 feet near the Front Range, especially in populated foothills where they are seeing fire danger near 2002 dry levels. Lightning and windy weather will contribute to the fire danger statewide.
- A dry-heat weather pattern is predicted to continue into Memorial Day weekend with temperatures 3-7 degrees above average with little precipitation. Major rivers should peak May 21-27th. A public safety concern of 40-50 degree water temperature with 80-degree air temperatures for the holiday weekend is predicted.

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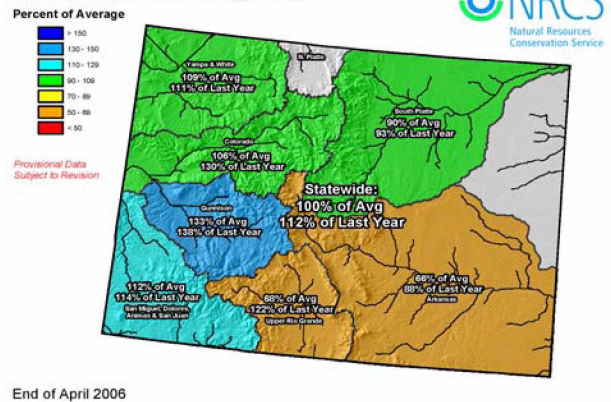
Colorado SNOTEL Snowpack Update Map



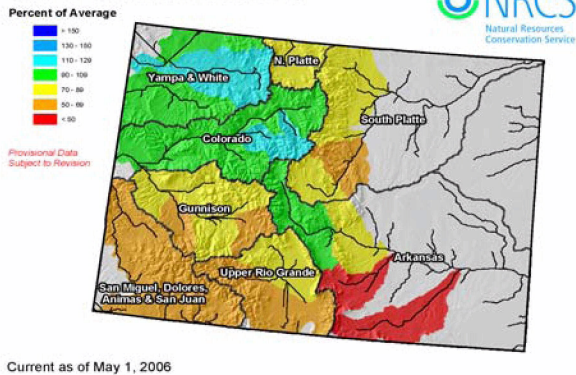
The North Platte and South Platte Basins are presently at 70-89% of average snowpack. The Colorado, Yampa/White, and Arkansas basins are currently at 50-69% of average snowpack, while the Gunnison, Rio Grande, and San Juan/Dolores basins are presently below 50% of average snowpack. NRCS data shows snowpacks are melting out early. The Gunnison and the South Platte are forecast to melt out before June 1, while the Arkansas to be melted out by June 1. The Colorado, North Platte, and Yampa are predicted to melt out earlier than usual, and the Rio Grande is forecast to melt out real soon, similar to that of 2002. This trend is of concern as it impacts annual water management decisions.

Statewide reservoir storage is average for this time of the year and 112% of last year's average. The highest current reservoir storage is in the Gunnison Basin, and the Arkansas and Upper Rio Grande Basins presently have the lowest. Despite the dry conditions, at the end of April, there were three reservoirs in the San Juan Basin that were still holding above average reservoir storage.

Colorado Reservoir Storage Map



Colorado Streamflow Forecast Map



Streamflows are forecasted to be average to slightly above average in the northern part of the State. The Yampa/White and the Colorado Basins are forecast to have the highest flows at 90-129% of average, while mainly the lower portions of the San Juan, Rio Grande and a small part of the Arkansas Basins will have the lowest flows. Major rivers are predicted to peak May 21 through May 27.

Long Term Forecast Summary

The general forecast is for normal to below normal precipitation and normal temperatures. The potential for increasing drought conditions exists. The Drought

Monitor shows that currently eastern and southeastern Colorado are moving into severe (Stage 2 level) drought conditions. Water supply currently is above average in the northwest because of the above average snowpack. Water supplies east of the Divide will benefit slightly from the monsoons that are predicted to begin in early July as well as trans-mountain diversions possible due to the west slope snow pack. The monsoons will help moderate temperatures and bring lower water demands to the Front Range. The wildfire danger is more critical near the Front Range.

NOTE: The NRCS maps depicted in this report were those presented at the May 16, 2006 meeting and may have been updated since the meeting.