

## JUNE 2006 DROUGHT UPDATE

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**For a complete summary of the June 22, 2006 Meeting of the Water Availability Force, please visit the CWCB website at [www.cwcb.state.co.us](http://www.cwcb.state.co.us).**

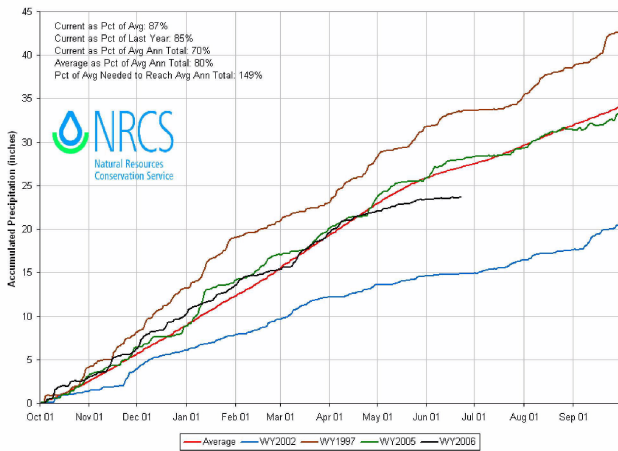
### Executive Summary

Much of Colorado continues to experience increasing drought conditions with very limited relief forecast. The State is projected to experience above normal temperatures with no better than average precipitation. The precipitation shortfall is expected to intensify the impact on the agriculture and increasingly stress the available water supplies. The good news is that for the most part reservoir storage is significantly better than 2002 although the April through June precipitation shortage is similar to 2002.

- April through June has been significantly dry and hot. The warm and dry conditions across Colorado have had a significant impact on the agricultural and livestock industry with no relief in the forecast, resulting in a worsening of the water supply outlook.
- Streamflows during May were above average in most parts of the State; however, the higher streamflows in May caused by early snow melt will lead to lower streamflows later in the summer and increased early demand on reservoir storage with critical late summer water supply concerns.
- The reservoir storage is considerably better than in 2002. The departure from average end of month storage was near 1,500,000 acre feet below average in 2002, and is currently about 40,000 acre-feet below average. This will mitigate much of the potential impact for municipalities however the agriculture will draw on reservoir storage early threatening late summer water supplies.
- The agriculture sector is at particular risk because general statewide stream forecasts are that stream flows will be lower when the irrigation needs increase throughout the summer. The Colorado State University Cooperative Extension reports that 32 Colorado Counties have disaster declarations due to drought and that 16 more are being considered.
- In general the municipal supplies are in good condition with individual water providers implementing appropriate conservation measures.
- The US Drought Monitor shows all of Colorado to be either abnormally dry (northwest Colorado) or to be in some stage of drought. The Monitor indicates that southeast Colorado is at the **extreme drought** intensity level.
- The Western Water Assessment states that the drought status has worsened in eastern Colorado and is likely to persist in eastern and southern Colorado. Water supply forecasts for the season are lower than May 1<sup>st</sup> due to warm, dry conditions in most areas, although storage in many reservoirs is higher than average for this time of year due to early runoff.
- Predictions from the NOAA-CIRES Climate Diagnostics Center are that Colorado will experience higher than average temperatures through September 2006 and that Colorado has an equal chance of above or below normal precipitation during that same time period.

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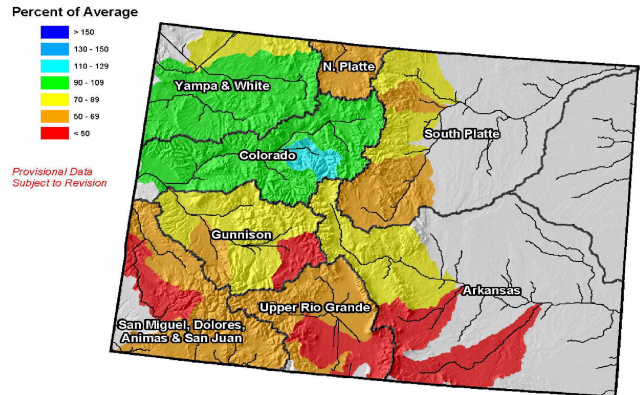
Colorado Statewide High/Low Year-to-Date Precipitation Summary  
Based on Provisional SNOTEL data as of Jun 22, 2006



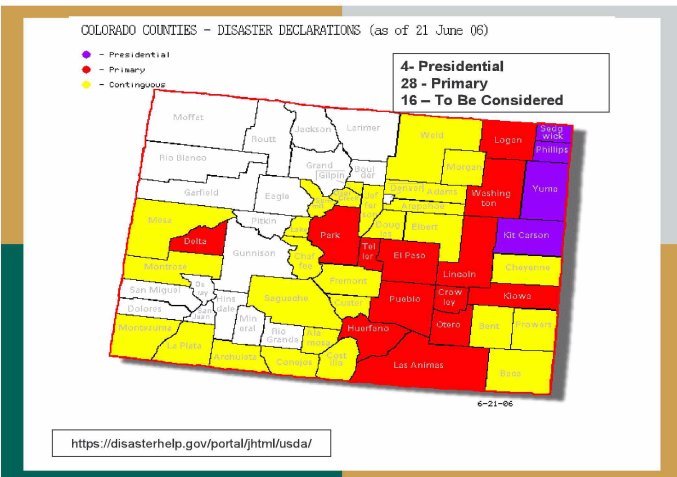
The adjacent figure illustrates the 2006 precipitation conditions. The water supply situation appeared to be near normal from October through March. However the precipitation for the April through June three month period was nonexistent nearly paralleling the 2002 water year. This drastic decline in precipitation had devastating impact on the agricultural and livestock industry. Although the reservoir storage is considerably better than 2002 the precipitation dependent pasture and crops struggled. The pasture and rangeland damaged in 2002 has not recovered sufficient to mitigate the 2006 impacts.

Statewide streamflow is forecast below average for most of Colorado. Significant low flow is forecast for the southern half of the state and South Platte River Basin. This in concert with the forecast above average temperatures and limited precipitation will cause the drought conditions to persist and potentially worsen. The wildfire danger is not expected to reduce and the agriculture and livestock industry continue to have devastating impacts.

Colorado Streamflow Forecast Map



Current as of June 1, 2006



The agricultural industry is experiencing the greatest impact of the current drought conditions. The Colorado State University Cooperative Extension reports that 32 Colorado Counties have disaster declarations due to drought and that 16 more are being considered. The forecast is for persistent drought conditions. The range land continues to experience the impact from the 2002 drought and is of little use in mitigating the 2006 impacts.

## Long Term Forecast Summary

The general forecast is for normal to below normal precipitation and above normal temperatures. Resulting in increasing drought conditions exists. The Drought Monitor shows that currently eastern and southeastern Colorado is moving into severe (Stage 2 level) drought conditions. Municipal water supply conditions are generally adequate with anticipated shortages continued for the agricultural users. Some impact to recreation and fisheries is anticipated during the late summer and early fall.

**NOTE:** The NRCS maps depicted in this report were those presented at the June 22, 2006 meeting and may have been updated since the meeting.