

NOVEMBER 2006 DROUGHT UPDATE

Water Availability Task Force Co-Chairs

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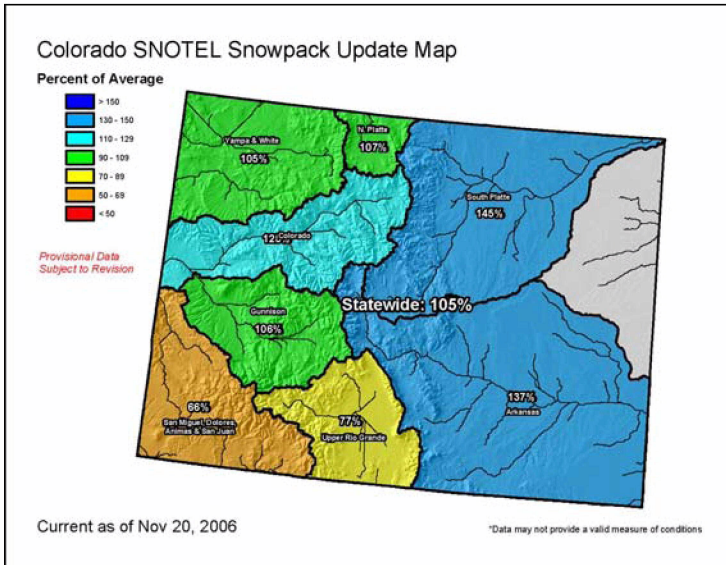
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Executive Summary

El Niño conditions have developed and are expected to strengthen to moderate conditions that should last into the spring 2007. Historically, Colorado has benefited from El Niño weather conditions. Northeast Colorado continues to experience moderate to severe drought conditions and dry conditions persist in the Front Range. Forecasts indicate an equal chance for above average to below average temperatures in Colorado, with above average precipitation is forecasted for southern Colorado. This forecast pattern is consistent with a typical El Niño.

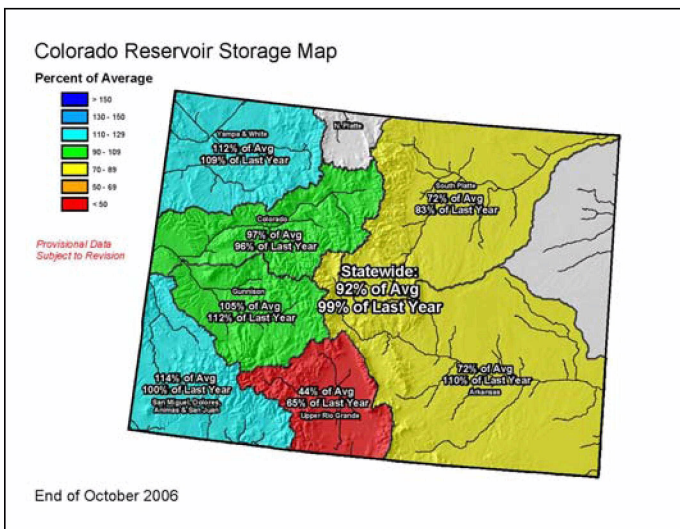
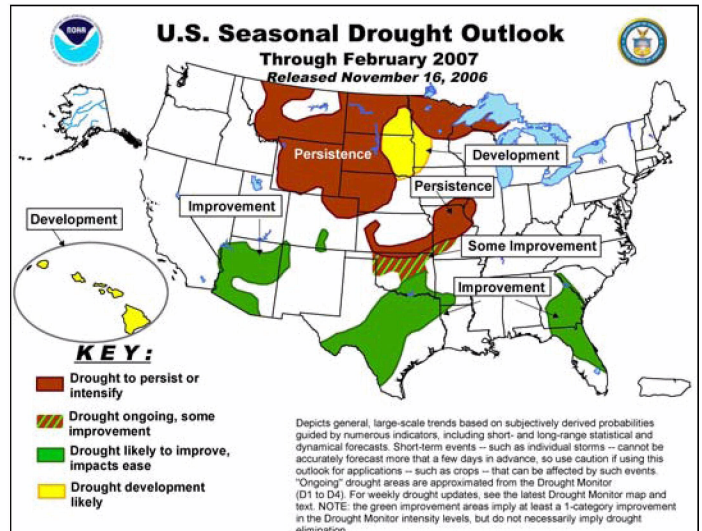
- Statewide, snowpack is at 106% of average, with year-to-date totals equaling 19% of the peak snowpack. The average peak snowpack is April 12th. Due to El Niño, it is more likely that the upcoming snow season will be above average in the parts of southern Colorado.
- Forecasts for December 2006 through March 2007 show a slight to strong tilt of the odds towards warmer temperatures covering northeast Colorado, while the rest of Colorado has equal chances of below normal/near-normal/above-normal temperatures.
- Statewide, reservoir storage is at 92% of average and at 99% of last year.
- October moisture was extremely beneficial to the agriculture, especially to winter wheat crops. As a result, currently soil moisture is good. According to CO Dept of Agriculture, crop yield data for the past year indicates a 20% reduction.
- Municipal water suppliers north of Denver metro area have adequate water storage supplies available. Major Denver metro supply reservoirs were at 90% of capacity, compared to 50% capacity in October 2002, and 86% capacity in October 2005.
- As a result of drought conditions, Jumbo Reservoir did dry out resulting in loss of all fish species. Refilling began Nov. 1st and CDOW restocked with trout on Nov. 9th. Water storage at John Martin Reservoir dipped below 3000 acre-feet. Had water levels dropped much lower, the fishery would have been in danger of being lost, costing hundreds of thousands of dollars. In order to keep levels above 3000 acre-feet, CDOW had to lease water during the summer and fall.
- The US Drought Monitor shows much of Colorado enjoying a respite from drought conditions. Exceptions include the continuing moderate to severely dry conditions in the northeast and abnormally dry conditions along the Front Range.
- The current elevation of Lake Powell, as of November 1, 2006, is 3,608 feet. Reservoir storage is 12.53 million acre-feet, 52% of capacity. Inflow to the reservoir is currently about 11,000 cfs. The projected elevation of Lake Powell on January 1, 2007 is now about 3,605 feet.
- January – April 2007 predictions from the NOAA-CIRES Climate Diagnostics Center are that Colorado will experience above normal precipitation throughout much of the southern portion of the State. However, temperature predictions for the same time period demonstrate increasing chances for above normal temperatures in the western part of the State.

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Statewide snowpack is at 105% of average and at 126% of last year. Month-to-date precipitation totals in the San Juan/Delores and Upper Rio Grande Basins are lagging behind other basins with significantly below average values. However, it is still very early in the water year (Oct – Sept) and current totals represent 15%-20% of the annual peak. The South Platte Basin month-to-date precipitation totals are well above average, followed by the Arkansas and Colorado Basins. Statewide, precipitation levels are above average, with a significant contribution in October 2006.

The latest U.S. Seasonal Drought Outlook through February 2007, released on Nov. 16th by NOAA and the Climate Prediction Center, reports that the ongoing El Nino should contribute to improving drought conditions throughout much of Colorado.



Colorado reservoir storage ranges from a low of 44% of average in the Rio Grande Basin to a high of 114% in the San Juan/Dolores Basin. Despite the quick start to the winter snowpack, a glance at the conditions during the first week of November indicates most of the upper Rio Grande basin is beginning to lag behind normal. Agricultural reservoir levels in the South Platte continue to be far below average with many of the plains reservoirs either empty or near empty by the end of November. Overall storage in the major reservoirs east of Kersey was only 12% full at the end of the month. This is nearer the 2% full at the end of October 2002. In contrast, storage is so high in the Gunnison Basin that conditions resulting from additional snowpack and precipitation may exceed reservoir capacity.

Long Term Forecast Summary

El Niño, the biggest since 1997, typically means a wet October and March but a dry December through February for Colorado. Forecasts indicate that March 2007 may shape up to be wet on the west slope and dry on the eastern plains. Forecasts may still change as this El Niño progresses.

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