

APRIL 2008 DROUGHT UPDATE

Water Availability Task Force Co-Chairs

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

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

Executive Summary

Colorado continues to experience cooler than average temperatures. The eastern plains of Colorado is the only region to have average temperatures. Forecasters predict La Niña* will continue for the next few months extending into the summer. The snow pack statewide remains above average which means the runoff is going to be above average or normal in every basin. High snow pack has helped keep temperatures cool in the mountains which have delayed the snowmelt. The eastern plains did not experience sufficient moisture in March and thus is experiencing a low level drought. Western Colorado is drought free, benefiting from winter snowfall. Strong La Niña's, like the current one, tends to last more than one year and droughts are tied to multi year La Niña's.

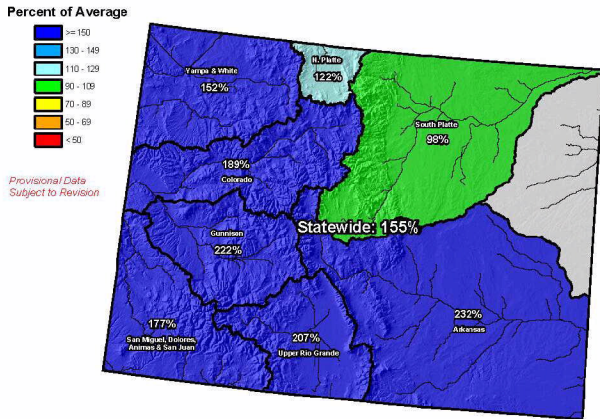
- Statewide, Colorado's snowpack is 128% of average. Most basins are still above average snowpack. The Arkansas basin is 149% of average which is their highest snow pack in the state. The South Platte basin is the lowest but is still above average at 107%.
- With median snowfall, the snowpack statewide is projected to be 130% of average by May 1st. The snowpack for the northern half of the state is projected to range from 108-139%. The snowpack for the southern half of the state is projected to be well above average ranging from 136-157% of average. With median snowfall until June 1st, statewide snowpack is projected to be 155% of average. Projections for the Arkansas basin are 232% and the lowest average projection belongs to the South Platte basin at 98%.
- Statewide, reservoir storage ranges from 92%-107% of average. Many basins will increase levels in their respective reservoirs from the snow melt run off. This is the case in the Colorado River basin which has 61% capacity and the Arkansas basin at 33% capacity. All of the major reservoirs on the South Platte had finished filling towards the end of March, but conditions may change if irrigation users divert water due to lack of rainfall.
- According to the Colorado Water Supply Index (SWSI)**, the values range from a high value of +3.6 in the Gunnison basin to a low value of +0.2 in the Yampa/White basin. The South Platte basin's SWSI value improved to +1.1, which is near normal. The Gunnison basins had the highest SWSI value at +3.6.
- Colorado's streamflow forecast statewide remains in the 90-150% of average range. Most basins are expected to have above average runoff. The Gunnison, Rio Grande and Arkansas basins are projected to have high stream flows.
- Local officials in the Rio Grande basin are now less fearful of damaging floods during the 2008 runoff season. Runoff levels in the basin might just be slightly above normal.

* *Sea surface temperatures at the Equator in the Pacific Ocean impact global climate patterns. Depending on these patterns, Colorado could be experiencing El Niño or La Niña conditions.*

** *SWSI values are based on snowpack, reservoir storage and precipitation for the winter period (Nov-Apr).*

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Colorado SNOTEL Jun 1 Snowpack Projection Map*



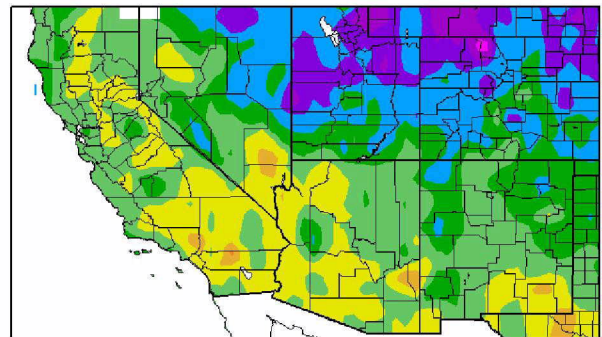
Current as of Apr 15, 2008

*Based on 50% Non-Exceedence Projections

The NRCS SNOTEL Snow pack projection map shows statewide snow pack would be 155% of average if Colorado experiences median precipitation levels until June 1st. The lowest snow pack is the South Platte with 98%. The highest snowpack percentage is the Arkansas basin at 232%. The majority of the state averages well above 120% of average.

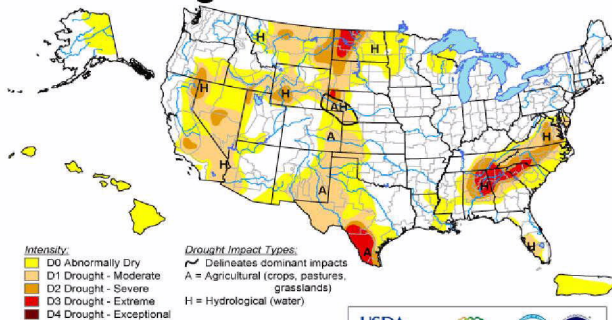
The adjacent map shows the departure from normal temperatures since April 1st. The continued cool temperatures for Colorado and Utah are contrary to La Niña conditions. Even with recent warm days, the cooler temperatures remain to delay the snowmelt which has helped to reduce flooding threats among basins with above average snow pack.

Departure from Normal Temperature (F)
4/1/2008 - 4/13/2008



Generated 4/14/2008 at HFRCC using provisional data. NOAA Regional Climate Centers

U.S. Drought Monitor April 8, 2008
Valid 8 a.m. EDT



The Drought Monitor focuses on broad-scale conditions. Local conditions may vary. See accompanying text summary for forecast statements.

Released Thursday, April 10, 2008
Author: Rich Tinker, Climate Prediction Center, NOAA

<http://drought.unl.edu/dm>

The U.S. Drought Monitor continues to show the eastern part of Colorado to be abnormally dry. Southeastern Colorado is categorized as experiencing a moderate drought. La Niña produces warm and dry conditions which heightens concern for prolonged droughts. The La Niña system is considered to be strong and could last for another year.

Long Term Forecast Summary

A moderate to strong La Niña has been in place since August 2007 and is expected to continue possibly through the summer. Forecasters are slightly optimistic for predicting moisture for eastern Colorado but predict dry conditions for the western part of the state. Forecasters cannot predict wet or dry conditions for the summer yet but as stated before, La Niña conditions favor dry and warm conditions. May's temperatures are important to watch for accelerated snowmelt.

NOTE: The maps and graphics depicted in this report were those presented at the April 15, 2008 meeting and may have been updated since the meeting.