

JULY 2008 DROUGHT UPDATE

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Executive Summary

The 2007-08 La Niña* event appears to be lingering and having a negative effect for Colorado's agricultural sector. Eastern Colorado, especially SE Colorado, has experienced very dry and windy conditions with persistent warm temperatures. According to the US Drought Monitor, SE Colorado is experiencing **severe to exceptional drought**. The current situation is being closely monitored by agriculture officials and the Water Availability Task Force, for a possible recommendation to activate the Agriculture Impact Task Force, to implement provisions of Colorado's Drought Mitigation & Response Plan pertinent to an ag drought. Current dry conditions could be mitigated in the short term by the possible rainfall Colorado could receive from the remnants of Hurricane Dolly.

- On Colorado's eastern plains, July has been a very dry month in terms of precipitation. At a CSU Experiment Station on the edge of the Town of Walsh, from July 2007 to July 2008, there has been a total of 7.92 inches of precipitation. In comparison, prior to the 2002 Drought, the station recorded 14.42 inches of precipitation over the same time period.
- Top soil and sub soil is drying up along the eastern plains and into Kansas according to an assessment done by the Department of Agriculture. Conditions for pasture and grazing lands have worsened. In certain parts of eastern Colorado, cattle have been unable to graze.
- The wheat crop has suffered due to dry conditions. In 2007, Baca County experienced a record wheat crop. This year, it is estimated that 50% of the wheat fields in the county have been abandoned. Statewide, the wheat crop has been salvaged due to Best Management Practices and more drought resistant wheat seed.
- 22 counties in Colorado have requested Drought Disaster Declaration. Governor Ritter has sent a letter to the Department of Agriculture asking for the declarations.
- Farmers and ranchers have seen a \$41 increase per acre in the cost of production in one year. Ultimately, this will put these farmers and ranchers in greater debt.
- Wind has been the main cause of wildfires spreading statewide. Dry conditions also contribute to the size of the recent wildfires. \$1.03 million of the Emergency Fire Funds have been used so far this year. With 5 months to remaining in the year, \$236,000 is left for future wildfires which would require support from the Governor's Office.
- Statewide, wildfire potential remains relatively low but can change from day to day. Humidity will help the wildfire situation in the next few weeks.
- Colorado Drought Mitigation & Response Plan can be found on the CWCB's website at <http://cwcb.state.co.us/Conservation/DroughtPlanning/ColoradoDroughtMitigationResponsePlan/>

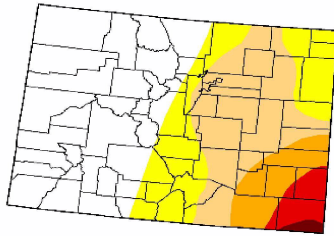
* *Sea surface temperatures at the Equator in the Pacific Ocean impact global climate patterns. Depending on these patterns, Colorado could be experiencing El Niño or La Niña conditions.*

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U.S. Drought Monitor Colorado

July 22, 2008
Valid 7 a.m. EST

	Drought Conditions (Percent Area)					
	None	D0-D1	D1-D2	D2-D3	D3-D4	D4
Current	47.1	52.9	34.2	11.6	4.3	0.7
Last Week (07/15/2008 map)	47.4	52.6	27.5	10.7	2.5	0.7
3 Months Ago (04/22/2008 map)	60.6	39.4	16.6	0.1	0.0	0.0
Start of Calendar Year (01/01/2008 map)	59.3	40.7	2.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Start of Water Year (10/01/2007 map)	80.4	19.6	0.4	0.0	0.0	0.0
One Year Ago (07/24/2007 map)	62.2	47.8	20.5	2.3	0.0	0.0



Intensity:

- D0 Abnormally Dry
- D1 Drought - Moderate
- D2 Drought - Severe
- D3 Drought - Extreme
- D4 Drought - Exceptional

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



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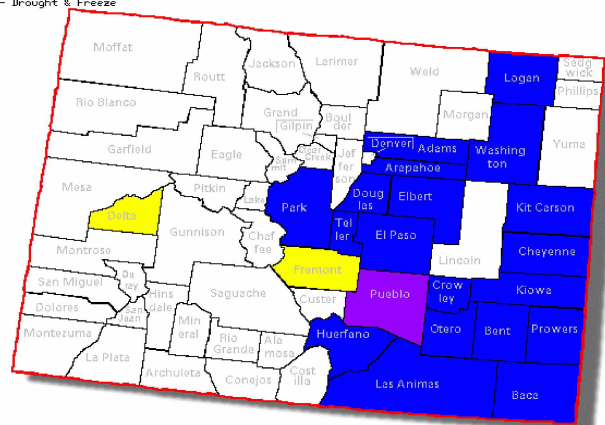
<http://drought.unl.edu/dm>

The U.S. Drought Monitor map shows the eastern part of Colorado continues to be abnormally dry and intensifies east into Kansas. Southeastern Colorado is categorized as experiencing exceptional drought conditions agriculturally and hydrologically. This has negatively impacted the wheat crop and cattle farms. 22 eastern counties have requested for Disaster Declaration in hopes of receiving emergency loans from the federal government.

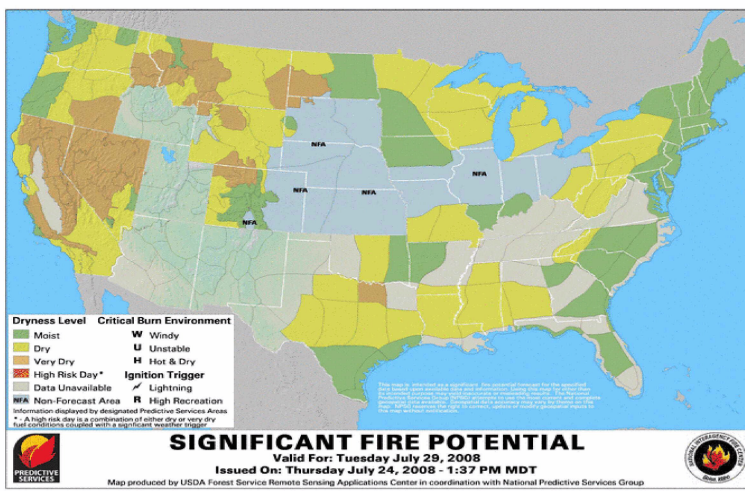
The adjacent map shows the 22 Colorado Counties that have requested Disaster Declaration. The counties in blue have requested Drought Disaster to Governor Ritter. Two counties, Fremont and Delta, have requested Freeze Disaster assistance and only Pueblo County have requested assistance for both. All counties are waiting for approval so they can access federal emergency loans.

Colorado Counties Requesting Disaster Declaration

- - Drought Disaster
- - Freeze Disaster
- - Drought & Freeze



7-24-08



The Significant Fire Potential map shows a majority of the state is at a lower risk for wildfires. Regional preparedness for Colorado is low to moderate with a level 2 out of 5. Nationally, preparedness is 4 out of 5. Forecasters have predicted a normal fire season this year for Colorado. Predictions may not reflect reality as it is difficult to receive fire information from local fire departments. Recently the Northwestern part of the state has seen a pickup in fire activity.

Long Term Forecast Summary

Forecasters are optimistic for the end of the summer and predict wetter than average conditions for Eastern and Southwestern Colorado which is in contrast to typical La Niña conditions. Climate Prediction Center models are predicting a wet early fall this year. Most forecasts have predicted near-neutral conditions going into the winter months but a return of La Niña is possible especially since stronger La Niña events last more than one winter.

NOTE: The maps and graphics depicted in this report were those presented at the July 25, 2008 meeting and may have been updated since the meeting.