

## AUGUST 2009 DROUGHT UPDATE

### Water Availability Task Force Co-Chairs

Veva Deheza, CWCB - 303-866-3441 ext. 3226  
Email - veva.deheza@state.co.us

Kevin Rein, DWR - 303-866-3581 ext. 8239  
Email – kevin.rein@state.co.us

### Executive Summary

The monsoon season came early and produced a significant amount of moisture in June and July but has been relatively weak in August which has resulted in drier conditions statewide. A mild El Niño continues to establish itself in Colorado providing above average precipitation for the eastern part of the state and dry conditions for the western slope. Drought conditions in parts of southeastern Colorado have eased since July but drought conditions have now developed in the south central region and the southwestern part of the state. El Niño conditions tend to result in good snow conditions at lower elevations of Colorado in mid winter.

- Every basin in the state has recorded lower than average precipitation thus far for the month of August. August 2002 precipitation amounts were either higher or equal to the precipitation received this August (2009), but this year is balanced out by a wet June and July.
- The statewide reservoir storage was 107% of average at the end of July. Individually, nearly all basins are above 100% of average for storage, with the exception of the Arkansas which is roughly average at 95%. The Yampa/ White, Colorado, South Platte, Gunnison and San Juan/ Dolores are all near reservoir storage capacity. The Upper Rio Grande and the Arkansas are at 33% and 32% of capacity, which is still 100% of average.
- Wet conditions in June and July have lead to low customer demand in many Front Range communities and water providers report their respective systems are in the best shape in years.
- Surface Water Supply Index (SWSI\*) values for August for the seven basins range from -1.2 to +3.0. The South Platte had the highest value at +3.0. The San Juan/ Dolores basins recorded the lowest value, of -1.2.
- The USDA reports that most crops in the state are in good to excellent condition. This year's wheat crop will yield approximately 95 million bushels, much more than last year's 57 million bushel crop. The strong wheat crop will benefit Colorado since the nationwide wheat crop is down 13%.

\* *SWSI values are based on streamflow, reservoir storage and precipitation for the summer period (May-October). The values range from a high of +4.0, which indicates an abundant supply to a low of -4.0, which indicates severe drought. A value of 0.0 indicates a near normal supply.*

### Long Term Forecast Summary

Forecasters expect El Niño conditions to continue through the end of the year but may remain weak to moderate. Historically, moderate El Niño temperature patterns in the fall are near normal or cooler than average in Colorado. Precipitation patterns in the fall typically produce wet October months. Based on these El Niño patterns, forecasters predict there is a better than average chance that much of the state will benefit from increased fall precipitation.

# AUGUST 2009 DROUGHT UPDATE

Colorado SNOTEL Water Year-to-Date Precipitation Update Map

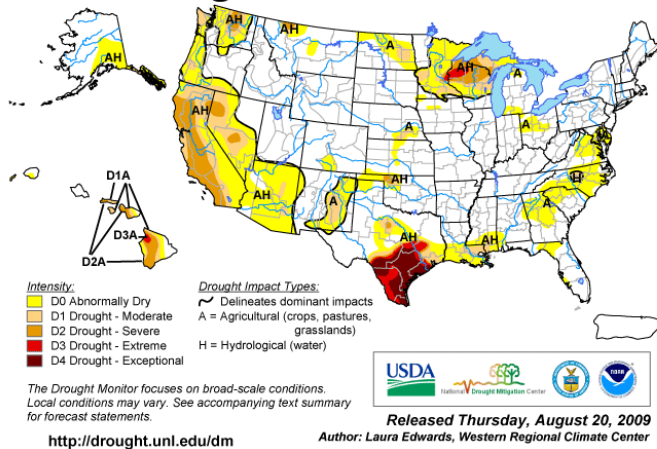


Current as of Aug 26, 2009

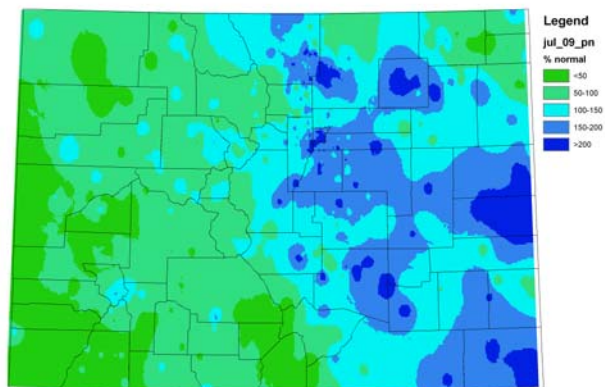
The Colorado water year to date precipitation map as of August 26 shows cumulative precipitation from October through present. Statewide precipitation since October is 97% of average. The South Platte, San Miguel/Dolores, Upper Rio Grande and the Arkansas basins are less than 100% of precipitation for the water year. All other basins are at or above 100% for the water year.

The adjacent map shows the U.S. Drought Monitor as of August 18, 2009. Drought conditions in south central parts of Colorado are at D0, Abnormally Dry conditions. Drought conditions will most likely expand to Southwestern Colorado in the coming weeks.

**U.S. Drought Monitor** August 18, 2009  
Valid 8 a.m. EDT



July 2009 Precipitation as Percent of Normal



The July 2009 Precipitation as a Percentage of Normal map shows the amount of moisture recorded statewide during the month of July. The eastern part of the state has received above average precipitation. The western half of the state received less than or near average precipitation. These totals are taken from CoCoRaHS gauges throughout the state. CoCoRaHS is a Community Collaborative Rain, Hail, Snow network made up of volunteers who measure daily precipitation levels around the state.

**NOTE:** The maps and graphics depicted in this report were those presented at the August 26, 2009 meeting and may have been updated since the meeting.