

MARCH 2010 DROUGHT UPDATE

Water Availability Task Force Co-Chairs

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Executive Summary

Across the state, many basins are closely monitoring conditions to see if late spring precipitation can make up for below average winter precipitation in five of the seven basins. The Yampa/White/North Platte and Colorado basins continue to experience the lowest precipitation levels in the state, at 75% and 78% respectively for the water year. It is unlikely that snowpack will get to average levels prior to reaching peak snowpack in mid April. The Rio Grande and Arkansas basins are above average for precipitation for the water year.

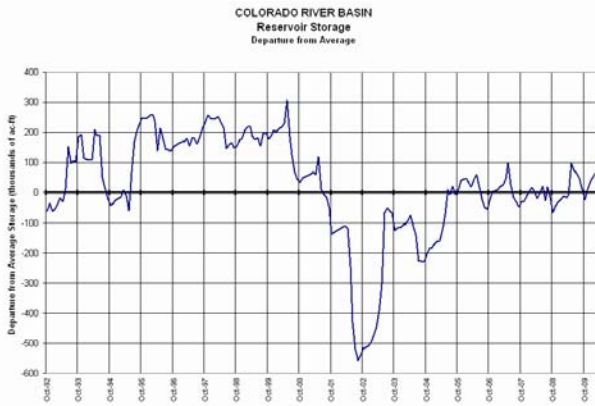
- As of March 25, the statewide snowpack is 88% of average. The basins with the highest snowpack average are the Rio Grande and Arkansas at 110% and 109% of average respectively. The Yampa/White & North Platte basin reported the lowest snowpack at 75% of average.
- Snowpack in the Colorado basin has decreased from 81% in February to 78% of average as of March 25. Precipitation levels for the current water year are only slightly ahead of what the basin experienced at this time in 2002. Current reservoir storage levels exceed storage levels at this time in 2002, which may help offset below average snowpack levels.
- Statewide reservoir storage was 105% of average at the end of March, a slight increase over previous months. Individually, five of seven basins are at or above 100% of average storage. The Upper Rio Grande is near average at 94% and the San Miguel/Dolores basin is the lowest in the state at 88% of average.
- Statewide, streamflow forecasts broadly range from 54-111% of average. The highest anticipated streamflow is in the Arkansas basin with a forecast of 90-111% of average. The Colorado and Yampa/White basins continue to have the lowest forecasted streamflow in the state at 75%-85% and 54%-74% of average respectively.
- Surface Water Supply Index (SWSI*) values for February for the seven basins range from -3.2 to +1.6. The Rio Grande had the highest value at +1.6. The Yampa/White/North Platte basin recorded the lowest value, of -3.2.

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

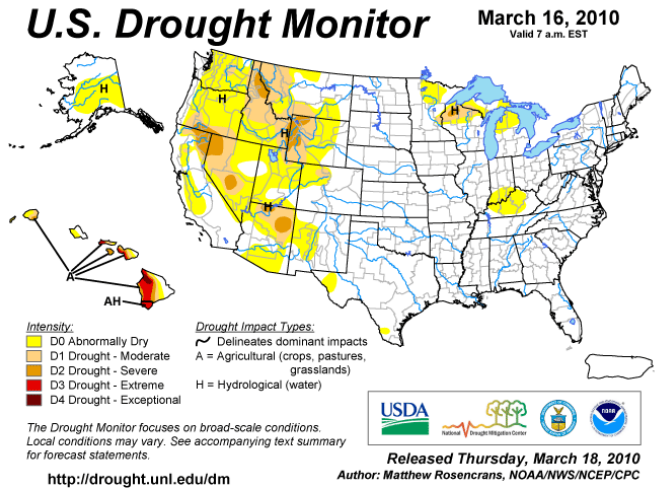
Forecasters expect El Niño conditions to continue with through April and May but climate models show a transition to neutral or La Niña conditions by the summer. Most of Colorado is forecasted to experience a wet spring except the Southwest region of Colorado which is predicted to have below average spring moisture. However, the effects of the lack of spring moisture will be offset by the current average snowpack levels.

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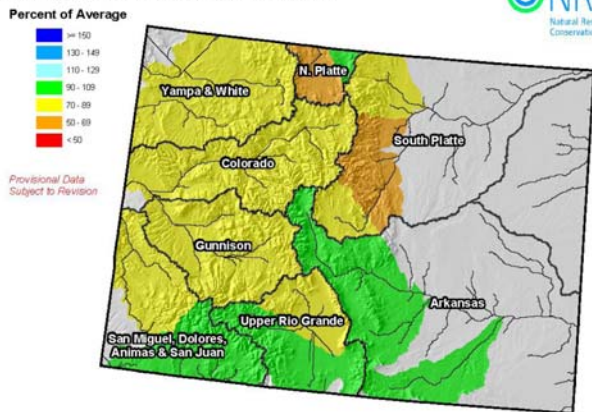


The graph to the left shows the average of reservoir storage recorded in the Colorado River Basin. The lowest level on the graph was in 2002. While the precipitation levels for the Colorado basin are currently below average and comparable to 2002, reservoir storage is in significantly better shape than in 2002. Reservoir storage is 109% of average and 110% of last year's levels. Reservoirs are at 70% capacity.

The adjacent map shows the U.S. Drought Monitor as of March 16, 2010. The northwest region of Colorado continues to experience a lack of significant moisture from recent snow storms in February and March. The northwestern part of the state is now categorized as D1, "Moderate" drought conditions. The Water Availability Task Force is closely monitoring this situation.



Colorado Streamflow Forecast Map



Current as of March 1, 2010

The Colorado streamflow forecast as of March 1 shows streamflow forecast for each of the seven basins. Streamflow levels are forecast to be below average for much of the state this spring. Southern basins, such as the Rio Grande, Arkansas, that have received higher snowpack this winter will likely experience near average streamflow. El Niño winters typically result in more precipitation for southern Colorado and decrease precipitation chances in the northern half of the state.

NOTE: The maps and graphics depicted in this report were those presented at the March 25, 2010 meeting and may have been updated since the meeting.

The next meeting will be a Joint Meeting of the Flood & Water Availability Task Forces and will be on April 20, 2010. The location is to be determined.