

## MAY 2010 DROUGHT UPDATE

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### Executive Summary

The storm track that gave the southern part of the state an average to above average snowpack during the winter has now shifted north and has produced average precipitation for the northern half of the state. The Yampa/North Platte and the Colorado basins have benefited from the April and May storms although both basins continue to experience drought conditions. The state has been experiencing a cool May which has slowed the snowmelt. Streamflow forecasts have improved slightly from the previous month but are still below average in six of the seven basins. Reservoir storage in the state remains in good shape heading into the demand season.

- Statewide, streamflow forecasts range from 75-130% of average. The highest anticipated streamflow is in the Arkansas basin with a forecast of 94-130% of average. The streamflow forecasts for the Colorado and Yampa/White basins have slightly improved to 75%-82% and 71%-90% of average respectively. The Upper Rio Grande and Gunnison basins have been experiencing early and rapid snowmelt due to dust on snow events.
- Current water year precipitation levels for the Yampa/White & North Platte and Colorado basins are at 95% and 93% of average respectively. Both basins received above average April precipitation and normal or near normal precipitation so far in May.
- Statewide reservoir storage has improved to 112% of average at the end of April, a six percent increase over the previous month. Individually, six of the seven basins are at or above 100% of average storage. The Upper Rio Grande basin is the lowest in the state at 89% of average, a slight decrease from last month when the basin was at 90% of average.
- Front Range water providers in attendance reported that their respective reservoirs were nearly full or expected to fill and some report that their systems are in the best condition relative to water supply since 2000.
- Surface Water Supply Index (SWSI\*) values, as of April 1, for the seven basins range from -2.4 to +1.8. The South Platte basin had the highest value at +1.8. The Yampa/White/North Platte basin recorded the lowest value, of -2.4 which is an improvement from the previous month's SWSI value of -3.5.

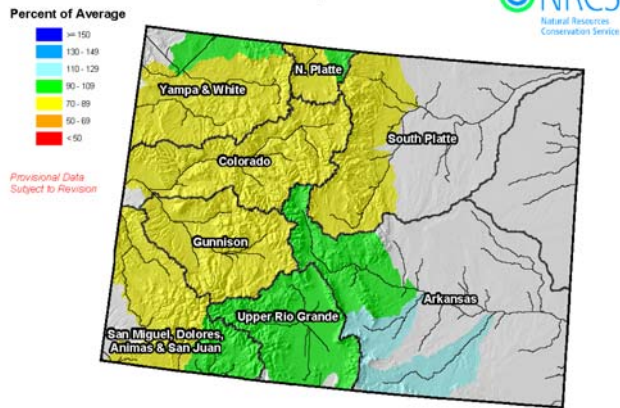
\* SWSI values are based on streamflow, reservoir storage and precipitation for the summer period (May-October). The values range from a high of +4.0, which indicates an abundant supply to a low of -4.0, which indicates severe drought. A value of 0.0 indicates a near normal supply.

### Long Term Forecast Summary

Forecasters expect El Niño conditions to transition to La Niña conditions by the summer. But there is a possibility El Niño conditions could return again at the end of the year. Updated predictions no longer forecast a dry summer for northwest Colorado. The Front Range could experience suppressed rainfall during the monsoon season. The southeastern plains are expected to benefit from a wet monsoon from July through September.

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Colorado Streamflow Forecast Map



Current as of May 1, 2010

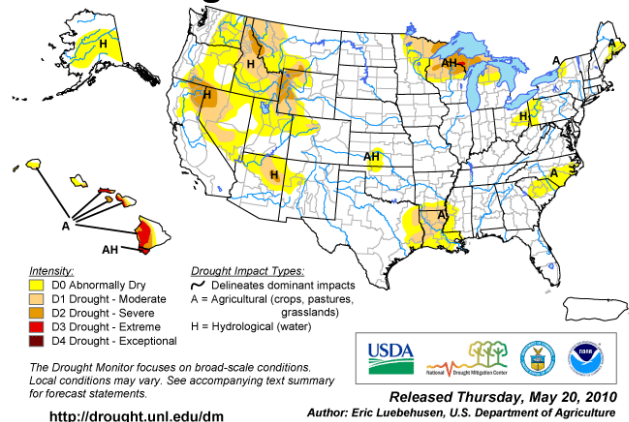


The Colorado streamflow forecast as of May 1 shows streamflow forecast for each of the seven basins. Streamflow forecasts have increased slightly statewide but levels continue to be forecasted below average for much of the state. The Arkansas basin has received a higher snowpack this winter and therefore, is forecasted to experience near to above average streamflow ranging from 94%-130% of average. Lower streamflow averages in the northern half of the state is a result of El Niño winters which typically result in more precipitation for southern Colorado and decrease precipitation chances in the northern half of the state.

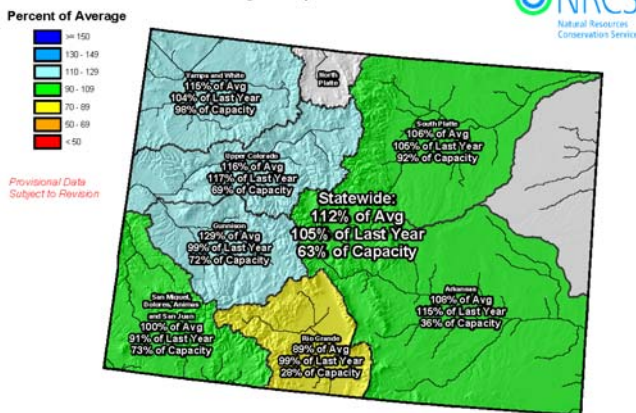
The adjacent map shows the U.S. Drought Monitor as of May 18, 2010. The northwest region of Colorado continues to experience drought conditions even though they have benefited from April and May storms. The majority of the northwestern part of the state is categorized as D0, “Abnormally Dry” drought conditions with a smaller portion of the area categorized as D1, “Moderate” drought conditions.

U.S. Drought Monitor

May 18, 2010  
Valid 6 a.m. EDT



Colorado Reservoir Storage Map



End of April 2010



The reservoir storage map to the left shows storage is 112% of average statewide and 105% of average at this same time last year. Six of seven basins are at 100% of average or above except the Upper Rio Grande basin. Front Range water providers report their reservoirs either have been filled or will fill in the near future and their systems are in good shape heading into the summer demand season.

**NOTE:** The maps and graphics depicted in this report were those presented at the May 21, 2010 meeting and may have been updated since the meeting. All presentations are available at the CWCB website – [www.cwcb.state.co.us](http://www.cwcb.state.co.us)

**The next WATF meeting will be on June 23, 2010. The meeting will be held at the Colorado Division of Wildlife, 6060 Broadway Denver, CO.**