

JUNE 2010 DROUGHT UPDATE

Water Availability Task Force Co-Chairs

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Executive Summary

Colorado's precipitation continues to fall in the northern half of the state. Continued dry conditions during the spring months in the southwest part of the state has resulted in drought conditions. Rapid runoff in May and June has helped fill respective reservoirs. However, providers are aware dry conditions & high demand can change the status of reservoir storage in a short amount of time. El Niño conditions have transitioned into La Niña conditions and a warm and dry summer is expected. Warmer and drier conditions in late June and July will increase the potential for wildfires across the state.

- Statewide, streamflow forecasts range from 69-111% of average. Runoff across the state peaked five days early at 92% of average. The Colorado, Gunnison & San Miguel/Dolores basins are forecasted to experience the lowest streamflows at 75%-84%, 69%-81% and 72%-86% of average respectively.
- Statewide reservoir storage is 112% of average at the end of May. 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 90% of average
- Water providers in attendance reported that their respective reservoirs were full or expected to fill due to the spring runoff. Despite decent reservoir storage, extended periods of warm and dry conditions during the summer can offset gains in reservoir storage.
- The U.S. Drought Monitor has changed the drought categorization for the northern mountains from D1 "Moderate" drought conditions to D0 "Abnormally dry" drought conditions. A portion of the southwest of the state is experiencing D0 drought conditions.
- A drier than average summer and above average temperatures could increase the potential for wildfires in the northwest part of the state. The Water Availability Task Force is monitoring both regions closely.

* *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.*

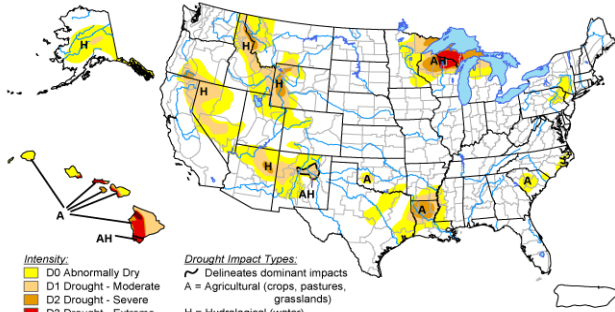
Long Term Forecast Summary

Forecasters believe El Niño conditions transitioning to La Niña conditions are inevitable. There is a possibility El Niño conditions could return again at the end of the year as the strength and duration of the La Niña event is uncertain. A La Niña summer following an El Niño winter are typically warmer than average. The Front Range is predicted to experience a dry summer. The southeastern plains are expected to benefit from a wet monsoon from July through September.

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U.S. Drought Monitor

June 15, 2010
Valid 8 a.m. EDT



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

Drought Impact Types:
 ~ Delineates dominant impacts
 A = Agricultural (crops, pastures, grasslands)
 H = Hydrological (water)

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



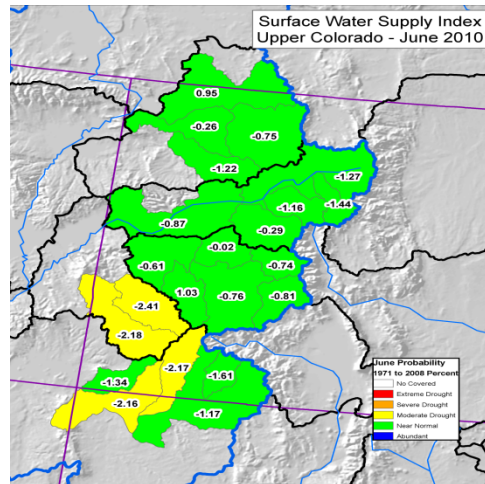
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Author: Laura Edwards, Western Regional Climate Center

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

The adjacent map shows the U.S. Drought Monitor as of June 15, 2010. The northwest region of Colorado continues to experience D0 “Abnormally Dry” drought conditions. A smaller portion of the northwest region was categorized as a D1 “Moderate” drought conditions in May but has slightly improved to D0 conditions. A portion of the southwestern part of the state is categorized as D0 drought condition after experiencing several drier than average spring months.

The adjacent map shows the June 2010 Surface Water Supply Index (SWSI) values for the Upper Colorado and San Miguel/Dolores basins. The map confirms the drought conditions that have gradually and steadily arose in the southwest region after a drier than average April, May and June. El Niño winters provide moisture to the southern half of the state but shifts north during the spring season. As of June 22, the San Miguel/Dolores basin has recorded 82% of average precipitation for the water year.



The photo, dated June 18, 2010, to the left shows the wildfire started by lightning close to the Great Sand Dunes National Park. Colorado has experienced several wildfires statewide but late spring moisture has helped to reduce ignitions. Warmer and drier conditions in July will increase the fire danger. Also, fine fuels such as grass and brush will eventually dry out in the fall and add to the fuel loading. An average fire potential is predicted for the Rocky Mountain Area through September.

NOTE: The maps and graphics depicted in this report were those presented at the June 23, 2010 meeting and may have been updated since the meeting. All presentations are available at the CWCB website – www.cwcb.state.co.us

The next WATF meeting will be on July 19, 2010. The meeting will be held at the Colorado Division of Wildlife, 6060 Broadway Denver, CO.