

## JULY 2011 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

#### *Activation of Phase 2 of the State Drought Mitigation and Response Plan, and the activation of the Agricultural Impact Task Force remain in effect to respond to serious drought conditions in southeastern and south central Colorado.*

Exceptional and extreme drought conditions continue to advance across south central and southeast Colorado with June and early July temperatures above average and precipitation well below normal for these regions. Agriculture Impact Task Force members report disaster declarations have been received for the remainder of the Arkansas and San Luis Valleys. Reported impacts such as failed crop acreage have already exceeded 2010 levels and there has been an increase in the cattle market as producers feel the cost of feeding their herds exceeds their value. The southeast corner, southwest corner and the southern counties of Colorado also have the highest potential for wildland fires.

The northern half of the state is benefiting from well above average precipitation for the current water year, Oct 2010 – present. Reservoirs have been filling in the Yampa/White, Gunnison, Colorado, and South Platte Basins after the spring runoff was delayed due to cooler temperatures. Statewide, reservoir storage is 100% of average. The Rio Grande and the Arkansas River basins have the lowest reservoir storage levels in the state at 57 and 77% of average, respectively.

- As of July 12, 45% of the State is now experiencing D0, D1, D2, D3 or D4 status according to the U.S. Drought Monitor. D0-D4 represents abnormally dry, moderate, severe, extreme and exceptional drought conditions respectively. Almost 30% of the state continues to experience D2 through D4 conditions. D4 conditions have expanded into the San Luis Valley, while D3 conditions have expanded north into El Paso County. D0 conditions have been introduced to the southwest corner of the state.
- Extremely dry conditions continue to plague southeastern and south central Colorado. The Agricultural Impact Task Force, activated in May by the Governor, has been meeting weekly to monitor and respond to the situation. WATF members have decided that activating the Wildfire Impact Task Force is not needed at this time. Close monitoring of the wildfire situation will continue.
- The Front Range and northeast portion of the state have benefited from an early monsoon season. Some portions of southeast Colorado such as Prowers County received some moisture but other drought affected areas in the San Luis Valley received little to no June precipitation.
- The southern portions of Colorado have the highest potential for wildland fires. Wildfire activity has been greatest near the border with New Mexico in Las Animas County. In this area, 101 daily red flag warnings have been issued. Red flag conditions are such that with an ignition source, a large fire is likely to occur.
- To date, seven significant wildfires have occurred in the state. Fire officials are expecting one to three more significant fires to occur based on the historical record. At this time of the year, the primary ignition source for a wildfire is lightning. So far, the March 2011 Fire Outlook produced by the Colorado State Forest Service, has been fairly accurate.
- Reference Evapotranspiration (ET) at the Avondale weather station (east of Pueblo, in the Arkansas Basin) and the Center weather station (Upper Rio Grande Basin) have exceeded 2002 maximum ET levels for the season April 1- Sept 30th.

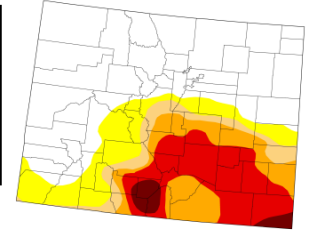
# JULY 2011 DROUGHT UPDATE

## U.S. Drought Monitor Colorado

July 12, 2011  
Valid 7 a.m. EST

The adjacent map shows the U.S. Drought Monitor for Colorado as of July 12, 2011. D4, exceptional drought conditions have expanded into the San Luis Valley while D3, extreme conditions have expanded further west covering the south central part of the state. D0, abnormally dry conditions, has been introduced into the Southwestern Basin. For this reason, **the State Drought Plan remains activated for southeastern and south central Colorado.**

	Drought Conditions (Percent Area)					
	None	D0-D2	D3-D4	D2-D4	D3-D4	D4
Current	54.57	45.43	32.64	27.21	16.88	2.22
Last Week (07/05/2011 max)	49.31	50.69	34.84	29.02	16.84	1.57
3 Months Ago (04/12/2011 max)	39.57	60.43	54.13	40.88	0.00	0.00
Start of Calendar Year (1/2/2011 max)	40.40	59.60	49.57	10.13	0.00	0.00
Start of Water Year (09/26/2010 max)	28.86	71.14	10.70	0.00	0.00	0.00
One Year Ago (07/06/2010 max)	77.80	22.20	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00



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

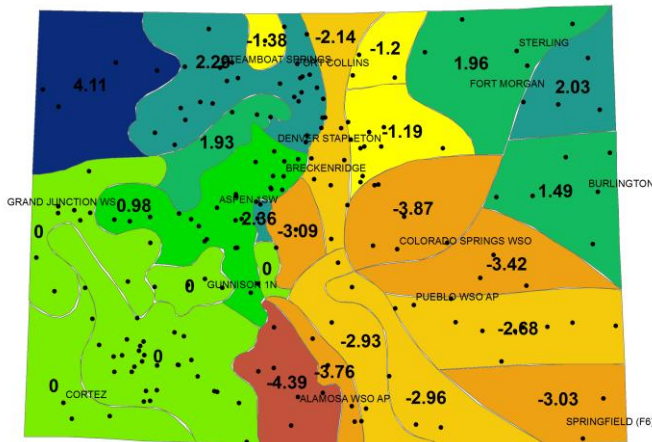
The Drought Monitor focuses on broad-scale conditions. Local conditions may vary. See accompanying text summary for forecast statements.

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



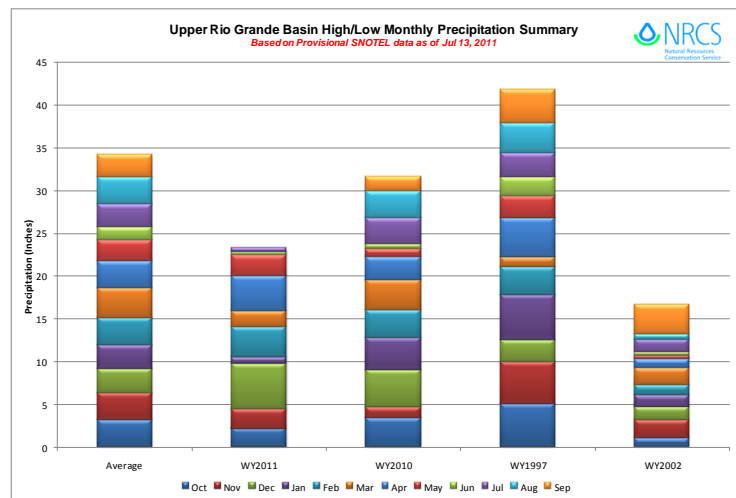
Released Thursday, July 14, 2011  
David Miskus, NOAA/NWS/NCEP/Climate Prediction Center

Preliminary Modified Palmer Drought Severity Index for Colorado  
June 2011



The adjacent map shows the Preliminary Modified Palmer Drought Severity Index for Colorado for June 2011. The Rio Grande region had the lowest value at -4.39. The range in values of -2.93 to -4.39 classifies these areas as experiencing moderate to extreme drought. The Upper Rio Grande basin has received below average precipitation since January 2011 and is currently at 88% of average for the water year.

The adjacent bar graph shows the Upper Rio Grande Basin Monthly Precipitation Summary. The 2011 Water Year total is represented by the bar second from the left. Below average precipitation amounts in June and a poor start to July have allowed drought conditions to deteriorate and fire potential to increase. Reservoir Storage in this basin is declining and is at 57% of average.



**NOTE:**

The next WATF meeting is scheduled for August 17, 2011, from 1:30-4pm at the Colorado Division of Wildlife, 6060 Broadway, Denver, CO. Should you wish to participate via web conference, please contact Ben Wade at [Ben.wade@state.co.us](mailto:Ben.wade@state.co.us)