



August 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 impact south central and southeast Colorado. While some drought stricken areas did receive decent late July moisture, the San Luis Valley received only ¼ inch during the month. Reported impacts such as failed crop acreage continue to rise and with poor grazing conditions cattle sales also remain high. July temperatures were two degrees above average for the state, and the month ranked as the 7th warmest July on record. Areas of Southeastern Colorado were 4-6 degrees above average for the month.

The northern half of the state continues to benefit from well above average precipitation for the current water year, October 2010 – present. Reservoirs are full in the Yampa/White, Gunnison, Colorado, and South Platte Basins, and while July rains kept demands low in these areas, a drier August has resulted increased demands. Statewide, reservoir storage is 108% of average. The Rio Grande and the Arkansas River basins have the lowest reservoir storage levels in the state at 57 and 87% of average, respectively.

- As of August 16th, 39% of the state is now experiencing D0, D1, D2, D3 or D4 status according to the U.S. Drought Monitor. Down from 45% of the State last month. D0-D4 represents abnormally dry, moderate, severe, extreme and exceptional drought conditions, respectively. D3 represents the largest portion of drought impacted areas at 17% of the state. D4 conditions have been scaled back slightly in both the San Luis Valley and Baca County due to some localized moisture.
- Alamosa is having one of its driest water years on record with only 2.3 inches since October.
- Reference Evapotranspiration (ET) in the San Luis Valley is also at a record high.
- The Agricultural Impact Task Force, activated in May by the Governor, has been meeting regularly to monitor and respond to the situation. As of August 17th Primary disaster declarations have been granted for Baca, Otero, Crowley, Bent, Chaffee, Custer, Fremont, Huerfano, Kiowa, Las Animas, Prowers, Pueblo, Saguache, Alamosa, Rio Grande, Costilla, Conejos counties. An additional request was sent by Governor Hickenlooper for Douglas and Elbert counties. An additional 13 counties have secondary status as a result of being contiguous to counties with primary declarations.
- Initial wheat and corn harvest data indicates the yields are down from last year with better production in the northern areas of the state where there has been sufficient moisture. Grass and Hay producers continue to struggle. Fall planting will begin at the end of the month and with this additional information is likely to come in on failed and prevented planting should the dry conditions persist.
- Fire danger has moderated somewhat in Colorado with no fires under the state's jurisdiction.
- The fire situation rating for the Rocky Mountain Area remains at Preparedness Level 2, indicating that resources within local dispatch areas are adequate, with the potential for some mobilization of additional resources from other local dispatch areas. Close monitoring of the wildfire situation will continue.

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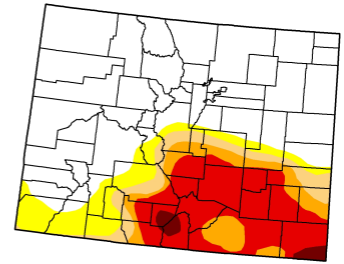
The adjacent map shows the U.S. Drought Monitor for Colorado as of August 16, 2011. D4, exceptional drought conditions have been slightly scaled back in both Baca County and the San Luis Valley while D3, extreme conditions, have expanded. D0, abnormally dry conditions, been scaled back to the north, but remain in the Southwestern Basin. For this reason, **the State Drought Plan remains activated for southeastern and south central Colorado.**

U.S. Drought Monitor

Colorado

August 16, 2011
Valid 7 a.m. EST

	Drought Conditions (Percent Area)					
	None	D0-D4	D1-D4	D2-D4	D3-D4	D4
Current	61.06	38.94	30.11	24.84	18.43	1.23
Last Week (08/09/2011 map)	61.06	38.94	30.11	24.84	18.37	1.45
3 Months Ago (05/12/2011 map)	42.60	57.40	45.12	31.10	7.53	0.34
Start of Calendar Year (12/29/2010 map)	40.40	59.60	49.57	10.13	0.00	0.00
Start of Water Year (09/26/2010 map)	28.86	71.14	10.70	0.00	0.00	0.00
One Year Ago (08/10/2010 map)	83.63	16.37	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00



Intensity:

<p>■ D0 Abnormally Dry</p> <p>■ D1 Drought - Moderate</p> <p>■ D2 Drought - Severe</p>	<p>■ D3 Drought - Extreme</p> <p>■ D4 Drought - Exceptional</p>
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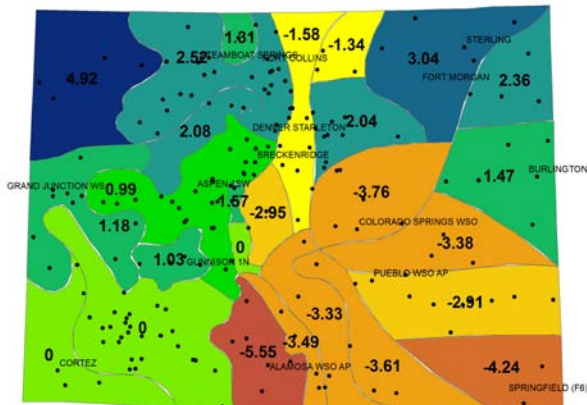
The Drought Monitor focuses on broad-scale conditions. Local conditions may vary. See accompanying text summary for forecast statements.



Released Thursday, August 18, 2011
Laura Edwards, Western Regional Climate Center

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

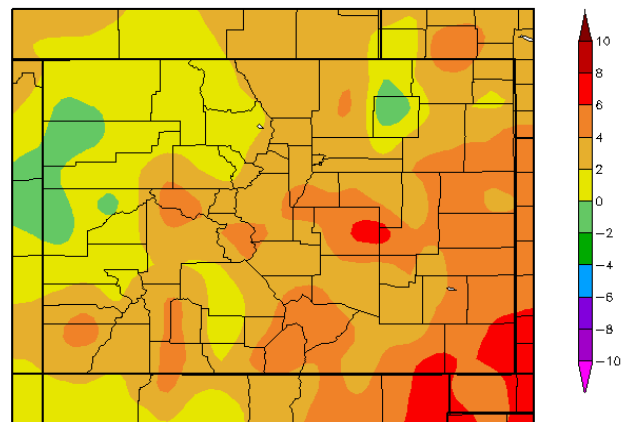
Preliminary Modified Palmer Drought Severity Index for Colorado
July 2011



The adjacent map shows the Preliminary Modified Palmer Drought Severity Index for Colorado for July 2011. The Rio Grande region had the lowest value at -5.55, where -4 indicates “extreme drought.” The Upper Rio Grande basin has received below average precipitation since January 2011 and is currently at 85% of average for the water year. The mountains in the basin have gotten the bulk of that moisture, while the valleys have been significantly drier.

The map to the right shows the departure from normal temperature for the month of July. On average the state was two degrees above normal, but the southeastern and south central portions of the state ranged from 4-6 degrees above average. High temperatures can escalate drought conditions by increasing ET rates.

Departure from Normal Temperature (F)
7/1/2011 – 7/31/2011



Generated 8/11/2011 at HPRCC using provisional data.

Regional Climate Centers

NOTE:

The next WATF meeting is scheduled for September 22, 2011, from 9:30-12 noon 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