

## NOVEMBER 2011 DROUGHT UPDATE

### Water Availability Task Force Co-Chairs

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### 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 Colorado.***

Exceptional and extreme drought conditions continue to impact Baca County in southeast Colorado. However, drought conditions in other areas of the state have seen significant improvement over the last two months. Moderate to severe conditions remain throughout the southeastern and south central portions of the state, including the San Luis Valley.

Reservoir storage remains above average in the Yampa/White, Gunnison, Colorado, South Platte Basins, and San Miguel/ Dolores/ Animas/ San Juan. Statewide, reservoir storage is 103% of average. The Rio Grande and the Arkansas River basins continue to be the regions with the lowest reservoir storage levels in the state at 60 and 88% of average, respectively. Municipalities present at the November WATF meeting feel that they have adequate storage and have transitioned to winter operations.

- As of November 22, 34% of the state is now experiencing some level of drought conditions, according to the U.S. Drought Monitor, a decrease from previous months. D3 and D4 conditions remain only in Baca County, while D2 and D1 conditions are impacting much of the rest of the southeastern parts of the state. D0-D4 represents abnormally dry, moderate, severe, extreme and exceptional drought conditions, respectively.
- Surface Water Supply Index (SWSI) values range from 0 in the San Miguel/ Dolores/ Animas/ San Juan to +3.5 in the Yampa/ White basin. According to the revised SWSI, the Dolores and Animas in the southwest were drier than the other southwestern basins at -2.61 and -2.03 respectively. The San Miguel and San Juan both experienced near normal conditions.
- At the Walsh weather station, in southeastern Colorado, a new record low for precipitation was recorded for the month of August and September ending the water year far below normal at just 35%. While they did not set new records, Pueblo, Alamosa, and Del Norte also finished the water year well below normal at 60, 61 and 49% respectively.
- The long term seasonal climate forecast indicates that the return of La Nina conditions will likely result in drier conditions than last year which was extremely wet in our north-central mountains. Nevertheless, the current precipitation outlook for early next year is near-normal in most of the state, with a chance of even above-normal precipitation in the north-central mountains.
- It is too early to tell what the implications of the seasonal drought of 2011 may have on fish and wildlife populations in the southern portion of the state, and the habitats upon which they depend. So far, there have been no reports of significant or widespread adverse impacts that can be directly attributed to the drought. Task force members are keeping a watchful eye on the availability of food supplies and water needed to sustain major life cycle events of existing populations and species.
- **The Agricultural Impact Task Force (AITF) has recommended to the Drought Task Force that regular meeting be suspended until the early part of 2012 when more information on winter precipitation will be available. However the AITF remains activated should conditions in the southeastern portions of the state require immediate response.**

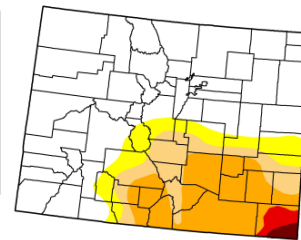
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The adjacent map shows the U.S. Drought Monitor for Colorado as of November 22, 2011. D3 extreme drought conditions have been removed from the San Luis Valley, but persist in Baca County as do D4, exceptional drought conditions. **Conditions in the extreme southeastern portion of the state still warrant activation of the State Drought Mitigation and Response Plan.**

## U.S. Drought Monitor Colorado

November 22, 2011  
Valid 7 a.m. EST

	Drought Conditions (Percent Area)					
	None	D0-D1	D1-D2	D2-D3	D3-D4	D4
Current	65.67	34.33	26.27	17.48	1.85	0.63
Last Week (11/15/2011 map)	65.67	34.33	26.27	17.48	1.85	0.63
3 Months Ago (09/23/2011 map)	56.44	43.56	28.66	23.06	11.94	1.19
Start of Calendar Year (12/28/2010 map)	40.40	59.60	49.57	10.13	0.00	0.00
Start of Water Year (03/27/2011 map)	60.62	39.38	27.69	19.99	7.88	0.56
One Year Ago (11/18/2010 map)	30.29	69.71	38.67	0.00	0.00	0.00



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

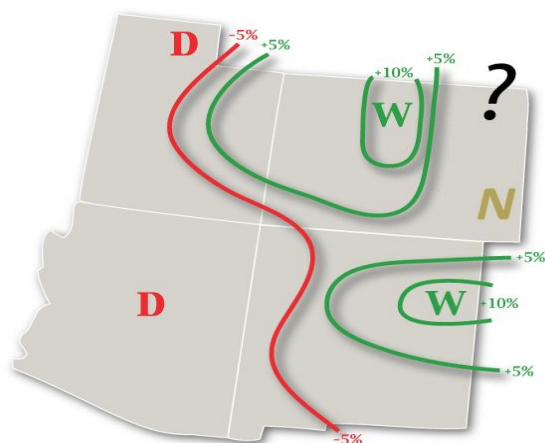
The Drought Monitor focuses on broad-scale conditions. Local conditions may vary. See accompanying text summary for forecast statements.

<http://droughtmonitor.unl.edu>



### Experimental PSD Precipitation Forecast Guidance

JAN - MAR 2012 (Issued November 17, 2011)



The adjacent map shows the statistical forecast for January through March 2012. This indicates a chance of wetter conditions in the north central mountains, and drier conditions in the Four Corners region. However, skill in forecasting for these areas has been marginal in the last decade.

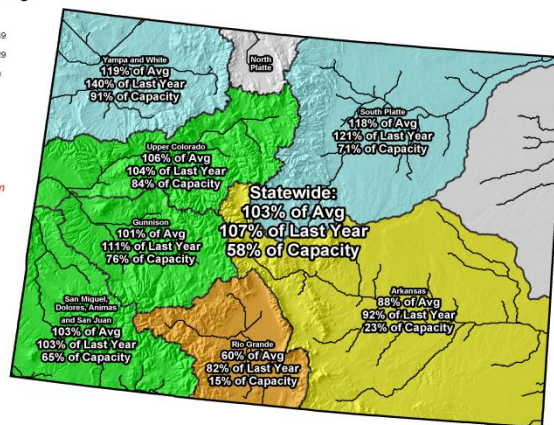
The map to the right shows the reservoir storage levels by basin and statewide. Currently municipalities feel storage levels are adequate. Winter precipitation over the next few months will provide more insight on how strong the run off season will be in the spring.

### Colorado Reservoir Storage Map

Percent of Average



Provisional Data  
Subject to Revision



End of October 2011

**NOTE:** Please check the CWCB website for the next scheduled WATF meeting – [www.cwcb.state.co.us](http://www.cwcb.state.co.us), or contact Ben Wade at [ben.wade@state.co.us](mailto:ben.wade@state.co.us).