

JANUARY 2012 DROUGHT UPDATE

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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 drought conditions in southeastern Colorado.

Drought conditions in Baca County in southeast Colorado have seen significant improvement over the last six weeks, however D2, severe drought conditions, still remain in both Baca county as well as the San Luis Valley. Elsewhere in the state abnormally dry conditions have emerged, with D0 now extending into the central and northern mountains all the way to the Wyoming and Utah borders. 36% of the state is now experiencing D0 conditions and the news media is reporting potential impacts to winter recreation. Water providers are watching the situation in the mountains closely but most feel they have sufficient storage at this time.

- December temperatures in the foothills and eastern plains were three degrees below average, while the mountains and western valleys were near normal. Thus far January has been above average for most of the state with the exception of the San Luis Valley and pockets on the southeastern plains and northern mountains.
- Both the western valleys and the eastern plains have received minimal precipitation to date in January.
- 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 105% 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 64 and 93% of average, respectively.
- As of January 17, 2012, 61% of the state is now experiencing some level of drought classification, according to the U.S. Drought Monitor, a nearly 20% increase from previous weeks. D4 has been entirely removed from Baca County and D3 has been significantly reduced. However, D2, D1 and D0 conditions are impacting much of the rest of the state. D0-D4 represents abnormally dry, moderate, severe, extreme and exceptional drought conditions, respectively.
- Surface Water Supply Index (SWSI) values range from -2.99 in the East Taylor sub-basin of the Gunnison River basin to +1.59 in the Big Thompson sub-basin of the South Platte. The remainder of the state is near normal, in part due to sufficient reservoir storage. The East Taylor Basin is lower, in part due to operational drawdown of Paonia Reservoir. Clear Creek Basin which also shows a SWSI indicating moderate drought at -2.69 is the result of a low stream flow forecast in a sub-basin that is not normally distributed and thus skewed slightly drier.
- Each of the seven basins of Colorado are below where they were at the same time last year with regard to Basin Snowpack, with the Colorado and the Gunnison at only 41 and 40% respectively, for the same time last year. The same basins are currently experiencing snowpack at 60 and 64% of average and are the lowest in the state. The Rio Grande, with 87% of average and 93% of the snowpack seen at this time last year, has the largest snowpack in the state.
- 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. The current long term forecast show drier than normal conditions for most of the mountains through the end of March.

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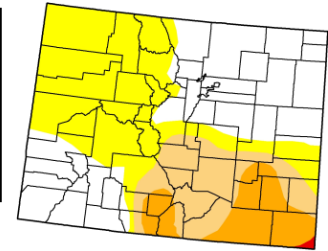
The adjacent map shows the U.S. Drought Monitor for Colorado as of January 17, 2012. D2, severe drought conditions, persist in the San Luis Valley and Baca County, with a sliver of D3 also in the extreme southeast. D0, abnormally dry, conditions have been introduced in the central and northern mountains. **Conditions in the extreme southeastern portion of the state still warrant activation of the State Drought Mitigation and Response Plan.**

U.S. Drought Monitor

January 17, 2012
Valid 7 a.m. EST

Colorado

	Drought Conditions (Percent Area)						
	None	D0-D1	D1-D2	D2-D3	D3-D4	D4	
Current	39.42	60.58	24.98	10.60	0.20	0.00	
Last Week (01/10/2012 map)	58.24	41.76	24.98	10.60	0.04	0.00	
3 Months Ago (10/18/2011 map)	64.30	35.70	27.41	19.99	6.46	0.57	
Start of Calendar Year (12/27/2011 map)	67.79	32.21	24.98	14.94	0.04	0.00	
Start of Water Year (09/27/2011 map)	60.62	39.38	27.69	19.99	7.88	0.56	
One-Year Ago (01/11/2011 map)	41.48	58.52	49.57	10.13	0.00	0.00	



Intensity:



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

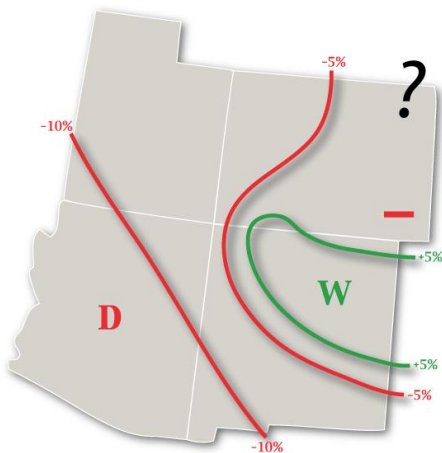


<http://droughtmonitor.unl.edu>

Released Thursday, January 19, 2012
Laura Edwards, Western Regional Climate Center and South Dakota S

Experimental PSD Precipitation Forecast Guidance

JAN - MAR 2012 (Issued January 13, 2012)

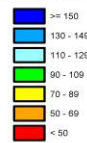


The adjacent map shows the statistical forecast for January through March 2012. This indicates a shift in the odds towards dry conditions in western and southeastern Colorado. This is consistent with two year La Nina events in which the second year is often drier than the first.

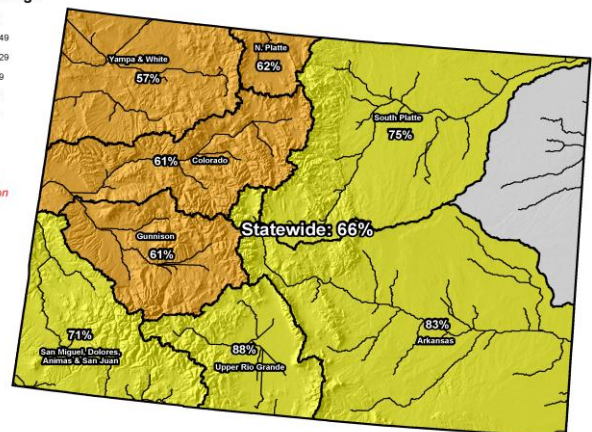
The map to the right shows the SNOTEL snowpack data by basin and statewide. Statewide snowpack at SNOTEL sites is 66% of the long term average. The Yampa/ White is reporting the lowest snowpack on record for this time of year. The Colorado Basin is showing the second lowest snowpack for this time of year. SNOTEL Records date back to the mid 1980's.

Colorado SNOTEL Snowpack Update Map

Percent of Average



Provisional Data
Subject to Revision



Current as of Jan 17, 2012

*Data may not provide a valid measure of conditions

NOTE: The next scheduled WATF meeting will be February 16th at the Division of Parks & Wildlife Headquarters. Additional information can be found at www.cwcb.state.co.us, or by contacting Ben Wade at ben.wade@state.co.us.