

FEBRUARY 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.

Early February precipitation in parts of the state has helped to increase snowpack levels somewhat. However, all major basins of the state remain below normal. Severe drought conditions still remain in Baca County as well as the San Luis Valley. Abnormally dry conditions persist in the southeast and the central/ northern mountains all the way to the Wyoming and Utah borders. 70% of the state is now experiencing some level of drought classification, according to the U.S. Drought Monitor - a 9% increase from a month ago. Water providers are watching the situation in the mountains closely, but most feel they have sufficient storage at this time.

- January temperatures were 3.5 to 5 degrees above average for most of Colorado, with the I-25 corridor 6-10 degrees above normal for the month.
- Following a drier than average month in January, February precipitation has made up some deficit, providing much needed moisture on the eastern plains and in the northern mountains.
- 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 106% 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 66 and 94% of average, respectively.
- As of the February 14, 2012 US Drought Monitor, D1, moderate drought, conditions have been expanded in the northern and central mountains, while D2, Severe drought, conditions remain over much of the southeast and south central portions of the state. D0, abnormally dry, conditions account for much of the rest of the impacted areas of the state. D0-D4 represents abnormally dry, moderate, severe, extreme and exceptional drought conditions, respectively.
- Surface Water Supply Index (SWSI) values range from -2.42 in the Arkansas Headwaters sub-basin to +1.6 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 Arkansas Headwaters is lower, due to operational drawdown of Homestake Reservoir. Other basins with a SWSI indicating moderate drought are the result of low stream flow forecasts.
- Six of the seven basins of Colorado are below where they were at the same time last year with regard to basin snowpack, with the exception being the Rio Grande with 101% of last year.
- As of February 15 all basins are below their longer term average for snowpack. The Yampa/White and Colorado River Basins are the lowest, with snowpacks at 70 and 72% of average respectively. The Rio Grande and Arkansas with 88% of average have the largest snowpack in the state.
- Many basins have experienced increased precipitation in the early part of February. Significantly more precipitation is needed to reach the longer term average in all basins.

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U.S. Drought Monitor

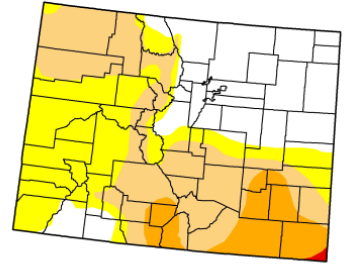
February 14, 2012
Valid 7 a.m. EST

Colorado

The adjacent map shows the U.S. Drought Monitor for Colorado as of February 14, 2012. D2, severe drought conditions, persist in the San Luis Valley and Baca County, with a sliver of D3 in the extreme southeast. D0, abnormally dry, conditions persist 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.**

Drought Conditions (Percent Area)

	None	D0-D4	D1-D4	D2-D4	D3-D4	D4
Current	30.48	69.52	41.07	10.67	0.21	0.00
Last Week (02/07/2012 map)	30.48	69.52	41.07	10.60	0.21	0.00
3 Months Ago (11/15/2011 map)	65.67	34.33	26.27	17.48	1.85	0.63
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 (02/08/2011 map)	41.65	58.35	49.57	10.13	0.00	0.00



Intensity:

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

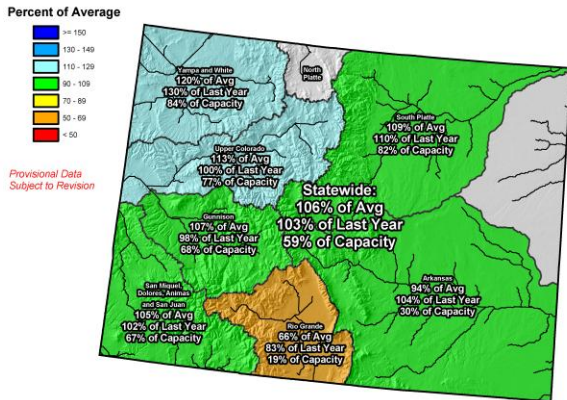
The Drought Monitor focuses on broad-scale conditions. Local conditions may vary. See accompanying text summary for forecast statements.

<http://droughtmonitor.unl.edu>



Released Thursday, February 16, 2012
Rich Tinker, NOAA/NWS/NCEP/Climate Prediction Center

Colorado Reservoir Storage Map

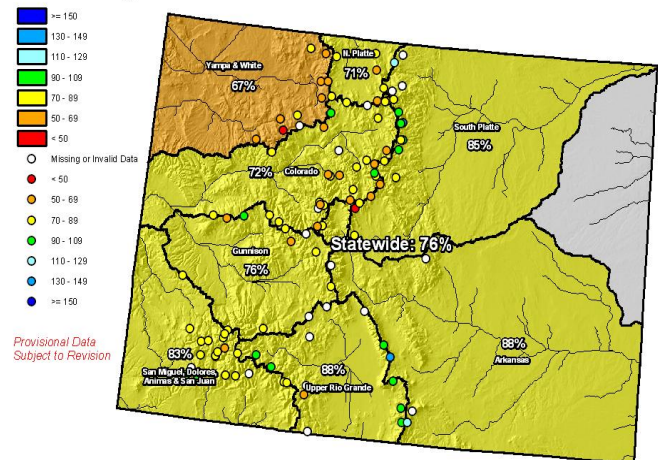


End of January 2012

The adjacent map shows Colorado Reservoir Storage as of the end of January 2012. This indicates sufficient storage in most parts of the state. High reservoir levels help to offset concerns regarding below average snowpack. The Rio Grande with the lowest storage levels in the state has faced ongoing drought since last year.

The map to the right shows the SNOTEL snowpack data by basin and statewide. Statewide snowpack at SNOTEL sites is 76% of the long term average. The Yampa/ White basin is reporting the lowest snowpack in the state. The Yampa/ White and the Colorado River basins both have the lowest February 1 snowpack in more than 30 years.

Colorado SNOTEL Snowpack Update Map with Site Data



Current as of Feb 15, 2012

*Data may not provide a valid measure of conditions

NOTE: The next scheduled WATF meeting will be March 22, 2012 at the Colorado Parks & Wildlife Headquarters. This meeting will be a joint meeting with the state's Flood Task Force. Additional information can be found at www.cwcb.state.co.us, or by contacting Ben Wade at ben.wade@state.co.us.