



## SEPTEMBER 2012 DROUGHT UPDATE

Water Availability Task Force Chair  
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***Activation of Phase 2 &3 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 throughout Colorado.***

The western slope of Colorado benefited from August and September rains; alleviating but not eliminating drought conditions; while portions of the eastern plains received no measurable precipitation in August and has seen an increase in exceptional drought conditions. Temperatures in August were cooler than June and July, but were still above average. For this calendar year to date, the statewide average temperature of 51.4 degrees Fahrenheit ranks as the 2nd warmest on record (1895-2012).

- Many municipalities have activated their drought stages resulting in both voluntary and mandatory watering restrictions. Highlands Ranch is now utilizing non-renewable groundwater supplies; and Pueblo has begun to utilize their “strategic reserve” and is forecasting that they will have limited water to lease to the agriculture sector during the 2013 growing season. Should drought conditions persist this may result in further impacts to the agricultural sector within the Arkansas River basin.
- Reservoir storage is at 68% statewide. Highest storage levels are in the Yampa/ White River Basin, at 104% of average while the lowest storage in the state is in the Rio Grande River basin at 50% of average. The Yampa/ White is largely dominated by energy producers who are keeping their water in storage in case the drought persist, roughly 2/3 of storage in the major reservoirs of that basin is held by energy producers. Some Front Range providers are reporting system storage levels as low as 33%.
- Surface Water Supply Index values have improved with some areas seeing near normal conditions. This is partially the result of municipal year-to-year carryover in large projects such as the Fryingpan-Arkansas. However, the vast majority of the state remains in the severe drought category with values below -3.
- Many weather stations are on track to set new record low reference evapotranspiration rates, a result of both dry conditions as well as consistently high temperatures throughout the growing season.
- As of the September 25, 2012 US Drought Monitor, 100% of Colorado is experiencing some level of drought classification. D2 (severe) and D3 (extreme) predominate over 80% of the state. 17% of the state is experiencing exceptional drought all of which is isolated to the eastern plains. Conditions over the eastern plains have deteriorated over the last month.
- While dry conditions have resulted in decreased yields, high commodity prices have helped to alleviate some of the impacts and markets remain strong. To date, the state has seen a 40% increase in agricultural exports.
- The latest long term experimental forecast released September 24, shows a chance of increased precipitation over the eastern plains and drier conditions over the four corners region. While conditions have switched to an El Nino, which often favors wetter conditions in Colorado, this El Nino is very weak and is not expected to result in “typical” conditions.

# September 2012 DROUGHT UPDATE

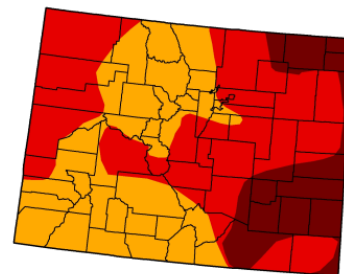
## U.S. Drought Monitor Colorado

September 25, 2012  
Valid 7 a.m. EST

The US Drought Monitor illustrates current drought conditions across the state of Colorado. Most of the state is experiencing severe or extreme drought conditions while the Arkansas River basin and a portion of the northern plains are facing exceptional drought conditions.

Drought Conditions (Percent Area)

	None	D0-D4	D1-D4	D2-D4	D3-D4	D4
Current	0.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	61.75	16.89
Last Week (09/18/2012 map)	0.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	61.75	16.89
3 Months Ago (09/26/2012 map)	0.00	100.00	100.00	97.72	45.83	0.00
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 (09/20/2011 map)	60.62	39.38	27.69	19.99	7.88	0.56



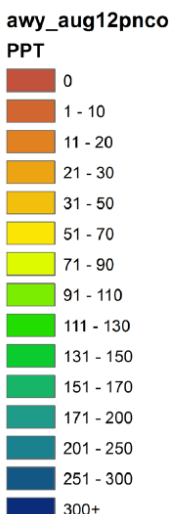
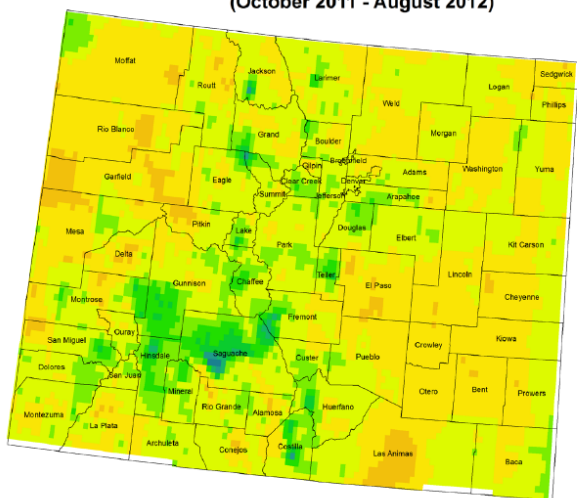
**Intensity:**  
■ D0 Abnormally Dry     ■ D3 Drought - Extreme  
■ D1 Drought - Moderate     ■ D4 Drought - Exceptional  
■ D2 Drought - Severe

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

<http://droughtmonitor.unl.edu>

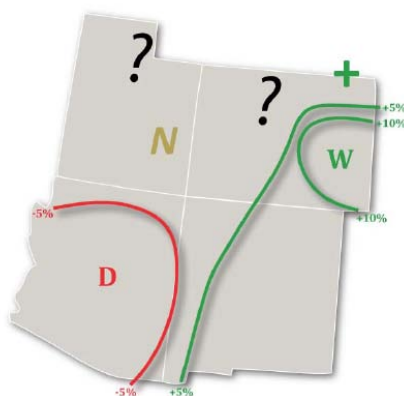
Released Thursday, September 27, 2012  
Anthony Artusa, NOAA/NWS/NCEP/CPC

**Colorado Water Year 2012 Precipitation as Percentage of Normal (October 2011 - August 2012)**

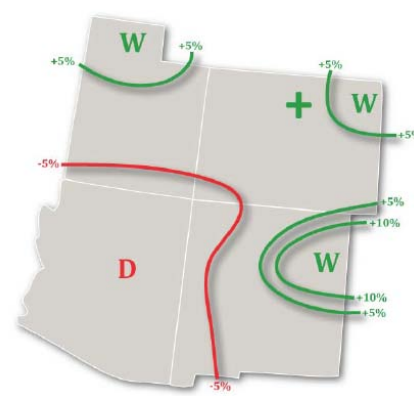


Despite recent precipitation, which brought beneficial moisture to much of the western slope, most of Colorado remains below normal for the water year which began October 1<sup>st</sup> 2011.

**Experimental PSD Precipitation Forecast Guidance**  
OCT - DEC 2012 (Issued September 18, 2012)



**Experimental PSD Precipitation Forecast Guidance**  
JAN - MAR 2013 (Issued September 24, 2012)



The long term experimental forecast shows increased chances of precipitation over the eastern plains for both the October to December timeframe, as well as the January through March forecast.

NOTE: The next scheduled WATF meeting will be the morning of October 18, 2012 at Colorado Parks and Wildlife Headquarters, 6060 Broadway, Denver, CO. Additional information can be found at [www.cwcb.state.co.us](http://www.cwcb.state.co.us), or by contacting Ben Wade at [ben.wade@state.co.us](mailto:ben.wade@state.co.us).