



NOVEMBER 2012 DROUGHT UPDATE

Water Availability Task Force Co- Chairs

Taryn Finessey, CWCB
303.866.3441 ext. 3231

Taryn.Finessey@state.co.us

Tracy Kosloff, DWR
303-866-3581 ext. 8211

Tracy.Kosloff@state.co.us

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 ongoing drought conditions throughout Colorado.

With ten consecutive months of below average precipitation, the 2012 water year, which ended on September 30th, saw just 75% of normal precipitation. November has continued on a below average trend; although a storm around Veteran's day brought beneficial moisture to the mountains, slightly boosting statewide precipitation from 54% on November 1st to 58% as of the 19th. At this early stage in the snow accumulation seasons, snowpack is at 45% of average. Despite a cooler October, November temperatures are above seasonal averages. Currently, this calendar year ranks as the 2nd warmest on record (1895-2012) with a statewide average temperature of 51.7 degrees Fahrenheit.

- As of the November 20, 2012 US Drought Monitor, 100% of Colorado is experiencing some level of drought classification. D2 (severe) and D3 (extreme) cover nearly 79% of the state, while 13% of the state is experiencing exceptional drought (D4), isolated to the eastern plains. This is a slight decrease in D4 classification since the start of the water year on October 1, 2012.
- Many municipalities that had implemented both voluntary and mandatory watering restrictions earlier in the year will keep these in place throughout the winter. Through the irrigation season Colorado Springs Utilities (CSU) saw consumption increase to the highest levels since 2002; consequently reservoir levels are the lowest since 2002. Other communities are closely watching the situation and have some concern should the drought conditions persist for another year.
- Statewide reservoir storage is at 66% of average and 37% of capacity. The highest storage levels are in the Yampa/ White River Basin, at 96% of average while the lowest storage in the state is the Rio Grande River basin at 47% of average. All other basins range from 61% to 73% of average and 17% to 52% of total capacity.
- Many basins that were able to rebound following the 2002 drought are reporting reservoir levels that have not been seen in nearly a decade; while others that were not able to fully rebound to normal levels post the 2002 drought continue to report below average reservoir levels.
- Surface Water Supply Index values have improved in some areas (Huerfano, Cache La Poudre & Big Thompson) and deteriorated in others. The central portions of the state as well as the southwestern corner have seen the largest decline. This is largely due to decreased stream flows and decreased storage levels. During this time of the year the SWSI is calculated using observed, rather than forecasted, stream flow volumes.
- For the first time in nine years ENSO-neutral conditions are likely to dominate through the winter months. Without El Nino or La Nina influencing weather patterns, it is difficult to determine when the current drought regime will be broken in Colorado. The latest long term experimental forecast, issued November 19th, shows below-normal chances of moisture from January to March throughout much of Colorado. This is based largely on other factors such as a cold north Pacific (PDO) and a warm North Atlantic (AMO).

NOVEMBER 2012 DROUGHT UPDATE

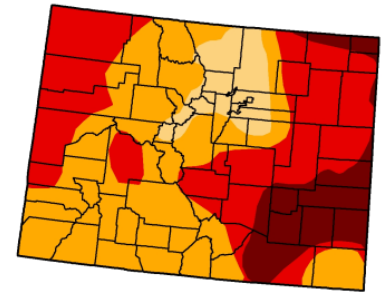
U.S. Drought Monitor

November 20, 2012
Valid 7 a.m. EST

Colorado

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	91.52	48.56	12.56
Last Week (11/13/2012 map)	0.00	100.00	100.00	91.52	48.56	12.50
3 Months Ago (08/21/2012 map)	0.00	100.00	100.00	99.96	68.38	9.64
Start of Calendar Year (12/27/2011 map)	67.79	32.21	24.98	14.94	0.04	0.00
Start of Water Year (09/25/2012 map)	0.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	61.75	16.89
One Year Ago (11/15/2011 map)	65.67	34.33	26.27	17.48	1.85	0.63



Intensity:



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

<http://droughtmonitor.unl.edu>



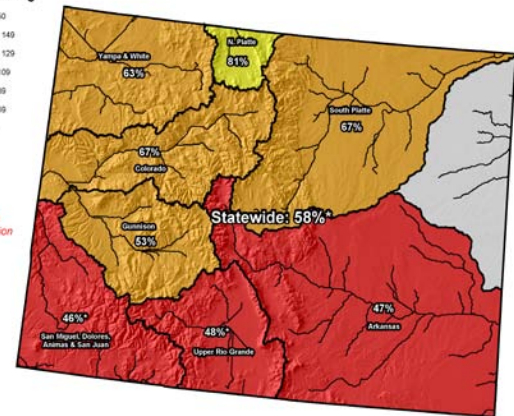
Released Thursday, November 22, 2012
National Drought Mitigation Center.

Colorado SNOTEL Water Year-to-Date Precipitation Update Map

Percent of Average



Provisional Data
Subject to Revision

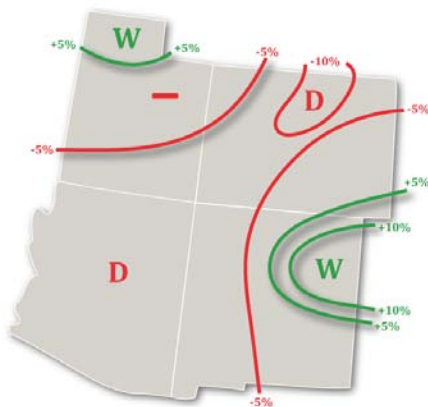


Current as of Nov 19, 2012

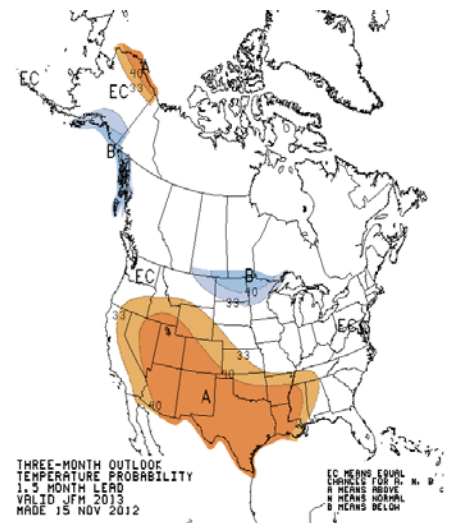
As of November 19, 2012 all of the state is below average for precipitation, with the southern portions of the state drier than the northern half. Statewide precipitation is at 58% of average.

Experimental PSD Precipitation Forecast Guidance

JAN - MAR 2013 (Issued November 19, 2012)



The long term experimental forecast (left) shows decreased chances of precipitation throughout much of the state during the January through March timeframe. The Climate Prediction Center also forecasts above average temperatures during the same timeframe (right).



NOTE: The next WATF meeting will be held in January 2013, additional information can be found at www.cwcb.state.co.us. Please join us on **Tuesday, December 18th** at 10AM MST for the Upper Colorado River Basin Drought Early Warning System Webinar. To register go to: http://ccc.atmos.colostate.edu/drought_webinar_registration.php