

MARCH 2013 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.

Late February and March precipitation coupled with periods of cooler than average temperatures have helped to maintain snowpack levels in the Colorado high country. However, the entire state continues to deal with drought conditions and the eastern plains remain exceptionally dry. Given current conditions, 275% of normal precipitation would be needed to reach average peak snowpack statewide, which typically occurs on April 8th. It is unlikely that this will be achieved. Consequently, water providers are preparing for continued drought conditions throughout the spring and summer and some have announced restrictions. Please visit www.CO2O.co for more information on restrictions in specific communities.

- As of the March 19, 2013 US Drought Monitor, 100% of Colorado is experiencing some level of drought classification. D1 (moderate) and D2 (severe) cover 52% of the state, while D3 (extreme) accounts for an additional 27%. 21% of the state is now experiencing exceptional drought (D4), a slight decrease from last month.
- Despite an increase in beneficial moisture during March statewide snowpack has maintained, but not improved, and is currently 77% of average. The highest snowpack in the state is in the Southwest basins (82%) while the South Platte is experiencing the lowest at 67% of normal for the water year. All other basins range from 73-79% of average. *
- Municipalities and water providers are actively preparing to respond to continued drought conditions with both mandatory and voluntary watering restrictions throughout the spring and summer demand season. Many major utilities will implement restrictions beginning April 1st. A website www.CO2O.co has been developed to help individuals determine what the restrictions in their specific community are.
- Statewide reservoir storage is at 71% of average and 39% of capacity, a slight increase from last month. The highest storage levels are in the Yampa/ White River Basin, at 106% of average while the lowest storage in the state is the Rio Grande River basin at 53% of average. All other basins range from 55% to 82% of average and 16% to 65% of total capacity. Last year this time the state was at 105% of average reservoir storage.*
- Surface Water Supply Index values have decreased across the entire state over the last month and all values remain negative. Below average reservoir storage and streamflow forecasts contribute to these values.
- NRCS is forecasting below average spring streamflows for the entire state, with most of the basins falling within the 50-69% of average forecast range.
- The long term experimental forecast for April through June of this year is projecting above normal moisture across most of the state, especially around the four corners region. Additionally, the Climate Prediction Center at NOAA is forecasting above average temperatures and persistent drought conditions across much of the state.

** The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) uses a 30 year running average that is updated every ten years. The transition to the new "normal" period of 1981-2010 began in early 2013 (previous months used the 1971-2000 period). NRCS is also transitioning to the use of median rather than average to define normal. Please keep in mind that this transition will affect the data when presented as a percent of normal.*

March 2013 DROUGHT UPDATE

U.S. Drought Monitor

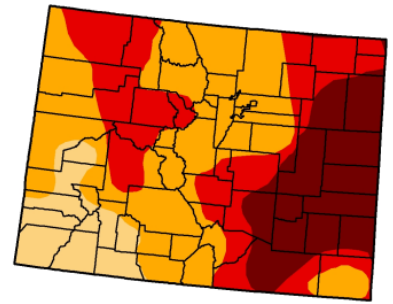
March 19, 2013
Valid 7 a.m. EST

Colorado

The US Drought Monitor illustrates current drought conditions across Colorado. Most of the state is experiencing severe to exceptional drought conditions. The eastern plains remain the driest region of the state.

Drought Conditions (Percent Area)

	None	D0-D4	D1-D4	D2-D4	D3-D4	D4
Current	0.00	100.00	100.00	88.97	48.06	21.22
Last Week (03/12/2013 map)	0.00	100.00	100.00	88.97	48.06	21.22
3 Months Ago (12/18/2012 map)	0.00	100.00	100.00	95.06	53.47	13.48
Start of Calendar Year (01/01/2013 map)	0.00	100.00	100.00	95.06	53.47	13.48
Start of Water Year (09/25/2012 map)	0.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	61.75	16.89
One Year Ago (03/13/2012 map)	28.97	71.03	42.60	8.30	0.21	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>

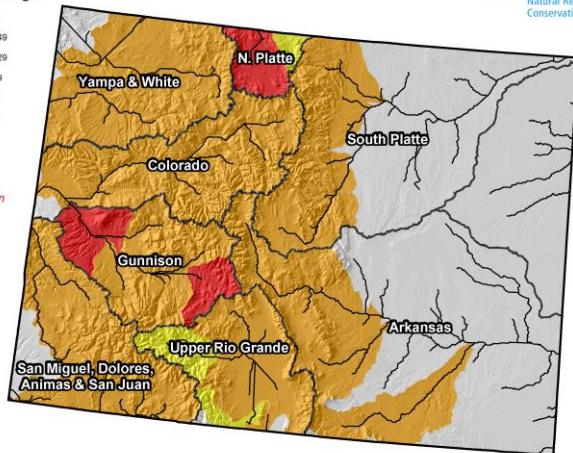


Released Thursday, March 21, 2013
National Drought Mitigation Center,

Colorado Streamflow Forecast Map



Percent of Average



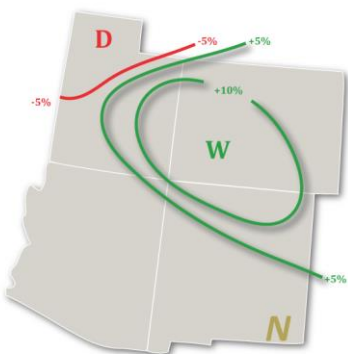
Provisional Data
Subject to Revision

Current as of March 1, 2013

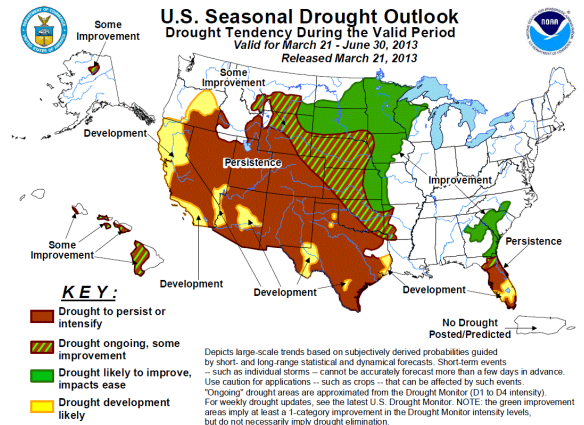
As of March 1st, statewide streamflow forecasts are well below average. This reflects both below average snowpack and reservoir storage statewide. The state is closely monitoring conditions and preparing to respond to potential impacts that can result from decreased streamflows.

Experimental PSD Precipitation Forecast Guidance

APR - JUN 2013 (Issued March 5, 2013)



The long term experimental forecast (left) is projecting above average precipitation during the April - June time period. However, the NOAA climate prediction center is forecasting that the drought will persist over much of the state through June (right).



NOTE: The next WATF meeting will be held April 18, 2013 at Colorado Parks and Wildlife Headquarters, additional information can be found at www.cwcb.state.co.us or by contacting Ben Wade at Ben.Wade@state.co.us