



March 2015 Drought Update

Water Availability Task Force Co- Chairs

Taryn Finnessey, CWCB

303.866.3441 ext. 3231

Taryn.Finnessey@state.co.us

Tracy Kosloff, DWR

303-866-3581 ext. 8211

Tracy.Kosloff@state.co.us

Activation 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 in Southern Colorado.

February was the 14th warmest on record and 221 daily temperature records were either tied or broken throughout the state. March has continued this pattern especially on the western slope. At least two communities, Denver and Colorado Springs have seen their earliest 80°F day on record (March 16). Late February and early March storms helped increase snowpack levels, but the remainder of the month, to date, has been warm and dry in many basins. El Nino conditions are expected to strengthen over the next few months favoring a wet spring for the southeastern portion of the state.

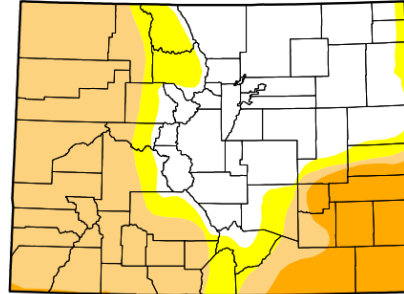
- Water year-to-date precipitation at mountain SNOTEL sites, as of March 16, is at 85% of normal. As a state, Colorado will need to experience 226% of normal precipitation in the next few weeks in order to reach the normal peak by April 1st. The South Platte basin continues to have the highest snowpack at 100% of normal. The Upper Rio Grande basin has the lowest at 73% of normal, a 12% increase from February.
- March 1st streamflow forecasts statewide range from 54-113% of average. The near average to above average forecasts are in the South Platte, Colorado, and upper portions of the Arkansas and Rio Grande basins. The lowest streamflow forecast is 54% of average in the upper Gunnison basin on Surface Creek at Cedaredge.
- Reservoir Storage statewide is at 105% of average as of March 1st a slight improvement from last month. Storage in the northern half of the state is in good shape heading into the spring. The southern half of the state has below average storage levels. The Upper Rio Grande has the lowest storage at 72% of normal.
- The Surface Water Supply Index (SWSI) is at near normal statewide. The lowest SWSI value in the state is due to low storage levels in Paonia Reservoir in the Gunnison basin. Currently, the reservoir is at 25% of average.
- Current El Nino conditions are expected to persist and may be bolstered by a positive PDO (Pacific Decadal Oscillation). El Nino typically favors more precipitation in Colorado during the growing season.
- Water providers in attendance reported their systems are in good shape, largely due to plentiful storage. Despite higher than average temperatures, providers have not seen a significant increase in customer demand.

NOTE: There will be a Joint Water Availability & Flood Task Force Meeting on April 15, 2015 at Colorado Parks and Wildlife Broadway Office; additional information can be found at www.cwcb.state.co.us or by contacting Ben Wade at Ben.Wade@state.co.us

March 2015 Drought Update

The US Drought Monitor illustrates current drought conditions across Colorado. Conditions on the western slope have declined from D0 (abnormally dry) to D1 (moderate drought). 11.5% of the state is experiencing D0 or abnormally dry conditions, while 39% is experiencing D1, moderate drought conditions. 12% of the state is currently classified as D2, severe drought conditions. 37% of the state remains drought free. Three months ago, 70% of the state was drought free.

U.S. Drought Monitor Colorado



March 17, 2015
(Released Thursday, Mar. 19, 2015)
Valid 7 a.m. EST

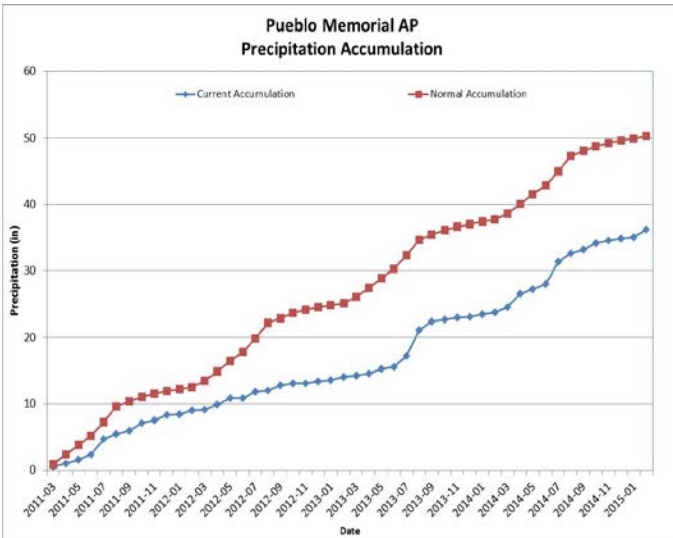
	Drought Conditions (Percent Area)					
	None	D0-D4	D1-D4	D2-D4	D3-D4	D4
Current	36.34	63.66	51.51	12.20	0.00	0.00
Last Week 3/10/2015	36.97	63.03	51.51	12.20	0.00	0.00
3 Months Ago 12/16/2014	69.87	30.13	21.26	12.26	0.00	0.00
Start of Calendar Year 1/1/2015	69.87	30.13	21.26	12.26	0.00	0.00
Start of Water Year 9/1/2014	66.96	31.04	22.94	13.82	2.31	0.00
One Year Ago 3/17/2014	38.90	61.10	21.62	13.69	5.58	1.47

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

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

Author:
Chris Fenimore
NCDC/NESDIS/NOAA

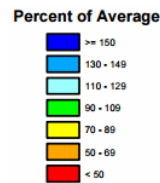
USDA
<http://droughtmonitor.unl.edu/>



The southeastern part of the state has been experiencing severe to exceptional drought conditions since 2011. The graph to the left shows the precipitation accumulation at the National Weather Service Coop Station in Pueblo. Since March 2011, the precipitation deficit has grown to over 14 inches. Annual precipitation at this location is 12 inches, meaning the existing deficit is more than a year's worth of precipitation. Recent seasonal forecasts have favored a wet spring for the southeastern part of the state.

Statewide, reservoir storage, as of March 1st is 105% of average, up from 90% of average this time last year. The northern portion of the state and the Gunnison basin have above average storage; while the southern portion of the state is largely below average. Most basins have more storage this year than they did this time last year.

Colorado Reservoir Storage Map



Provisional Data
Subject to Revision

