



November 2015 Drought Update

Water Availability Task Force Co- Chairs

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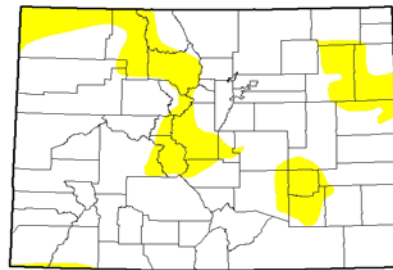
Following a very warm and dry start to the fall, November to-date has seen more seasonal temperatures west of the divide and increased precipitation on the west slope and northeastern plains. This has helped to alleviate abnormally dry conditions over parts of the state. Storage levels in some basins are at the highest levels since the turn of the 21st century and water providers have no immediate concerns going into the snow accumulation season.

- September ended water year (WY) 2015 well above average for temperature across Colorado, ranking as the warmest September on record. The start of WY 2016 began much the same with October ranking the 3rd warmest on record. Both months saw average temperatures more than 5⁰F above the long term monthly average, setting the state up to see the warmest three month September/October/ November period on record.
- Overall precipitation during the October 2014- September 2015 water year was above average and the wettest water year since WY1999. Evapotranspiration rates were also some of the lowest recorded, since record keeping began 23 years ago.
- Statewide water year-to-date precipitation is near average across most of the state. Recent storms resulted in increases in many basins including the basins of the southwest, Upper Rio Grande, Gunnison, Upper Colorado and South Platte which are all above average for the water year to-date at 140, 105, 113, 110 and 121 percent of average, respectively.
- Reservoir Storage statewide is at 109 percent of average as of November 1st. The Arkansas basin has the highest storage levels in the state at 132 percent of average; this is the highest reservoir levels have been in the Arkansas in more than 15 years.
- The Upper Rio Grande has the lowest storage levels at 87percent of average; this is also the only basin with below average storage. However, the Rio Grande levels are 28 percent greater now than this time last year and the highest they have been since 2009.
- The Surface Water Supply Index (SWSI) is highly variable across the state with sub-basins ranging from extremely dry to extremely wet. At this time of year the index reflects reservoir storage, which is largely above normal statewide, streamflow forecasts will be incorporated into the index beginning in January.
- El Niño conditions remain strong, and are projected to continue into early spring. Strong events do not favor increased precipitation during the winter months in the central and northern mountains of Colorado, as storm tracks tend to move in a more southerly pattern. However, the likelihood of good spring snowfall in this region is better, especially along the Front Range. The best combination would be for the El Niño to weaken over the winter, and then come back strong in spring.

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The US Drought Monitor illustrates current drought conditions across Colorado. A warm and dry early fall introduced some areas of abnormally dry conditions across the state. The WATF will continue to closely monitor conditions throughout the winter months when precipitation deficits can be quickly overcome with a few large storms. .

U.S. Drought Monitor Colorado



November 17, 2015
(Released Thursday, Nov. 19, 2015)
Valid 7 a.m. EST

	Drought Conditions (Percent Area)					
	None	D0-D1	D1-D2	D2-D3	D3-D4	D4
Current	82.15	17.85	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Last Week	79.91	20.09	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
3 Months Ago	87.96	2.04	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Start of Calendar Year	89.87	30.13	21.26	12.26	0.00	0.00
Start of Water Year	71.49	28.51	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
One Year Ago	70.00	30.00	21.26	12.26	0.00	0.00

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

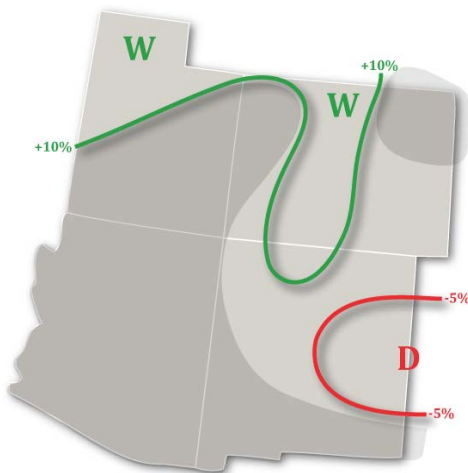
The Drought Monitor focuses on broad-scale conditions. Local conditions may vary. See accompanying text summary for forecast statements.

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

Experimental PSD Precipitation Forecast Guidance

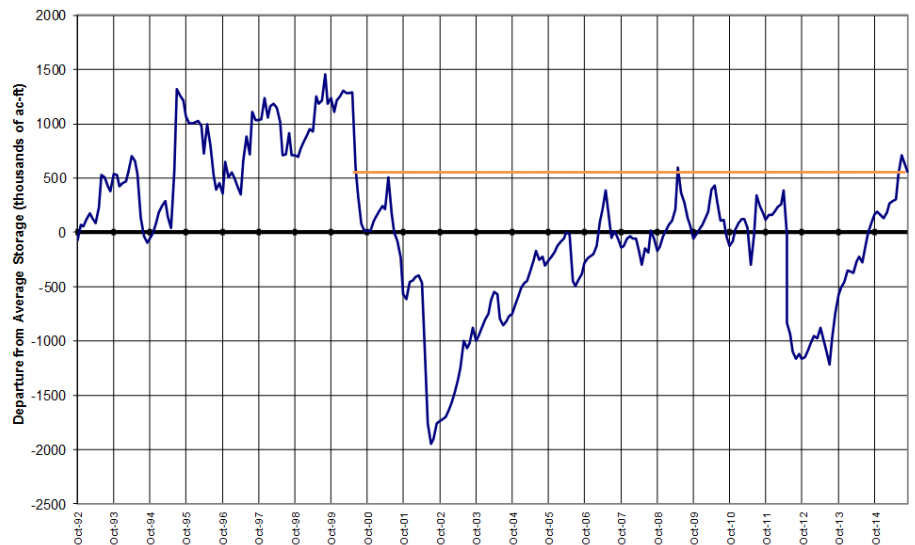
JAN – MAR 2016 (Issued November 16, 2015) – Skill Masked



The long term experimental forecast for January through March indicates wetter than average conditions across the central mountains, this is largely due to expectations for above average snowfall in March. Historically, Colorado's largest snowstorms along the Front Range have occurred during the spring months of El Niño years.

The graph to the right shows a time series of statewide reservoir storage levels since 1992. Recently, statewide reservoir storage has reached the highest levels seen since the turn of the century. A warm, dry fall resulted in a slight decline, but conditions remain well above average.

COLORADO STATEWIDE
Reservoir Storage
Departure from Average



NOTE: The next Water Availability Task Force Meeting is on January 20, 2016 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