



February 2016 Drought Update

Water Availability Task Force Co- Chairs

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Statewide precipitation, as of February 16, is at 106% of average. January brought beneficial storms to the state but so far in February, Colorado has only experienced 77% of average precipitation. This recent lull in precipitation is not unusual at this time of the year. The spring months will be the key to determine whether or not the state has a good water year. National forecasts predict a wet spring for Colorado but also suggest a warm next few months. The February 16 US Drought Monitor map for shows 92% of Colorado is drought free and the remaining 8% of the state is experiencing D0 or abnormally dry conditions.

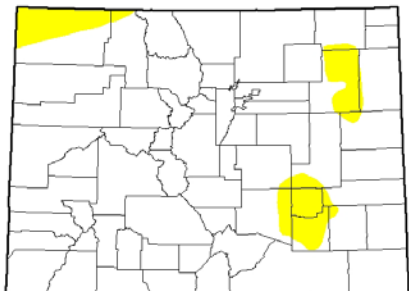
- January was the 42nd warmest on record in Colorado with the Eastern Plains being the one region that has been above average temperature statewide. The temperature to date in February remains average to slightly above average for the east side of the Continental Divide while most of the western half of the state is below average. There are wildfire concerns in the southeastern corner of the state.
- Statewide SNOTEL water year-to-date precipitation is 106% of normal. Statewide, January precipitation was 98% of normal and half way through February, precipitation is 77% of normal. The Southwest basins have the highest snowpack percent of median at 113%. The lowest snowpack in the state is in the Yampa/White & North Platte basins which are slightly below normal at 99% & 97% respectively.
- The state experienced at least six spring storms in 2015 which eliminated drought conditions across the state. The state will need three to four storms this spring, especially in the South Platte & Arkansas basins, to keep drought conditions from reappearing this summer and beyond.
- Reservoir storage statewide remains above normal at 110% which is the same as January. The Arkansas basin has the highest storage levels in the state; the Upper Rio Grande has the lowest storage levels, just slightly below normal. However, the Rio Grande levels have risen slightly since the beginning of the water year in October 2015. Water providers in attendance reported their respective systems are in decent shape at this time.
- The Surface Water Supply Index (SWSI) as of February 17 is near or above average across the majority of the state, with the southern half of the state faring better than the northern half. The lowest SWSI value, -1.41 in the South Platte Basin, is due to the emptying of Antero Reservoir. At this time of year the index reflects reservoir storage and streamflow forecasts.
- Streamflow forecasts are normal to above normal in most basins. Forecasts in the Yampa/White ranged from a maximum of 102% on the North Platte River near Northgate & the Laramie River near Woods to a low of 80% on the Little Snake River near Dixon. The highest streamflow forecasts are in the Southwest basins ranging from 108%-122%.

NOTE: There will be a Joint Water Availability & Flood Task Force Meeting on March 24, 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

February 2016 Drought Update

U.S. Drought Monitor Colorado

February 16, 2016
(Released Thursday, Feb. 18, 2016)
Valid 7 a.m. EST



	Drought Conditions (Percent Area)					
	D0-D4	D1-D4	D2-D4	D3-D4	D4	D4
Current	92.65	7.35	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Last Week 2/9/2016	92.65	7.35	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
3 Months Ago 10/15/2015	92.15	17.85	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Start of Calendar Year 1/1/2016	90.02	9.98	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Start of Water Year 10/1/2015	71.49	28.51	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
One Year Ago 2/17/2015	36.97	63.03	51.48	12.20	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.

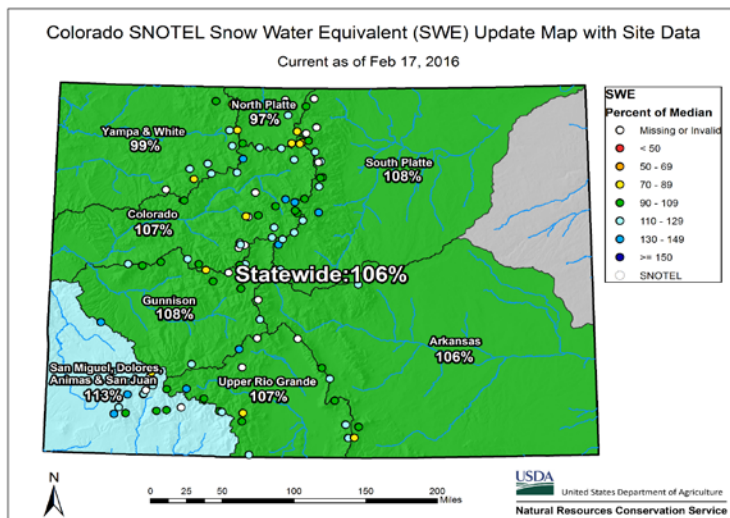
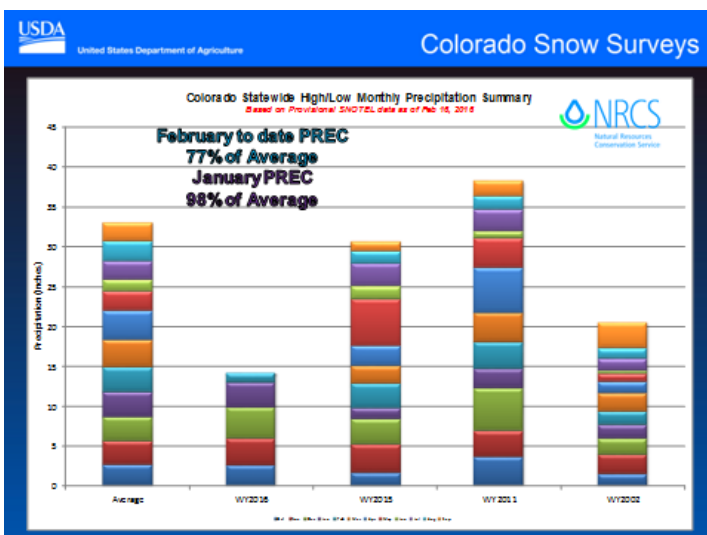
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<http://droughtmonitor.unl.edu/>

The US Drought Monitor illustrates current drought conditions across Colorado. A few areas that were categorized as D0, abnormally dry, in the center of the state as well as a portion of eastern Colorado along the Kansas border have disappeared for now. Currently, 92% of Colorado is drought free. At this time in 2015, only 37% of Colorado was not experiencing any drought conditions.

The bar graph to the right is the statewide precipitation summary as of February 16. All basins in the state except for the South Platte basin recorded from 60%-85% of average precipitation. The Gunnison Basin had the lowest to date at 60% of average. The South Platte had 100% of average. The recent lull in precipitation is not unusual for this time of the water year.



The map to the left shows snow water equivalent (SWE) as of February 17, statewide. SWE is a common snowpack measurement. It is the amount of water contained within the snowpack. It can be thought of as the depth of water that would theoretically result if you melted the entire snowpack instantaneously.