



June 2018 Drought Update

Water Availability Task Force Co- Chairs

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*In response to persistent and prolonged drought conditions throughout the southern half of the state and along the western border, **the Governor activated the Colorado Drought Mitigation and Response Plan for the agricultural sector on May 2, 2018**, additional information can be found [HERE](#).*

The month of May was, on average, the second warmest on record and the warmest since 1934. While daytime highs were above normal, night time highs were also well above normal, which may have contributed to early snowmelt across much of Colorado. June has continued to see well above average temperatures with most of the state experiencing temperatures 4-10 degrees above normal. Precipitation for both May and June to-date has largely been well below average statewide, these conditions contribute to fire danger.

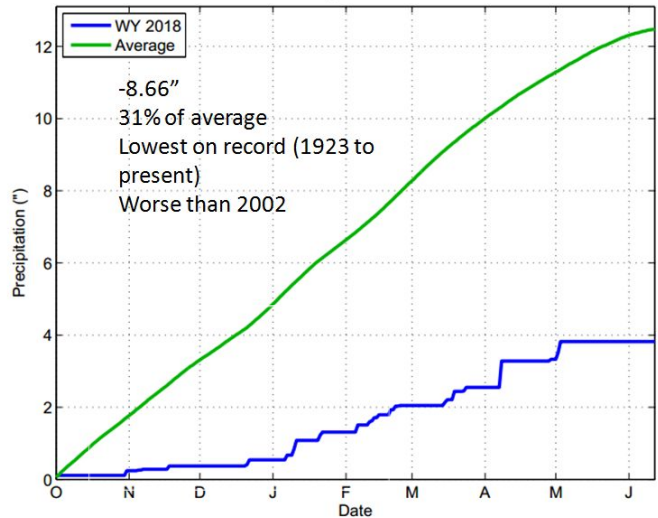
- SNOTEL sites from the Grand Mesa to Mesa Verde National Park have broken low records for both peak snow accumulation as well as water-year to date precipitation.
- Water demand is increasing; and reservoir storage in the Southwest basins of the San Miguel, Dolores, Animas & San Juan, Gunnison and Rio Grande have seen significant decreases in reservoir storage in recent months. The reservoir storage for the Southwest basins of the San Miguel, Dolores, Animas & San Juan has dropped from 91 percent of normal storage last month to 75 this month and has the lowest storage levels in the state.
- Isolated cattle sell off and prevented planting of some acreage has been reported. High hay prices make purchasing adequate supplies to maintain livestock a challenge. There are some reports of cattle being moved to alternative grazing areas, including out of state, and we anticipate additional cattle sell off. Unless conditions improve additional prevented and failed crop acres are likely.
- Windy, dry conditions have continued to fuel fires in June leading to numerous large wildfires, including the 416 Fire near Durango that is now the 5th largest fire in Colorado history. Weather forecasts indicate the potential for large scale moisture statewide in the coming week and in particular in southwest Colorado. While this will help alleviate drought and fire potential, it also introduces the potential for floods near burn scars.
- As of June 12, exceptional drought, D4, continues to affect southwest Colorado and the Sangre de Cristo mountains, covering eight percent of the state. Extreme drought, D3, covers 27 percent of the state; severe drought 16 percent and 16 percent is classified as moderate drought. An additional 12 percent of the state is currently experiencing abnormally dry conditions (see image on reverse side).
- Reservoir storage statewide is at 106 percent of normal. The Arkansas basin is reporting the highest average storage at 127 percent. Front Range water providers are seeing an increase in demand but mainly draw water resources from areas of the state that received near normal winter precipitation, and therefore have adequate supplies and are not anticipating any water use restrictions outside normal operations.
- The Surface Water Supply Index (SWSI) values have declined slightly in June, with most of the western slope classified as extremely dry. These values are largely driven by well below average streamflow forecasts. Low streamflows are also a contributing factor to aquatic wildlife impacts that have been reported in isolated areas.

NOTE: The next Water Availability Task Force Meeting will be held on July 24, 2018 in Durango, Colorado; Additional information can be found at www.cwcb.state.co.us or by contacting Ben Wade at Ben.Wade@state.co.us

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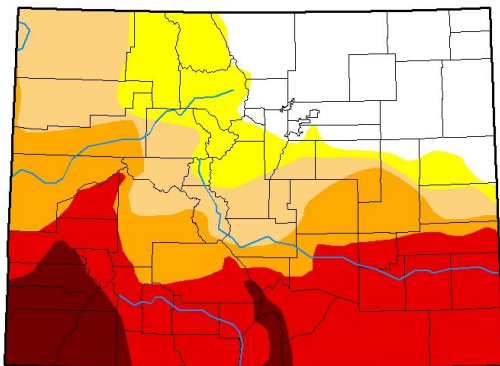
Colorado has been dry since the start of the water year on October 1, 2017 with the southern half of the state significantly drier than the north. The combined basins of the southwest including the San Miguel, Dolores, Animas and San Juan have only received 31 percent of average precipitation and currently have a deficit of nearly nine inches since October, this is worse than what this region experienced in 2002.

Mesa Verde Precipitation Water Year 2018



U.S. Drought Monitor Colorado

June 12, 2018
(Released Thursday, Jun. 14, 2018)
Valid 8 a.m. EDT



Intensity:

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

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

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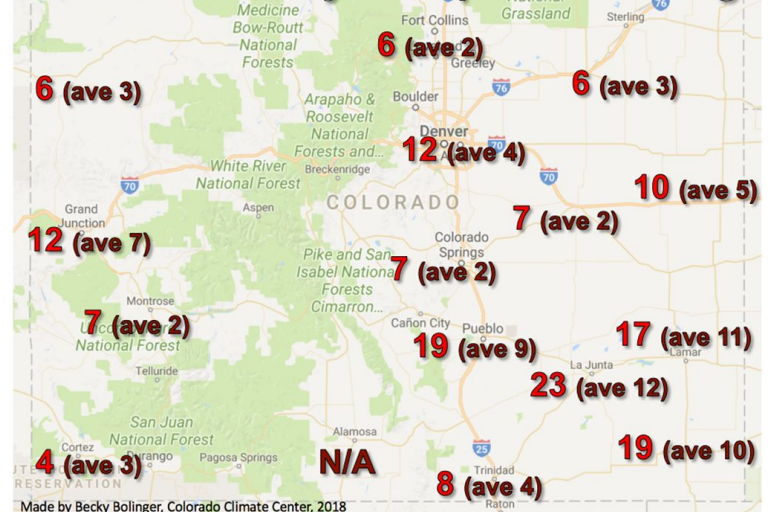


<http://droughtmonitor.unl.edu/>

Southern Colorado remains in exceptional drought conditions, with D4 now present in the Southwest and the Sangre de Cristo mountains. Northwest Colorado is being closely monitored for worsening conditions.

Nearly all regions of the state have seen an above average number of 90 degree days so far this calendar year, with La Junta having already had 23 days with temperatures exceeding 90 degrees. Even areas of the state that have seen good precipitation, like Denver, and Fort Collins have seen three times the average 90 degree days so far this year.

Number of 90°-Days Compared to Average



Made by Becky Bollinger, Colorado Climate Center, 2018