



# July 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](#).*

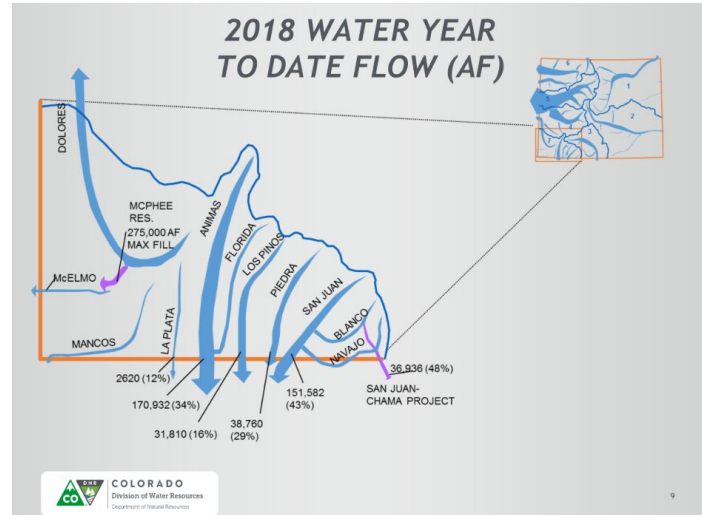
October through June of this year has been the third warmest and the third driest October through June period in the 123 year record, with no single month reporting below average temperatures. Southwestern Colorado and other west slope locations have seen record warmth since last fall. June and July to-date have both been three to five degrees above average temperatures, exacerbating fire danger. Precipitation for June was 47 percent of average statewide, and while July to-date has seen beneficial monsoon moisture in southern Colorado, statewide July to-date precipitation is 85 percent of average as of July 23. This is in part due to dry conditions in northwestern Colorado, where drought conditions have worsened more than other areas over the last two months.

- Despite some good precipitation in June and beneficial monsoon moisture in July, southwestern Colorado is still facing a long term precipitation deficit, with SNOTEL water year to-date precipitation totals of just 49 percent of average.
- 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. The reservoir storage for the Southwest basins of the San Miguel, Dolores, Animas & San Juan has dropped 29 percent in two months while the Rio Grande has seen an 36 percent drop over the same time period.
- The Yampa/White basin had the second lowest percent of normal precipitation for June & July and would need 278 percent of normal precipitation to reach average conditions. This large of a deficit has not been overcome throughout the 30 year SNOTEL period of record. The areas around the Flat Top Wilderness are at or near record low precipitation, further illustrating the northward expansion of extreme drought conditions.
- Continued cattle sell off as well as failed and prevented planting has been reported. To-date almost 295K acres were too dry to plant while and additional 211K acres that were planted have failed crops.
- As of July 24, exceptional drought, D4, continues to affect southern Colorado covering ten percent of the state. Extreme drought, D3, covers 30 percent of the state; severe drought 21 percent and 16 percent is classified as moderate drought. An additional six percent of the state is currently experiencing abnormally dry conditions (see image on reverse side).
- Some small water systems are being impacted by both continued dry conditions resulting in limited supply and ash washes from burn scars within their watersheds. These conditions are also affecting aquatic ecosystems and fish kills have been reported.
- Long term forecasts indicate an increased likelihood of above average temperatures for August through October statewide. Southwestern Colorado is forecast to continue to benefit from additional monsoon moisture and has an increased likelihood of above average precipitation August through October.
- An EL Nino watch has been issued, meaning there is a greater than 70 percent chance of an El Nino developing, which could bring an increased chance of wet extremes for September through November in Colorado.

**NOTE: The next Water Availability Task Force Meeting will be held on August 22, 2018 at Colorado Parks and Wildlife; Additional information can be found at [www.cwcb.state.co.us](http://www.cwcb.state.co.us) or by contacting Ben Wade at [Ben.Wade@state.co.us](mailto:Ben.Wade@state.co.us)**

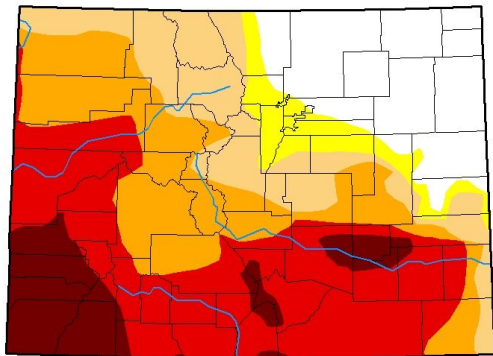
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Southwestern Colorado has been particularly impacted by this drought with significantly reduced river flows throughout the water year.



## U.S. Drought Monitor Colorado

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

Southern Colorado remains in exceptional drought conditions, with D4 now present in the Southwest, Rio Grande and Arkansas River basins. Northwest Colorado has seen a two level degradation over the last two months.

The Colorado Surface Water Supply Index (SWSI) continues to show extremely dry conditions over the majority of the state. This index reflects both low stream flows and reservoir storage.

