



September 2018 Drought Update

Water Availability Task Force Co- Chairs

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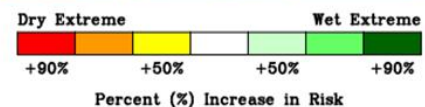
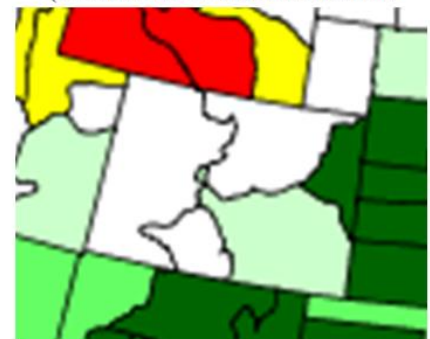
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*In response to persistent and prolonged drought conditions throughout the southern half of the state and along the western border, **the Governor activated the Colorado Drought Mitigation and Response Plan for the agricultural sector on May 2, 2018**,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

With only three weeks left in the 2018 water year, October through August of this year has been the third warmest and the fourth driest October through August period in the 123 year record. Warm and dry conditions continued to persist in Western Colorado in August and early September.

- SNOTEL water year to-date precipitation statewide is 68 percent of average, but ranges from 49 percent of average in the Southwest basins to 86 percent of average in the South Platte River Basin. The Rio Grande is at 54 percent of average; while the Gunnison is at 58 percent. The Arkansas is faring slightly better at 63 percent, while the northern basins of the Colorado and Yampa- White are at 76 and 75 percent of average, respectively.
- High temperatures, and below average precipitation have led to increasing water demand across much of the state. Reservoir storage, statewide is at 82 percent of normal, with the Arkansas, Colorado, Yampa-White, and South Platte all above 90% of average for the end of August, despite recent declines. Storage in the Upper Rio Grande basin is 88% of normal. The Southwest basins of the San Miguel, Dolores, Animas & San Juan, and Gunnison have seen significant decreases in reservoir storage and are now at 48 and 59 percent of normal, respectively.
- Agriculture has been heavily impacted this growing season by both high temperatures, drought, and hail. Hay prices are higher than in the last few years and producers are concerned about finding enough feed for cattle resulting in continued sell off. The Governor is likely to issue an executive order relaxing restrictions on trucks carrying hay into Colorado.
- Long term forecasts indicate an increased likelihood of above average temperatures for September through November. Southwestern Colorado is forecast to continue to benefit from additional monsoon moisture and has an increased likelihood of above average precipitation into Fall.
- ENSO-neutral conditions are likely to continue through September with El Niño conditions likely to develop in the fall. El Niño could bring an increased chance of wet extremes for southeastern Colorado this winter as shown in the figure.

December – February Precipitation During El Nino
Colorado Increased Risk of Wet or Dry Extremes
(modified from NOAA/ESRL/PSD)

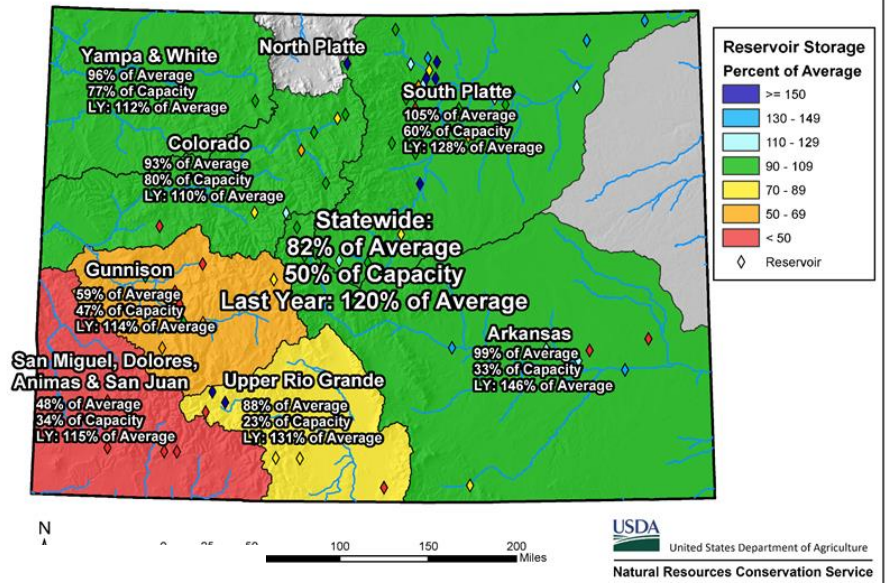


NOTE: The next Water Availability Task Force Meeting will be held on November 13, 2018 at Colorado Parks and Wildlife; Additional information can be found at www.cwcb.state.co.us or by contacting Ben Wade at Ben.Wade@state.co.us

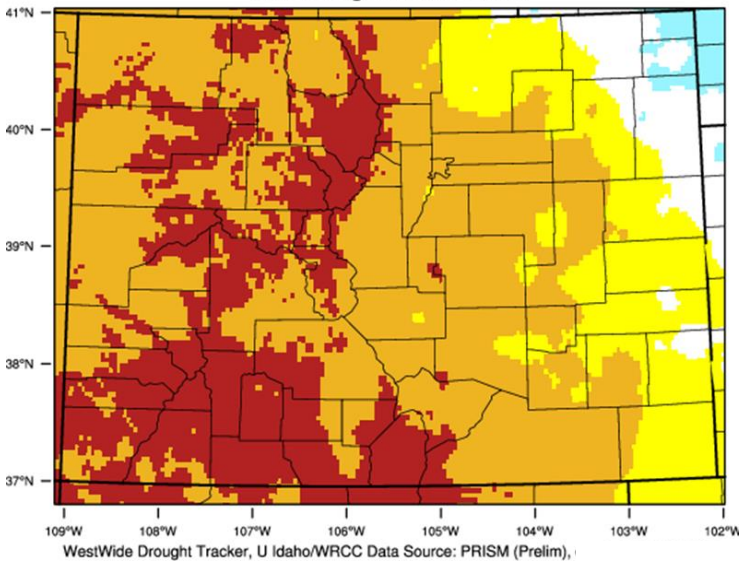
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Reservoir storage remains strong, 82% of average for the end of August statewide. Water users with access to storage, especially municipal water suppliers, have been able to avoid major restrictions on water use operations by relying on storage.

End of August 2018



Colorado - Mean Temperature
October-August 2018 Percentile



Western Colorado has seen above normal and record warm temperatures for the water year to date.

4th driest in 123-year record (behind WY 2002, WY 1934, WY 2012), -4.55" below the 16.67" average

Colorado, Precipitation, October-August

