January 2019 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, ***Governor Hickenlooper activated the Colorado Drought Mitigation and Response Plan for the agricultural sector on May 2, 2018****, additional counties in northwest Colorado were added in September and activation remains in effect; information can be found HERE.*

While December saw warm temperatures and below average snow accumulation across much of the state, January has brought widespread precipitation statewide, boosting snowpack in some regions of the State hardest hit by drought.. Water providers looking ahead to the 2019 demand season are relieved by recent precipitation gains but are cautiously optimistic about what the year will hold.

- As of January 22nd, exceptional drought, D4, continues to affect southern Colorado covering 2.8 percent of the state, extreme drought, D3, covers 19 percent of the state; severe drought 20 percent and 26 percent is classified as moderate drought. An additional 16 percent of the state is currently experiencing abnormally dry conditions.

- Forecasters expect a weak El Niño to form and persist through Spring of 2019, however given the timing it is unclear the impact that this weak event will have the remainder of the winter months.

- SNOTEL water year to-date precipitation statewide is 107 percent of average, but ranges from 87 percent of average in the Upper Rio Grande basins to 130 percent of average in the Arkansas River Basin. The Southwest basins are the only other area below normal at 98 percent while the Yampa- White, Gunnison, South Platte, Colorado, North Platte are all near normal at 109,112,115,114 and 105 percent respectively.

- Reservoir storage, statewide is at 81 percent of normal, with the Arkansas, South Platte, Colorado, and Yampa-White, all above 90 percent of average at the start of the calendar year. Storage in the Upper Rio Grande basin is 80 percent of normal. The Southwest basins of the San Miguel, Dolores, Animas & San Juan, and Gunnison are now at 56 and 58 percent of normal, respectively. Individual reservoir storage levels are highly variable statewide, some reservoirs have strong storage while storage in other reservoirs is at near record low levels for this time of year.

- Long term forecasts indicate an increased likelihood of above average temperatures statewide February through April and an increased likelihood of above average precipitation over the same time period.

NOTE: The next Water Availability Task Force Meeting will be held on February 19, 2019 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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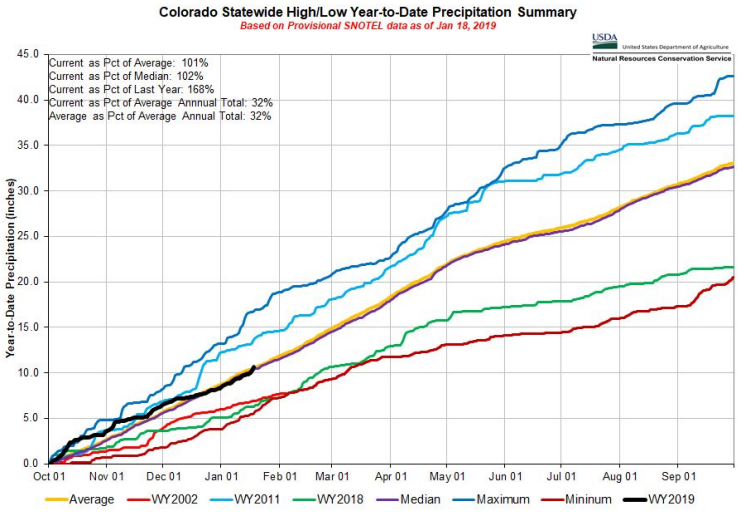
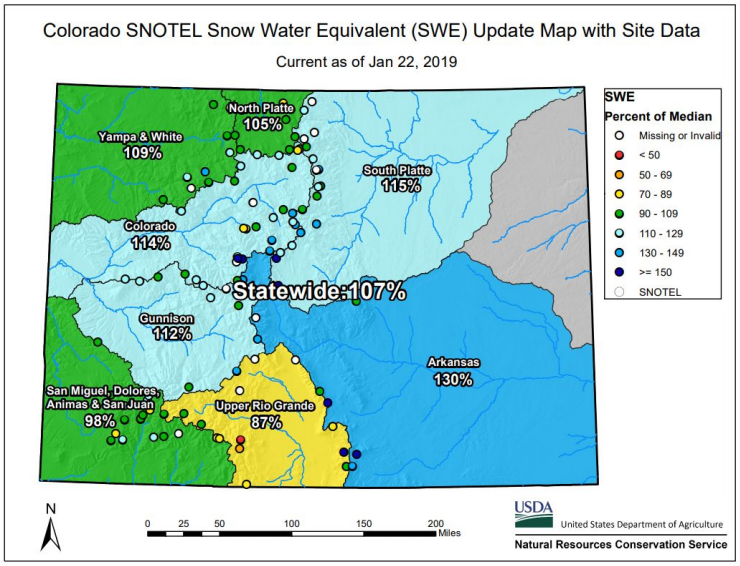
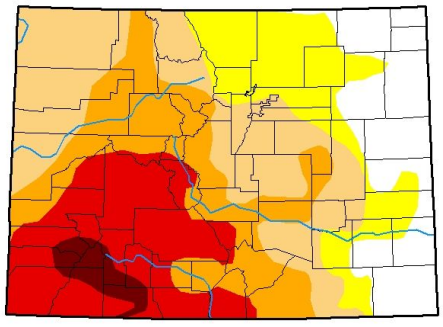
Recent precipitation has boosted statewide average to near normal conditions, however, drought recovery will require more than normal snow accumulation in the most heavily impacted areas.





Recent storms have boosted statewide snowpack to near normal conditions.

Despite recent precipitation, Western Colorado is still dealing with severe, extreme and exceptional drought. Continued above average snow accumulation may help to alleviate these conditions as the winter progress and will be closely monitored.



U.S. Drought Monitor

Colorado

January 22, 2019

(Released Thursday, Jan. 24, 2019)

Valid 7 a.m. EST

Drought Conditions (Percent Area)

	None	D0	D1	D2	D3	D4
Current	15.91	15.60	26.08	20.36	19.26	2.79
Last Week 01-15-2019	15.91	15.60	15.49	27.65	14.84	10.51
3 Months Ago 10-23-2018	16.64	15.53	8.61	20.14	25.45	13.64
Start of Calendar Year 01-01-2019	17.94	15.80	11.35	27.80	15.88	11.22
Start of Water Year 09-25-2018	14.19	13.51	7.89	15.94	32.26	16.21
One Year Ago 01-23-2018	0.59	23.51	46.69	29.21	0.00	0.00

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.

Author:

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National Drought Mitigation Center

http://droughtmonitor.unl.edu/