



COLORADO

Department of
Natural Resources

June 2021 Drought Update

The June Water Availability Task Force (WATF) meeting, including past recordings and supporting presentations, can be found at cwcb.colorado.gov/water-availability-flood-task-forces. To receive updates on meetings, subscribe via the [public notice portal](#).

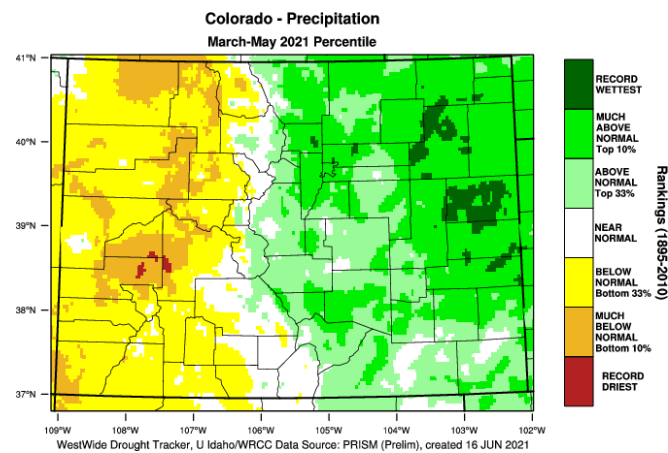
If we consider spring 2021 temperature averages for the state as a whole, March, April, and May rank as moderate averages within the 127 year record. However, distributed data products quickly reveal stark contrasts in conditions east and west of the Continental Divide. Temperatures for the western slope were above normal March to May 2021 (in the top 33 percentile) while eastern Colorado spring temperatures ranked in the middle and bottom 33% of the historical records. Similarly, while May ranked as the 11th wettest for the state on record, and the wettest May since 2015, precipitation was heavily concentrated east of the Divide and San Luis Valley. Some parts of Washington and Kit Carson county recorded their *record wettest* spring ever (March - May). In contrast, areas in Montrose, Delta and Gunnison counties registered their *record driest* spring with large regions in the bottom 10% of records.

This east-west temperature and precipitation contrast mirrors the status of current drought conditions across the state. Throughout spring, the [U.S. Drought Monitor](#) recorded gradual class improvements east of the divide and gradual degradations on the west slope. The June 29th monitor records 54% of the state free from active drought conditions, while 18% remains in exceptional (D4) conditions; 12% in extreme (D3); 6% in severe (D2) drought; 5% in moderate (D1); and 4% in abnormally dry (D0) areas. D4 entered western Colorado Sept. 29, 2020, so June 29th marks 39 consecutive weeks of D4 in western Colorado.

The [Standardized Precipitation Index](#) (SPI) values over varying timescales (30 days to 24 months) reveal varying chapters in the 2020-2021 drought story. The 30- and 90-day maps highlight a wet spring for the east and the 12- and 24-month maps reveal the consistent intensity of drought for the west. The satellite-derived [VegDri Index](#) similarly highlights severe drought stress for vegetation across the west.

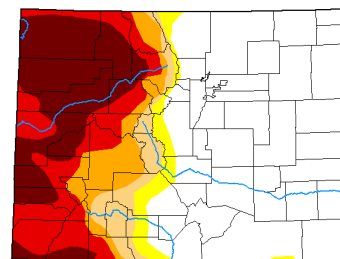
The NOAA Climate Prediction Center [three month outlook](#) continues to indicate increased chances of above normal temperatures and below normal precipitation in the upcoming months. These forecasts are consistent with long-term temperature trends, while the monsoon season remains uncertain.

Statewide [reservoir storage](#) registered at 84% of average and 55% of total capacity at the end May. Last year at this time reservoirs sat at 100% of average. Most of the state observed earlier than normal snowmelt and substantially lower streamflow forecasts than would typically be expected with a similar snowpack. The entire Colorado and Gunnison basins, and most of the Yampa in-state bounds show [Surface Water Supply Indices](#) of -3.11 or less.



U.S. Drought Monitor Colorado

June 29, 2021
(Released Thursday, Jul. 1, 2021)
Valid 8 a.m. EDT



	Drought Conditions (Percent Area)				
	None	D0-D1	D2-D3	D3-D4	D4
Current	54.48	40.52	41.62	36.37	29.95
Last Week (6/22/2021)	54.41	40.59	41.62	36.37	30.35
3 Months Ago (03/29/2021)	0.00	100.00	92.31	61.69	32.13
Start of Calendar Year (12/31/2020)	0.00	100.00	100.00	93.73	75.17
Start of Water Year (09/29/2020)	0.00	100.00	99.29	89.35	52.98
One Year Ago (6/30/2020)	15.67	84.33	67.96	56.23	34.07

Intensity

- None
- 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. For more information on the Drought Monitor, go to <https://droughtmonitor.unl.edu/about.aspx>

Author:
Deborah Balthe
National Drought Mitigation Center



Next Water Availability Task Force Meeting: JULY 27, 2021 9:30 AM

Co-Chairs: Megan Holcomb, CWCB & Tracy Kosloff, DWR
Additional info at cwcb.colorado.gov/water-availability-flood-task-forces

