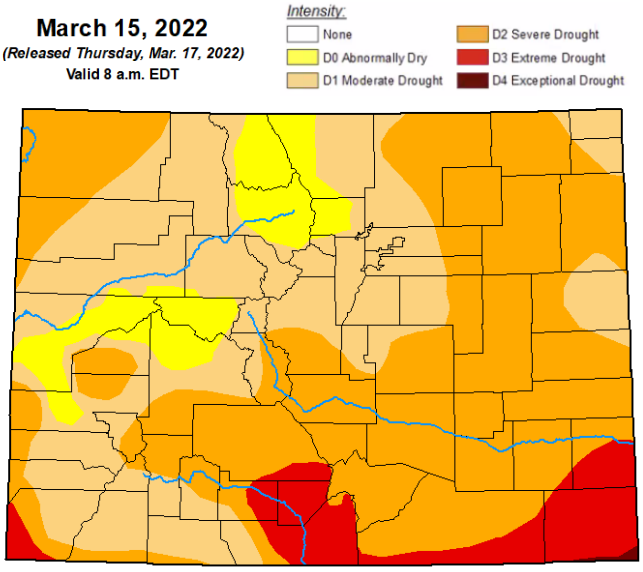
COLORADO
Department of Natural Resources

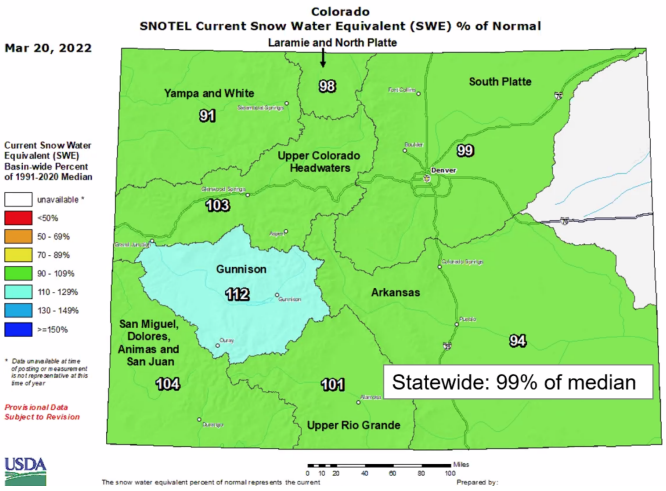
March 2022 Drought Update

DROUGHT // Nearly 55% of the contiguous U.S. continues to experience drought conditions. Moderate to exceptional drought remains a prevalent issue statewide, as we continue a 97-week streak for Colorado, logging D3 or D4 drought somewhere in our state. The March 15th US Drought Monitor identifies less than 1% of Colorado in exceptional (D4) conditions; 8% in remains in extreme drought (D3); 49% in severe drought (D2); 35% moderate (D1); and 8% in abnormally dry (D0) conditions. Over the last year (52 week change) the U.S. Drought Monitor shows 1-4 class improvements in severity for much of the western slope, with the biggest improvements in the Yampa and Colorado basins. In the last 3 months, drought severity has improved primarily on the front range and northeast plains.



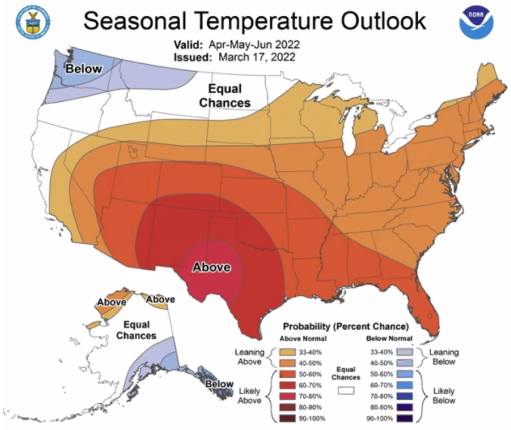
SOIL MOISTURE // Soil moisture deficit remains of high concern and likely to impact streamflows as we have seen in the last two water years. Shallow soil moisture measurements are improving, but severe deficits remain in deep soil moisture especially on the eastern plains and parts of the San Luis Valley.

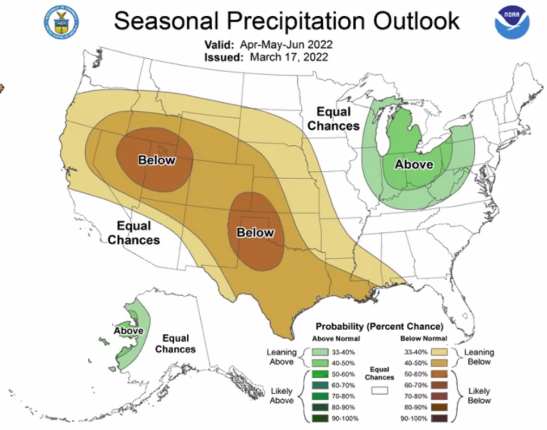
SNOWPACK // Snow totals remain near or slightly below normal around the state after an exceptionally snowy December was followed by a lackluster January and a few late February storms. Current statewide snowpack (snow water equivalent) is at 99% of median as of March 20th (see SNOTEL map).



STORAGE // Statewide reservoir storage sits at 75% of normal for this time of year. In March 2020, state reservoirs were at 107% of normal. In March 2021, reservoirs were 85% of normal. There is a large amount of variation in site-specific storage across the state with the lowest values being in southwest Colorado and the highest in the South Platte. See new NRCS reservoir charts.

OUTLOOK // The NOAA Climate Prediction Center's three month outlook for the U.S. indicates high confidence in above average temperatures and drier than average conditions for spring and summer. La Niña patterns persist and, while expected to weaken May-July, second season La Niña historically influences lower than normal spring precipitation.





Next Water Availability Task Force Meeting: APRIL 19, 2022 9:30am
Co-Chairs: Megan Holcomb, CWCB & Tracy Kosloff, DWR
Additional info at cwcb.colorado.gov/water-availability-flood-task-forces