



COLORADO

Department of
Natural Resources

March 28, 2023

Water Availability Summary - WY 2023

Observed temperature

Colorado is experiencing the coolest four month start to a water year since 2010. March will be the 5th cooler-than-average month in a row, and it has delivered snowpack in a big way for the mountains, especially the San Juans. Temperatures have been especially cold for March in western Colorado.

Observed precipitation and drought conditions

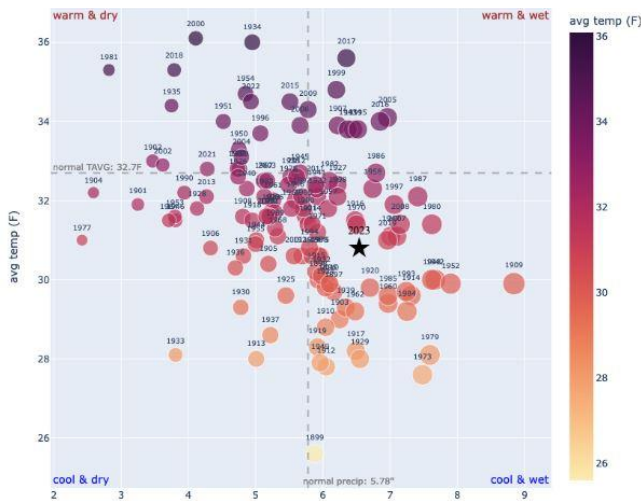
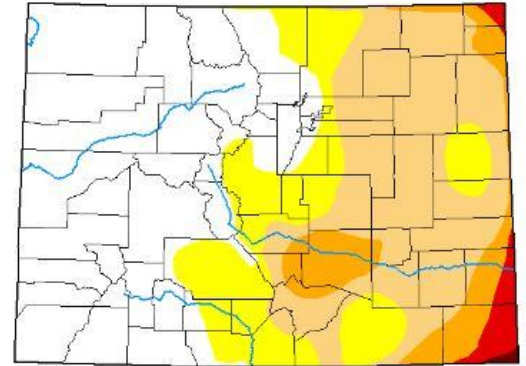
Colorado is experiencing the wettest start to a water year since 2016. However, Southeastern Colorado remains dry, and March has generally been dry east of the divide so far (with some exceptions). Water year to date precipitation in the mountains is 112% of median. On March 17, 2023 Secretary of Agriculture, Tom Vilsack, designated 23 Colorado counties as primary natural disaster areas due to the recent drought. This type of Secretarial disaster designation occurs when drought intensity value (as measured by the US Drought Monitor) during the growing season of: D2 Drought-Severe for 8 or more consecutive weeks or D3 Drought-Extreme or D4 Drought-Exceptional.

Forecasted streamflows

Within western Colorado, drought concerns have largely faded for now, with streams and reservoirs likely to return to a near-normal range, though of course big problems still persist downstream. March 1st Streamflow Forecasts were for above normal seasonal volumes in all major basins except the Arkansas and South Platte. Forecasts within these basins are also highly variable. Be on the lookout for updated water supply outlook forecasts because there are likely to be changes.

U.S. Drought Monitor March 21, 2023

Colorado



Snowpack and reservoir storage

Statewide snowpack is 141% of normal and the statewide snow water equivalent is 124% of peak with roughly two and a half weeks left in the primary accumulation season. Snowpack is well above normal across most of Colorado, with the Southwest having highest snowpack totals. All major basins are holding above normal snowpack with the exception of the Arkansas Basin. The combined basins of Southwest Colorado have reached record snowpack for this time of year. Statewide reservoir storage remains highly variable across Colorado with the Gunnison and combined Southwest Basins holding substantially less water than the rest of the state. These conditions are also a reflection of hydrological conditions in the Gunnison and combined Southwest Basin over the last few years, as well as releases from Blue Mesa. The basins that are holding the lowest reservoir

storage also have the most plentiful snowpack which is encouraging for replenishing storage volumes.

Seasonal outlook

La Niña has ended, with neutral conditions expected through spring and the possibility of El Niño by summer/fall (though that remains uncertain). Confidence in the outlook for the rest of spring and summer is uncertain. The summer outlook leans toward warmer than normal, in line with recent trends.

Next Water Availability Task Force Meeting: April 20, 9:30am

Co-Chairs: Kathryn Weismiller, CWCB & Tracy Kosloff, DWR

Additional info at cwc.colorado.gov/water-availability-flood-task-forces

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