



COLORADO

Department of
Natural Resources

May 25, 2023

Water Availability Summary - WY 2023

Observed temperature

Through the end of April, this water year has been the coldest since 1984 and the 31st coldest on record. Each of the last six months has been colder than average. While April was relatively cool and dry, May temperatures have climbed and have slightly been higher than average with pockets of significantly warmer than average temperatures.

Observed precipitation and drought conditions

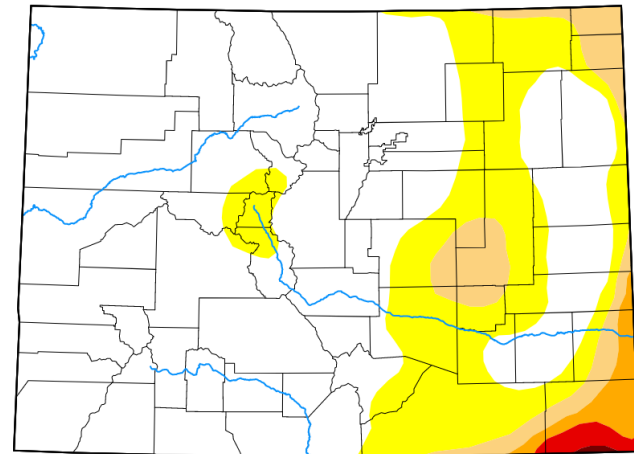
May is often a wet month for the eastern part of the state, but this year has been especially noteworthy. With just under a week left in May, it has already ranked as the 6th wettest on record and the wettest since 1973 at Denver. The storm on May 10-12 brought very heavy rain to the Front Range, with Denver receiving 4.40" and Colorado Springs receiving 3.80" of rain over those three days. Drought conditions were improving steadily statewide, but the wet May on the eastern half of the state brought notable improvements to drought conditions. As of May 23, less than 8% of the state's geographical area is in drought, whereas a year ago about 90% of the state was experiencing drought. Drought conditions persist on the state's eastern border, with elevated drought impacts in parts of the state where deficits from last summer have not yet been made up.

Forecasted streamflows

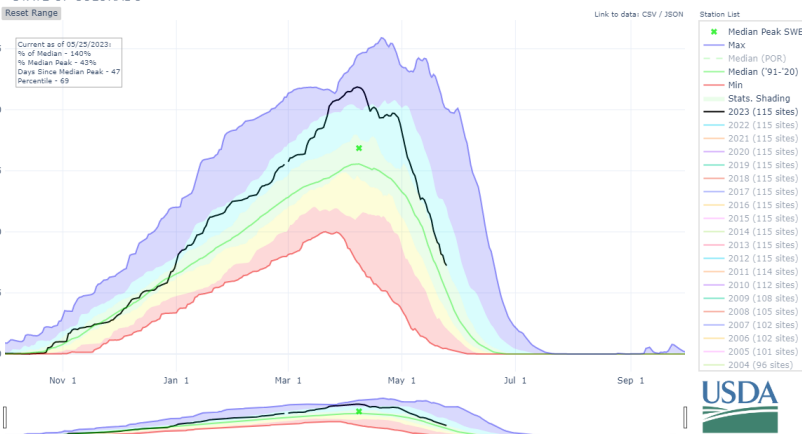
There is still a lot of snowpack at high elevations that has lingered with cool temperatures this spring. Warmer May temperatures accelerated the runoff with many rivers across the state at or near flood stages. Snowmelt is progressing quickly across the state. Streams and reservoirs are likely to return to a near-normal range. April observed streamflow volumes were well above normal across the Western Slope and Rio Grande. This pattern is forecast to persist over the coming months.

U.S. Drought Monitor
Colorado

May 23, 2023
(Released Thursday, May 25, 2023)
Valid 8 a.m. EDT



SNOW WATER EQUIVALENT IN
STATE OF COLORADO



Snowpack and reservoir storage

The timing of the snowpack peak was normal and snowpack was well above normal across most of Colorado, with the Southwest having highest snowpack totals. Statewide snowpack peaked at the 95th percentile of historical observations. Statewide, WY precipitation to date is currently 111% of median. The Gunnison and combined Southwest basins are leading that metric, while the Arkansas and South Platte basins are just under their median precipitation for this water year. Across all SNOTEL sites, melt season is now underway and average snowpack values are now measuring at about 25% of the individual peak values. Reservoir storage volumes are swiftly increasing across the state and June 1st reservoir storage volumes are anticipated to show major gains over the previous month.

Seasonal outlook

El Niño is very likely to emerge soon (possibly rapidly) after three winters of La Niña conditions. El Niño development should support an increased chance of a cold or wet weather in the fall of this year across the state.

Next Water Availability Task Force Meeting: June 20, 2023 9:30am

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

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

Special thanks to Russ Schumacher, Colorado Climate Center; Karl Wetlaufer, USDA Natural Resources Conservation Services