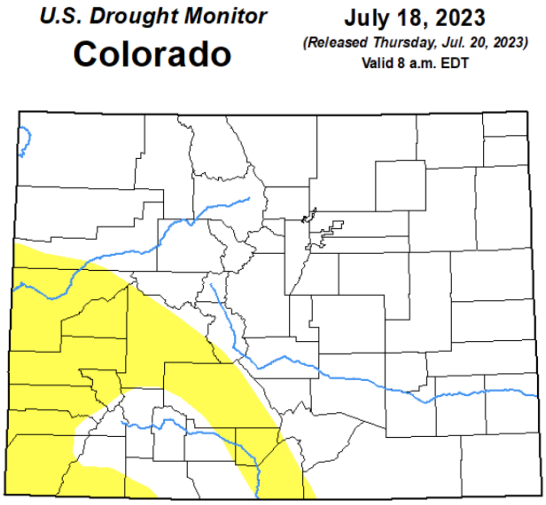
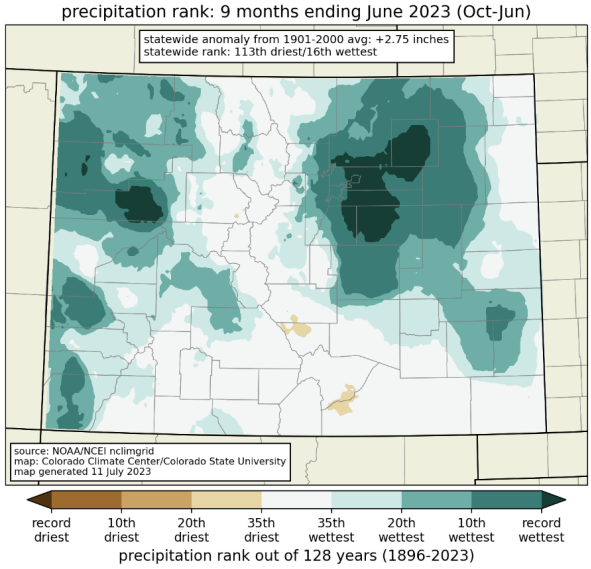
COLORADO
Department of Natural Resources

July 25, 2023
Water Availability Summary - WY 2023

Observed temperature
Despite warm and dry trends in recent years, this water year to date has been cool and wet. In fact, the first nine months of this water year to date are the coolest the state has experienced since 1993. In June 2023, moisture-laden air and thunderstorms kept daytime temperatures low, which led to cooler than normal maximum daily temperatures across the state, especially east of the Continental Divide. However, temperatures during the first few weeks of July were warmer than normal in western Colorado.



Observed precipitation and drought conditions
In June 2023, the eastern part of the state experienced much wetter conditions than normal. A large area located immediately east and southeast of the Denver Metro area experienced its wettest June out of the previous 129 Junes on record. Parts of Elbert county reported June 2023 as its wettest month ever recorded. However, the western side of the state, particularly parts of Mesa County, experienced drier than normal conditions, according to the 90-day Standardized Precipitation Index (SPI). Over the last month, the western slope faced very high evaporative demand, along with low soil moisture and pre-drought stress on vegetation. These surface hydrology indicators reflect the hotter and drier conditions in southwest Colorado, which are also exhibited in the US Drought Monitor.



Observed & Forecasted streamflows
Streamflow volumes from April through June were well above normal across the state. The highest volumes, relative to normal, were observed in western Colorado. Although average statewide precipitation in this water year to date is above normal (108%), it has decreased by 6% since last month due to recent hot and dry conditions in the southwest. All major basins, excluding the Arkansas and Rio Grande, remain at or above median precipitation for this water year to date. Even so, precipitation in the Arkansas and Rio Grande basins remain relatively high at 92% and 97%, respectively.

Snowpack and reservoir storage
Snowpack has melted at all SNOTEL sites in Colorado, and reservoir storage is above normal in almost all major basins. There have been considerable reservoir storage increases observed in the Gunnison and combined Southwest basins during this runoff season. Most basins experienced sharper increases in reservoir storage earlier this summer (April 1st to June 1st) compared to last month (June 1st to July 1st), but overall, the state is sitting in a comfortable position with respect to reservoir storage.

Seasonal outlook
The seasonal outlook for the rest of summer and into fall includes potential for above average temperatures across the state, particularly in the southwest, and below normal precipitation across the western slope. Current El Niño conditions are very likely to persist into the fall and even into mid-winter (>90% chance). Although a below average monsoon season is predicted to continue into August, El Niño conditions in the fall will increase the likelihood of cooler and wetter conditions for much of the state.

Next Water Availability Task Force Meeting: August 17, 2023 9:30am
Co-Chairs: Kathryn Weismiller, CWCB, Tracy Kosloff, DWR, and Emily Adrid, CWCB
Additional info at cwcb.colorado.gov/water-availability-flood-task-forces

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