



COLORADO

Department of
Natural Resources

September 19, 2023

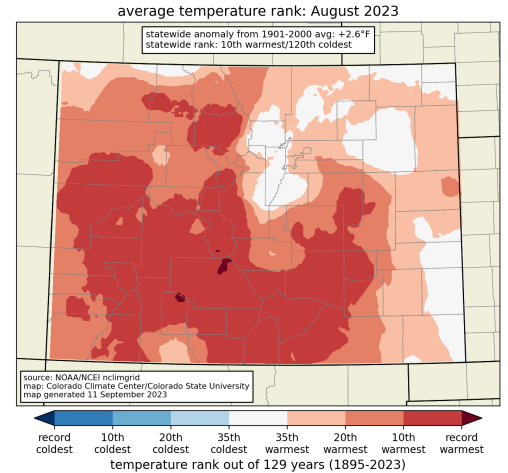
Water Availability Summary - WY 2023

Observed temperature

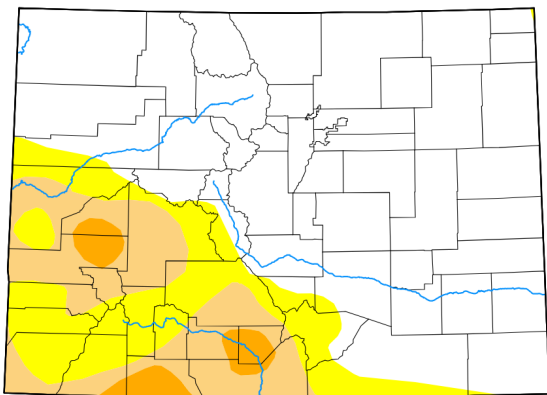
Despite this water year's near average (or slightly cooler than average) temperatures statewide, August was much warmer than average. In fact, August 2023 was the 10th warmest August in the 128-year record. This was driven by much warmer than average temperatures in the western and southern portions of the state. There are small areas in Saguache and Mineral counties that experienced record high average temperatures (seen in dark red). Conversely, much of the northeastern portion of the state experienced near average temperatures. Over the first couple weeks of September, daily temperatures have stayed right around average for this time of year.

Observed precipitation and drought conditions

Water Year 2023 was wetter than average for much of the state with record wet conditions in the northeastern plains. Areas around the Sangre de Cristos and San Luis Valley, however, experienced drier than average conditions this water year. August 2023 followed this same trend: parts of northern Colorado were wetter than average and parts of southern Colorado were drier than average. The wet and dry anomalies average out to near average precipitation for August 2023 statewide. Since the beginning of summer, drought has expanded in the southwest quadrant of the state, and currently, about 31% of the state is categorized by drought conditions. D1 and D2 drought conditions cover about 16% of the state, with almost 3% of the state in that D2 category. More recent precipitation in September has favored the southern portions of the state, and some areas in the San Luis Valley have accumulated over two and a half inches this month helping to alleviate drought conditions.



U.S. Drought Monitor **September 12, 2023**
(Released Thursday, Sep. 14, 2023)
Valid 8 a.m. EDT



Observed & Forecasted streamflows

Observed April through July streamflows were near normal in the Arkansas and South Platte basins, but streamflows were well above normal across the rest of the state. This is largely due to the wetter than normal conditions most of the state experienced during that April to June time period. Many rivers in Western Colorado have been above the 90th percentile of observed streamflow volumes in their recorded history, many going back 50 to 100 (or more) years.

Snowpack and reservoir storage

Statewide reservoir storage has remained above normal levels for the last three months after three years of below normal storage. Specifically, the Arkansas, Upper Rio Grande, Gunnison, South Platte, Colorado Headwaters, Yampa-White-Little Snake basins' total reservoir storage is above median storage levels. Looking ahead, the upcoming snowpack

season could have a later start due to high seasonal temperature outlooks.

Seasonal outlook

Over the next couple weeks, dry conditions and near average temperatures are projected statewide. NOAA's fall season projections indicate warmer than average temperatures and uncertainty for precipitation. Additionally, it is highly likely that El Niño conditions will continue into winter and even into early spring of 2024. Typically, El Niños occurring in fall correlate with increased risk of wet extremes, especially in the southern mountains. This means drought recovery is possible. Conversely, El Niño conditions in winter could increase the chance of drought development in the northern mountains.

Next Water Availability Task Force Meeting: November 28, 2023 9:30am

Co-Chairs: Tracy Kosloff, DWR, and Emily Adrid, CWCB

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

Special thanks to Becky Bolinger, Colorado Climate Center; Karl Wetlaufer, USDA Natural Resources Conservation Services