

# STATE OF COLORADO

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## Colorado Water Conservation Board Department of Natural Resources

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### MEMORANDUM

TO: Mike King  
Executive Director  
Department of Natural Resources

John Salazar  
Commissioner  
Department of Agriculture

Reeves Brown  
Executive Director  
Department of Local Affairs

FROM: Jim Miller, Co-Chair Agricultural Impact Task Force  
Department of Agriculture

Reagan Waskom, Co-Chair Agricultural Impact Task Force  
Colorado Water Institute, Colorado State University

Veva Deheza, Co-Chair Water Availability Task Force  
Colorado Water Conservation Board

DATE: August 15, 2011

SUBJECT: **Status of Agricultural Impact Task Force, Current Drought Conditions, and Resulting Agricultural Impacts**

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John Hickenlooper  
Governor

Mike King  
DNR Executive Director

Jennifer L. Gimbel  
CWCB Director

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This memorandum serves as an update and status report to the Drought Task Force from the Agricultural Impact Task Force (AITF) regarding current AITF activities, current drought conditions around the State, and the resulting agricultural impacts.

Since the last memo sent on July 1, 2011, the AITF has moved from weekly conference calls to biweekly calls to coordinate efficient and rapid response to the persistent drought conditions in southeast and south central Colorado.

Much of the discussion on these calls has focused on current and evolving drought conditions, resulting federal disaster declarations, triggered federal agricultural disaster relief programs, impacts and the process for ongoing communication between agencies.

**Current Drought Conditions**

As of the August 9, 2011, the U.S. Drought Monitor continues to show D4 (exceptional drought) conditions in Baca, Alamosa, Costilla and Conejos Counties, D3 (extreme drought) exists in part or all of 14 additional counties including all of Pueblo, Otero and Crowley counties and portions of Prowers, Bent, Las Animas, Kiowa, El Paso, Rio Grande, Saguache, Fremont, Custer, Huerfano and Lincoln Counties. An additional 14 counties are experiencing drought ranging from abnormally dry (D0) conditions to severe drought (D2). In total, 39% of Colorado is classified in some stage of drought effecting 32 counties.

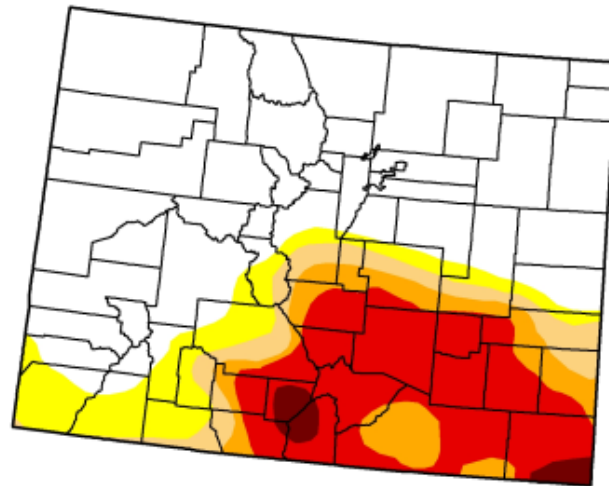
# U.S. Drought Monitor

## Colorado

**August 9, 2011**  
Valid 7 a.m. EST

*Drought Conditions (Percent Area)*

	None	D0-D4	D1-D4	D2-D4	D3-D4	D4
Current	61.06	38.94	30.11	24.84	18.37	1.45
Last Week (08/02/2011 map)	57.90	42.10	31.98	26.31	18.74	2.17
3 Months Ago (05/10/2011 map)	39.59	60.41	52.58	40.72	3.25	0.00
Start of Calendar Year (12/28/2010 map)	40.40	59.60	49.57	10.13	0.00	0.00
Start of Water Year (09/28/2010 map)	28.86	71.14	10.70	0.00	0.00	0.00
One Year Ago (08/03/2010 map)	82.95	17.05	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00



Intensity:

- D0 Abnormally Dry
- D1 Drought - Moderate
- D2 Drought - Severe
- D3 Drought - Extreme
- D4 Drought - Exceptional

The Drought Monitor focuses on broad-scale conditions. Local conditions may vary. See accompanying text summary for forecast statements.

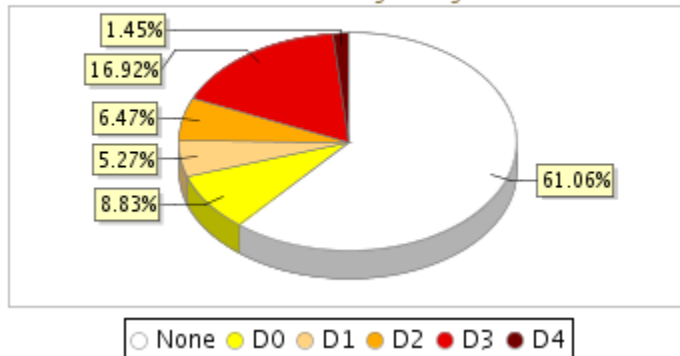


Released Thursday, August 11, 2011  
Laura Edwards, Western Regional Climate Center

<http://drought.unl.edu/dm>

**% Area for Colorado  
(As of 8.9.2011)**

Info Source: National Drought Mitigation Center



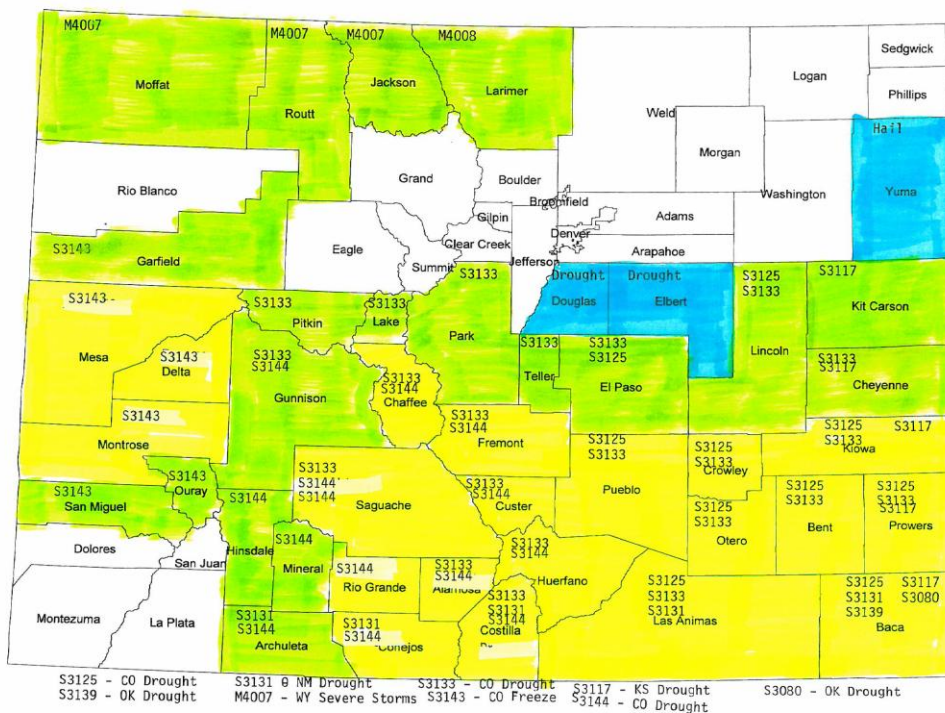
**Federal Disaster Declarations/Drought Disaster Relief**

Primary disaster declarations for Baca, Otero, Crowley, Bent, Chaffee, Custer, Fremont, Huerfano, Kiowa, Las Animas, Prowers, Pueblo, Saguache, Alamosa, Rio Grande, Costilla, Conejos counties have been received from Secretary Vilsack following a request from Governor Hickenlooper. An additional request was sent by Governor Hickenlooper for Douglas and Elbert counties. A primary county status under a secretarial disaster designation opens up additional financial resources and benefits for agricultural producers in these counties.

An additional 12 counties have secondary status as a result of being contiguous to counties with primary declarations. See Figure below.

Emergency grazing on CRP lands have been granted for Lincoln, Otero, Las Animas, Bent, Kiowa, Prowers, Baca, and Crowley counties. Although reports indicate that the grazing conditions of these lands is far from ideal. Ranchers will be able to use land in the Conservation Reserve Program through Sept. 30.

Below is a map of current Colorado Counties with disaster declarations. Not all are for drought, as this map also includes severe storms, hail and freeze declarations. However, the south east and south central counties are all drought declarations.



- = Primary Designation
- = Secondary Designation as a contiguous county
- = County seeking primary designation status, but not yet granted

**Drought Impacts Assessment**

- High hay prices coupled with high cattle prices continue to result in high cattle marketing in southeastern and south central Colorado as ranchers choose to sell rather than pay high hay prices to feed cattle.

- As of July 23<sup>rd</sup> 211,325 acres of crop land have failed while an additional 91,525 acres have not been planted due to dry conditions.
- In the Medicine Bow/Routt NFs/Pawnee NG - Pawnee grasslands had a very mixed turnout (both early and late) and will have a corresponding early and late off date due mainly to drought.
- Pike San Isabel NF/Comanche and Cimarron NG – Permittees at two high elevation allotments needed to stop grazing early. Cimarron NG permittees were off the land by the end of July, several have had to sell cattle due to lack of forage on private land in addition to a shortened season on national grasslands. Comanche NG - are not as dry as the Cimarron but still are experiencing a 20-25% reduction across the board due to drought related impacts.
- San Juan NF - several grazing rotations have had to be shortened due to early poor forage production (drought), however the season of use is back on track due to recent monsoonal moisture.
- As of August 8<sup>th</sup> there are currently no wildfires within the Colorado State Forest Service jurisdiction. Still, the Duckett Fire continues to burn northwest of Westcliffe and is under the jurisdiction of other agencies. Firefighters continue to monitor the fire while maintaining and patrolling trail closures within the fire area to protect the public. Firefighters have worked tirelessly for the past month to ensure minimal risk to life and property near the fire. While there is no actual constructed fire line on portions of the western flank, where the risk to firefighters in steep and hazardous terrain is too great, the fire perimeter has become relatively secure due to the lack of heat near the edges. Until a fire-ending weather event occurs, such as several inches of rain covering the entire fire area, managers are unlikely to consider the fire controlled or out.
- The fire situation rating for the Rocky Mountain Area remains at **Preparedness Level 2**, indicating that resources within local dispatch areas are adequate, with the potential for some mobilization of additional resources from other local dispatch areas.

**Member organizations represented on the calls included:**

CO Department of Agriculture  
 Division of Water Resources  
 CSU Extension  
 Natural Resources Conservation Service  
 Department of Natural Resources- EDO

Colorado Water Conservation Board  
 USDA Farm Service Agency  
 Lower Arkansas Conservancy District  
 Colorado Climate Center  
 State Land Board

***Communications***

Veva Deheza and Taryn Hutchins-Cabibi, of the CWCB, will continue working closely with the co-chairs and members of the AITF to collect field reported drought information and drought impact data, and will maintain a clearinghouse of data for analysis and future assessment.

***Future Meetings of the Agricultural Impact Task Force (AITF)***

Biweekly conference calls are held Wednesday. The call-in number is 303-866-3441, when you hear the woman's voice recording, dial 7621. The next call will be August 17<sup>th</sup> at 3:15pm, all subsequent calls (8/31) will be held at 2pm.

***For Additional Information***

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