

Water Availability Task Force
Sept. 21, 2006
Ag Impact Task Force Report

- Fall winter wheat crop planting is approximately 33% complete, which is slightly behind the long-term average for this date. Growers report planting into good surface soil moisture for the first time in several years in some areas of the plains.
- Growers in the San Luis Valley and other areas reporting some crop damage due to late season moisture – difficulty harvesting hay, potatoes, and barley sprouting and mold.
- Summer crops at end of growing season rated mostly in good condition.
 - Harvest of potatoes, corn, corn silage, onions and dry beans close to average for this date.
 - Alfalfa- 3rd cutting mostly complete, some producers getting a 4th cutting.
 - Corn- projected 840,000 acres harvested, down by 110,000 acres from last year. Yields slightly down – est. 152 bu/A average yield. Total CO corn crop est. at 128 million bu, which is down 9% from last year. Nationally, we are expecting 2nd largest corn and soybean crop on record.
 - Potato acres and yields projected down slightly.
 - In general, crop development slowed during late season due to cool, cloudy days during recent storm events, but soil moisture has subsequently increased during August and September.
- Range and non-irrigated pasture conditions still rough in places, currently 36% rated poor or very poor, 42% fair, 20% good on statewide basis. These ratings are in line with the past 5 year average conditions – admittedly, a rather poor past 5 years. Late season range and pasture conditions held steady due to recent seasonal temps and precipitation. However, excessive annual weed growth is causing grazing and haying problems for some producers where grass recovery has been slow. Many livestock producers must continue with supplemental feeding due to lack of pasture and hay production, incurring higher than desirable production costs. Many have used early weaning and herd culling to reduce pasture damage and feeding expense.
- Summary – Irrigators with adequate supplies are going to see some very good crop yields this year due to early and mid-season heat. Producers with junior irrigation rights or curtailed wells have been significantly impacted this year. We are going into the off-season in reasonably fair shape with typically variable conditions found around the state. Range and dry lands have a longer drought memory than irrigated lands and we will need continued moisture to recover these resources. Alternatively, dry and warm off-season conditions will result in continued resource degradation and loss of agricultural income. The WATF should continue to carefully monitor Ag conditions during the fall, winter and early spring if warm and dry weather predominates.