

JANUARY 2010 DROUGHT UPDATE

Water Availability Task Force Co-Chairs

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Executive Summary

Statewide, January has been a dry month. All basins, as of January 22, have received below average precipitation for the month. Recent snow storms in the southwest should help ease drought concerns as that region of the state has been in a moderate drought according to the U.S. Drought Monitor. Forecasters predict normal precipitation for the next two weeks as the El Niño event remains steady and will continue at least through March.

- As of January 22, the statewide snowpack is 82% of average. Following the recent snow storms, the Rio Grande and San Miguel/Dolores are now at 100% of average. The Yampa/White & Colorado basins report the lowest snowpack at 69% and 73% of average respectively.
- The Colorado basin in particular is experiencing below average snowpack at 73%, the lowest it has been since January 2002. Although snowpack is low, officials in the Colorado basin still say it is still too early in the water year to know if this year will be similar to 2002. It is important to note that reservoir storage currently is in better shape than it was at this time in 2002. The Water Availability Task Force will continue to monitor the situation closely.
- The statewide reservoir storage was 101% of average at the end of December. Individually, nearly all basins are at or above 100% of average for storage, with the exception of the Upper Rio Grande which is near average at 93% & the San Miguel/Dolores basin which is the lowest in the state at 89% of average.
- While reservoir storage is in decent shape along the Front Range, water providers in attendance are concerned by the lack of moisture as the demand season approaches and continue to monitor the situation closely.
- Statewide, the streamflow ranges from 70-109% of average. The highest streamflow is in the Arkansas basin which ranges from 90-107% of average. The lowest streamflow averages are found in the Yampa/White, Gunnison (80-85) and Colorado basins (74-85%).
- Surface Water Supply Index (SWSI*) values for January for the seven basins range from -2.1 to +1.6. The South Platte had the highest value at +1.6. The Yampa/White basin recorded the lowest value, of -2.1. Six of the seven basins experienced an increase in their SWSI value from the previous month. The Arkansas basin was the only basin to see a decrease.

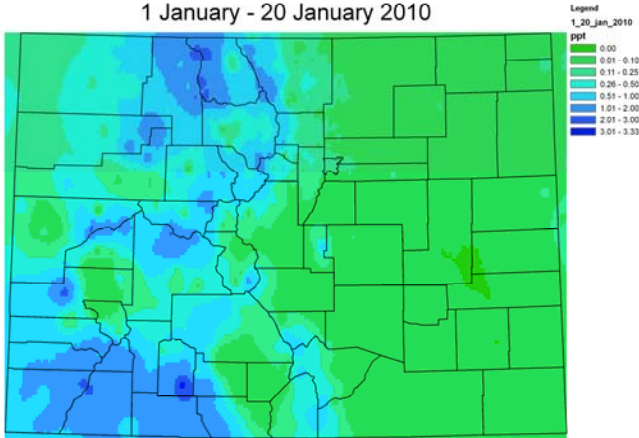
* *SWSI values are based on snowpack, reservoir storage and precipitation for the winter period (November-April). The values range from a high of +4.0, which indicates an abundant supply to a low of -4.0, which indicates severe drought. A value of 0.0 indicates a near normal supply.*

Long Term Forecast Summary

Forecasters expect El Niño conditions to continue with at least moderate strength through the spring. Most of Colorado is predicted to experience a dry winter with above average odds for a wet spring in the southwest part of the state. A wet March could balance out a dry January and February. Using past El Niño events as guidance, forecasters do not have high confidence for increased precipitation for Colorado beyond March.

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Colorado Precipitation (in)
1 January - 20 January 2010

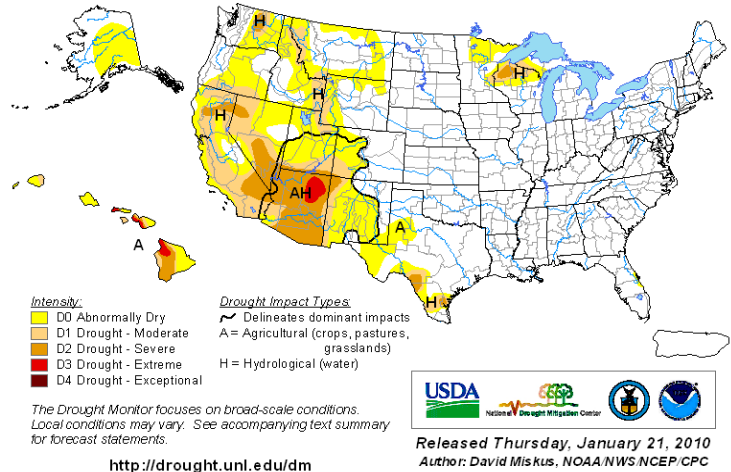


This map shows the amount of moisture recorded statewide during the month of January through January 20. The eastern part of the state has been dry while west of the divide has received anywhere from 0.10 to 2 inches of moisture. These totals are taken from CoCoRaHS gauges throughout the state. CoCoRaHS is a Community Collaborative Rain, Hail, Snow network made up of volunteers who measure daily precipitation levels around the state.

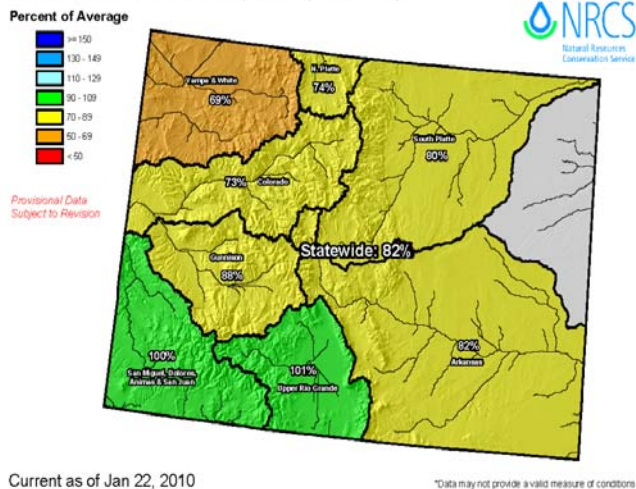
The adjacent map shows the U.S. Drought Monitor as of January 19, 2010. Drought conditions in much of the western slope are at D0, Abnormally Dry conditions. Drought conditions in Southwestern Colorado are at D1, moderate drought. Recent snow storms in the southwest should help reduce the drought concerns in the southwest region.

U.S. Drought Monitor

January 19, 2010
Valid 7 a.m. EST



Colorado SNOTEL Snowpack Update Map



The Colorado SNOTEL Snowpack Update Map as of January 22 shows the statewide snowpack at 82% of average. The lowest snowpack average is in the Yampa/White at 69% of average. The recent snow storms have helped the San Miguel/Dolores and Rio Grande basins to report 100% of average.

NOTE: The maps and graphics depicted in this report were those presented at the January 22, 2010 meeting and may have been updated since the meeting.

The next Water Availability Task Force meeting will be on February 25, 2010.