

# STATE OF COLORADO

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## Colorado Water Conservation Board Department of Natural Resources

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## CWCB stresses caution; warns of high runoff for many Colorado streams and rivers

The Colorado Water Conservation Board (CWCB) continues to closely monitor streams and rivers on the western slope and along the Front Range, particularly in the northern tier of the state. Record high snowpack in some locations of Colorado's high country, combined with forecasted warm temperatures above the seasonal norms, will greatly contribute to rising streams and rivers. Most of Colorado will enjoy cooler temperatures today, but warm weather is expected to return this weekend and early next week according to the National Weather Service.

Tom Browning, Chief of Watershed and Flood Protection for the CWCB, noted that the Elk River west of Steamboat Springs has already reached a peak flow that is the second highest on record and is "concerned that the worst is yet to come. There is strong likelihood that the Elk River could reach a 100-year peak flow over the next 5 days or so, and could even experience levels approaching a 500-year event this month depending on weather conditions." Low lying roads, buildings, and infrastructure along the Elk River would certainly be affected, Browning said.

The CWCB is also watching flow conditions on Front Range streams such as Clear Creek at Georgetown, the Big Thompson River at Estes Park, and the Cache La Poudre River in the vicinity of Greeley and Fort Collins. Kevin Houck, a senior engineer for the CWCB, said "record high snowpack in northern Colorado could lead to snowmelt flood flows that are similar to historic peaks" and that "communities at risk are preparing for high water at this time."

It's important to note that flooding in the Denver Metropolitan area caused by snowmelt runoff is unlikely, according to CWCB officials. This is because major floods in the metro area have historically been triggered by heavy rainstorms and flash flood events, not snowmelt.

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