



## SEPTEMBER 2011 DROUGHT UPDATE

### Water Availability Task Force Co-Chairs

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### **Executive Summary**

***Activation of Phase 2 of the State Drought Mitigation and Response Plan, and the activation of the Agricultural Impact Task Force remain in effect to respond to serious drought conditions in southeastern and south central Colorado.***

Exceptional and extreme drought conditions continue to impact south central and southeast Colorado. However, some drought stricken areas have received beneficial precipitation alleviating, but not eliminating, drought conditions. Reported impacts such as failed crop acreage continue to rise and with poor grazing conditions cattle sales also remain high. With August temperatures above average for the entire state, the month ranked as the hottest August on record. Portions of southeastern Colorado experienced average temperatures as much as 4-8 degrees above normal for the month.

Reservoir storage remains above average in the Yampa/White, Gunnison, Colorado, South Platte Basins, and San Miguel/ Dolores/ Animas/ San Juan. Statewide, reservoir storage is 107% of average. The Rio Grande and the Arkansas River basins continue to be the regions with the lowest reservoir storage levels in the state at 58 and 85% of average, respectively. Demands rose in some areas during August as a result of increased temperatures.

- As of September 20, 39% of the state is now experiencing some level of drought conditions, according to the U.S. Drought Monitor. While this is equivalent to last month, the D4 in the San Luis Valley has been improved to a D3, and some areas of D3 scaled back to a D2. D0-D4 represents abnormally dry, moderate, severe, extreme and exceptional drought conditions, respectively. D3 & D0 represents the largest portion of drought impacted areas, each at 12% of the state. D4 conditions remain in the southeastern corner of Baca County.
- Surface Water Supply Index (SWSI) values range from -1.2 in the San Miguel/ Dolores/ Animas/ San Juan to +3.4 in the Upper Colorado River basin. The low value in the southwest was a result of below average flows and well below average precipitation.
- At the Walsh weather station, in southeastern Colorado, a new record low for precipitation was recorded for the month of August, and is currently on track to set a record low for September as well.
- As of September 10, 226,629 acres of crop land have failed while an additional 97,594 acres have not been planted due to dry conditions. The breakdown is as follows:

<u>CROP</u>	<u>FAILED</u>	<u>PREVENTED</u>
Corn	13,940	50,085
Sorghum	445	39,413
Wheat	199,640	2,063

- The long term seasonal climate forecast indicates that the return of La Nina conditions will likely result in drier conditions than last year. Below average conditions in the southeastern portion of the state are likely to persist with a chance of normal precipitation in the mountains for the mid winter. Temperatures for October through December are expected to be above average for the entire state.
- Fire danger has moderated somewhat in Colorado with no fires under the state's or other jurisdictions.
- 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.

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## U.S. Drought Monitor

September 20, 2011  
Valid 7 a.m. EST

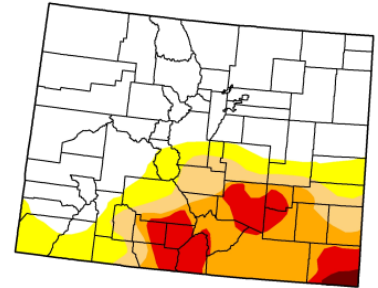
### Colorado

The adjacent map shows the U.S. Drought Monitor for Colorado as of September 20, 2011. D4, exceptional drought conditions, have been removed from the San Luis Valley, but persist in Baca County. D3 conditions have also been scaled back. However, short and long term forecast show little improvement for the extreme southeastern corner of the state. For this reason, **the State Drought Plan remains activated.**

Drought Conditions (Percent Area)						
	None	D0-D4	D1-D4	D2-D4	D3-D4	D4
Current	60.62	39.38	27.69	19.99	7.88	0.56
Last Week (09/13/2011 map)	47.15	52.85	29.54	22.93	8.63	0.56
3 Months Ago (06/21/2011 map)	59.62	40.38	31.54	25.86	11.95	0.91
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 (09/14/2010 map)	65.39	34.61	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00

#### Intensity:

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

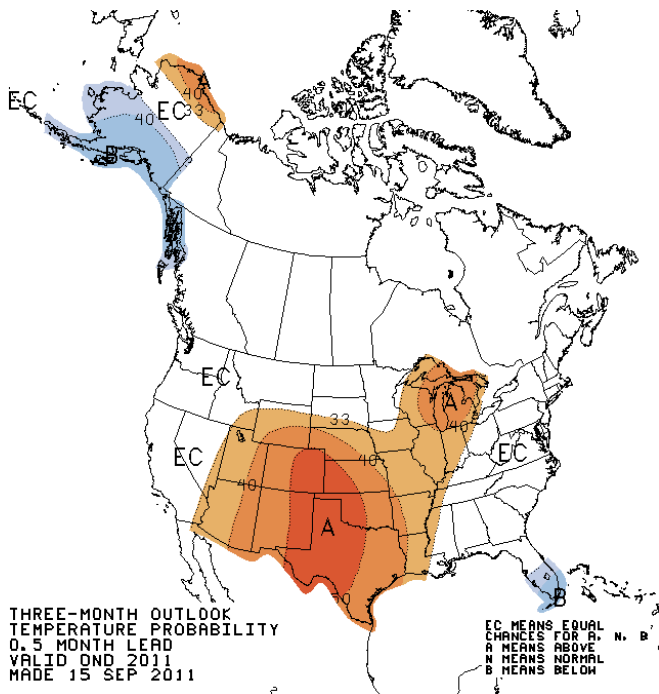


The Drought Monitor focuses on broad-scale conditions. Local conditions may vary. See accompanying text summary for forecast statements.

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

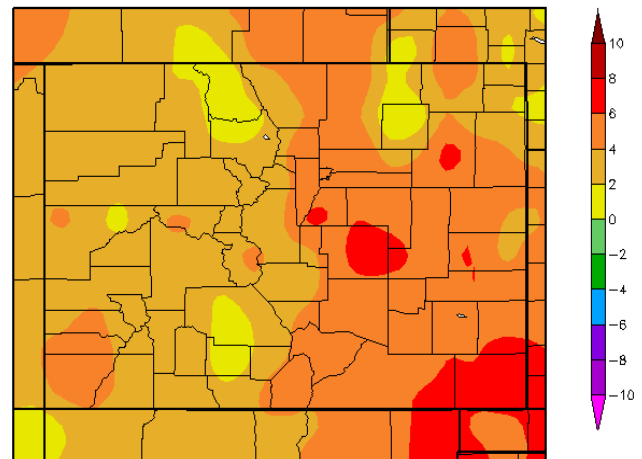


Released Thursday, September 22, 2011  
Michael Brewer, National Climatic Data Center/NOAA



The adjacent map shows the Climate Prediction Center's forecast for the three month period from October to December for temperature probability. As a result of the La Nina conditions, Colorado is expected to experience above average temperature through the end of the calendar year.

### Departure from Normal Temperature (F) 8/1/2011 - 8/31/2011



The map to the right shows the departure from normal temperature for the month of August. Statewide it was the warmest August on record. The southeastern and south central portions of the state ranged from 4-6 degrees above average with a few pockets ranging between 6-8 degrees above average. High temperatures can escalate drought conditions by increasing ET rates.

Generated 9/11/2011 at HPRCC using provisional data.

Regional Climate Centers

**NOTE:** Please check the CWCB website for the next scheduled WATF meeting – [www.cwcb.state.co.us](http://www.cwcb.state.co.us), or contact Ben Wade at [ben.wade@state.co.us](mailto:ben.wade@state.co.us).