

STATE OF COLORADO

Colorado Water Conservation Board Department of Natural Resources

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John W. Hickenlooper
Governor

Mike King
DNR Executive Director

Jennifer L. Gimbel
CWCB Director

TO: Colorado Water Conservation Board Members

FROM: Veva Deheza, Section Chief
Office of Water Conservation & Drought Planning

DATE: July 1, 2011

SUBJECT: **Agenda Item #9, July 12-13, 2011 Board Meeting**
Current Drought Status and Update on State Drought Plan Activation

Staff Recommendation

This is an information item only.

Background

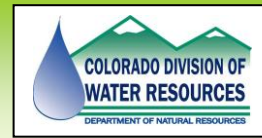
The Colorado State Drought Mitigation and Response Plan was activated by Governor Hickenlooper on May 17, 2011 in response to rapidly deteriorating conditions in southeast and south central Colorado. The Agricultural Impact Task Force (AITF) was also activated at this time for the same geographic region.

Since that time, the AITF has met on a weekly basis to coordinate response, assess impacts, and increase communication.

Conditions are continually changing. However, exceptional and extreme drought conditions continue to advance across south central and southeast Colorado. Federal drought declarations for three counties, Bent, Crowley and Otero, have been granted from the Secretary of Agriculture Vilsack; and an additional request for declarations in nine other counties (Bent, Chaffee, Custer, Fremont, Huerfano, Kiowa, Las Animas, Prowers and Pueblo) has been sent by Governor Hickenlooper. Impacts, including failed acres, inability to plant, and culling of herds are currently being reported.

Details on current conditions and response will be presented to the Board.

Please see the enclosed June 2011 Drought Update and most recent memorandum to the Drought Task Force from the AITF for additional information.



June 2011 DROUGHT UPDATE

Water Availability Task Force Co-Chairs

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Kevin Rein, DWR - 303-866-3581 ext. 8239
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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 advance across south central and southeast Colorado with May temperatures above average and precipitation well below average for these regions. Governor Hickenlooper is requesting federal drought declaration for three counties, Bent, Crowley and Otero, from the Secretary of Agriculture; additional requests for declarations are anticipated. Impacts, including failed acres, inability to plant and culling of herds are currently being reported. In contrast, drought conditions have improved considerably across the northern Front Range urban corridor and northeast Colorado due in part to below average temperatures and significant precipitation in May.

In the mountains, despite neutralized La Niña conditions, the region continues to experience above average moisture and below average temperatures which have led to a later than normal spring runoff. Statewide, reservoir storage is near average, with some reservoirs currently drawn down for flood control purposes. The Rio Grande and the Arkansas River basins have the lowest reservoir storage levels in the state at 70 and 72% respectively.

- Extremely dry conditions continue to plague southeastern and south central Colorado. The Agricultural Impact Task Force, activated by Governor Hickenlooper on May 18, 2011, has been meeting weekly to monitor and respond to the situation.
- May precipitation alleviated, and in some areas eliminated, drought conditions across much of the northeastern plains and Front Range corridor of the state.
- According to the U.S. Drought Monitor, 41% of the State is now experiencing D0, D1, D2, D3 or D4 status, which represents abnormally dry, moderate, severe, extreme and exceptional drought conditions respectively. 27% of the state is experiencing D2 through D4 conditions. D4 conditions have been introduced in far southeast corner of the State in Baca County, while D3 conditions have been expanded into the San Luis Valley and north into Pueblo and El Paso Counties.
- Governor Hickenlooper is seeking primary federal drought declarations for Baca, Crowley counties. Should the Secretary of Agriculture approve the request, farmers and ranchers will be eligible to seek additional federal natural disaster assistance.
- Conditions in the San Luis Valley as well as El Paso and Pueblo counties have deteriorated to D3 on the US Drought Monitor, triggering eligibility for the USDA Livestock Forage Disaster Program. This program provides cash payments to eligible producers who suffered grazing losses for eligible livestock because of drought on federally-managed grazing land.
- Emergency grazing will be allowed in eight counties (Baca, Otero, Crowley, Kiowa, Prowers, Bent, Pueblo and Las Animas) on Conservation Reserve Program lands.
- Reference Evapotranspiration (ET) at the Avondale weather station (east of Pueblo, in the Arkansas Basin) has exceeded 2002 maximum ET levels for the season April 1- Sept 30th.
- As of June 18, 2011 the Farm Service Agency (FSA) reports over 90,000 of insurance-eligible cropland acres has failed and the agency has received prevented-planting claims on nearly 46,500 acres. It should be noted that these figures do not reflect the full extent of crop damage in the region.
- La Nina conditions have weakened and it is unclear if conditions will remain neutral or return to La Nina later this year.

June 2011 DROUGHT UPDATE

U.S. Drought Monitor

June 14, 2011
Valid 7 a.m. EST

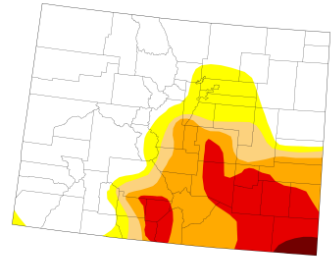
Colorado

The adjacent map shows the U.S. Drought Monitor for Colorado as of June 14, 2011. The northern plains have seen some relief from drought conditions; while the southeastern and south central regions of the state have deteriorated to D2, D3 and in the Baca County area D4 - exceptional drought conditions. For this reason, **the State Drought Plan remains activated for southeastern and south central Colorado**

	Drought Conditions (Percent Area)					
	None	D0-D4	D1-D4	D2-D4	D3-D4	D4
Current	58.84	41.16	31.89	26.50	13.01	0.91
Last Week (06/07/2011 map)	59.67	40.33	31.89	25.19	9.62	0.91
3 Months Ago (03/15/2011 map)	41.65	58.35	51.50	35.33	0.00	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 (06/08/2010 map)	81.04	18.96	0.25	0.00	0.00	0.00

Intensity:

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



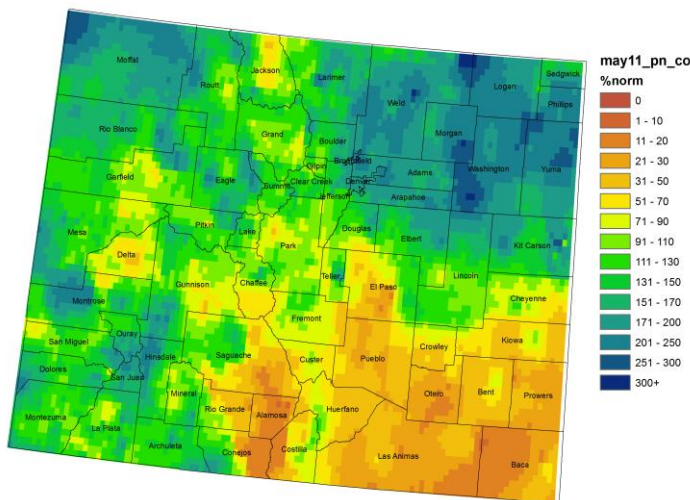
The Drought Monitor focuses on broad-scale conditions. Local conditions may vary. See accompanying text summary for forecast statements.

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



Released Thursday, June 16, 2011
Brian Fuchs, National Drought Mitigation Center

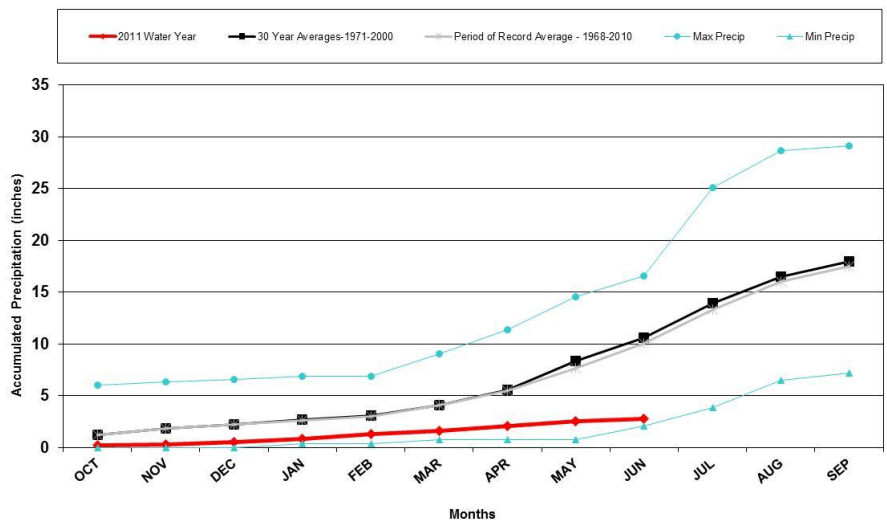
Colorado May 2011 Precipitation as Percentage of Normal



The adjacent map shows precipitation for the month of May 2011. As illustrated by the orange and yellow colors, the southeast and south central portions of the state did not receive the beneficial precipitation that the northern plains, mountains and areas of the southwest received in May. The southeast and the San Luis Valley remain well below average for precipitation for the water year (October 2010- present)

Walsh 2011 Water Year

The adjacent line graph shows that 2011 is currently tracking along with the minimum precipitation levels for each month and well below the 30 year average at Walsh, in southeastern Colorado.



NOTE:

The next WATE meetings are scheduled for July 14 and August 17, 2011, at the Colorado Division of Wildlife, 6060 Broadway, Denver, CO. Should you wish to participate via Webinar please contact Ben Wade at Ben.wade@state.co.us

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MEMORANDUM

John Hickenlooper
Governor

Mike King
DNR Executive Director

Jennifer L. Gimbel
CWCB Director

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: July 1, 2011

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

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 June 10, 2011, the AITF has held weekly conference calls to coordinate efficient and rapid response to the deteriorating 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.

Interstate & Federal • Watershed & Flood Protection • Stream & Lake Protection • Finance
Water Information • Water Conservation & Drought Planning • Water Supply Planning

Drought Task Force Call

As follow up to this memo, and to provide an update on the current wildfire situation, **there will be a Drought Task Force conference call at 1pm on July 14th**. The call in number is 303.866.3441 when you hear the woman's voice recording, dial 7621.

Current Drought Conditions

As of the June, 30, 2011, the U.S. Drought Monitor continues to show **D4** (exceptional drought) conditions in Baca County, **D3** (extreme drought) has been expanded to 18 different counties including all of Alamosa, Pueblo, Otero and Crowley counties and portions of Baca, Prowers, Bent, Las Animas, Kiowa, Costilla, Conejos, El Paso, Rio Grande, Saguache, Fremont, Custer, Huerfano, Lincoln Counties. Other parts of southeastern and south central Colorado are in **D2** status (severe drought). Abnormally dry (D0) conditions are also appearing in the southwest corner of the state.

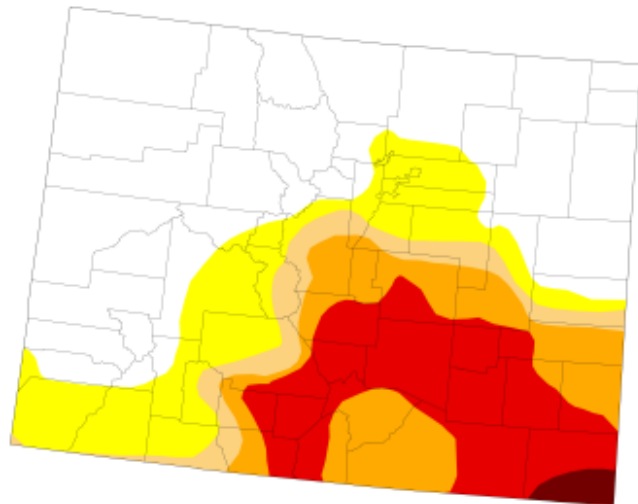
U.S. Drought Monitor **Colorado**

June 28, 2011
Valid 7 a.m. EST

	Drought Conditions (Percent Area)					
	None	D0-D4	D1-D4	D2-D4	D3-D4	D4
Current	49.91	50.09	34.36	28.89	16.64	0.91
Last Week (06/21/2011 map)	59.62	40.38	31.54	25.86	11.95	0.91
3 Months Ago (03/29/2011 map)	40.99	59.01	53.08	39.67	0.00	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 (06/22/2010 map)	79.25	20.75	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00

Intensity:

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

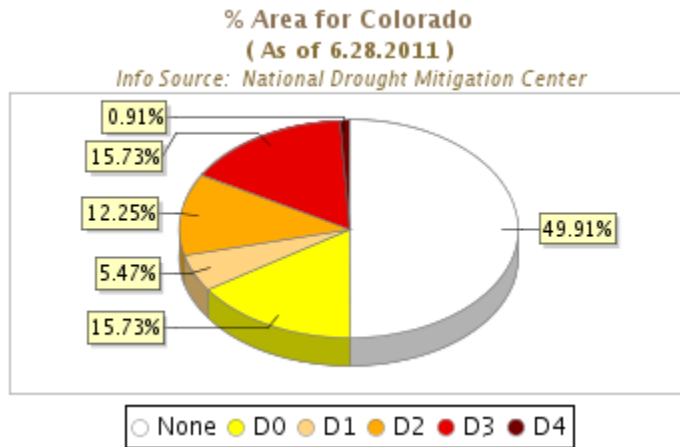


The Drought Monitor focuses on broad-scale conditions. Local conditions may vary. See accompanying text summary for forecast statements.

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



Released Thursday, June 30, 2011
Richard Heim/Liz Love-Brotak, NOAA/NESDIS/NCDC



Federal Disaster Declarations/Drought Disaster Relief

Disaster declarations for Baca, Otero, and Crowley counties have been received from Secretary Vilsack following a request from Governor Hickenlooper on June 16th. An additional request was sent by Governor Hickenlooper on June 27th for Bent, Chaffee, Custer, Fremont, Huerfano, Kiowa, Las Animas, Prowers and Pueblo counties. If granted this would designate them as primary counties for drought and lack of precipitation. A primary county status under a secretarial disaster designation opens up additional financial resources and benefits for agricultural producers in these counties.

It is anticipated that Alamosa, Conejos, Costilla, Rio Grande and Saguache counties will also seek primary declaration in the next week.

In addition, emergency grazing on CRP lands have been granted for Lincoln, Otero, Las Animas, Bent, Kiowa, Prowers, Baca, and Crowley counties. Ranchers will be able to use land in the Conservation Reserve Program through Sept. 30.

Drought Impacts Assessment

- High hay prices coupled with high cattle prices have led increased cattle marketing in southeastern and south central Colorado as ranchers choose to sell rather than pay high hay prices to feed cattle.
- The wheat harvest has just begun and data is not yet in of yields but it is expected that wheat producers will see revenue losses as well.
- The West Otero Timpas Conservation District, Olney- Boone Conservation District and Colorado State Land Board held a drought workshop June 29th in Rocky Ford aimed at agricultural producers in need of information regarding deferred payments, cost/benefit ratios, cash flow, weather patterns, drought management grazing techniques and government assistance for drought relief.
- Las Animas County has experienced a greater than normal number of fires this year.
- The United States Forest Service will shorten their grazing season in the Pike and San Isabel National Forest, Rio Grande National Forest and the Comanche National Grasslands this year in response to dry conditions.

- As of June 25th 111,808 acres of crop land have failed while an additional 56,329 acres have not been planted due to dry conditions. These acres are primarily in the southeastern portion of the state; however additional data from the San Luis Valley is also beginning to come in.

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)

Weekly conference calls are held Wednesday at 2:00pm. The call-in number is 303-866-3441, when you hear the woman's voice recording, dial 7621.

For Additional Information

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