

# STATE OF COLORADO

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## Colorado Water Conservation Board Department of Natural Resources

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TO: Colorado Water Conservation Board Members

FROM: Tom Browning, Section Chief  
Watershed & Flood Protection Section

DATE: June 29, 2011

SUBJECT: **Agenda Item 19**  
**July 12-13, 2011 Board Meeting**  
**Watershed & Flood Protection Section – 2011 Flood Season Recap**

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John W. Hickenlooper  
Governor

Mike King  
DNR Executive Director

Jennifer L. Gimbel  
CWCB Director

### Background

The 2010-2011 mountain snowpack in Colorado, especially in the northern portion of the state, was much higher than normal and actually represented record setting levels at numerous measuring stations. CWCB staff prepared for high water, and braced for potential flood damages. Preparatory actions included hosting Flood Task Force meetings; presenting at local and regional flood awareness workshops; conducting extensive public outreach; and coordinating with emergency managers and local officials.

As it turns out, we were incredibly lucky, for the most part, with intermittent warm and cool weather in May and June that led to moderated snowmelt flows in the stream and river basins where high snowpack existed. In addition, the level of preparedness was nearly unprecedented, which led to a reduction or avoidance of flood damages.

In general, many streams in the Colorado, Yampa/White, and North Platte basins experienced peak flows on the order of 10-year floods, with one notable exception of essentially a 500-year event on a particular river in Routt County. The South Platte basin managed to escape serious high water despite incredible snowpack levels that rivaled or exceeded 1983 amounts in some areas.

Staff has been reminding citizens that Colorado's most devastating floods are typically generated by rainfall, not snowmelt, and that flood awareness should continue throughout the entire flood season. Staff will provide the Board with a brief summary of snowpack and runoff conditions along with an overview of known damages and sites where problems occurred.

### Staff Recommendation

This is an informational item only, and Board action is not requested by staff.