

APRIL 2012 DROUGHT UPDATE

Water Availability Task Force Co-Chairs

Veva Deheza, CWCB - 303-866-3441 ext. 3226
Email – veva.deheza@state.co.us

Kevin Rein, DWR - 303-866-3581 ext. 8239
Email – kevin.rein@state.co.us

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 drought conditions.

March 2012 tied 1966 for the driest on record and it was the third warmest March for Colorado. Records date back to 1895. April has seen some improvement in precipitation with beneficial precipitation on the eastern plains that has lessened extreme and severe drought conditions. However, much of Colorado remains well above average for temperature and below average for precipitation. All major basins of the state have seen significant declines in snowpack. All continue to be below normal for the year. Statewide snow water equivalent at SNOTEL sites is 39%. Severe drought conditions have been reintroduced in the San Luis Valley and established throughout portions of the Yampa/White, Colorado and Gunnison River basins. Water providers are watching the situation very closely.

- To date, April temperatures have been 2-8 degrees above average for most of Colorado, with multiple areas experiencing temperatures 10 degrees above normal.
- Historically, Colorado reaches its average peak snow water equivalent for the season by April 12. However, this year only 68% of average was achieved and that peak occurred a full month early on March 12, 2012. Some basins, including the South Platte and the San Miguel/ Dolores/ Animas/ San Juan peaked as early as March 4.
- 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 108% 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 73% and 86% of average, respectively.
- As of the April 17 US Drought Monitor, 95% of Colorado is experiencing some level of drought classification, down from 100% two weeks earlier. D1, moderate drought, conditions remain in much of the Arkansas River basin and the northern and central mountains, while D2, severe drought conditions, have been introduced in the northwestern part of the state and the Rio Grande River basins. D0, abnormally dry conditions, account for the rest of the impacted areas of the state (35%). Removal of D0 on the central plains and a reduction of D2 in the southeastern plains resulted from early April storms that brought substantial precipitation.
- The Surface Water Supply Index (SWSI) values range from -3.86 in the Arkansas headwaters sub-basin to -0.13 in the Upper Arkansas sub-basin. The Arkansas headwaters' low value is, in part, due to operational drawdown of Homestake Reservoir. All SWSI values throughout the state are negative.
- La Niña conditions have weakened, and the long term forecast for late spring (April-June) shows a shift towards dryness covering southwest Colorado, near-normal moisture over the eastern plains, and a slight shift towards wetness in northwest Colorado.
- There is about a 40% chance that we could see a transition towards El Niño within the next few months, which would favor more moisture for the state.
- On the West Slope, combinations of prevalent fine fuels and the possibility of a drier than normal season could lead to significant fire potential concerns as the season progresses.

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U.S. Drought Monitor Colorado

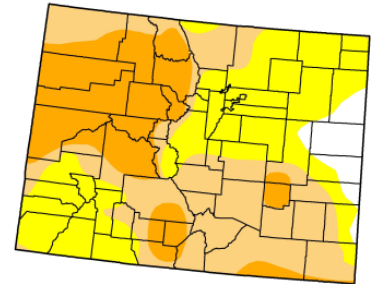
April 17, 2012
Valid 7 a.m. EST

The adjacent map depicts the April 17, 2012 US Drought Monitor. While the overall percentage of the state that is classified at some level of drought has decreased in the last two weeks, the intensity of the dryness has increased in the San Luis Valley and the Yampa/White, Colorado and Gunnison River basins. 26% of the state is now characterized as experiencing severe drought conditions.

	Drought Conditions (Percent Area)					
	None	D0-D4	D1-D4	D2-D4	D3-D4	D4
Current	5.17	94.83	59.85	25.93	0.00	0.00
Last Week (04/10/2012 map)	5.17	94.83	55.94	17.09	0.00	0.00
3 Months Ago (01/17/2012 map)	39.42	60.58	24.98	10.60	0.20	0.00
Start of Calendar Year (12/27/2011 map)	67.79	32.21	24.98	14.94	0.04	0.00
Start of Water Year (09/27/2011 map)	60.62	39.38	27.69	19.99	7.88	0.56
One Year Ago (04/12/2011 map)	39.57	60.43	54.13	40.88	0.00	0.00

Intensity:

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



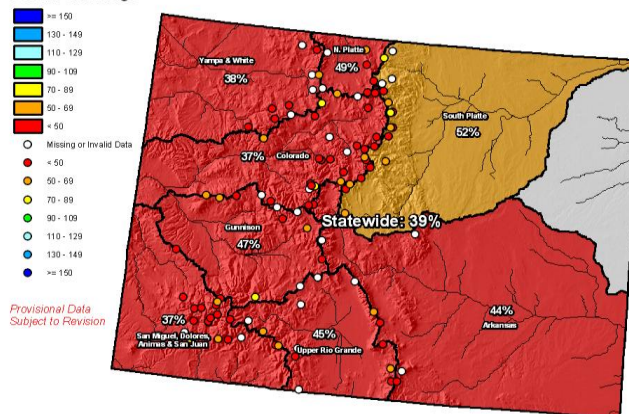
The Drought Monitor focuses on broad-scale conditions. Local conditions may vary. See accompanying text summary for forecast statements.

<http://droughtmonitor.unl.edu>



Released Thursday, April 19, 2012
Anthony Artusa, Climate Prediction Center/NCEP/NWS/NOAA

Colorado SNOTEL Snowpack Update Map with Site Data Percent of Average



Current as of Apr 17, 2012

*Data may not provide a valid measure of

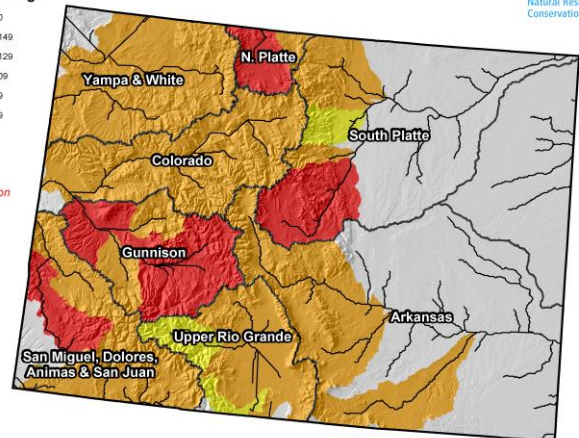
The map to the left shows the SNOTEL snowpack data by basin and statewide as of April 17, 2012. Statewide snowpack at SNOTEL sites is 39% of the long term average, a decrease from 72% on March 21, 2012. The Colorado Basin is reporting the lowest snowpack in the state at 37%. The Yampa/White Basin is reporting only slightly higher at 38%.

Colorado Streamflow Forecast Map

Percent of Average

■ >= 150
■ 130 - 149
■ 110 - 129
■ 90 - 109
■ 70 - 89
■ 50 - 69
■ < 50

Provisional Data
Subject to Revision



Current as of April 1, 2012



The adjacent map illustrates the April 1, 2012 streamflow forecast compiled by the NRCS. All streamflow forecasts are below average to well below average. Statewide streamflow forecasts have dropped 20-50% since March 1, and mid-month forecasts for April indicate that they continue to decline rapidly.

NOTE: The next scheduled WATF meeting will be May 22, 2012 at the Colorado Parks & Wildlife Headquarters from 1:30-3:30pm. Additional information can be found at www.cwcb.state.co.us, or by contacting Ben Wade at ben.wade@state.co.us.