MAY 2012 DROUGHT UPDATE

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As of May 22, 2012 activation of Phase 2 of the State Drought Mitigation and Response Plan has been expanded to include the Yampa/White, Colorado and Gunnison River basins. The Plan remains active for the south central and southeastern portions of the state.

April 2012 was the fourth warmest on record (records date back to 1895). While May has been slightly cooler, temperatures remain above average, exacerbating persistently dry conditions on the west slope and throughout the San Luis Valley. May precipitation along the Front Range corridor has improved. However, municipalities are reporting increased demand and expect to see storage levels drop if conditions persist. Evapotranspiration rates on the Eastern Plains resemble levels expected for mid-summer months. Many irrigators are using more water than normal for this time of year. All major basins have seen significant declines in snowpack. All continue to be below normal for the year. Extreme drought conditions have been introduced in the Yampa, Colorado and Gunnison River basins per the U.S. Drought Monitor. Governor Hickenlooper has expanded the activation of the Colorado's Drought Mitigation and Response Plan to include this region.

- The last two months temperatures have been five degrees above average for most of Colorado, with some areas experiencing temperatures 6-10 degrees above normal.
- The Colorado and Yampa River basins both have the lowest May 1st snowpack on record (45 year record), with 21% and 17% of average respectively. Both were also near record high this time last year.
- Reservoir storage remains strong throughout most of the state, at 112% of average. The Gunnison River Bain has the highest percent of average storage at 124%, while the Rio Grande has the lowest at 70% of average.
- As of the May 22, 2012 US Drought Monitor, 96% of Colorado is experiencing some level of drought classification. D1, moderate drought, conditions remain in much of the southern Colorado, while the northern and central mountains are now classified as D2, severe, and D3 extreme drought conditions. Pockets of D2 also exist in the San Luis Valley and Crowley County.
- The Surface Water Supply Index (SWSI) values range from -4 in the North Platte headwaters to -1.93 in the Big Thompson. The South Platte River Basin, which encompasses the Big Thompson sub-basin, is the only river basin that is predominantly weighted with reservoir storage this time of the year. With storage strong values appear slightly higher. All SWSI values throughout the state, utilizing the revised methodology, are negative.
- Some drought indicators, in portions of the state, show conditions worse than 2002, such as the SWSI for Yampa/ White and Arkansas basins, which indicates less surface water supply in 2012 than 2002.
- La Niña conditions weakened to neutral. A full transition to El Niño is not expected this spring, but could occur later this summer. El Niño conditions would favor more moisture for the state.
- The long term forecast for late summer (July-September) shows a tilt towards wet conditions covering most of southern Colorado, near-normal moisture over the northwestern portion of our state, and a slight tilt towards wetness in northeast Colorado.
- Producers are already anticipating a low wheat harvest and rangeland conditions are poor. Dry land farmers are the most impacted at this time, although irrigators are reporting needing more water than normal for this time of year.
- Fire danger remains above normal for the western portion of the state.

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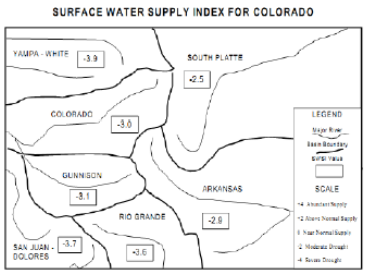
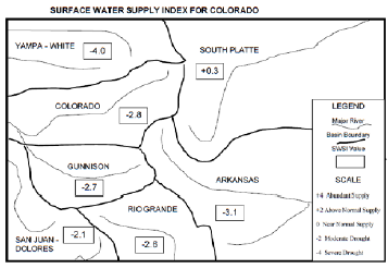
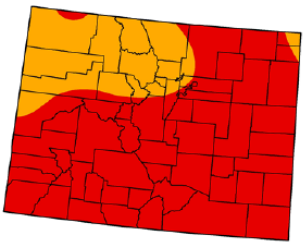
The adjacent maps compare the Surface Water Supply Index (SWSI) and US Drought Monitor (USDM) for May 2002 and 2012. While SWSI values for May 1, 2012 are comparable to those seen in 2002, the USDM shows more areas of the state in Exceptional Drought at this time in 2002. The process by which the State of Colorado contributes to the USDM has been refined over the last decade.

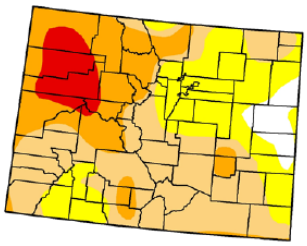


May 2002



May 2012



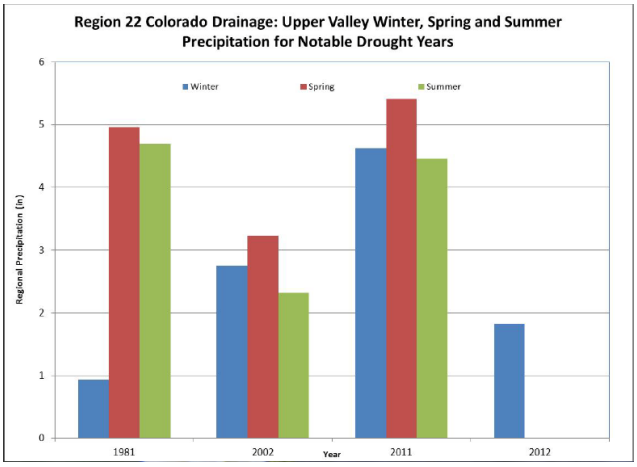


May 21, 2002 | May 22, 2012

Drought Severity

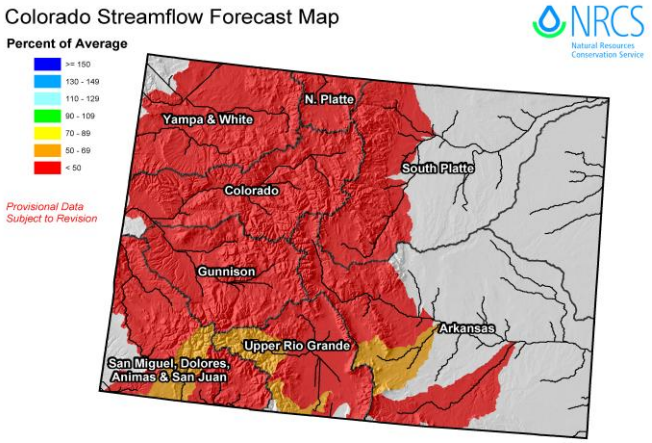
D0 - Abnormally Dry
D1 Drought - Moderate
D2 Drought - Severe
D3 Drought - Extreme
D4 Drought - Exceptional

Week	Nothing	D0-D4	D1-D4	D2-D4	D3-D4	D4
May 21, 2002	0.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	76.81	0.00
May 22, 2012	4.44	95.56	68.59	29.60	7.27	0.00



The graphic to the left shows precipitation by season for notable water years in the Colorado River Basin. Winter precipitation in this basin was below 2002, but above 1981 levels. Spring is defined as March, April, May and is not yet complete. But preliminary precipitation data for March and April are tracking well below that of 2002.

The adjacent map illustrates the May 1, 2012 streamflow forecast complied by the NRCS. All streamflow forecasts are well below average. Statewide streamflow forecasts have dropped 5-15% since April 1, and reports indicate that they continue to decline. The South Platte forecasts dropped the most with the average forecast 25% lower this month.



Current as of May 1, 2012

NOTE: The next scheduled WATF meeting will be the morning of June 20, 2012 at the Colorado Parks & Wildlife Headquarters. Additional information can be found at www.cwcb.state.co.us, or by contacting Ben Wade at ben.wade@state.co.us.