



## AUGUST 2012 DROUGHT UPDATE

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***Activation of Phase 2 &3 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 throughout Colorado.***

Monsoonal rains in July brought widespread beneficial moisture to most of the west slope, dropping as much as 300% of average precipitation over parts of the central mountains and foothills; and relieving, but not eliminating, drought conditions. Precipitation has been tempered by above average temperatures throughout the summer. Following the warmest June on record, July continued on trend and was the fifth warmest on record. January –July 2012 now ranks as the second warmest calendar year since 1895 when records began.

- Governor Hickenlooper elevated activation of the State Drought Mitigation and Response Plan to Phase 3 for the agricultural sector only on August 10<sup>th</sup>, the activation of the Agricultural Impact Task Force was also expanded to cover the entire state.
- Reservoir storage is at 73% statewide. Highest storage levels are in the Yampa/ White River Basin, at 112% of average while the lowest storage in the state is in the Rio Grande River basin at 52% of average. The Yampa/ White is largely dominated by energy producers who are keeping their water in storage in case the drought persist, roughly 2/3 of storage in the major reservoirs of that basin is held by energy producers.
- The eastern plains saw the greatest departure from normal temperatures, while the west slope saw temperatures in July that were more moderate at 1-3 degrees above normal. Much of the state has seen slightly cooler temperatures in August.
- July Surface Water Supply Index values remain negative statewide and represent extreme to severe drought throughout much of the state, with multiple areas showing a -4, the lowest level of the index. The South Platte Headwaters and the Uncompaghre are nearest to normal at -0.7; all other sub basins are -1.3 or lower.
- As of the August 14, 2012 US Drought Monitor, 100% of Colorado is experiencing some level of drought classification. D2 (severe) and D3 (extreme) predominate over 90% of the state. 9% of the state is experiencing exceptional drought all of which is isolated to the eastern plains.
- Otero, Bend, Prowers, Crowley and Kiowa Counties all experienced extreme drought conditions last summer as well and had not fully recovered, exacerbating conditions and impacts this year.
- Failed and prevented crop planting figures have increased since early July and irrigation abandonments are now being reported as well.
- The latest Climate Prediction Center Seasonal Drought Outlook released August 16, forecasts that drought conditions will persist or intensify throughout much of Colorado through November. The southwest corner of the state is expected to see improvements and an easing of drought conditions.

