

STATE OF COLORADO

Colorado Water Conservation Board Department of Natural Resources

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TO: CWCB Board Members

FROM: Taryn Finnessey, Water Supply Planning Section

SUBJECT: **Agenda Item #27, May 14-15, 2013 Board Meeting
Water Supply Planning - Drought Update and Outlook**

John W. Hickenlooper
Governor

Mike King
DNR Executive Director

Jennifer L. Gimbel
CWCB Director

Staff Recommendation: *This is an informational item only. No Board action is required.*

Background:

Colorado continues to experience moderate (100%), severe (78%), extreme (27%), and exceptional (17%) drought throughout the state. April precipitation helped increase snowpack significantly in many of the northern basins, especially the Colorado, Yampa/White and South Platte and North Platte. However, below average snowpack remains in many of the other basins; with the San Juan/ Dolores and Rio Grande seeing rapid declines during the month of April. Reservoir storage, as of May 1, is below average at 71% of average statewide and streamflow forecasts are significantly below average and predominantly in the lower than 50-69% of average range. Cooler temperatures have helped to moderate demands throughout early spring. Municipal and Agricultural sectors are both preparing for continued dry conditions into the spring and summer months.

Given that Colorado has been experiencing drought for two years in some parts of the state, and one year statewide, below average precipitation could bring severe impacts and require increased & more coordinated response. As a result, the Colorado Drought Mitigation and Response Plan remains in phase-two activation for the entire state.

The drought response portal (www.COH2O.co), launched in March, to assist water providers in distributing information regarding local watering restrictions, has been a huge success with more than 50 water providers participating from five river basins.

Staff will present the latest information on both drought conditions and outlook for the coming weeks and months. Information on snowpack, reservoir levels, stream flows, potential response actions, and related topics will be presented as well as next steps for addressing any developing drought impacts.

The next Water Availability Task Force meeting will be held on May 16, 2012 in Denver at the Colorado Parks and Wildlife headquarters building.