

# STATE OF COLORADO

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## Colorado Water Conservation Board Department of Natural Resources

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TO: CWCB Board Members

John W. Hickenlooper  
Governor

FROM: Kevin Houck, Watershed & Flood Protection Section

Mike King  
DNR Executive Director

DATE: March 5, 2014

James Eklund  
CWCB Director

SUBJECT: **Agenda Item #27, March 18- 19, 2014 Board Meeting  
Watershed & Flood Protection- Spring Climate Forecast and Runoff  
Potential**

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

### **Background:**

2013 was a dramatic climactic year for the State of Colorado in which numerous extreme features were experienced. In one calendar year, the State experienced numerous large wildfires (including the most destructive in state history), the most damaging flood in nearly fifty years in the state, and ongoing exceptional drought, primarily in the Arkansas River watershed.

A significant amount of local worry is being expressed regarding the spring runoff season. Of note, as of March 3, 2014, the snow water equivalent of the South Platte watershed sits at 144% of normal. That is a highly elevated value for this time of year, even during normal years. However, due to the instability of numerous waterways damaged during the 2013 flood, the unpredictability of even average flows can be cause for concern. Two other river basins (Upper Colorado at 131% and North Platte at 136%) are also at elevated levels. Statewide, the snowpack is reported as 111%.

The Arkansas River watershed is still gripped in severe drought, which extends from the eastern edge of Pueblo County to the Kansas state line, with Crowley, Otero, Bent, and Kiowa Counties reporting the worst conditions. Unfortunately, current forecast maps do not present optimistic outlooks for this area.

Staff will present the latest information on both drought and flood conditions and outlooks for the coming weeks and months. Information on snowpack, reservoir levels, stream flows, potential response actions, and related topics will be presented. A review of last year's runoff season will be provided. Klaus Wolter of the University of Colorado will present his long-term forecast for the region and discuss possible impacts from the current La Nina event impacting Colorado's weather patterns.

**A joint meeting of the Water Availability Task Force and the Flood Task Force will be held on March 20, 2014.** Daily flood threat bulletins will be available on the CWCB website during the Colorado flood season from May through September.