



September 2014 Drought Update

Water Availability Task Force Co- Chairs

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Activation of the State Drought Mitigation and Response Plan, and the activation of the Agricultural Impact Task Force remain in effect to respond to ongoing drought conditions in Southern Colorado.

Mild temperatures and above average precipitation has persisted across northern Colorado and portions of the eastern plains, bringing continued drought relief to some of drought stricken Colorado. Forecasts for the coming months indicate that further drought relief is likely in this region. The Rio Grande basin has received less precipitation and conditions there are being closely monitored. Along the Front Range, water providers indicated that storage levels are at, or near, record levels and demand is down.

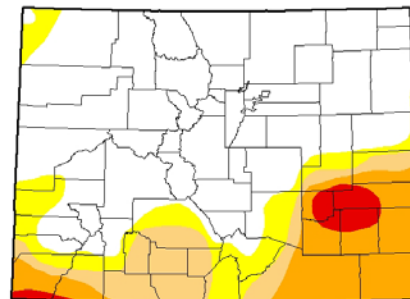
- Currently, 36% of the state is in some level of drought classification according to the US Drought Monitor. 11% is characterized as “abnormally dry” or D0, while an additional 10% is experiencing D1, moderate drought conditions. 13% is classified as severe, 3% as extreme and none of the state is in exceptional drought (D4).
- Despite recent rains on the eastern plains, the Pueblo weather station is still running a deficit both for the water year and on a 4 year time frame. The 15.58 inch deficit over the last four years illustrates how difficult it can be to recover from persistent drought conditions. Walsh, further down the Arkansas basin, is experiencing a 17.56 inch deficit over the same 4 year period.
- Year-to-date precipitation at mountain SNOTEL sites remains at 103% of average. July and August, both saw above average precipitation totals, 122 and 112% respectively, while September to-date is right at average. Storms have largely missed the area of extreme drought that remains near the intersection of Crowley, Kiowa, Otero and Bent counties.
- Reservoir Storage statewide is at 100% of average at the end of August 2014, 28% ahead of where we were for storage this time last year. The lowest reservoir storage statewide continues to be the Upper Rio Grande, with 61% of average storage. The South Platte has the highest storage level at 138% of average. In general, storage is stronger in the northern basins than in the southern river basins.
- The Surface Water Supply Index (SWSI) for the state is near normal across much of the state, with an “abundant” index in a few northern basins of the South Platte, North Platte, Yampa/White, and Colorado. The lowest values in the state are in the Southwest and Rio Grande reflect very low reservoir and streamflow levels. This area of the state has not received the same moisture as the rest of the state.
- A weak El Nino is expected to continue as a weak-to-moderate event into early next year. Such an event may bring wetter than average conditions to the eastern plains for late winter into early spring. Drier conditions may develop in northwestern Colorado and the Colorado River basin.

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The US Drought Monitor illustrates current drought conditions across Colorado. Currently, nearly 2/3 of the state is free of drought while 36% is experiencing drought ranging from abnormally dry to extreme. The drought that is impacting southeastern Colorado is now well into its fourth year, but recent rains have some brought relief. It will likely take years for rangelands and producers to fully recover.

U.S. Drought Monitor Colorado

September 16, 2014
(Released Thursday, Sep. 18, 2014)
Valid 8 a.m. EDT



	Drought Conditions (Percent Area)					
	None	D0-D4	D1-D4	D2-D4	D3-D4	D4
Current	63.98	36.02	25.12	15.56	2.67	0.00
Last Week 9/9/14	63.14	36.86	25.25	15.58	2.67	0.00
3 Months Ago 6/15/14	50.04	49.16	26.49	17.30	9.31	1.89
Start of Calendar Year 1/1/14	32.04	67.96	22.33	13.56	4.01	1.47
Start of Water Year 10/1/13	24.91	75.09	37.88	12.01	4.01	1.47
One Year Ago 9/16/13	15.79	84.21	64.58	16.98	4.01	1.47

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

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

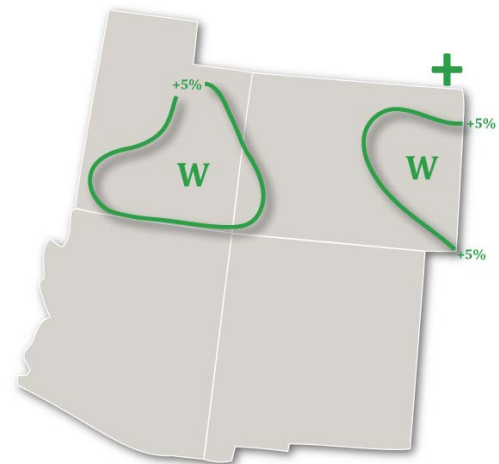
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USDA
<http://droughtmonitor.unl.edu/>

Statewide SWSI values are near normal for most of the state and abundant in the northern basins. Some moderate drought appears in the southwest and Rio Grande basins. Strong surface water supplies puts the state in a good position going into the snow accumulation season.

Experimental PSD Precipitation Forecast Guidance

OCT – DEC 2014 (Issued September 15, 2014) – Skill Masked



The long-term experimental forecast indicates a higher likelihood of wet conditions on the eastern plains in Colorado. This coincides with analog years where the state has experienced a weak to moderate El Nino during the autumn months. Forecasting skill in this area of the state is also good.

NOTE: The next Water Availability Task Force Meeting will be on November 18, 2014 at Colorado Parks and Wildlife Broadway Office; additional information can be found at www.cwcb.state.co.us or by contacting Ben Wade at Ben.Wade@state.co.us