



# August 2015 Drought Update

## Water Availability Task Force Co- Chairs

Taryn Finnessey, CWCB

303.866.3441 ext. 3231

[Taryn.Finnessey@state.co.us](mailto:Taryn.Finnessey@state.co.us)

Tracy Kosloff, DWR

303-866-3581 ext. 8211

[Tracy.Kosloff@state.co.us](mailto:Tracy.Kosloff@state.co.us)

Colorado remains largely drought free despite decreased precipitation in late July and early August. This is in part due to moderate summer temperatures over the same time period. Drier conditions in recent weeks have led to declining soil moisture levels, but overall evapotranspiration rates are below average for the season, and pasture conditions are reportedly good. Water supplies continue to increase and statewide storage is the highest we have seen since 2000. Water providers are reporting system-wide storage levels greater than 90 percent of capacity. Demand is also lower than this time last year.

- State wide water year-to-date precipitation is 99 percent of average, up 19 percent since May 1<sup>st</sup>. Precipitation to-date in August is 79 percent of average following multiple months of above average precipitation.
- July temperatures were below average resulting in the coolest July in over a decade (2004). August temperatures have been warmer, but the western slope continues to be below average.
- In the San Miguel, Dolores, Animas and San Juan river basins August precipitation to-date is 118 percent of normal, exceeding average total August precipitation in just the first two weeks of the month. Coupled with abundant accumulation in the two previous months this region is seeing greatly improved conditions.
- Reservoir Storage statewide is at 117 percent of average as of August 1<sup>st</sup>. The Arkansas has the highest levels in the state at 153 percent of average. John Martin Reservoir in the lower Arkansas is experiencing its highest storage levels since 2001. The Upper Rio Grande has the lowest storage levels at 92 percent of average, this is also the only basin with below average storage.
- The Surface Water Supply Index (SWSI) is abundant across much of the South Platte and Arkansas, and near normal in the remainder of the state. The state has recently complete a automation tool for the index and a revised detailed monthly report can be found at <http://water.state.co.us/DWRDocs/Reports/Pages/SWSIReport.aspx>
- El Niño has gained strength over the last few months and continues to be forecasted as a strong event, if not a “Super El Niño.” The last “Super El Niño” was in 1997 when Colorado experienced above average precipitation.
- Short term forecasts favor mountain precipitation over the plains with localized storms statewide.

NOTE: There will be a Joint Water Availability & Flood Task Force Meeting on September 23, 2015 at Colorado Parks and Wildlife Broadway Office; Additional information can be found at [www.cwcb.state.co.us](http://www.cwcb.state.co.us) or by contacting Ben Wade at [Ben.Wade@state.co.us](mailto:Ben.Wade@state.co.us)

# August 2015 Drought Update

The US Drought Monitor illustrates current drought conditions across Colorado. Drought conditions have mostly been eliminated. With only a small portion of the state (2 percent) experiencing D0 or abnormally dry conditions.

## U.S. Drought Monitor Colorado

**August 11, 2015**  
(Released Thursday, Aug. 13, 2015)  
Valid 8 a.m. EDT



Drought Conditions (Percent Area)						
	None	D0-D4	D1-D4	D2-D4	D3-D4	D4
Current	97.96	2.04	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Last Week	97.95	2.05	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
3 Months Ago	42.49	57.51	49.14	20.25	0.00	0.00
Start of Calendar Year	69.87	30.13	21.26	12.26	0.00	0.00
Start of Water Year	68.98	31.04	22.94	13.82	2.31	0.00
One Year Ago	59.90	40.10	26.95	15.59	2.87	0.00

**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.

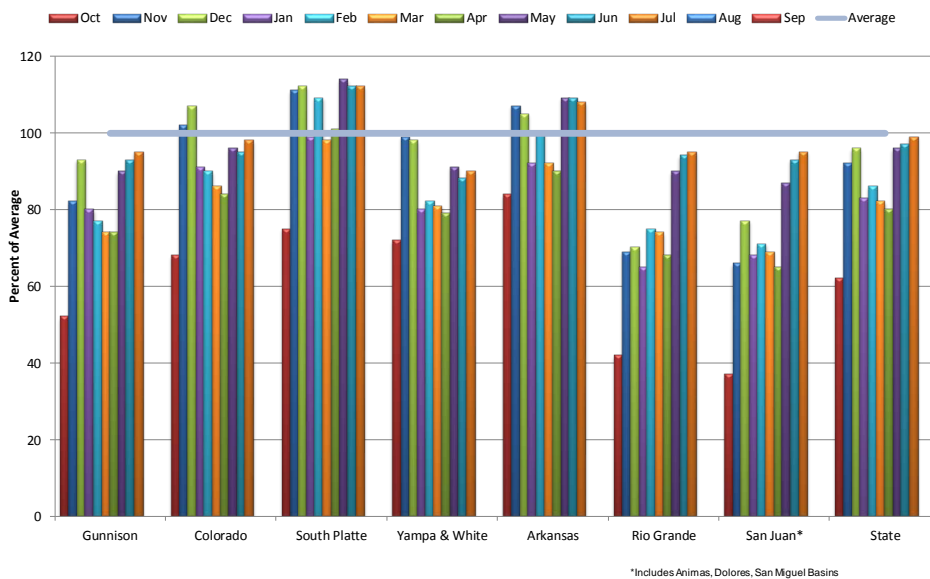
**Author:**  
Brian Fuchs  
National Drought Mitigation Center



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

## Colorado Year-to-Date Precipitation Summary for WY2015

USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service



Late spring and early summer precipitation has been strong statewide, with most basins near or above average conditions for the water year. The water year runs from October through September.

The Division of Water Resource has recently completed the development of a SWSI automation tool that provides reliable information on current surface water supply conditions. The new map output is shown here, and additional information about the index and the automation project can be found on DWR's website.

