November 2016 Drought Update

Water Availability Task Force Co- Chairs

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Colorado experienced above average temperatures in October and the first half of November combined with well below normal precipitation as weak La Niña conditions have developed. October was the third warmest on record and temperatures across the state through November 14 ranged from 4-10 degrees above normal. While the 2016 Water Year ended with nearly average precipitation, the 2017 water year is off to a dry start with all basins in the state recording well below normal precipitation as of November 14 at the mountain SNOTEL sites.

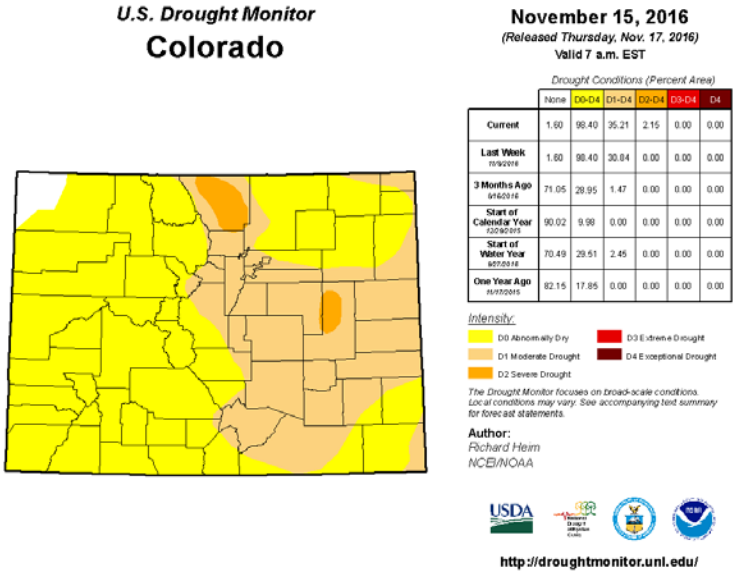
- Statewide snowpack as of November 14 is at 6% of average. This is the worst start to the mountain snowpack season since at least 1986, although daily snowpack records only date back to that year. At this point in the water year, Colorado typically receives 2.1 inches of snow water equivalent however the state is currently at 0.1 inches.

- Statewide water year to date mountain precipitation is 34% of average. The South Platte & Yampa/White basins have the highest percentage of average at 42% and 47% respectively. The lack of precipitation has negatively affected the winter wheat crop.

- Reservoir storage statewide remains strong at 104% of normal. The Southwest and Yampa/White River basins have the highest storage levels in the state at 112 and 114% of average, respectively. The Upper Rio Grande has the lowest storage levels at 87% percent.

- Water providers in attendance all reported storage levels ranging from 70 to 123 percent of average. Demand is above average & providers hope colder temperatures will help decrease the demands.

- A weak La Niña has developed contributing to the lower than average precipitation in the state this fall. The long term forecast predicts the weak La Niña may be gone by early 2017. CPC forecasts give Colorado equal chances for moisture through late winter with a chance for extra moisture in December. Weak La Niña conditions should favor the northern and central mountains through mid winter, after which it would revert to being a negative factor. The next two weeks promise to bring near normal moisture to the state in a welcome change from dry fall conditions.



The US Drought Monitor shows D2, severe drought, has been introduced into Larimer and Lincoln counties. D1, moderate drought, has been expanded further towards the southeastern part of the state. Only 1.6% of Colorado in the northwest part of the state is currently drought free.

NOTE: The next Water Availability Task Force Meeting will be held on January 19, 2017 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