



April 2017 Drought Update

Water Availability Task Force Co- Chairs

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With temperatures eight degrees above average, March of this year was the warmest March on record for the State of Colorado, and the second warmest on record for the nation. Late March precipitation brought much needed moisture, but the state as a whole received only 64 percent of average, in what is historically one of our wettest months. April has also been dry with only 58 percent of normal precipitation to-date. However, the forecast for the next two weeks indicates that the state will likely see cooler temperatures and more moisture.

- Demand has already increased for municipal water providers, in some communities as much as 150 percent of average for this time of year; this is indicative of an increase in outdoor watering.
- In Colorado, normal snow accumulation typically peaks around April 9th, yet in 2017 this occurred on March 11th, despite some recovery in late March and early April that gave the South Platte, Arkansas, and Rio Grande basins their respective peaks in early April. Additional snow accumulation is possible should adequate future weather conditions develop.
- During the snow accumulation season all river basins were able to reach or exceed typical peak snowpack levels. Northern Basins met typical snowpack peak levels (South Platte, Yampa/White, North Platte, Arkansas & Colorado). Southern Basins exceeded typical snowpack peak levels (Gunnison, San Miguel/ Dolores, Animas/ San Juan).
- Statewide water year- to- date snowpack as of April 19th is at 91% of normal, down from 121% on March 17th.
- Reservoir storage statewide remains high at 110% of normal and all basins are at or above normal. March was the first month since 2009 that the Upper Rio Grande reservoirs reached 100% of normal.
- Following two months of below average precipitation the Surface Water Supply Index (SWSI) has begun to show decreased water availability particularly in the Yampa/ White and the South Platte River basins.
- Streamflow forecasts have fallen considerably over the last month and now range from a high of 147% of normal on Tomichi Creek to a low of 78% on Antero & Yampa above Stagecoach.
- Neutral ENSO conditions are present, and are favored to continue through spring, with the possible development of an El Nino this summer. The April-June forecast looks mixed for the season, with the Climate Prediction Center (CPC) expecting more moisture than average, while statistical tools favor drier conditions, especially over the eastern plains. The monsoon season looks favorable based on CPC forecast and current analogues. Should an El Niño develop this summer, precipitation odds during the latter half of the growing season would become more favorable.
- Core fire season in the mountains of western Colorado is anticipated to get off to a later than average start s a result of decent moisture over the winter. Consequently below average large fire risk is predicted from May through June.
- For the lower elevations, foothills and south eastern plains the expectation is for average large fire potential from April through July.
- The Flood Threat Bulletin will begin May 1st and can be found at <http://www.coloradofloodthreat.com/>
- A new tool for SNODAS has been developed and can be accessed at <http://projects.openwaterfoundation.org/owf-proj-co-cwcb-2016-snodas/prototype>

NOTE: The next Water Availability Task Force Meeting will be held on May 26, 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

April 2017 Drought Update

U.S. Drought Monitor Colorado

April 18, 2017
(Released Thursday, Apr. 20, 2017)
Valid 8 a.m. EDT

	Drought Conditions (Percent Area)						
	None	D0-D4	D1-D4	D2-D4	D3-D4	D4	
Current	46.01	53.99	11.88	0.00	0.00	0.00	
Last Week 04-11-2017	51.89	48.11	19.46	0.00	0.00	0.00	
3 Months Ago 01-17-2017	44.17	55.83	35.34	0.75	0.00	0.00	
Start of Calendar Year 01-03-2017	31.88	68.12	37.21	2.88	0.00	0.00	
Start of Water Year 09-27-2016	70.49	29.51	2.45	0.00	0.00	0.00	
One Year Ago 04-18-2016	74.62	25.38	2.08	0.00	0.00	0.00	

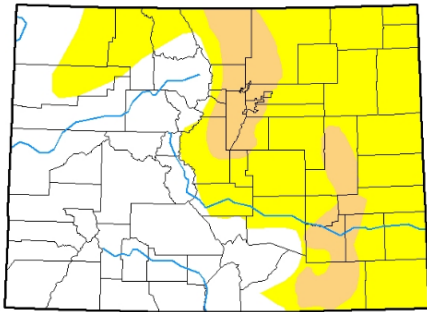
Intensity:
■ D0 Abnormally Dry ■ D3 Extreme Drought
■ D1 Moderate Drought ■ D4 Exceptional Drought
■ D2 Severe Drought

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

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

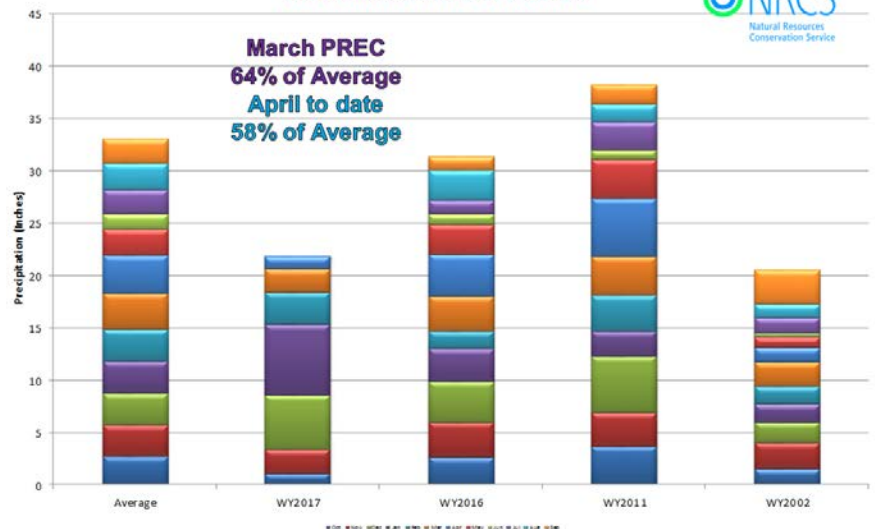


The US Drought Monitor illustrates a one category improvement in drought conditions over much of the eastern plains from last month. The majority of this (42%) is abnormally dry, while 12 percent is moderate drought. Over the last few weeks warm and dry conditions have lead to drier conditions in the northwestern portion of the state.

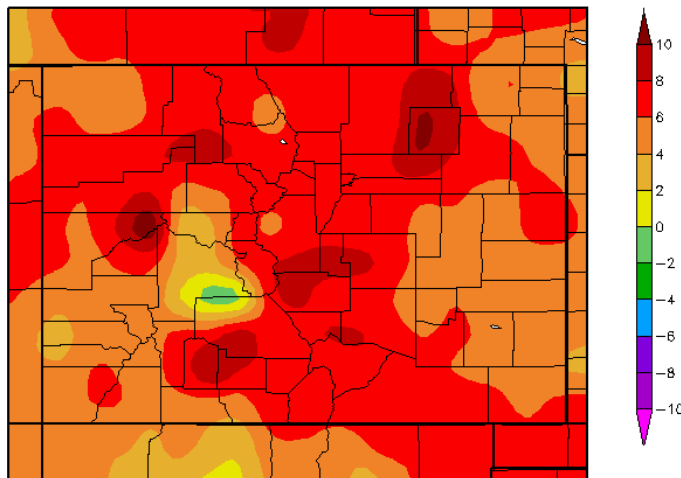
Despite significant precipitation in late March and early April, both months have been drier than normal. We will continue to monitor the situation closely.

Colorado Statewide High/Low Monthly Precipitation Summary

Based on Provisional SNOTEL data as of Apr 17, 2017



Departure from Normal Temperature (F) 3/1/2017 – 3/31/2017



Record warmth in March resulted in an earlier than normal snow ablation in most basins, as a result snowpack melt rates will accelerate quickly each time CO returns to warm weather. Long range forecasts also indicate a high probability of above average temperatures through July.