



COLORADO
Governor Jared Polis

Governor's Memorandum of Drought Emergency

To: Executive Directors, Departments of State Government

From: Jared Polis, Governor, State of Colorado

Date: November 30, 2020

RE: Phase 3 Activation of the Colorado Drought Mitigation and Response Plan

This memo marks the transition of the State Drought Mitigation and Response Plan from Phase 2 to Phase 3 “Full Plan Activation” and activation of the Municipal Water Impact Task Force. For nearly 15 weeks, deep and persistent drought conditions have covered 99-100% of the state. The last time the state experienced this intensity and coverage of drought was early 2013. Exceptional (D4) drought conditions currently cover 27% of the state with 47% in Extreme (D3) drought. 2020’s record drought and wildfire seasons have left deep ecological and economic scars — with impacts that will persist for many years to come.

Climate outlooks for 2021 indicate drought conditions are highly likely to continue next year. Should well-above average snowpack accumulate over winter months, the state may choose to revert back to an activated “Phase 2”. Until then, it is strongly recommended that water providers, local governments, agricultural producers, and water- and open space-based businesses proactively plan for the continuance of drought through 2021. The message for winter is a hopeful watchfulness, but due to extreme soil moisture deficits statewide, average snowpack will result in below average springtime streamflows.

As directed by Colorado’s Drought Mitigation and Response Plan, the Municipal Water Task Force is chaired by the Colorado Water Conservation Board and the Department of Local Affairs. The initial objective of the Task Force is for water suppliers to coordinate with each other and the state going into winter to prepare for anticipated drought-related challenges and opportunities in 2021.

Phase 3 will remain activated until further notice for all 64 Colorado counties. The Drought Task Force, Agriculture Impact Task Force, and Municipal Water Impact Task Force will continue to lead state response and mitigation efforts. Should you have questions about the role of your agency during this activation please contact Megan Holcomb, Senior Climate Specialist, at 720-772-6928 or at megan.holcomb@state.co.us.

Sincerely,

Jared Polis
Governor

