



COLORADO

Department of Natural Resources

January 18, 2023

Water Availability Summary - WY 2023

Observed temperature

Calendar year 2022 for the state was the 20th warmest and 37th driest in the 128 year record. Thus far in Water Year 2023 October and December have been near normal in temperature, and November was below Normal (31st coolest). A major cold front swept through Colorado on December 21st - from 3:50 - 4:00pm, the Christman Field station dropped from 43.4°F to 9.5°F. That's a drop of 33.9°F in 10 minutes. Overall Water Year to date 2023 most of the state experienced near average temperature, with a statewide rank of 65th warmest/64th coolest. Small select areas in the East, Central Mountains, and Northwest experienced slightly cooler temperatures and parts of Mesa and Montrose counties experienced slightly warmer temperatures.

Observed precipitation and drought conditions

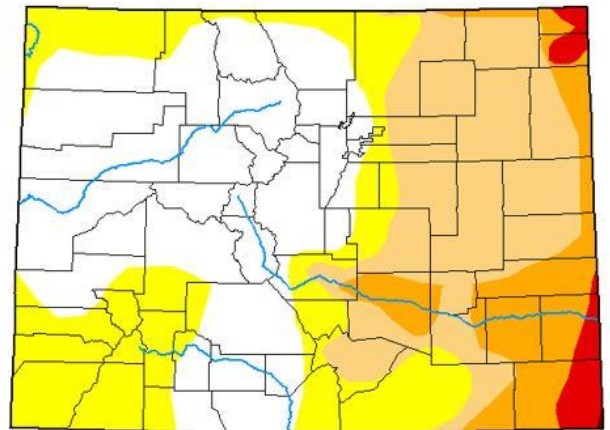
In Water Year 2023, October and November saw near average statewide precipitation, whereas December saw above average precipitation (20th wettest on record). Precipitation has been near normal in the South Platte and Upper Rio Grande basins and above normal in all other basins besides the Arkansas basin, where it remains below normal. Drought has improved in western CO and worsened in southeast CO. Precipitation is above normal at 118% of median for the water year to date.

Forecasted streamflows

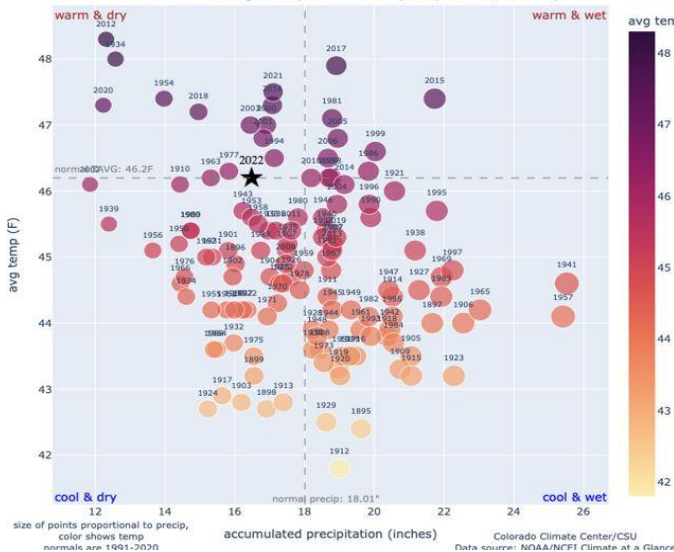
Although not yet available, February 1st streamflow forecasts are anticipated to be significantly improved over the previous month in most parts of the state. Above normal summer precipitation improved soil moisture conditions going into winter which could increase the efficiency of snowmelt runoff over previous years.

U.S. Drought Monitor Colorado

January 10, 2023
(Released Thursday, Jan. 12, 2023)
Valid 7 a.m. EST



Colorado statewide average temperature and precipitation, January - December



Snowpack and reservoir storage

Statewide snowpack is 129% of median for this time of year. A series of storms since the end of December have provided substantial increases to the snowpack statewide. Snowpack is well above normal across all of Western Colorado and near normal in other basins except the Arkansas which is below normal. The Sangre de Cristo mountains, feeding water into both the Rio Grande and Arkansas basins, have the most meager snowpack in Colorado.

Statewide reservoir storage is at 79% of normal. Reservoir storage remains highly variable across Colorado with the Gunnison and combined Southwest Basins holding substantially less water than normal. Releases from Blue Mesa are driving low reservoir storage in Gunnison Basin.

Seasonal outlook

La Niña looks likely to weaken the rest of winter, with neutral conditions to take over sometime in the spring. This could be good news for the Eastern Plains. The Climate Prediction Center is uncertain about likely temperature patterns as we head into spring and predicts a slight leaning toward drier than average conditions, especially the southern part of the state. However it is uncertain if that will hold true if La Niña is no longer a factor.

Next Water Availability Task Force Meeting: February 21, 2023 9:30am

Co-Chairs: Kathryn Weismiller, CWCB & Tracy Kosloff, DWR

Additional info at cwcb.colorado.gov/water-availability-flood-task-forces

Special thanks to Becky Bolinger, Colorado Climate Center; Karl Wetlaufer, USDA Natural Resources Conservation Services