



# COLORADO

Department of  
Natural Resources

## September 2021 Drought Update

As the 2021 Water Year comes to a close, Colorado experienced the 4th warmest summer on record in 127 years on record. The month of August concluded as the 14th warmest August statewide and the 23rd driest on record. The [U.S. Drought Monitor](#) from October 5 reflects the result of warmer than average temperatures and below average precipitation as 2% of Colorado persists in exceptional (D4) conditions; 11% in extreme drought (D3); 14% severe drought (D2); 27% moderate (D1); and 35% of the state in abnormally dry (D0) conditions.

The [Standardized Precipitation Index](#) (SPI) values over varying timescales (30 days to 24 months) reveal varying chapters in the 2020-2021 drought story. Despite the summer monsoon activity that brought wetter conditions to western Colorado, the 12-month SPI shows extreme drought conditions in northwest Colorado and a continued dry pattern across the western half of the state. The satellite-derived [VegDri Index](#), partially based on SPI, similarly highlights severe drought stress for vegetation in southeast Colorado and moderate drought on the eastern plains and northwest Colorado. Overall, there are very dry soil conditions going into the winter months.

Statewide [reservoir storage](#) was 80% of average and 48% of total capacity as of September 1 (a reduction from 85% of average on August 1, 2021).

The NOAA Climate Prediction Center [three month outlook](#) leans toward warmer temperatures and drier than average conditions, particularly in southern Colorado. It is expected that La Nina conditions will emerge during the fall months and persist through winter and early spring, followed by ENSO-neutral conditions in late spring and early summer of 2022.

Water providers report reservoir storage is in decent shape and demand is average for this time of year although some reported water usage was the same as in July and August.

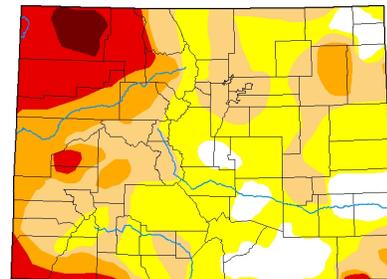
Millet harvesting has been a disappointment in most areas of the state. Winter wheat planting has started despite the dry conditions though some producers will wait until there is moisture to plant winter wheat. The Colorado Crop Progress from the USDA reports the top soil moisture is 40% of adequate and the sub-soil moisture is at 35% of adequate.

Wildlife officials reported fishing closures were lifted on the Colorado, Eagle and Roaring Fork rivers but closures remain on the mainstem of the Yampa, Elk and Tomichi Creeks and the Dolores River below McPhee Reservoir. Aquatic biologists have discovered a significant fish kill in Grizzly Creek after the rain event on the Glenwood Canyon burn scar resulted in a massive mudslide.

**Next Water Availability Task Force Meeting: NOVEMBER 4, 2021 9:30 AM**  
Co-Chairs: Megan Holcomb, CWCB & Tracy Kosloff, DWR  
Additional info at [cwcb.colorado.gov/water-availability-flood-task-forces](http://cwcb.colorado.gov/water-availability-flood-task-forces)

### U.S. Drought Monitor Colorado

October 5, 2021  
(Released Thursday, Oct. 7, 2021)  
Valid 8 a.m. EDT



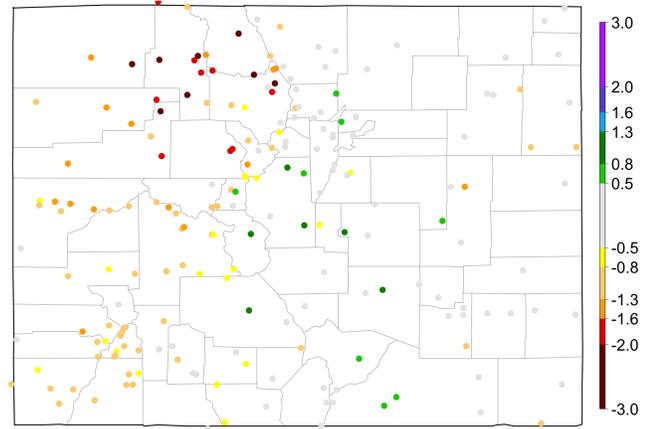
**Intensity:**  
None  
D0 Abnormally Dry  
D1 Moderate Drought  
D2 Severe Drought  
D3 Extreme Drought  
D4 Exceptional Drought

The Drought Monitor focuses on broad-scale conditions. Local conditions may vary. For more information on the Drought Monitor, go to <http://droughtmonitor.unl.edu/about.aspx>

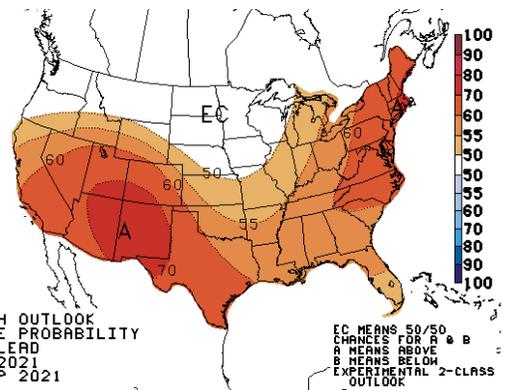
**Author:**  
Brian Fuchs  
National Drought Mitigation Center



### 12-month SPI: 2020/09/20 - 2021/09/19



Data from High Plains Regional Climate Center and ACIS



THREE-MONTH OUTLOOK  
TEMPERATURE PROBABILITY  
0.5 MONTH LEAD  
VALID QND 2021  
MADE 16 SEP 2021

EC MEANS 50/50  
CHANCES FOR A & B  
A MEANS ABOVE  
B MEANS BELOW  
EXPERIMENTAL 2-CLASS  
OUTLOOK