



# COLORADO

Department of Natural Resources

## May 2020 Drought Update

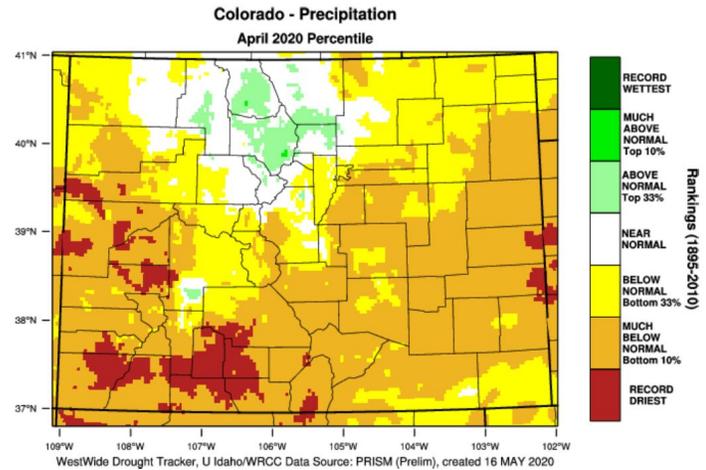
As predicted in last month's report, snowpack has rapidly declined. Soils are exceptionally dry throughout the southern half of the state and much of the eastern plains. Thus, despite average mountain snowpack, drought conditions have quickly intensified - particularly in the San Luis Valley, Arkansas Valley, and parts of the western slope. Outlooks show the eastern plains as hot and dry for the next two weeks. May's Water Availability Task Force (WATF) meeting confirmed some producers are anticipating significant decreases in winter wheat production and seeing stressed and delayed rangeland grasses. Succinct, local impact reports from CoCoRaHS volunteers can be found on the CO Climate Center [website](#). Drought Plan activation is being considered for the agriculture sector in select counties by the WATF and Drought Task Force members.

- The latest U.S. Drought Monitor, released May 28, shows two cells of deepening drought conditions across the San Juans and Sangre de Cristos as well as southeastern Colorado centered around Lamar. D3 (extreme) conditions first emerged on the Drought Monitor on May 5, covering 11% of the state. As of May 26, D3 has increased to 17.5% coverage.
- D0 (abnormally dry) conditions cover 11.5% of the state; D1 (moderate) covers 21%; D2 (severe) covers 26%; and D3 (extreme) drought encompasses 17.5% of the state. The north border remains drought free (23%).
- The 90-day Standardized Precipitation Index (SPI) (from Feb. 24 to May 24) shows below average moisture for nearly all of Colorado aside from the Boulder-Longmont region.
- ENSO forecasts continue to hold in neutral conditions, with a 65% chance of neutral conditions holding through the summer. By autumn, La Niña starts to become a possibility.
- NOAA's Climate Prediction Center three month outlook maps show very high confidence for above average temperatures June through August for the entirety of the state and equal chances of below, above, or average precipitation outlooks.
- Reservoir storage remains just above average for most major basins except the southwest reservoirs (95% avg), the Upper Rio Grande (78%), and Arkansas (91%). Statewide, reservoirs are at 104% of average and 61% capacity.
- Municipal water providers described above average demands in April and May, indicating early irrigation demands, but most reported average reservoir levels.

### Next Water Availability Task Force Meeting:

**JUNE 23, 2020 9:30a - 11:00a - Webinar**

Co-Chairs: Megan Holcomb, CWCB & Tracy Kosloff, DWR  
 Questions? Contact [ben.wade@state.co.us](mailto:ben.wade@state.co.us)  
 Additional info at [cwcb.colorado.gov](http://cwcb.colorado.gov)

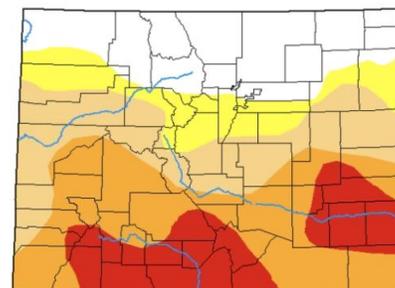


### U.S. Drought Monitor Colorado

May 26, 2020

(Released Thursday, May 28, 2020)  
 Valid 8 a.m. EDT

	Drought Conditions (Percent Area)					
	None	D0-D1	D1-D2	D2-D3	D3-D4	D4
Current	23.22	76.78	65.20	43.76	17.52	0.00
Last Week (05-19-2020)	23.22	76.78	65.20	46.31	17.52	0.00
3 Months Ago (02-25-2020)	30.09	69.91	42.77	3.30	0.00	0.00
Start of Calendar Year (01-01-2020)	31.72	68.28	51.19	20.11	0.00	0.00
Start of Water Year (10-01-2019)	30.14	69.86	27.53	0.00	0.00	0.00
One Year Ago (05-26-2019)	100.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00



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

Author: Curtis Rigant, National Drought Mitigation Center

