



## FEBRUARY 2013 DROUGHT UPDATE

### Water Availability Task Force Co- Chairs

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### ***Activation of Phase 2 &3 of the State Drought Mitigation and Response Plan, and the activation of the Agricultural Impact Task Force remain in effect to respond to ongoing drought conditions throughout Colorado.***

Late January brought beneficial moisture to the four corners region of the state, decreasing the drought severity in the southwest. However, the eastern plains remain exceptionally dry and have seen an expansion of D4 classification according to the US Drought monitor. Early February also brought above average temperatures for much of the state. While mountain snowpack has improved in some portions of the state, it has declined in others, and all basins remain below normal for water year precipitation and snowpack. Many water providers are preparing for continued drought conditions throughout the spring and summer. The state is working with providers to help ensure all essential needs are met.

- As of the February 12, 2013 US Drought Monitor, 100% of Colorado is experiencing some level of drought classification. D1 (moderate) and D2 (severe) and cover 49% of the state, while D3 (extreme) accounts for an additional 26%. One fourth of the state is now experiencing exceptional drought (D4), which is isolated to the eastern plains.
- Despite beneficial moisture in some portions of the state during January and early February that boosted snowpack to 91% of average in the Southwest and 81% in the Rio Grande basin; the state as a whole remains at 76% of normal for the water year.\*
- The South Platte is experiencing the lowest snowpack in the state at 59% of normal followed by the Arkansas at 65%. The North Platte, Yampa/White, Colorado and Gunnison are at 72, 76, 70 and 78% of normal, respectively.\*
- Given current conditions 143% of normal precipitation is needed to reach the average peak snowpack, which typically occurs on April 8<sup>th</sup>. There is a 10% chance that this will occur.
- Municipalities and water providers are actively preparing to respond to continued drought conditions with both mandatory and voluntary watering restrictions throughout the spring and summer demand season. Many are reporting storage levels below 50% of capacity.
- Statewide reservoir storage is at 69% of average and 38% of capacity. The highest storage levels are in the Yampa/ White River Basin, at 103% of average while the lowest storage in the state is the Rio Grande River basin at 51% of average. All other basins range from 57% to 80% of average and 18% to 76% of total capacity. Last year this time the state was at 105% of average reservoir storage.\*
- Surface Water Supply Index values have improved in isolated areas of the state following recent precipitation, yet all values remain negative.
- NRCS is forecasting below average streamflows for the entire state, with most of the basins falling within the 50-69% of average forecast range for April 1st.

*\* The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) uses a 30 year running average that is updated every ten years. The transition to the new "normal" period of 1981-2010 began in early 2013 (previous months used the 1971-2000 period). NRCS is also transitioning to the use of median rather than average to define normal. Please keep in mind that this transition will affect the data when presented as a percent of normal.*

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## U.S. Drought Monitor

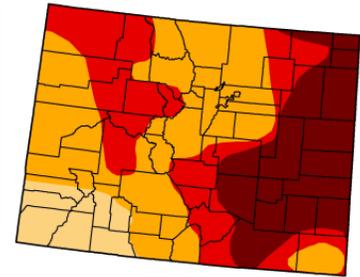
February 12, 2013  
Valid 7 a.m. EST

### Colorado

The US Drought Monitor illustrates current drought conditions across Colorado. Most of the state is experiencing severe to exceptional drought conditions. However, recent moisture in the southwest corner of the state resulted in improvements from severe to moderate drought.

Drought Conditions (Percent Area)

	None	D0-D4	D1-D4	D2-D4	D3-D4	D4
Current	0.00	100.00	100.00	91.30	50.99	24.92
Last Week (02/05/2013 map)	0.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	54.29	24.92
3 Months Ago (11/13/2012 map)	0.00	100.00	100.00	91.52	48.56	12.50
Start of Calendar Year (01/01/2013 map)	0.00	100.00	100.00	85.06	53.47	13.48
Start of Water Year (08/25/2012 map)	0.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	61.75	16.89
One Year Ago (02/07/2012 map)	30.48	69.52	41.07	10.60	0.21	0.00



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

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

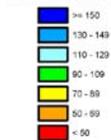


Released Thursday, February 14, 2013  
Michael Brewer, National Climatic Data Center, NOAA

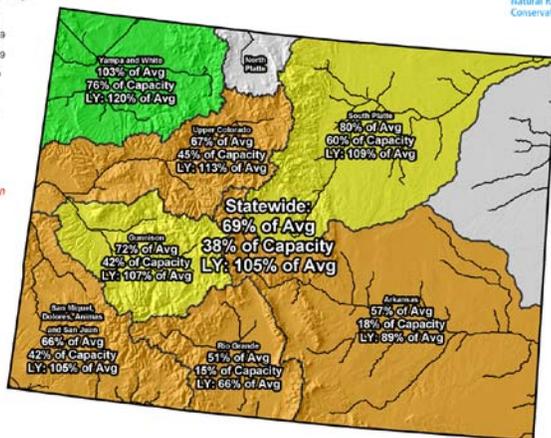
<http://droughtmonitor.unl.edu>

### Colorado Reservoir Storage Map

Percent of Average



Provisional Data  
Subject to Revision



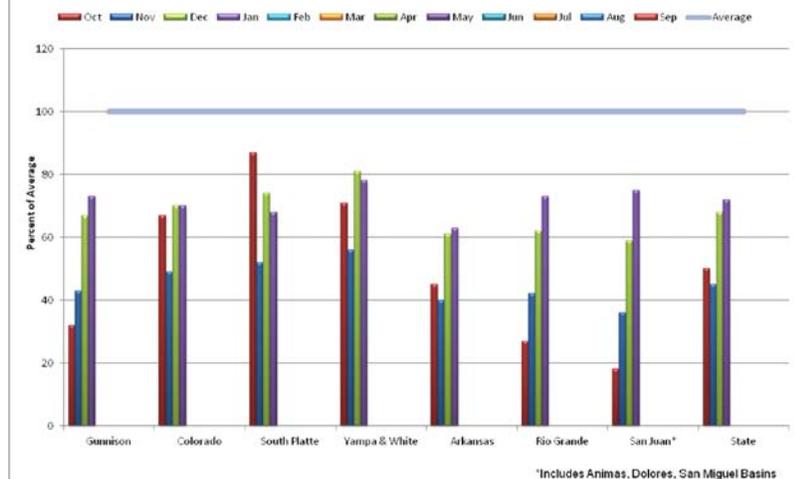
End of January 2013

Despite beneficial moisture in some portions of the state earlier this month, all basins remain well below normal for precipitation for the water year.

As of February 1<sup>st</sup>, statewide reservoir storage remains well below average at 69%, and 38% of capacity. This time last year reservoir levels were at 105% of average. Energy companies hold much of the storage rights in the Yampa/White basin, and have reported retaining large storage amounts which results in the above average reservoir levels in the basin.

### Colorado Year-to-Date Precipitation Summary for WY2013

USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service



**NOTE:** The next WATF meeting will be held March 21, 2013 at Colorado Park and Wildlife Headquarters, additional information can be found at [www.cwcb.state.co.us](http://www.cwcb.state.co.us) or by contacting Ben Wade at [Ben.Wade@state.co.us](mailto:Ben.Wade@state.co.us)