



Natural Resources Conservation Service
P.O. Box 2890
Washington, D.C. 20013

Date: January 15, 2006

Subject: January 1, 2006 Western Snowpack Conditions and Water Supply Forecasts

The following information is provided for your use in describing western climate and water supply conditions as of January 1, 2006.

OVERVIEW

In a complete reversal of last year's record high precipitation and snowpack, the southwestern U.S. is experiencing record low snowpacks and seasonal precipitation. In a parallel twist, last year's record low snowpacks in 2005 the Pacific Northwest have been replaced with above average snowpacks in many basins and well above average precipitation throughout the region. Above average snowpacks are reported in central Oregon, central Idaho, and western Montana and western Wyoming. Precipitation is well above average in most Pacific Northwest basins in response to a series of warm, sub-tropical storms that have moved through the region starting in September and October of 2005. The West has been warm this fall and winter, with temperatures ranging 2 to 5 degrees above average Westwide and an exceptionally warm December with temperatures ranging from 10 to 15 degrees above average in Montana, Wyoming, Colorado, Idaho, Nevada, and Utah.

Seasonal runoff forecasts for most Southwest basins are well below average as a result of record low snowpacks and lack of precipitation. Runoff forecasts are above average in western Colorado, eastern Utah, southern Wyoming, northern Nevada, the Sierras of California, central Oregon, southern Idaho, and parts of western Montana. Near to slightly below average streamflow is forecast for western Oregon, most of Washington, northern Idaho, British Columbia, western Montana, northern Wyoming and southern Utah and southwestern Colorado.

As of January 1, reservoir storages for all western states except for Arizona and California are slightly below historic averages. Arizona and California are above historical averages.

SNOWPACK

The January 1, 2006 snowpack map reflects extremely low (less than 50% of average snowpacks) in Arizona, New Mexico, southern Colorado, southwestern Utah, parts of central Nevada, southwestern and northwestern Oregon, and southwestern and southeastern Washington (Fig. 1). The scarcity of winter storms in the Southwest is the primary reason for the extremely low snowpacks and warm temperatures in western Oregon and other parts of the Pacific Northwest have produced more rain than snow. Snowpacks are also below average in northern Idaho, northern Washington, northern Wyoming parts of northern California and central Utah. A series of strong winter storms has resulted in above or well above average snowpacks (111% to over 150%) in eastern Oregon, southern Idaho, southwest Montana, western and southern Wyoming, northern Utah, northern Colorado and the central Sierras of California. Snowpacks in Alaska are below average in the southern third of the state and well below average in the northern third.

A map containing a daily update of the westwide snowpack may be obtained from the following URL - http://www.wcc.nrcs.usda.gov/water/w_qnty.html

MONTHLY AND SEASONAL PRECIPITATION

December precipitation was extremely low, less than 50% of average, in southern California, Arizona, New Mexico, and extreme southern Colorado (Fig. 2). Precipitation was near, to slightly below average, in southern Utah, eastern Wyoming, most of Montana and northwest Washington. Precipitation was well above average (greater than 150%) in central California, most of Oregon, east-central Washington, southern Idaho, northern Utah, western and southern Wyoming and north-central Colorado.

Seasonal precipitation for the period October 1, 2005 to December 31, 2005 is almost a carbon copy of the December precipitation (Fig. 3) Very low amounts have been reported in southern California, Arizona, and New Mexico is, near average in the Great Basin and well above average amounts in northern California, the Pacific Northwest, Montana, Wyoming and northern Colorado. Alaska precipitation is near to slightly below average in most basins and slightly above average in southwestern basins.

SPRING AND SUMMER STREAMFLOW FORECASTS

As of January 1, 2006, a majority of basins in the Southwest are forecast to receive well below average spring and summer streamflows while above average streamflow is forecast for basins in central Oregon, southern Idaho, northern Nevada, western Colorado, eastern Utah, southern Wyoming, a portion of southwestern Montana and the Sierras of central California (Fig. 4).

Near to slightly below average streamflow is forecast for western Oregon, most of Washington, northern Idaho, British Columbia, western Montana, northern Wyoming and southern Utah and southwestern Colorado.

Specific state streamflow summaries can be obtained from the Internet location - <http://www.wcc.nrcs.usda.gov/cgibin/bor.pl>

RESERVOIR STORAGE

As of January 1, reservoir storages for all western states except for Arizona and California are slightly below historic averages. Arizona and California are above historical averages (Fig. 5).

FOR MORE INFORMATION

The National Water and Climate Center Homepage provides the latest available snowpack and water supply information. Please visit us at <http://www.wcc.nrcs.usda.gov>

/s/ DAVID THACKERAY

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Washington, DC

Mountain Snowpack as of January 1, 2006

Legend

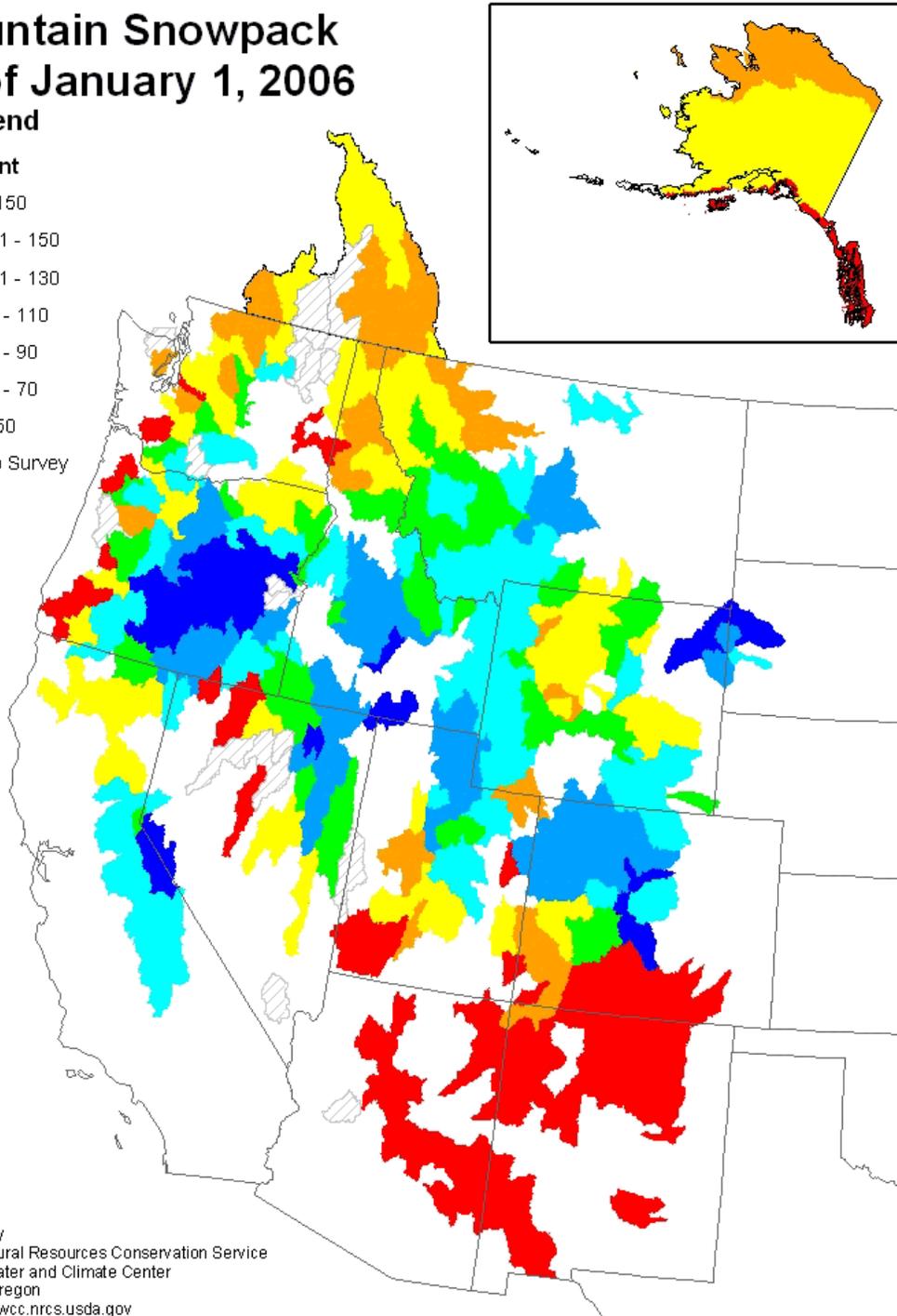
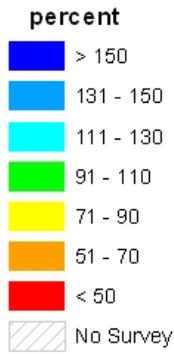
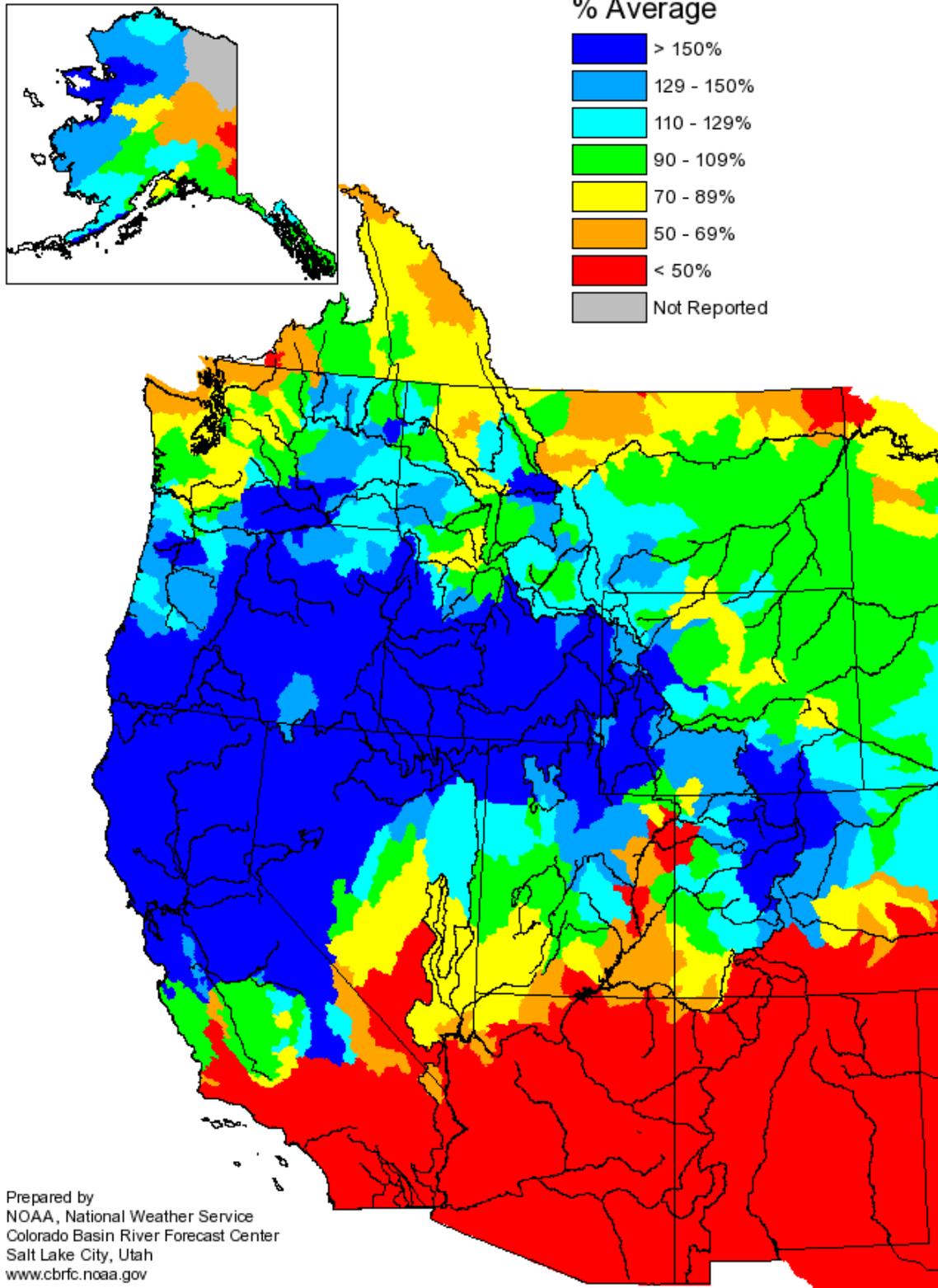


Figure 1. Mountain Snowpack, January 1, 2006

Monthly Precipitation for December 2005

(Averaged by Hydrologic Unit)



Prepared by
NOAA, National Weather Service
Colorado Basin River Forecast Center
Salt Lake City, Utah
www.cbrfc.noaa.gov

Figure 2. December 2005 Precipitation

Seasonal Precipitation, October 2005 - December 2005

(Averaged by Hydrologic Unit)

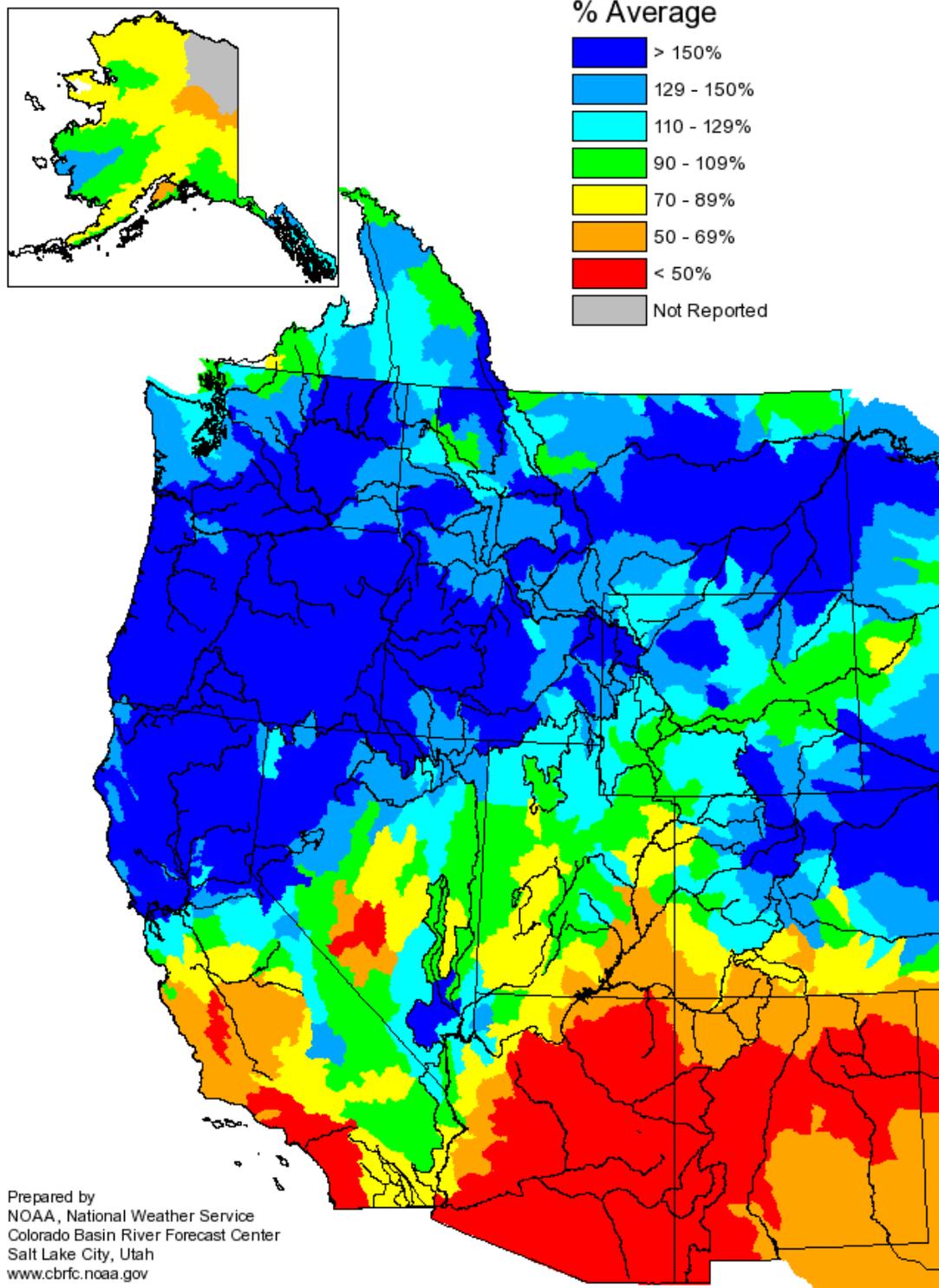


Figure 3. Seasonal Precipitation, October 1, 2005 to December 31, 2005

Spring and Summer Streamflow Forecasts as of January 1, 2006

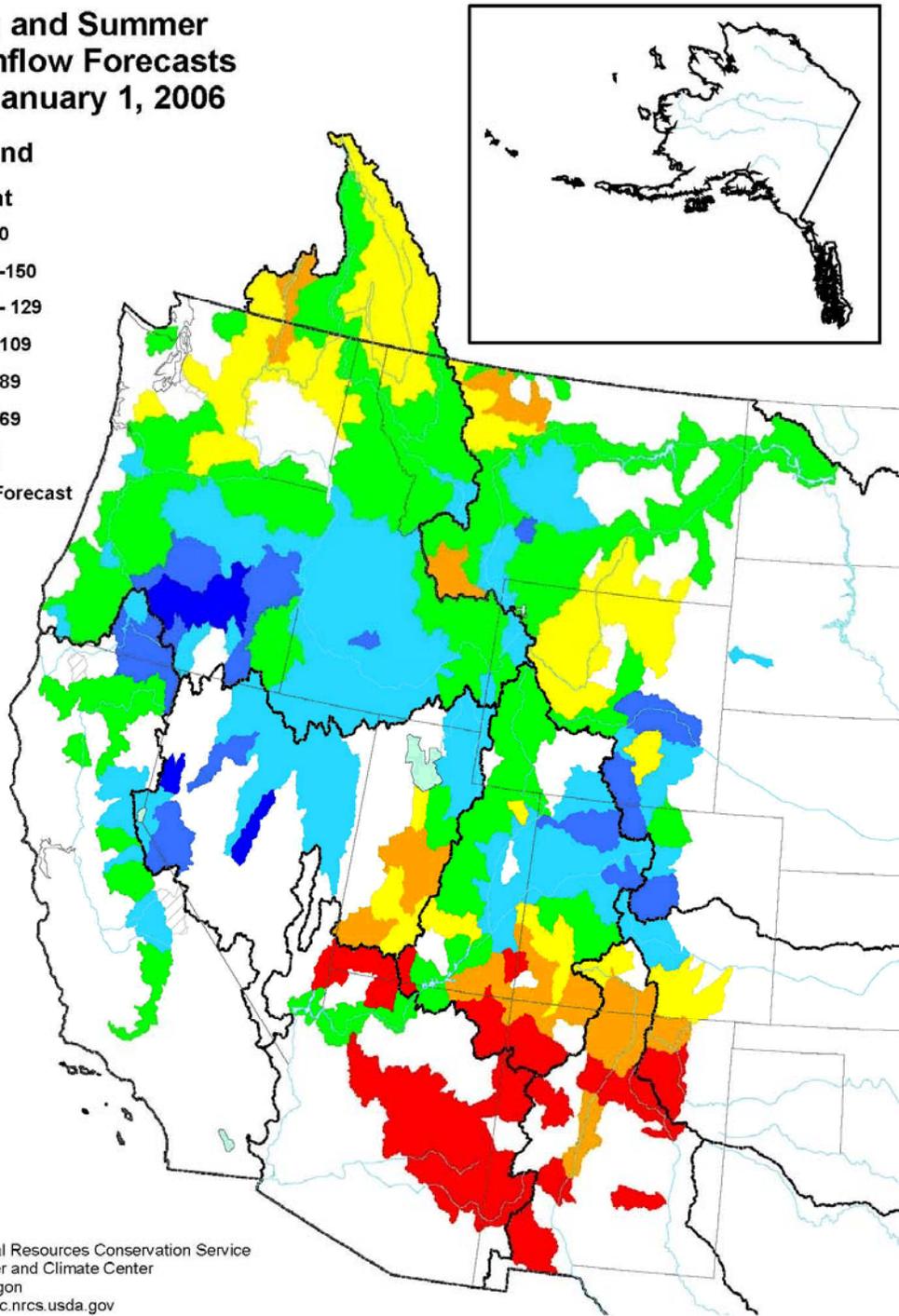
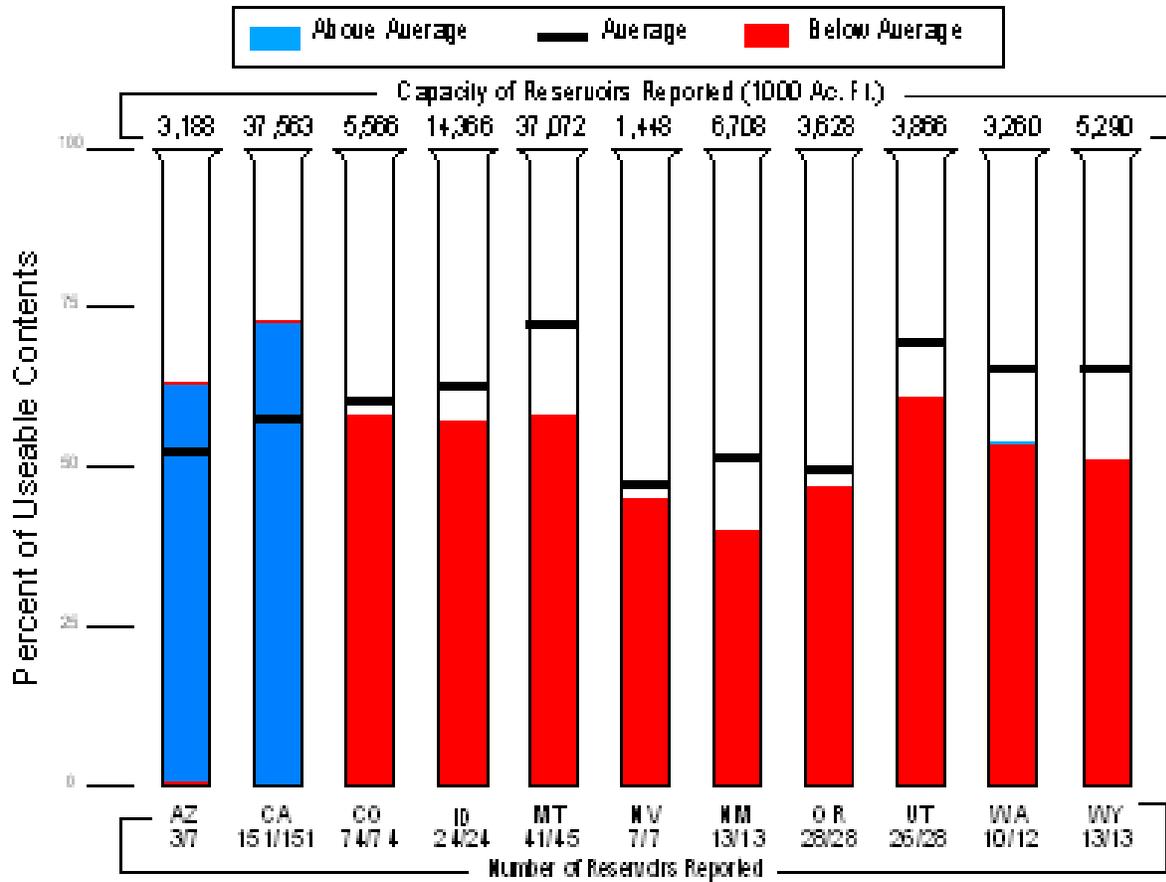


Figure 4. Seasonal Water Supply Forecasts - January 1, 2006

Reservoir Storage as of January 1, 2006



Prepared by: USDA, Natural Resources Conservation Service, National Water and Climate Center, Portland, OR
<http://www.nrcnrcs.usda.gov>

Fig. 5. Reservoir Storage - January 1, 2006