United States Department of Agriculture

NRCS

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

Date: **March 17, 2006**

Subject: **March 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 March 1, 2006.

OVERVIEW

Record low snowpacks continue in the Southwest while snowpacks were above, to well above average in Oregon, southern Washington, southern Idaho, western Wyoming, northern Utah and northwestern Colorado.

Seasonal precipitation is extremely low in the Southwest and 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.

Extremely low seasonal streamflow is forecast for most basins in Arizona, New Mexico and southwest Utah as a result of record low snowpacks and lack of precipitation. Streamflow forecasts are above average in northern Colorado, northern Utah, southern Wyoming, northern Nevada, southern Idaho, the Sierras of California, most of Oregon, the southern Cascades of Washington, and parts of western Montana. Near, to slightly below average streamflow is forecast for northern Washington, northern Idaho, British Columbia, western Montana, northern Wyoming and southern Utah and southwestern Colorado.

As of March 1, reservoir storages for all western states are slightly below seasonal averages with the exception of Arizona, California, and Oregon which are slightly above historical averages.

SNOWPACK

The westwide March 1, 2006 snowpack map reflects extremely low (less than 25% of average snowpacks) in Arizona, New Mexico, parts of southern Colorado, and southwestern Utah (Fig. 2). The scarcity of winter storms in the Southwest is the primary reason for the extremely low snowpacks.

A series of strong winter storms has boosted snowpacks to above, or well above average (111% to over 150%) in central Oregon, the southern Cascades of Washington, southern Idaho, a portion of southwest Montana, western and southern Wyoming, northern Utah, northern Colorado and the central Sierras of California. Snowpacks are below average throughout Alaska.

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

MONTHLY AND SEASONAL PRECIPITATION

February precipitation was extremely low, less than 50% of average, in southern California, Arizona, New Mexico, most of Oregon, southern Utah, southern Colorado, and central Idaho (Fig. 3). Precipitation was below average in most of the Pacific Northwest and Great Basin. Precipitation was above average (greater than 109%) in central and southeastern Wyoming and north-central Montana. Alaska reported above average precipitation state-wide.

Seasonal precipitation for the period October 1, 2005 to February 28, 2006 reflects a continuing pattern of very dry conditions in the Southwest and wet conditions in the Pacific Northwest (Fig. 4). The pattern is near to slightly below normal in southern California, southern Nevada, central Utah and western parts of Colorado and Wyoming (Fig. 4). Alaska seasonal precipitation is not available.

SPRING AND SUMMER STREAMFLOW FORECASTS

Extremely low seasonal streamflow is forecast for most basins in Arizona, New Mexico and southwest Utah as a result of record low snowpacks and lack of precipitation (Fig. 5). Streamflow forecasts are above average in northern Colorado, northern Utah, southern Wyoming, northern Nevada, southern Idaho, the Sierras of California, most of Oregon, the southern Cascades of Washington, and parts of western Montana. Near, to slightly below average streamflow is forecast for northern 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 March 1, reservoir storages for all western states are slightly below seasonal averages with the exception of Arizona, California, and Oregon which are slightly above historical averages (Fig. 6).

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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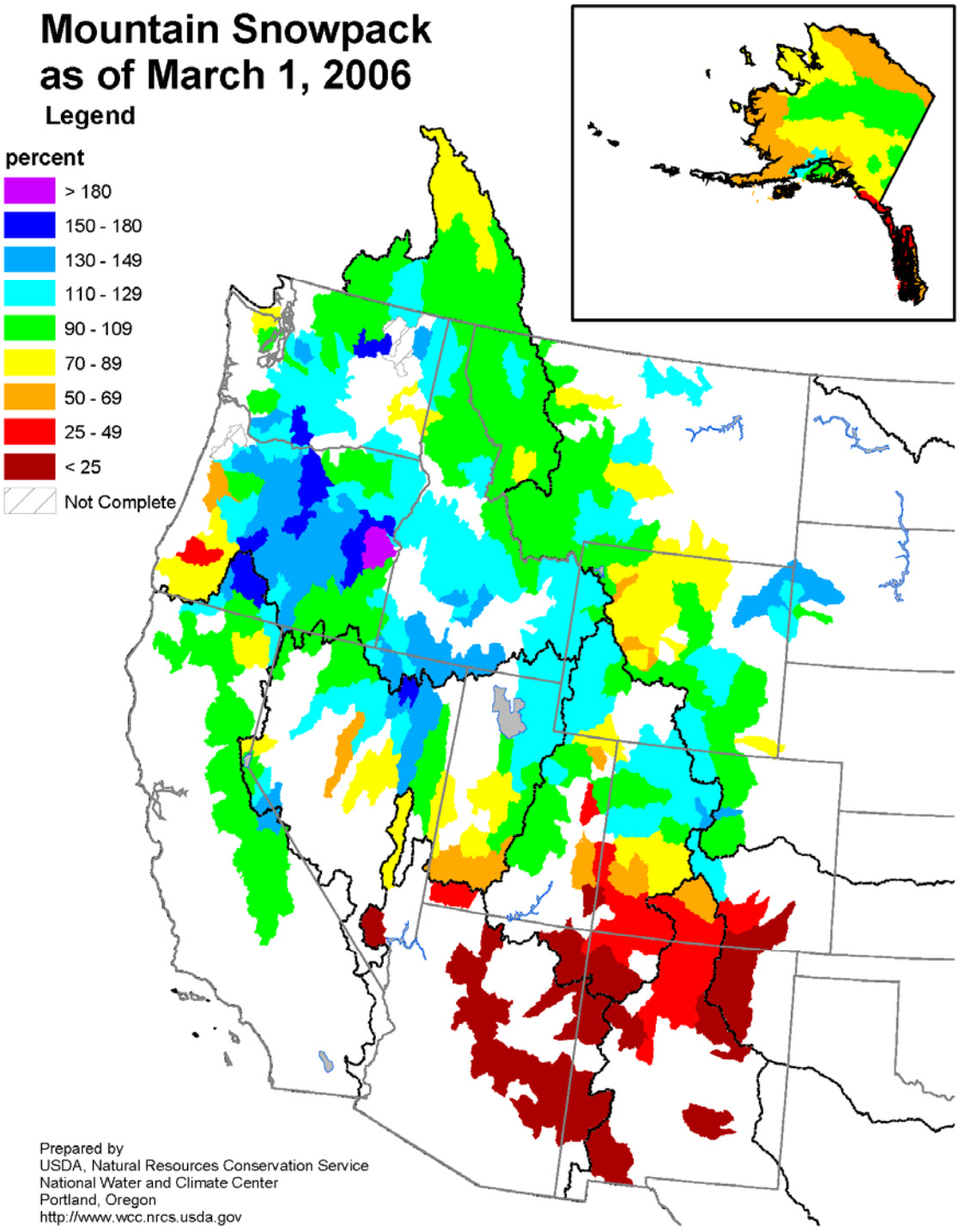

Figure 2. Mountain Snowpack, March 1, 2006

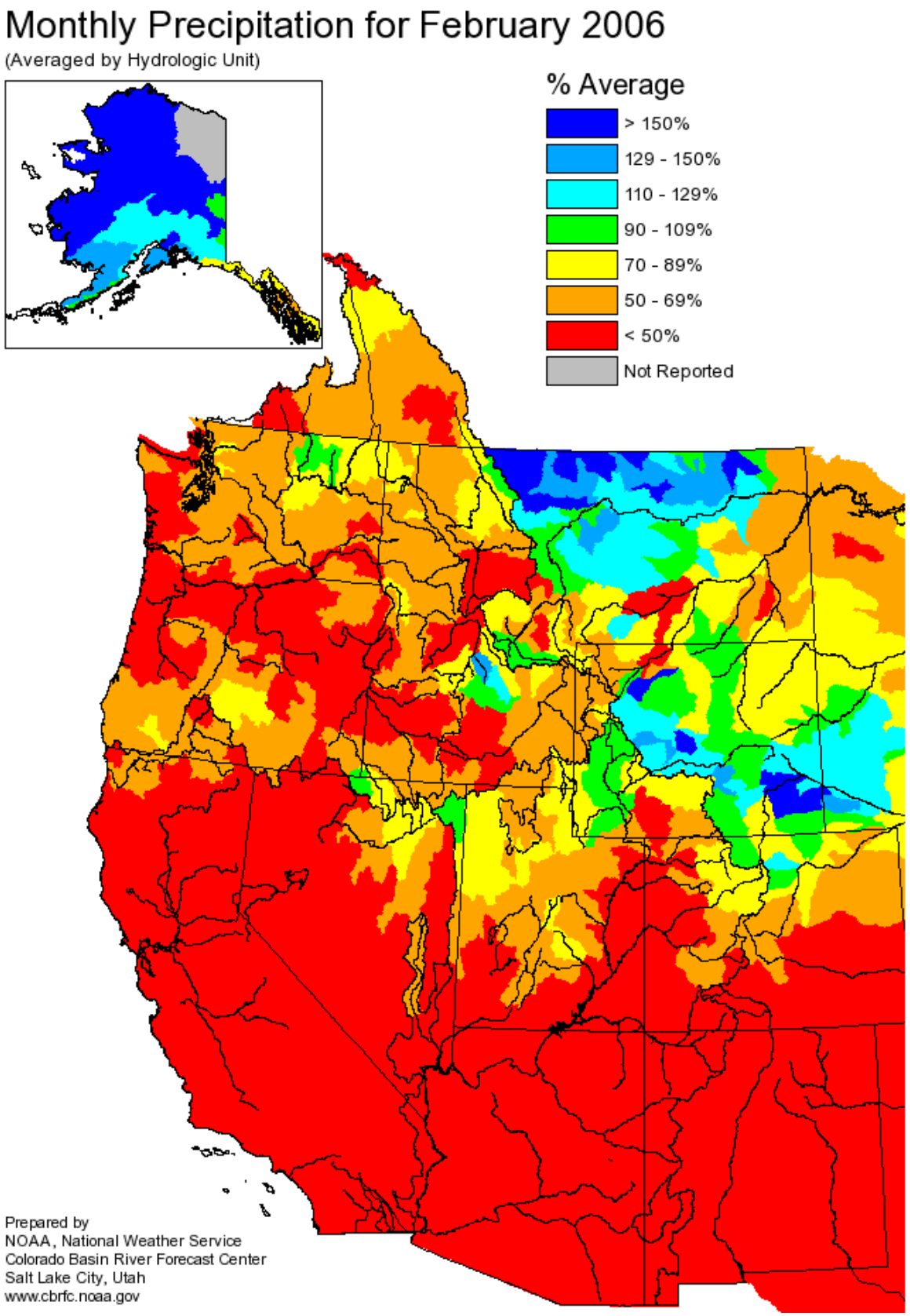

Figure 3. February 2006 Precipitation

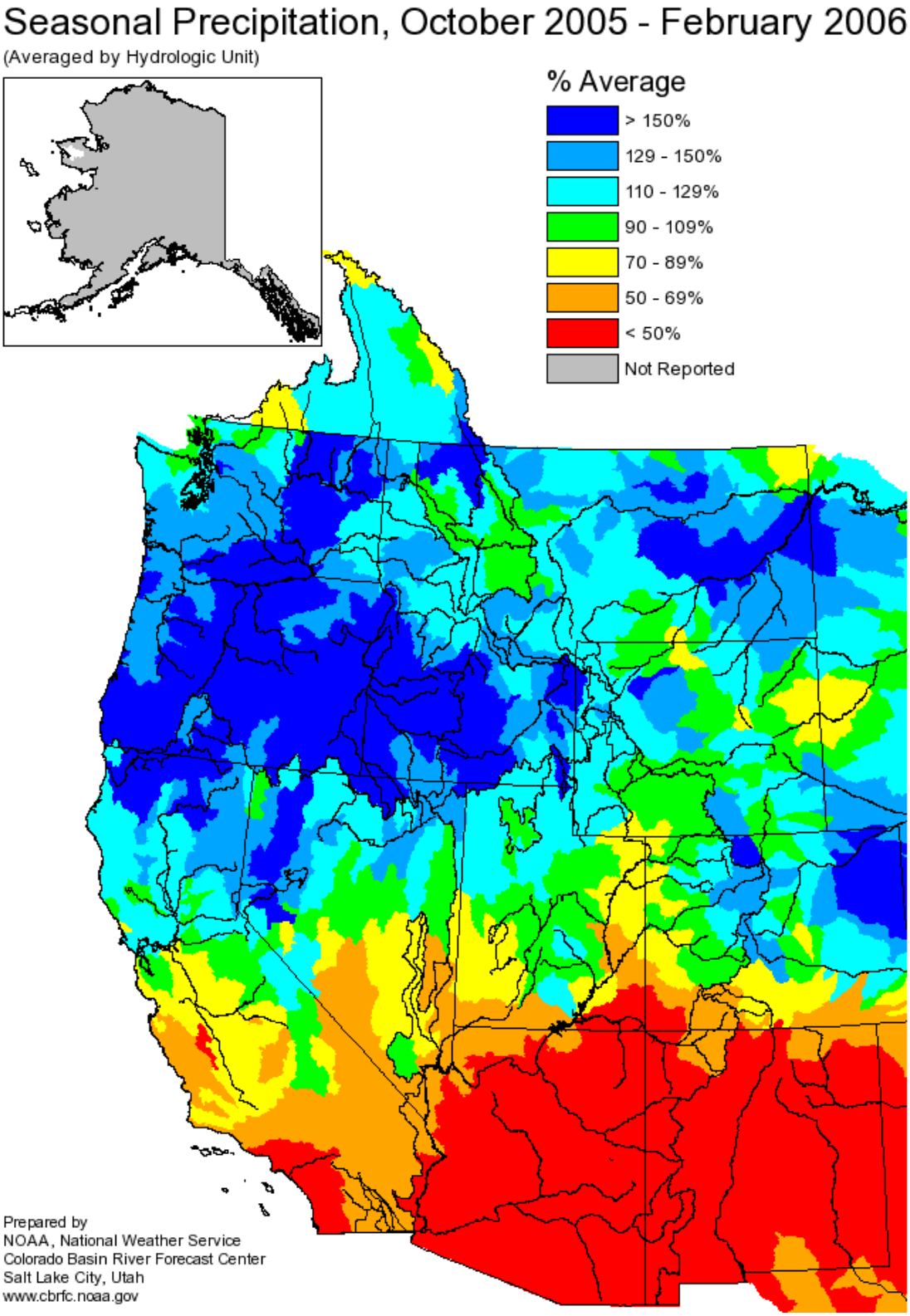

Figure 4. Seasonal Precipitation, October 1, 2005 to February 28, 2006

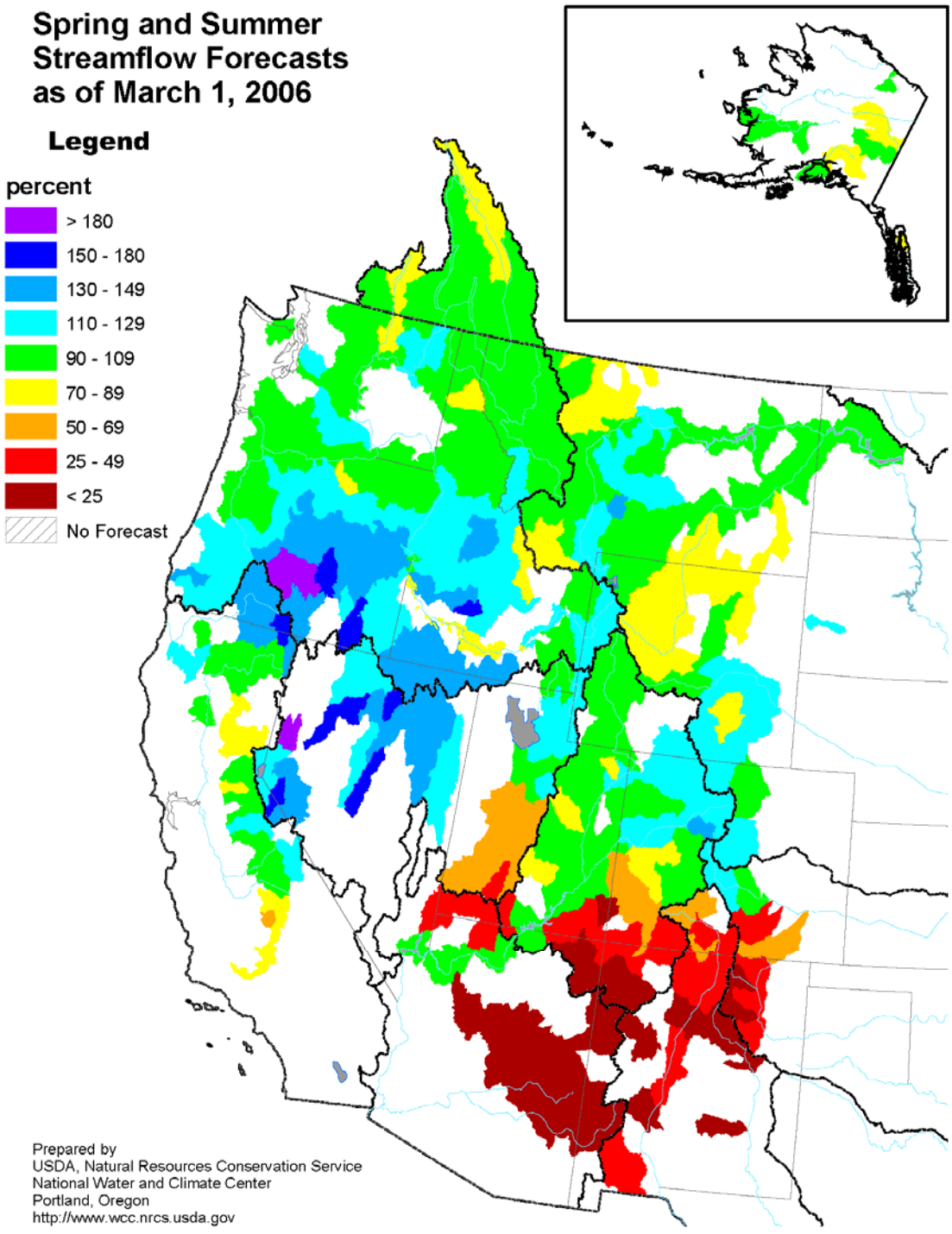

Figure 5. Seasonal Water Supply Forecasts - March 1, 2006

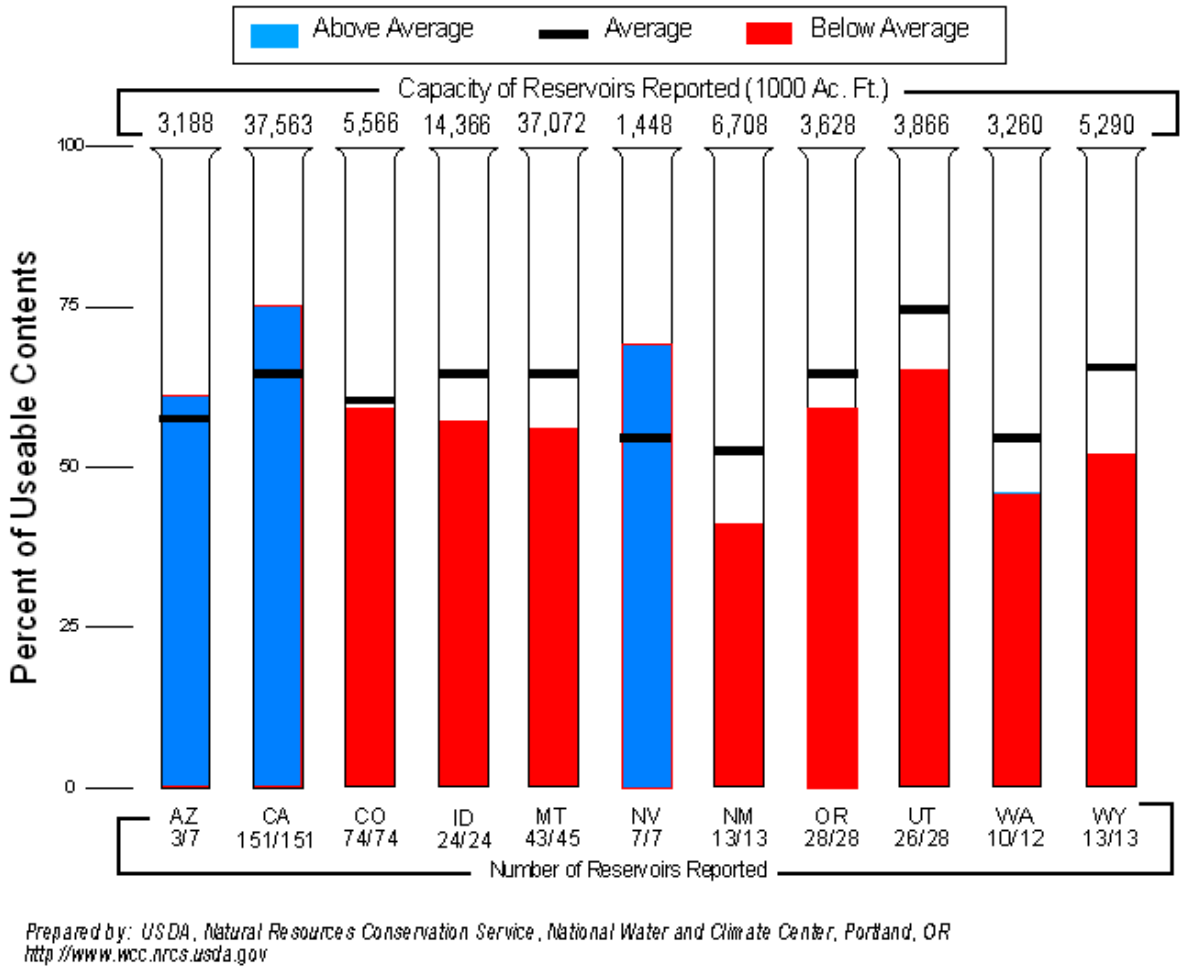

Fig. 6. Reservoir Storage - March 1, 2006