



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

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Date: **February 16, 2012**

Subject: **February 1, 2012 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 February 1, 2012.

## **OVERVIEW**

A moderate “La Niña” continues, however, thus far, we have seen excessive precipitation only fall over the Northern Tier States in January (Fig. A). This has helped many river basins to catch-up to near normal snow-water equivalent values by the end of the month. Alaska experienced its coldest month since January 1971. All but the Panhandle had minimal precipitation.

## **SNOWPACK**

February opened with the driest regions over much of the Great Basin (Fig. 1). The Cascades, Northern Rockies, and parts of the Southern Rockies and Southwest Mountains had near average conditions. All but the Northern Slope of Alaska had average or above average snow cover. Because much of the Northern Tier States had marginal snowpack in December, much of this area recovered nicely as noted in Fig. 2. While the Southwest had surplus snow cover in December, the lack of significant precipitation in January resulted in substantial losses.

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.html>

## **SEASONAL PRECIPITATION**

In a typical La Niña winter, the Western States usually experience above normal precipitation north of latitude of 41°N and below normal south of 41°N. However, thus far during the 2012 Water Year, this La Niña has delivered excess moisture to the eastern third of the high country over the West including much of Montana and Idaho (Fig. 3).

Monthly and seasonal precipitation maps are available from the following location - <http://www.wcc.nrcs.usda.gov/gis/precip.html> and <http://www.cbrfc.noaa.gov/wsup/westwide/westwide.cgi>.

## **SPRING AND SUMMER STREAMFLOW FORECASTS**

The spring and summer streamflow forecasts as of February 1, 2012 are calling for normal flows scattered across the Northern Tier States and below normal flows over the Southern Tier States; including the Great Basin (Fig. 4). Exception include above flows over the Upper Columbia River (Canada), Bighorns (Wyoming), and southwest mountains in New Mexico.

With January's precipitation, the Northern Tier States flow forecasts improved this month while lack of precipitation over the Southwest resulted in a general deteriorated flow forecast (Fig. 5).

State Basin Outlook Reports can be accessed at: <http://www.wcc.nrcs.usda.gov/cgibin/bor.pl>.

## **RESERVOIR STORAGE**

Statewide (average) reservoir levels (Fig. 6) shows all but New Mexico and Arizona with normal or above normal storage. This figure was corrected on 16 February.

## **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>

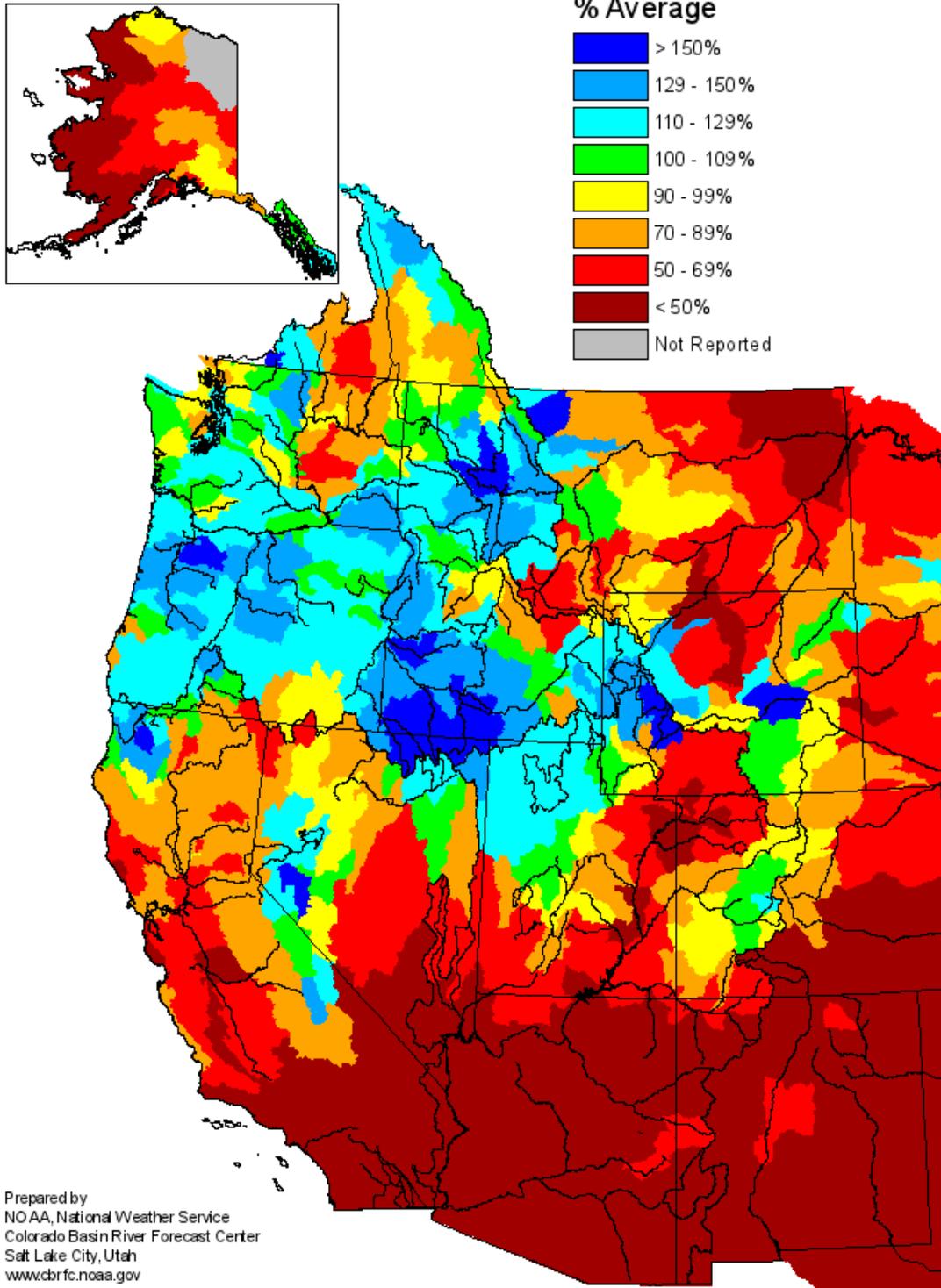
/s/

Micheal L. Golden

Acting Deputy Chief, Soil Survey and Resource Assessment

# Monthly Precipitation for January 2012

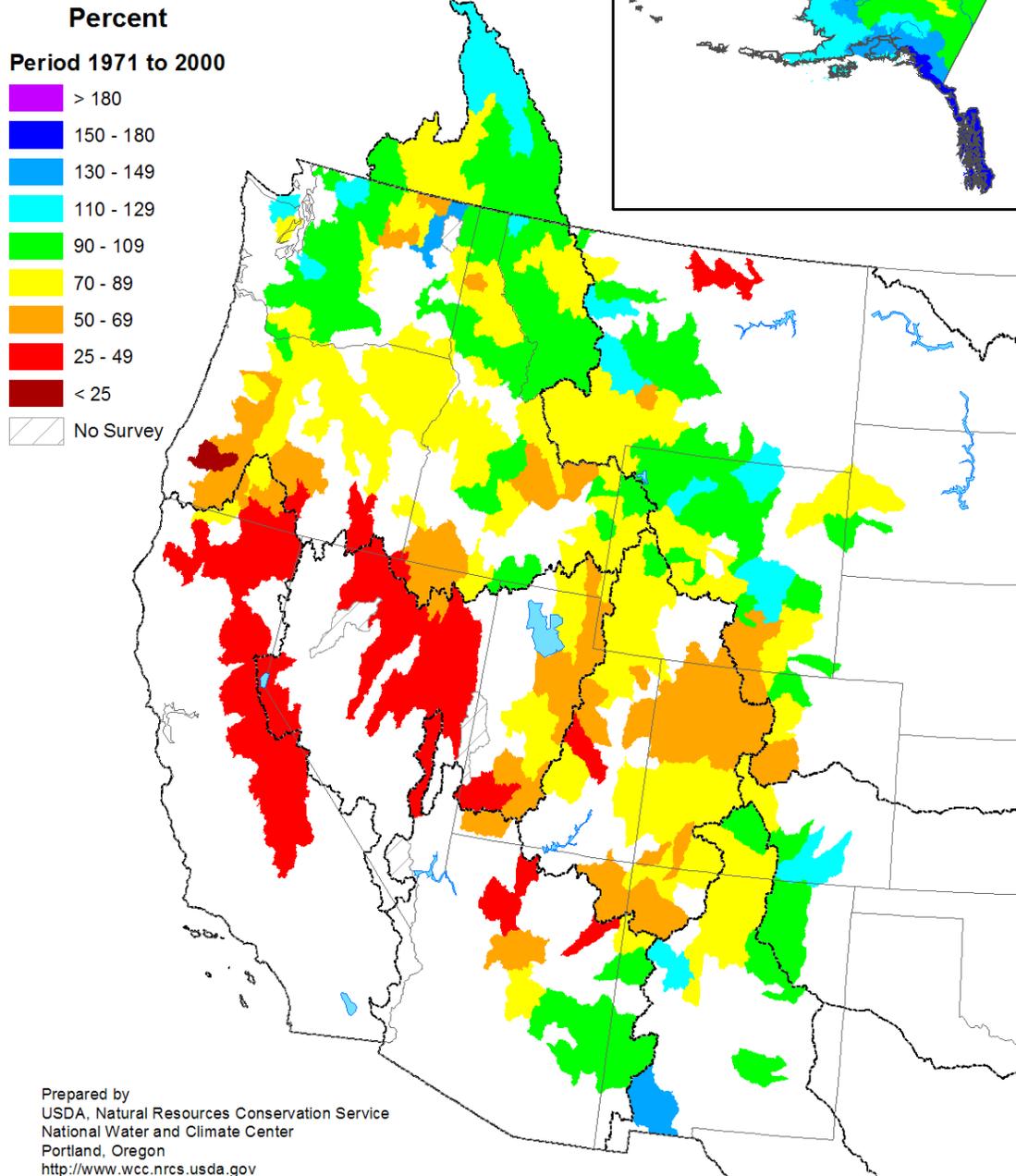
(Averaged by Hydrologic Unit)



**Figure A. January 2012 Precipitation**

<http://www.cbrfc.noaa.gov/wsup/westwide/precip/westM201201.png>

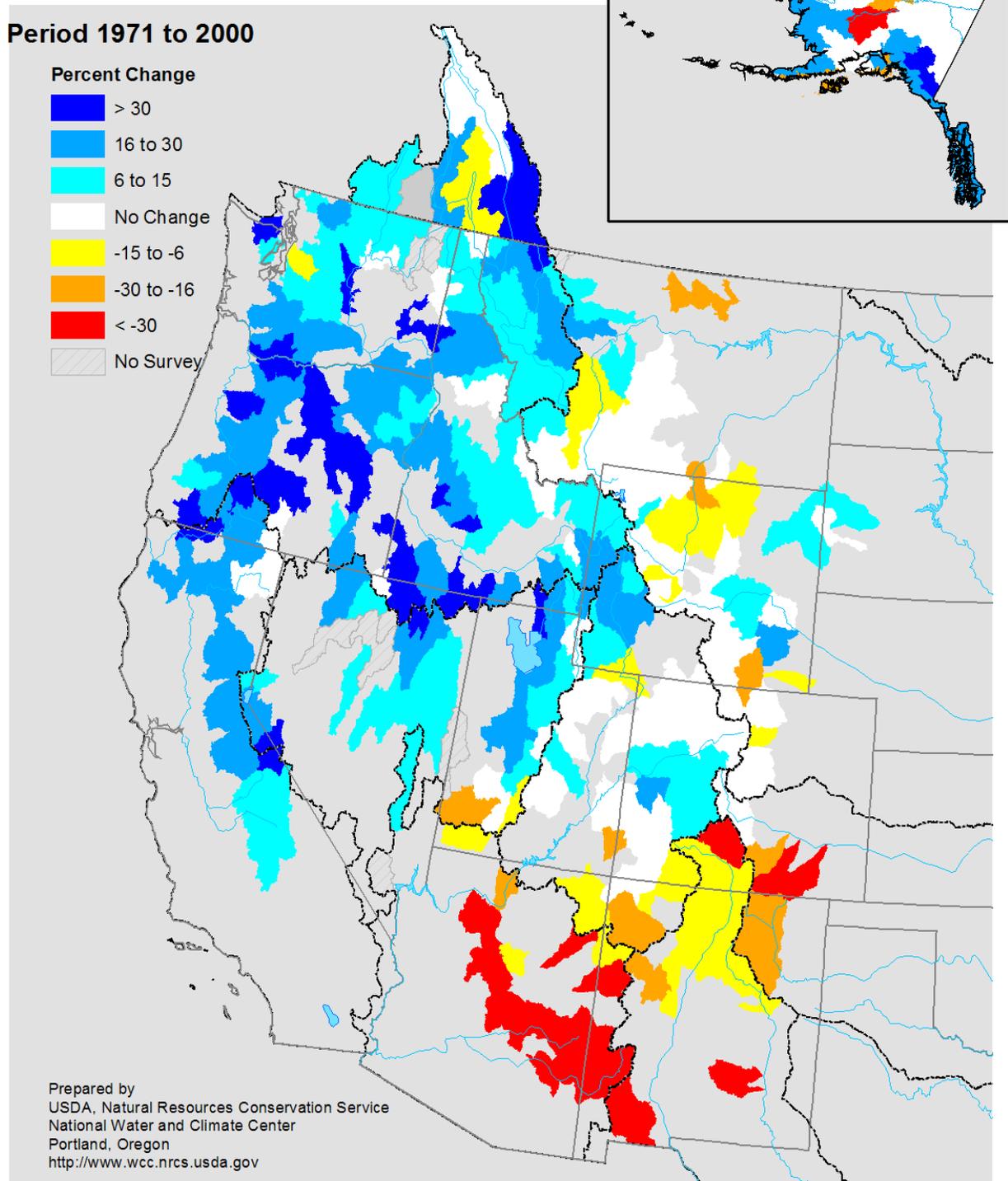
# Mountain Snowpack as of February 1, 2012



**Figure 1. Mountain Snowpack, February 1, 2012**

<http://www.wcc.nrcs.usda.gov/ftpref/support/water/westwide/snowpack/wy2012/snow1202.gif>

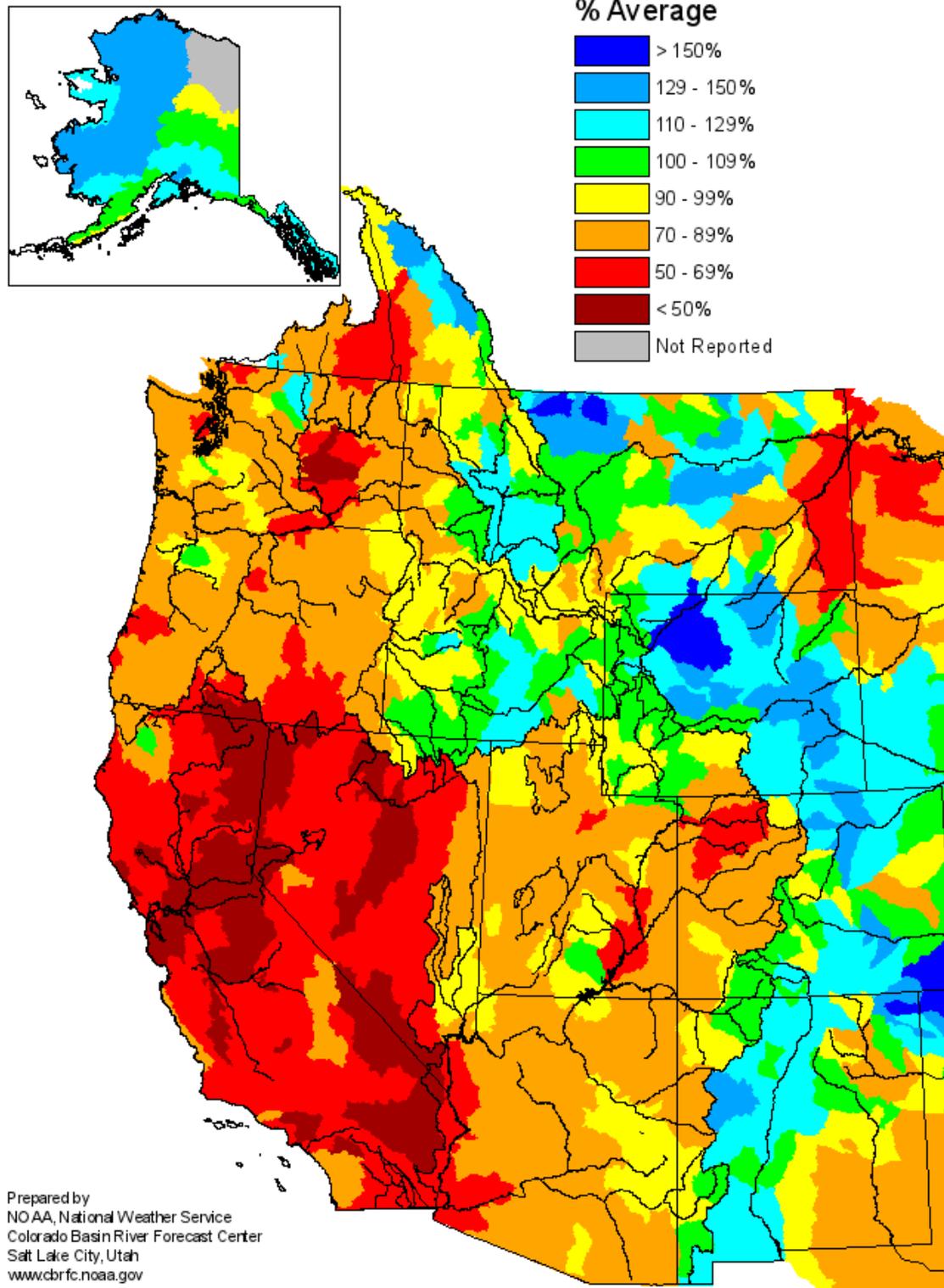
# 2012 Mountain Snowpack Change in percent between January 1 and February 1



**Fig. 2. Mountain Snowpack Difference** between, January 1 to February 1, 2012  
<http://www.wcc.nrcs.usda.gov/ftpref/support/water/westwide/snowpack/wy2012/snow1202.gif>

# Seasonal Precipitation, October 2011 - January 2012

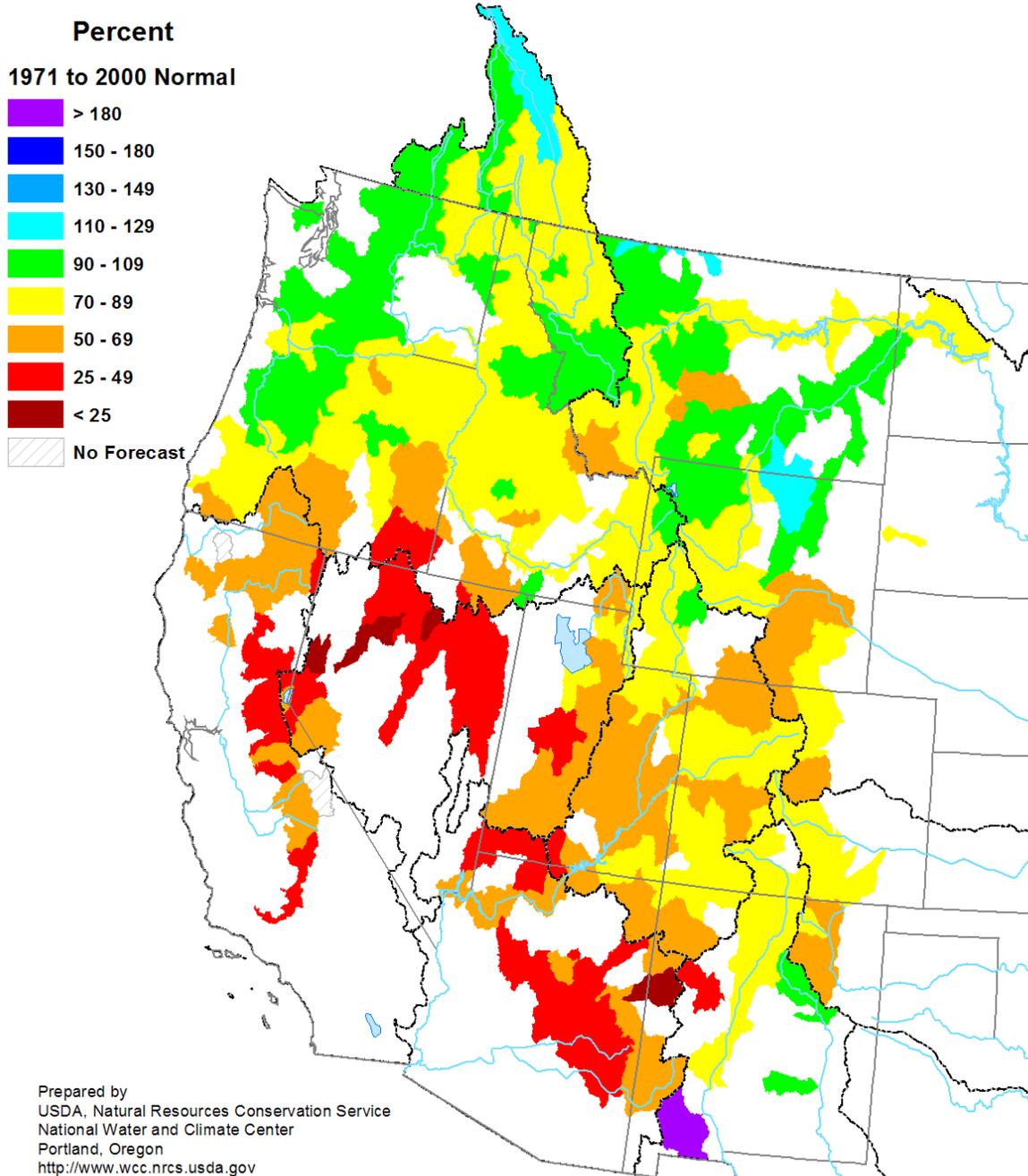
(Averaged by Hydrologic Unit)



**Figure 3. Seasonal Precipitation, October 1, 2011 to January 2012**

<http://www.cbrfc.noaa.gov/wsup/westwide/precip/westS201201.png>

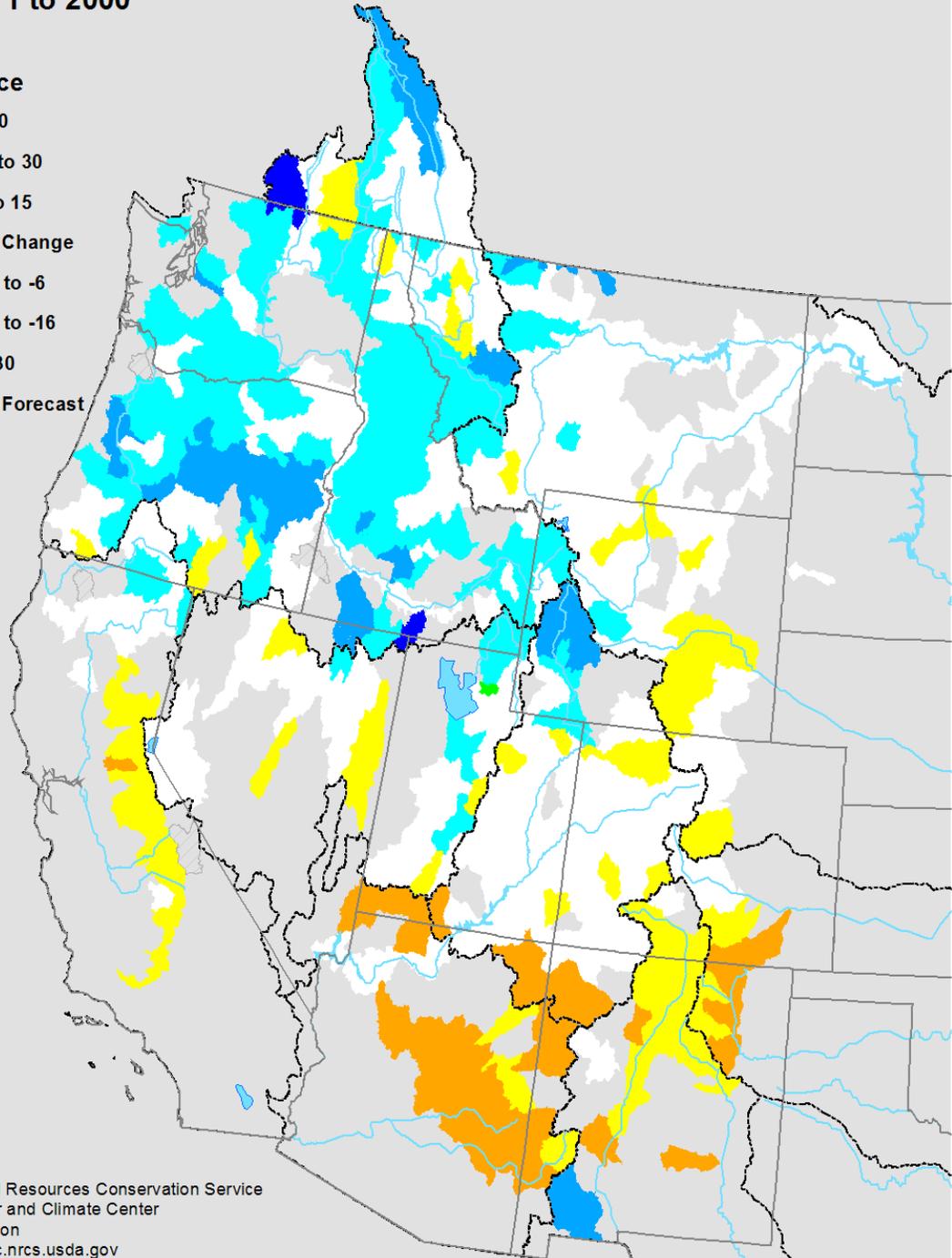
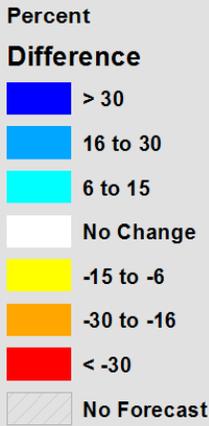
## Spring and Summer Streamflow Forecasts as of February 1, 2012



**Figure 4. Seasonal Water Supply Forecasts - February 1, 2012**  
(Alaska not forecast in February). California will be available later at link below.  
<http://www.wcc.nrcs.usda.gov/ftoref/suoport/water/westwide/streamflow/wv2012/strm1202.aif>

## Change in Spring and Summer Streamflow Forecasts from January 1 to February 1, 2012

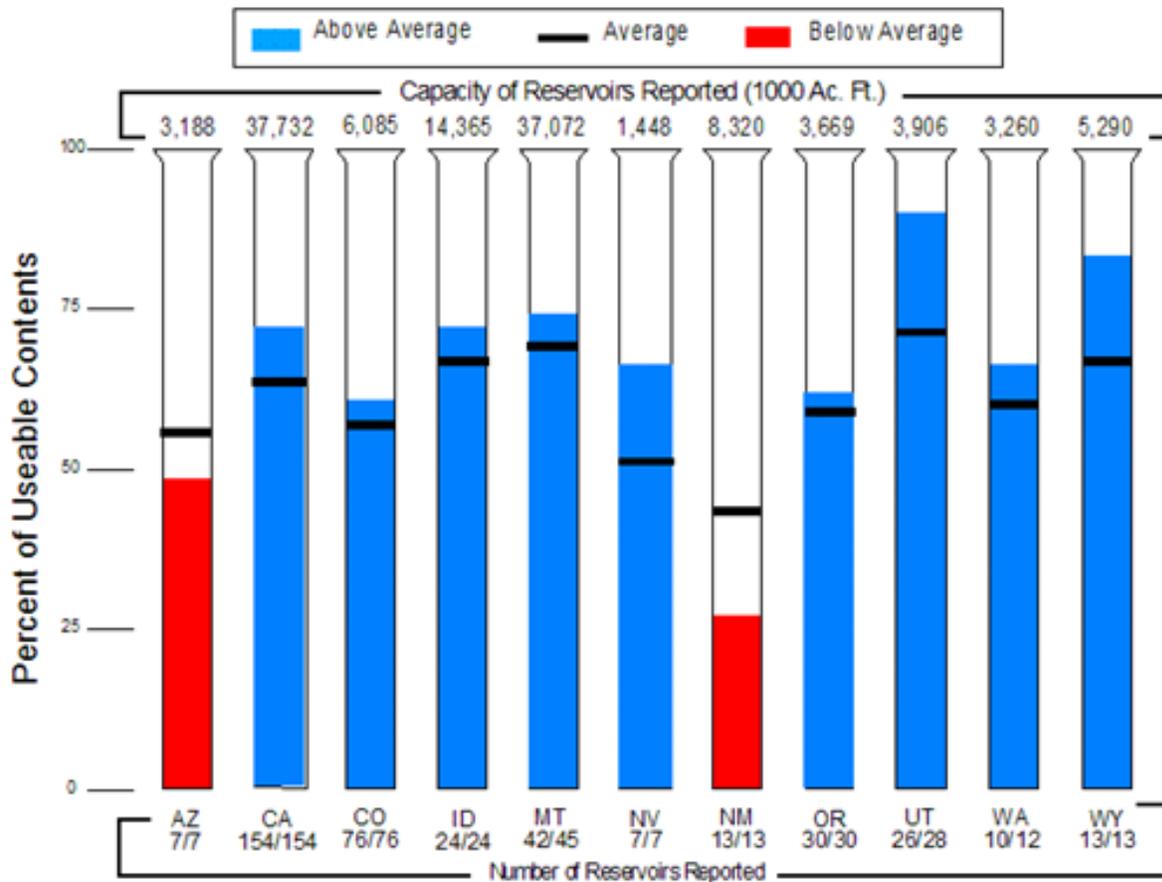
Period 1971 to 2000



Prepared by  
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Fig. 5. **Change in streamflow forecast** between January 1 and February 1, 2012.

### Reservoir Storage as of February 1, 2012



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

**Figure 6. Reservoir Storage - February 1, 2012.**

<http://ftp.wcc.nrcs.usda.gov/support/water/westwide/reservoir/wy2012/resv1202.gif>