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News Release

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Water Supply Outlook for Colorado and Downstream States Improves

Denver, CO – May 5th, 2016 – For the first time during 2016, statewide snowpack improved over the previous month as opposed to the declines that have occurred each month since January 1st. April weather conditions yielded a seven percent improvement in snowpack, which now stands at 104 percent of normal. Mountain precipitation across the state of Colorado during April was the best of the 2016 calendar year, at 110 percent of normal. Now water year-to-date precipitation is exactly at 100 percent of normal. Brian Domonkos, Colorado Snow Survey Supervisor, illustrates how fortunate the Colorado water situation is, “At this time last year the water supply outlook was grim at best. Colorado’s current snowpack and precipitation levels are right where we want to be this time of year. Elsewhere in the Western United States seasonal snowpack during 2016 succumbed to early spring warming and did not recover as Colorado did from recent storms.”

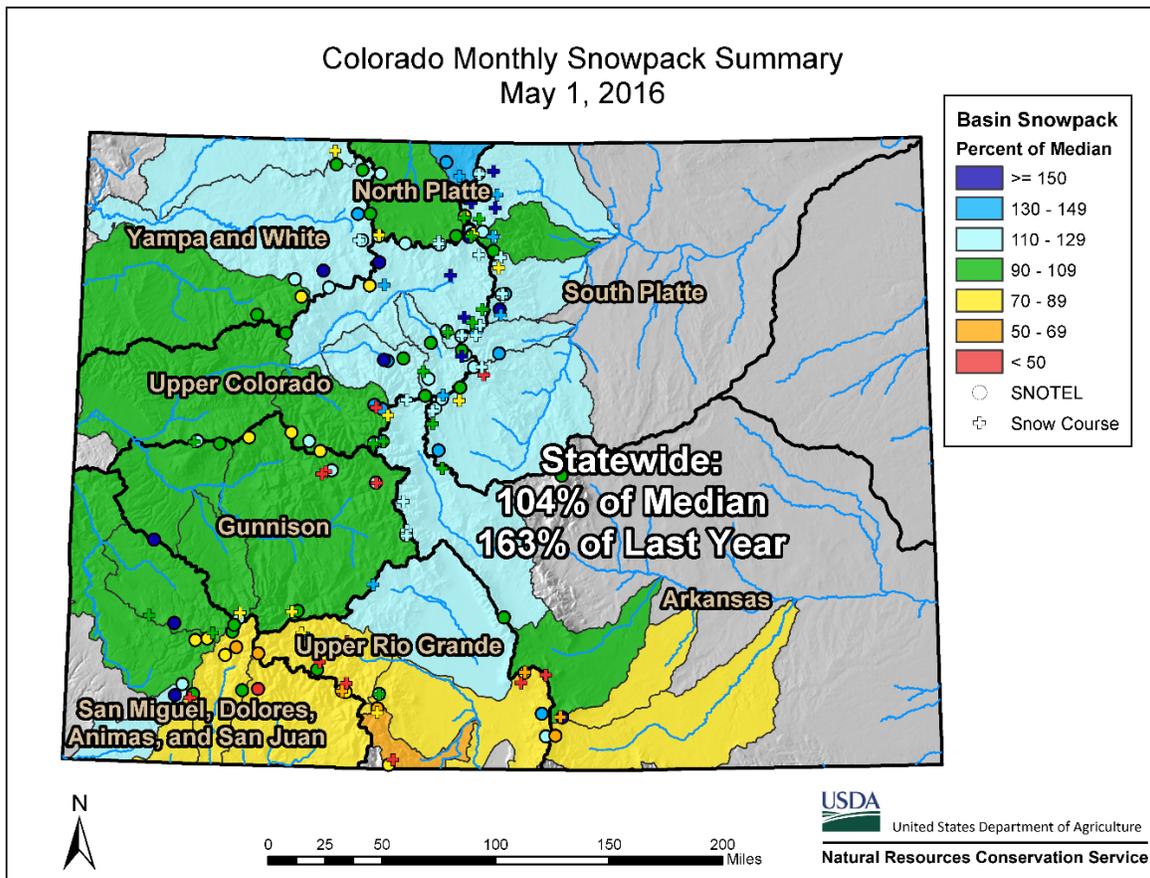


Figure 1: May 1 Snowpack observations at SNOTEL & Snow Course locations (Click on map for link)

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The seven major mountain watersheds in Colorado all received 90 percent of normal April precipitation or better. Special mention is warranted in the Arkansas, Upper Rio Grande and combined Yampa, White and North Platte Basins, because these areas received 120 percent of normal or better precipitation. The seven major watersheds also have ninety percent of normal or better water year-to-date precipitation.

Snowpack metrics indicate that the North and South Platte River basins have the best snowpack in the state at 114 percent of normal. The Arkansas saw the greatest improvement in April, while the Upper Rio Grande and combined San Miguel, Dolores, Animas and San Juan Basins saw little change. It is fortunate those basins saw little change downward given that snowpack there is now 77 and 85 percent of normal respectively. Although not reflected in snowpack values, it is also fortunate that rain was abundant most particularly in the Upper Rio Grande, which added to the greater water budget.

Statewide reservoir totals increased one percent since April 1st ending the month at 112 percent of normal, with declines occurring in the Rio Grande, Arkansas and combined Yampa, White and North Platte watersheds.

Colorado's Snowpack and Reservoir Storage as of May 1, 2016

Table with 5 columns: BASIN, % MEDIAN SNOWPACK, % LAST YR.'S SNOWPACK, % AVERAGE RESERVOIR STORAGE, LAST YEAR'S % AVERAGE RESERVOIR STORAGE. Rows include Gunnison, Colorado, South Platte, North Platte, Yampa/White, Arkansas, Rio Grande, SMDASJ*, and Statewide.

*Combined San Miguel, Dolores, Animas and San Juan Basins

For more detailed information about individual Colorado watersheds or supporting water supply related information, have a look at the Colorado Water Supply Outlook Report or feel free to go to the Colorado Snow Survey website at:

http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/co/snow/

Or contact Brian Domonkos, Colorado Snow Survey Supervisor at Brian.Domonkos@mt.usda.gov or 720-544-2852.

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