



Natural Resources Conservation Service
National Water and Climate Center
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March 1, 2002 Western Snowpack Conditions and Water Supply Forecasts

March 11, 2002

The following information is provided for your use in describing climate and water supply conditions in the West as of March 1, 2002.

OVERVIEW

Extremely low seasonal snowpacks in the Southwest have resulted in *near record minimum* streamflow volume forecasts for Arizona, New Mexico, southern Utah and southern Colorado. Below average snowpack in the Rockies has resulted in a *much below average* streamflow volume forecast for central Montana, central Wyoming, central Colorado and northern Utah. *Below average* streamflow is forecast for central Idaho, central Oregon, northern Nevada, northern California and southwest Oregon as a result of a very dry February. *Near to slightly above average* streamflow is forecast for western Oregon, Washington, northern Idaho and British Columbia. All major western storage reservoirs are below their seasonal averages.

SNOWPACK

March 1, 2002 snowpacks continue to exhibit a wide contrast ranging from above average totals in Pacific Northwest to well below average in the Intermountain West and Desert Southwest as shown in Figure 1. The entire Western U.S. snowpack diminished due to a very dry February (Figure 2). A significant portion of the West received less than 50% of the average February precipitation. Referring again to Figure 1, the northern Cascades of Oregon continue to report the highest snowpacks, which are generally 120% to 140% of average. The remainder of snowpacks throughout Oregon, Washington and northern Idaho remain near to slightly above average. For the Columbia Basin, the March 1 composite snowpack for the Columbia River above The Dalles was 107% of average, down 2% from last month.

In stark contrast to the Pacific Northwest, snowpacks diminish dramatically eastward into the northern Rockies and the Desert Southwest. Snowpacks in Arizona, southwestern Utah, southern Nevada, southern Colorado and northwestern New Mexico are less than 50% of average. Large areas of central Wyoming, Colorado New Mexico, Utah and Arizona report snowpacks between 50% and 70% of average. After a near normal start last fall, very few winter storms have brought significant snow to the Rockies and Desert Southwest through the winter. Alaska reports generally below average snowpacks with a small area of near average snowpacks in central and above average in southeastern sections. The most recent snowpack information may be obtained from the following URL - http://www.wcc.nrcs.usda.gov/water/w_qnty.html

SEASONAL PRECIPITATION

Seasonal precipitation (October 1, 2001 through February 28, 2002) shows well below average precipitation in southern California, southern Nevada, Arizona, most of New Mexico, southern Utah, southwest Colorado, central Wyoming and central Montana (Figure 3). The Pacific Northwest, northern California and northern Nevada report near average seasonal precipitation. The Oregon and Washington Cascades report above, to much above seasonal precipitation.

SPRING AND SUMMER STREAMFLOW

The March 1, 2002 water supply forecasts are well below average in central Montana, Wyoming, Colorado, central and southern Utah, southern Nevada, Arizona and New Mexico as shown in Figure 4. Water supplies are forecast to be generally below average in central California, northern Nevada, central Idaho and southwest and central Oregon. Water supplies are forecast to be near, or slightly above average for the remainder of the Pacific Northwest. Water supply forecasts for Alaska are near or slightly below average.

RESERVOIR STORAGE

All major western storage reservoirs are below seasonal averages as shown in Figure 5. This continues to reflect the carryover dryness of last year's drought that affected much of the West and seasonal deficiencies in precipitation through most of the West.

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/ RON MARLOW

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Mountain Snowpack as of March 1, 2002

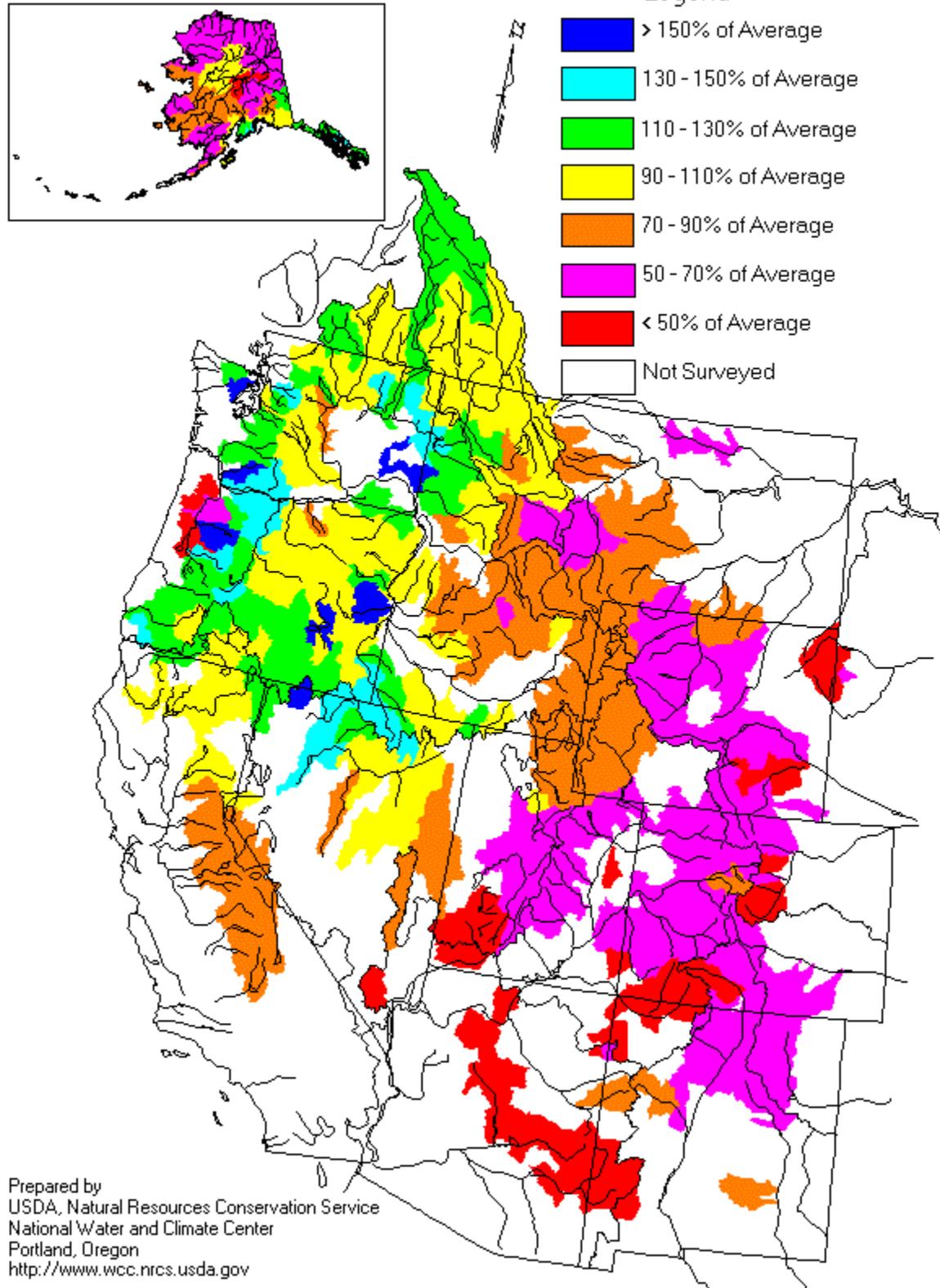


Figure 1. Mountain Snowpack - March 1, 2002

Monthly Precipitation for February 2002

(Averaged by Hydrologic Unit)

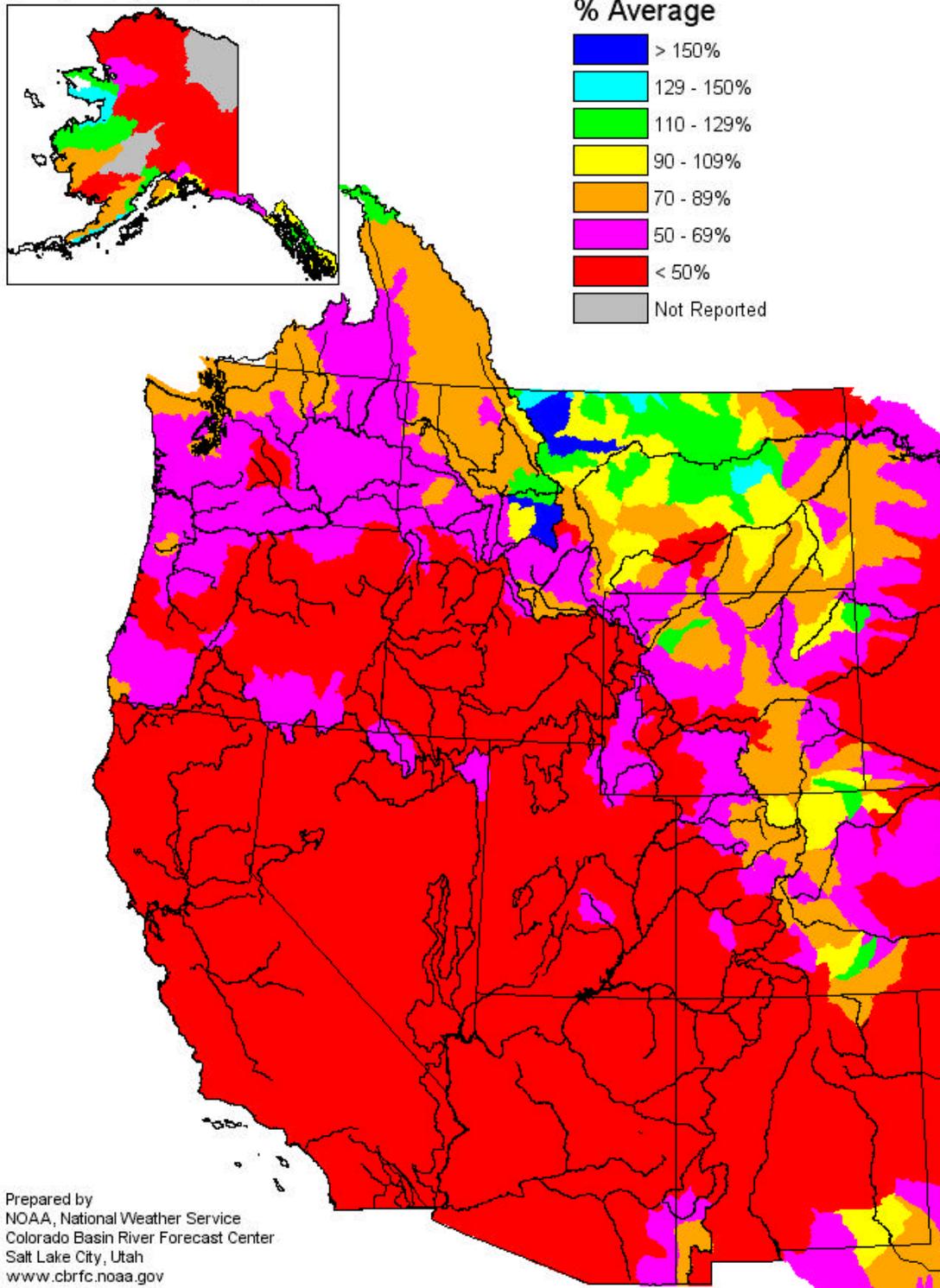


Figure 2. February Precipitation

Seasonal Precipitation, October 2001 - February 2002

(Averaged by Hydrologic Unit)

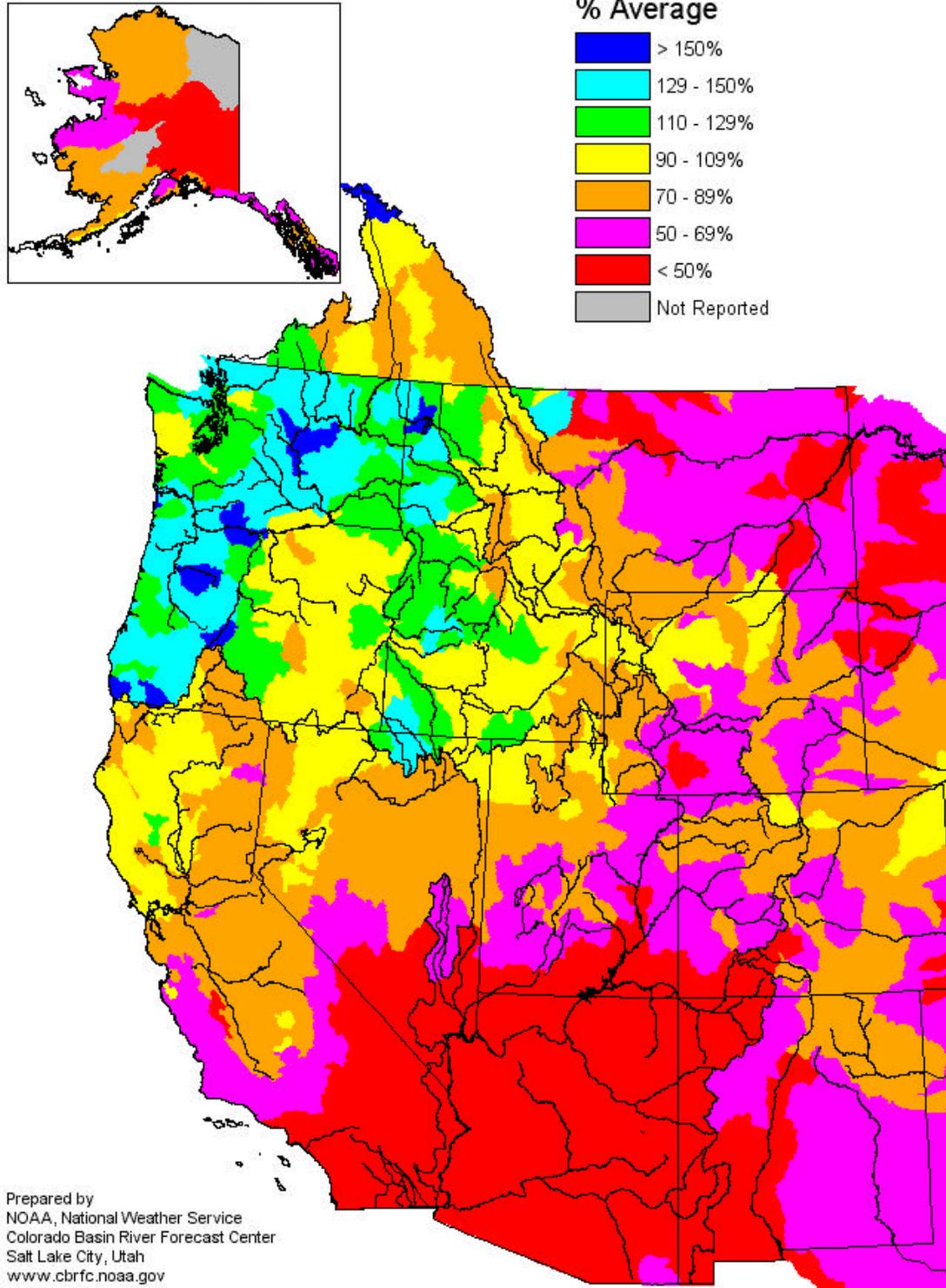


Figure 3. Seasonal Precipitation to Date Starting October 1, 2001

Spring and Summer Streamflow Forecasts as of March 1, 2002

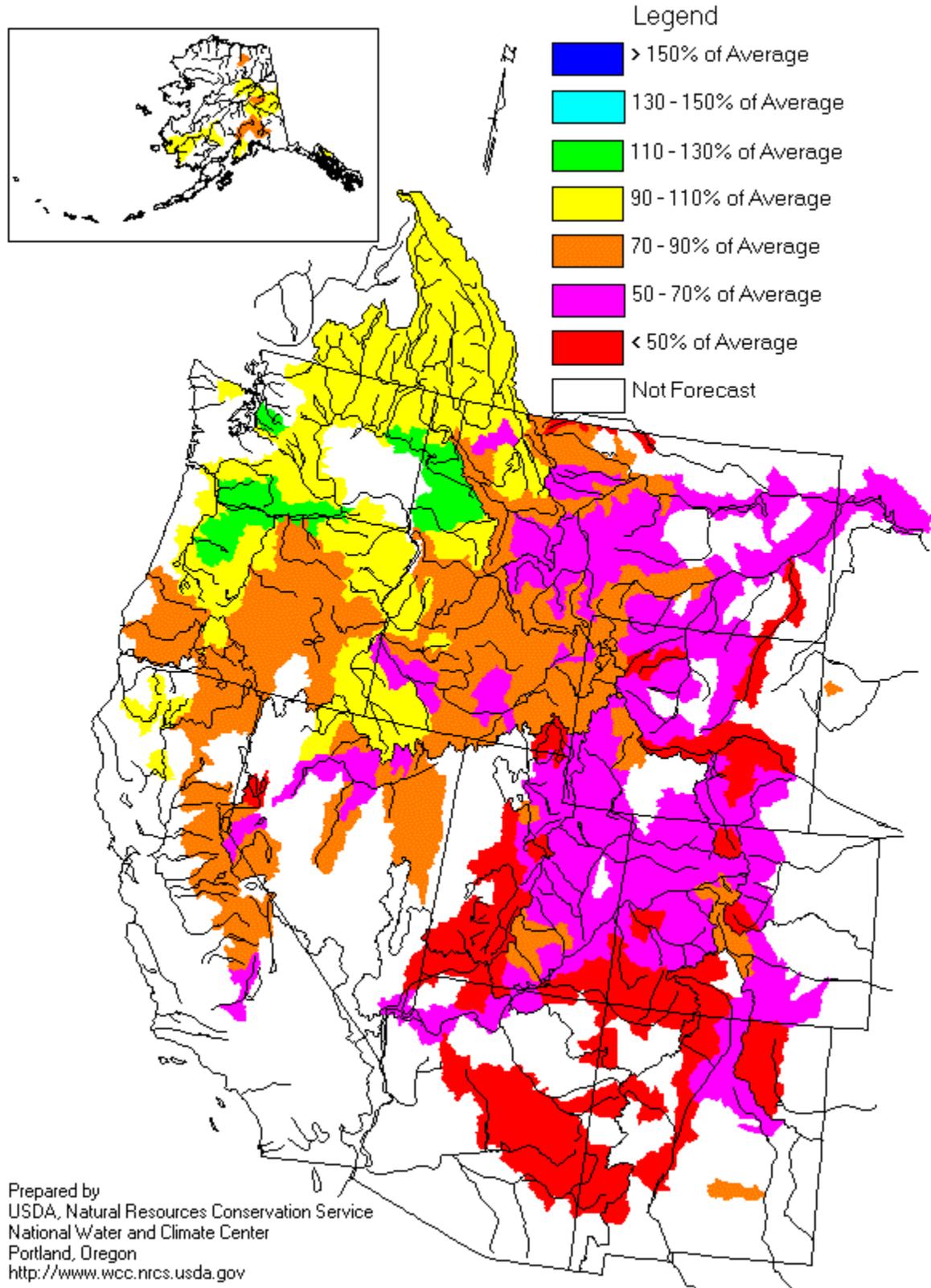
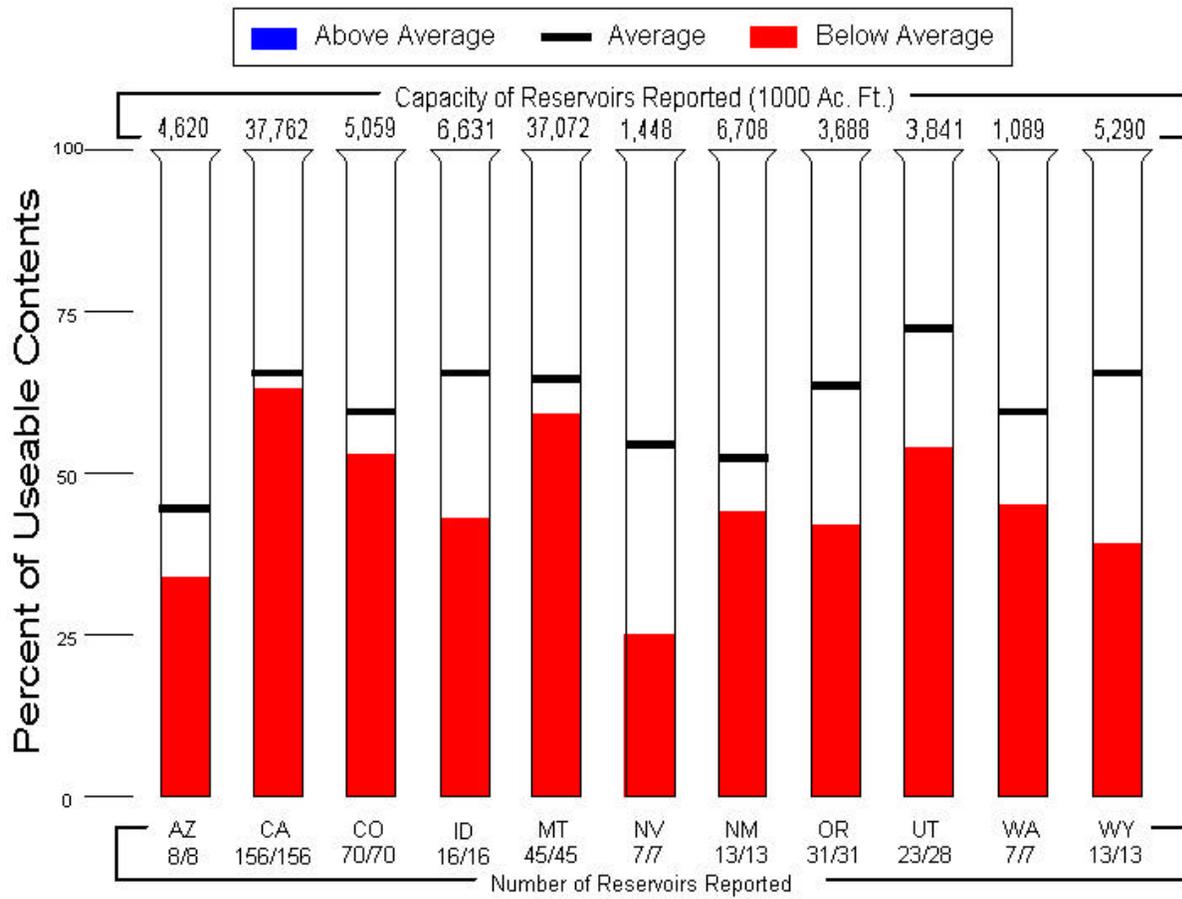


Figure 4. Seasonal Water Supply Forecasts - March 1, 2002

Reservoir Storage as of March 1, 2002



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

Figure 5. Current Reservoir Storage - March 1, 2002