



Natural Resources Conservation Service
National Water and Climate Center
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April 1, 2002 Western Snowpack Conditions and Water Supply Forecasts April 9, 2002

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

OVERVIEW

Extremely low seasonal snowpacks in the Southwest have resulted in **near record minimum streamflow volume forecasts** for portions of 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 March.

Near to slightly above average streamflow is forecast for western Oregon, Washington, northern Idaho and British Columbia. In many drought areas, snowmelt runoff may be reduced as soil moisture is replenished. All major western storage reservoirs are below their seasonal averages.

SNOWPACK

April 1, 2002 snowpacks continue to exhibit a wide contrast ranging from well above average totals in Pacific Northwest to well below average in the Intermountain West and Desert Southwest as shown in Figure 1. The northern Cascades of Oregon continue to report the highest snowpacks, which are generally 120% to 150% of average. The remainder of snowpacks throughout Oregon, Washington and northern Idaho remain near to slightly above average.

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. Many low and middle elevation sites have melted-out well ahead of schedule.

Large areas of central Utah, central Colorado, and central Wyoming report snowpacks between 50% and 70% of average. A very warm and dry March contributed to a significant reduction in the southern portion of the western U.S. snowpack (Figure 2). A large portion of the West received less than 50% of the average March precipitation. After a near normal start last fall, very few winter storms have brought significant snow to the Rockies and Desert Southwest through the entire winter. Alaska reports generally below average snowpacks in the north and east 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

MONTHLY AND SEASONAL PRECIPITATION

March precipitation was below 50% of average in many southwestern sections (Figure 2). Below average precipitation was reported through most of the Pacific Northwest also. Only northern Idaho, northwestern and central Montana and portions of northeastern Wyoming reported above average precipitation for March. Seasonal precipitation (October 1, 2001 through March 31, 2002) shows well below average precipitation (less than 70% of average) in southern California, southern Nevada, Arizona, western New Mexico, southern Utah, southern Colorado, southwestern 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 April 1, 2002 water supply forecasts are extremely low (less than 50% of average) in Arizona, New Mexico, southern Colorado, southern Utah, and southern and central Wyoming. Well below average streamflows (between 50% and 70% of average) are forecast for central and northern Utah, central Colorado, western Wyoming, parts of southern Idaho, southwestern and central Montana, and a small portion of central and western Nevada and parts of California as shown in Figure 4. Water supplies are forecast to be generally below average (between 70% and 90% of average) in central California, northern Nevada, central Idaho, parts of northwestern Montana 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 except in the southeastern sections which are slightly above 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 the water year's seasonal precipitation deficiencies 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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Washington, DC

Mountain Snowpack as of April 1, 2002

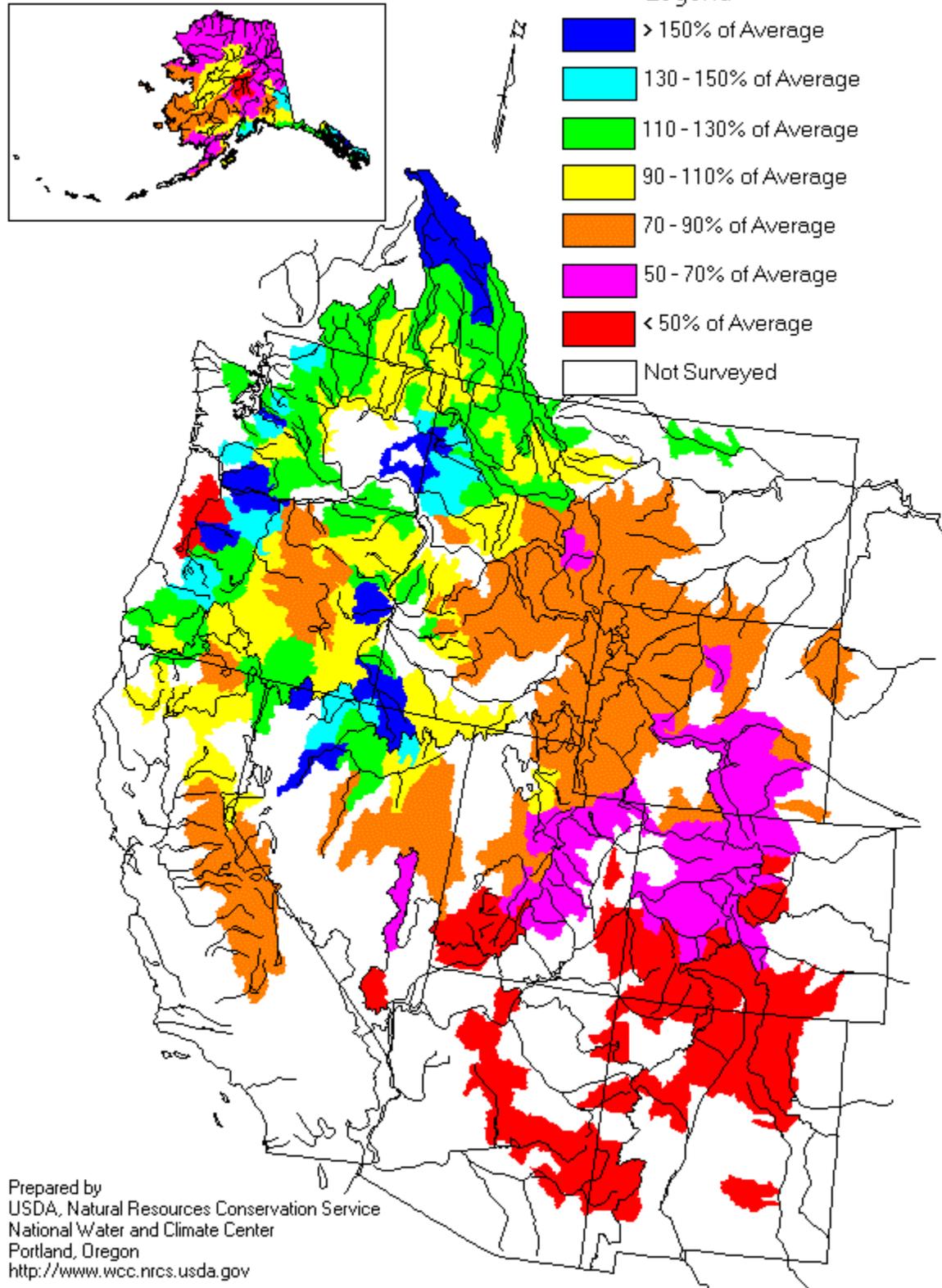


Figure 1. Mountain Snowpack - April 1, 2002

Monthly Precipitation for March 2002

(Averaged by Hydrologic Unit)

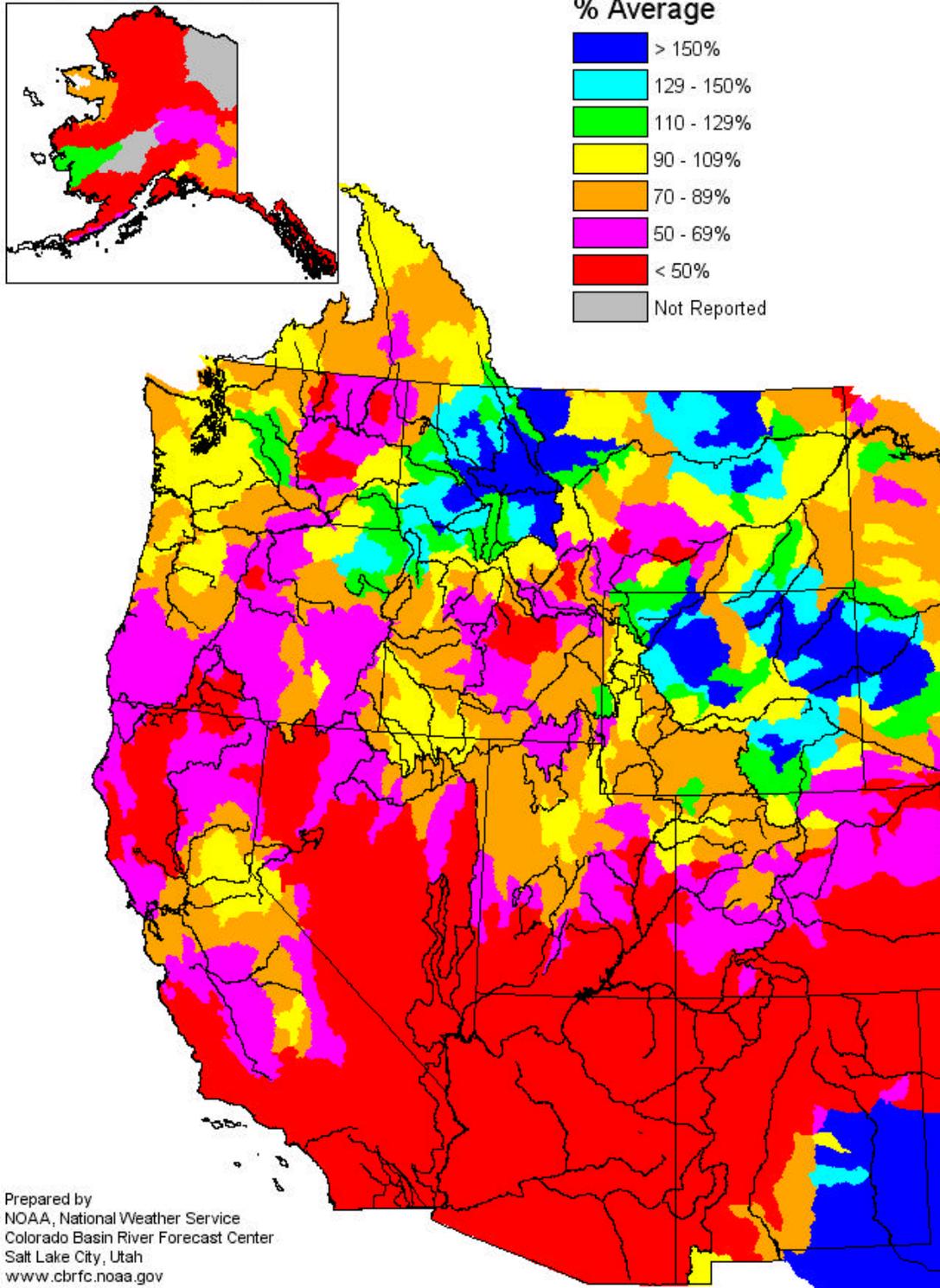


Figure 2. March 2002 Precipitation

Seasonal Precipitation, October 2001 - March 2002

(Averaged by Hydrologic Unit)

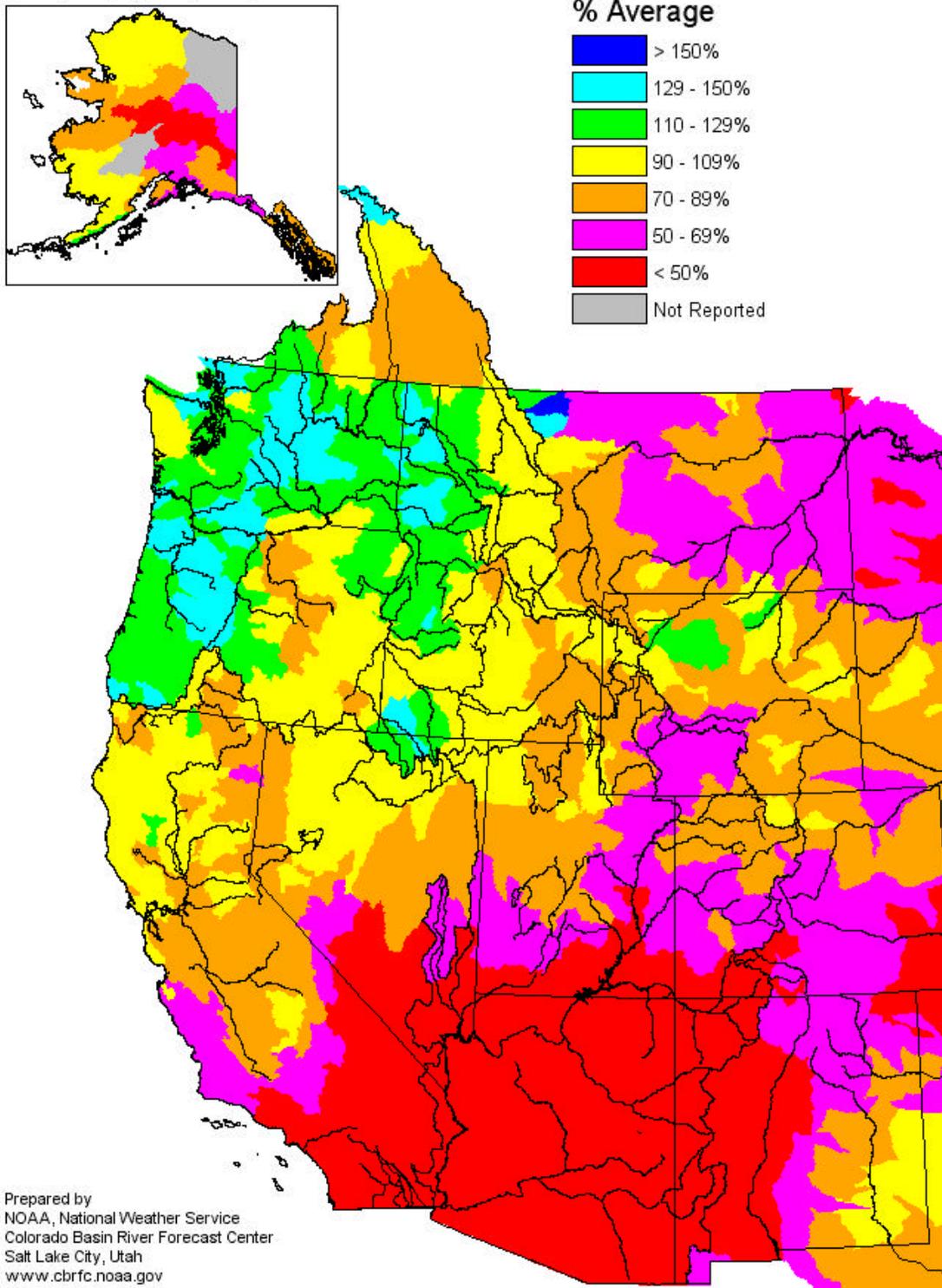


Figure 3. Seasonal Precipitation to Date Starting October 1, 2001

Spring and Summer Streamflow Forecasts as of April 1, 2002

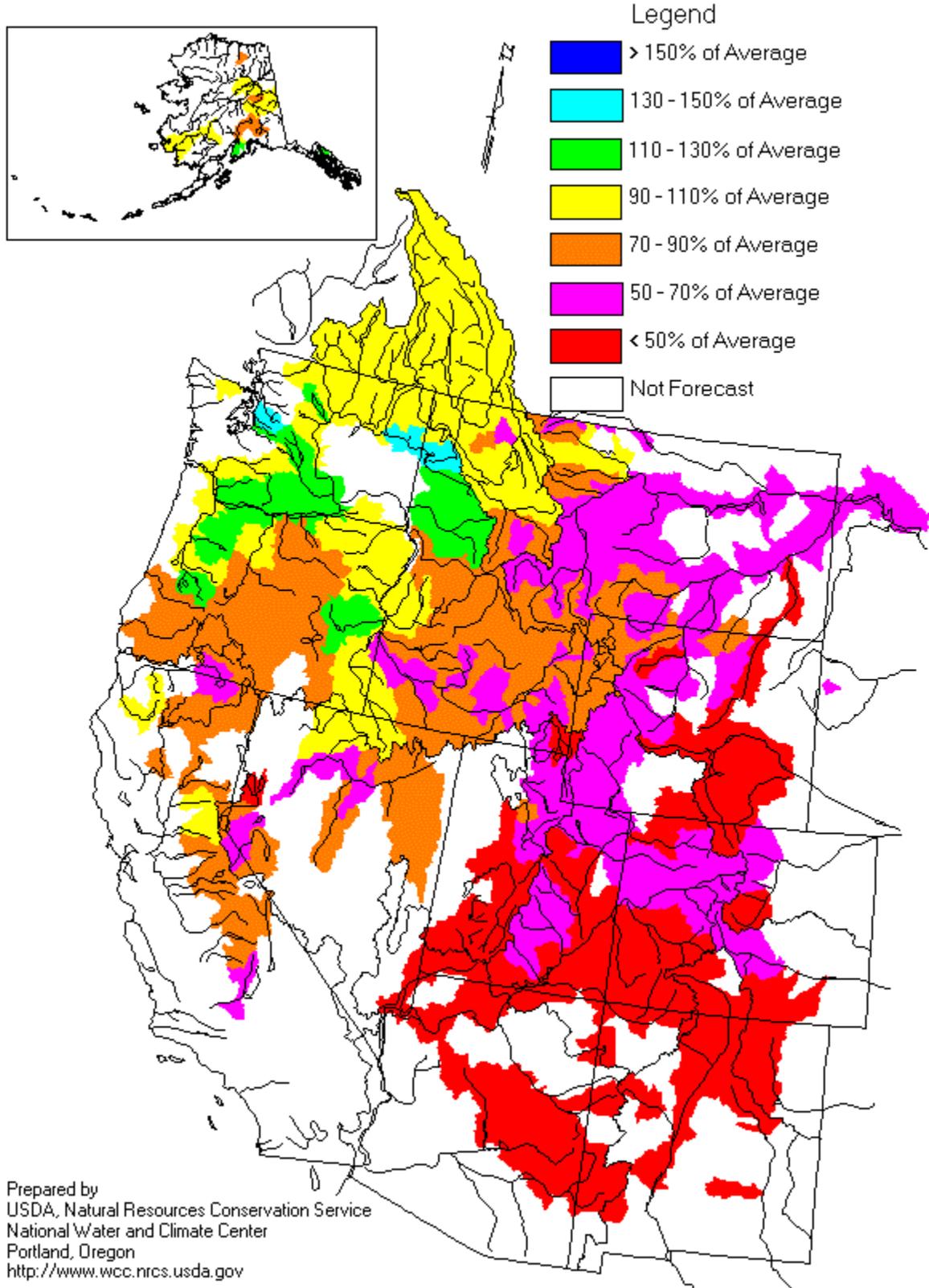
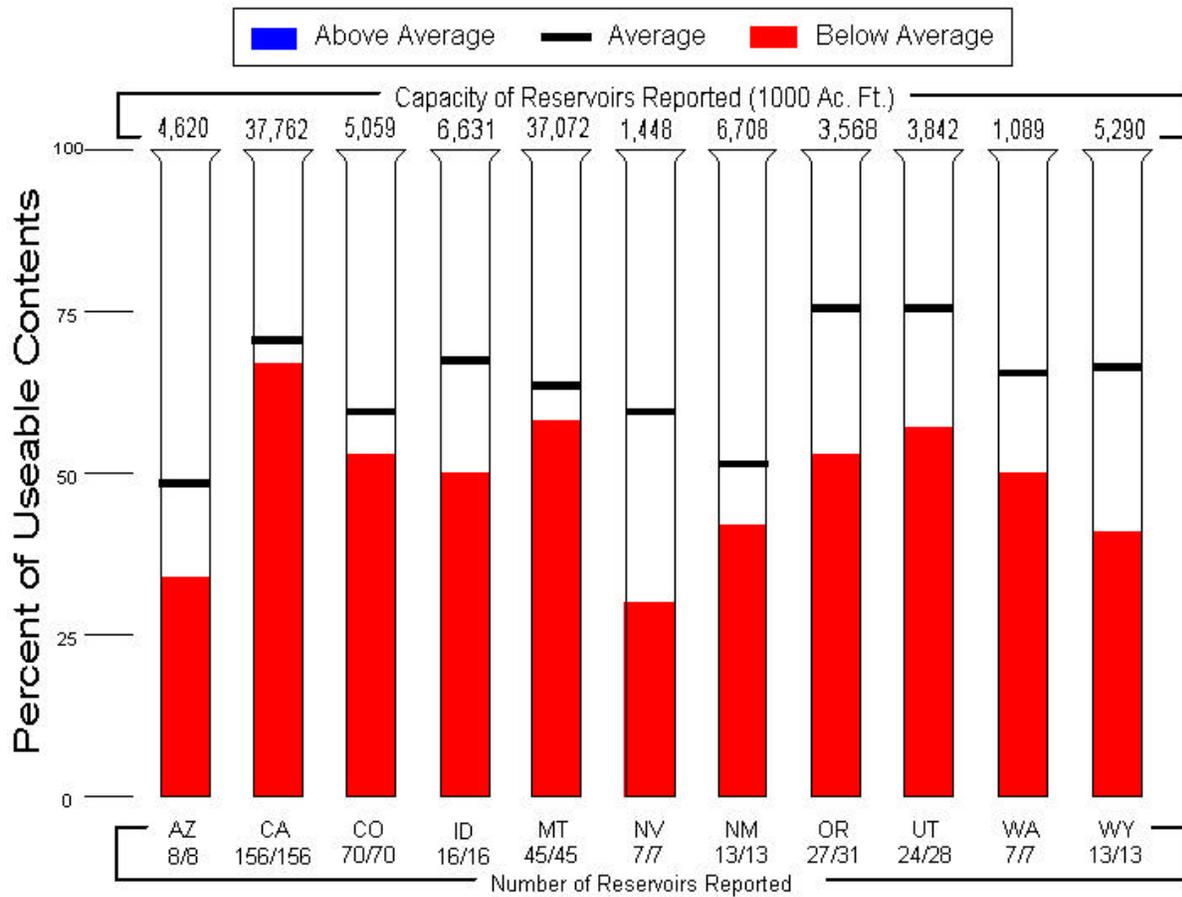


Figure 4. Seasonal Water Supply Forecasts - April 1, 2002

Reservoir Storage as of April 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 - April 1, 2002