



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

Date: **January 20, 2005**

Subject: **January 1, 2005 Western Snowpack Conditions and Water Supply Forecasts**

The following information is provided for your use in describing climate and water supply conditions in the West as of January 1, 2005.

OVERVIEW

A series of very strong fall and early winter storms have brought record snowpacks and precipitation to the southwestern US. Many basin snowpacks in the Sierras of California, the Great Basin of Nevada and Utah report snowpacks in excess of 150% of average, with several reporting over 200% of average. In stark contrast to well above average snowpack and seasonal precipitation in the Southwest, the Pacific Northwest missed many of the major storms resulting in below average snowpacks in Oregon, Washington, Idaho and Montana.

Seasonal runoff forecasts for most Southwest basins are above average as a result of significant fall and winter precipitation and snowpack. Conversely, Pacific Northwest basins are forecast to receive below average spring and summer streamflows due to the lack of precipitation and snowpack.

As of January 1, reservoir storages for all western states except Washington were below historic averages.

SNOWPACK

The January 1, 2005 snowpack map reflects generally below average snowpacks in the Pacific Northwest states of Washington, Oregon, Idaho and Montana (Fig. 1). Snowpacks are less than 50% of average in the Oregon and Washington Cascades and in scattered basins in Idaho and Montana. In contrast to the low snowpacks in the Pacific Northwest, snowpacks in the Sierras of California and the Great Basin states of Nevada, and Utah are well above average. Many basins in southern Utah and in the Sierras report greater than 150% of average snowpacks. Snowpacks in southern Colorado, central Arizona, and eastern New Mexico are also well above average. Snowpacks in Alaska are variable, with central and south central Alaska reporting above average snowpacks and northern and southwestern Alaska reporting below average snowpacks.

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

MONTHLY AND SEASONAL PRECIPITATION

December precipitation was extremely low, less than 50% of average, in western Washington, western Oregon, eastern Montana, and eastern Wyoming (Fig. 2). In contrast, much of the Southwest, including southern California, southern Nevada, most of Utah, Arizona and central Idaho reported much above, greater than 150% of average, precipitation. The rest of the West reported amounts near or slightly below average. Alaska reports above average precipitation in the north and south and average in the middle of the state.

Seasonal precipitation for the period October 1, 2004 to December 31, 2004 is well above average, greater than 150% of normal, in the Southwest states of California, Nevada, Arizona, Utah, central Idaho, southeastern Oregon, and eastern New Mexico (Fig. 3). Seasonal precipitation is well below average, less than 50% of average, in coastal Oregon, Washington and parts of southwestern Montana. Alaska precipitation is above average in most basins.

SPRING AND SUMMER STREAMFLOW FORECASTS

As of January 1, 2005, a majority of basins in the Pacific Northwest are forecast to receive below average spring and summer streamflows while many Southwest basins are forecast to receive above average spring and summer streamflows (Fig. 4).

Significant fall precipitation from a series of intense storms has set the stage for well above average spring and summer runoff for many basins in Utah, Nevada, Arizona, southern Colorado and southeastern New Mexico. In contrast, lack of significant precipitation events, low snowpacks and warm temperatures have contributed to below average spring and summer streamflow forecasts for many basins in the Pacific Northwest.

Specific state streamflow summaries can be obtained from the Internet location - <http://www.wcc.nrcs.usda.gov/cgibin/bor.pl>

RESERVOIR STORAGE

As of January 1, 2005 reservoir storages for all western states except Washington are below historic averages (Fig. 5).

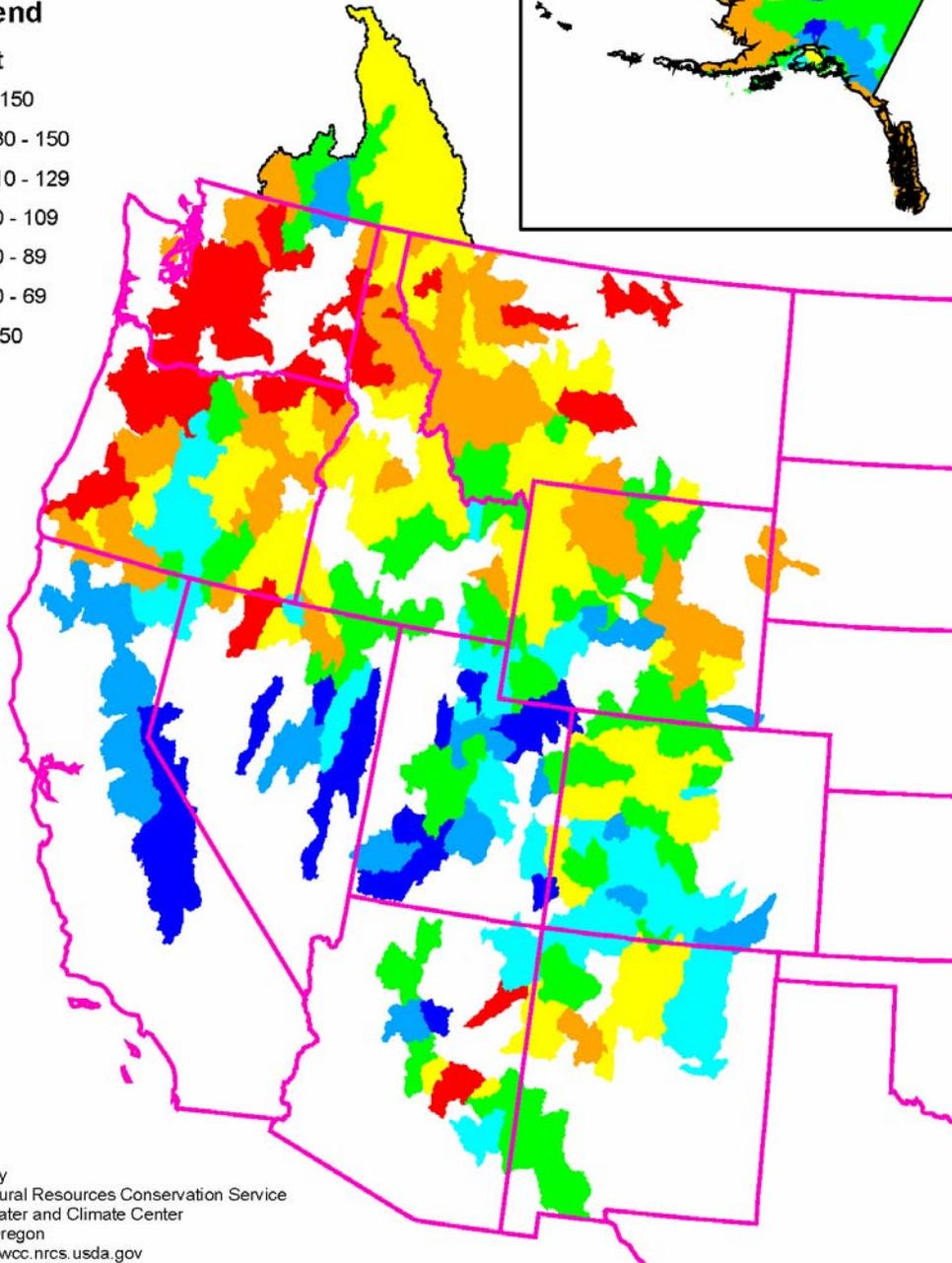
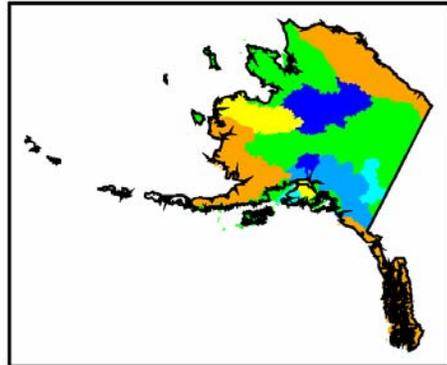
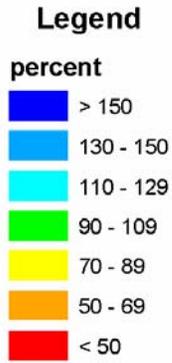
FOR MORE INFORMATION

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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Mountain Snowpack as of January 1, 2005



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

Figure 1. Mountain Snowpack, January 1, 2005

Monthly Precipitation for December 2004

(Averaged by Hydrologic Unit)

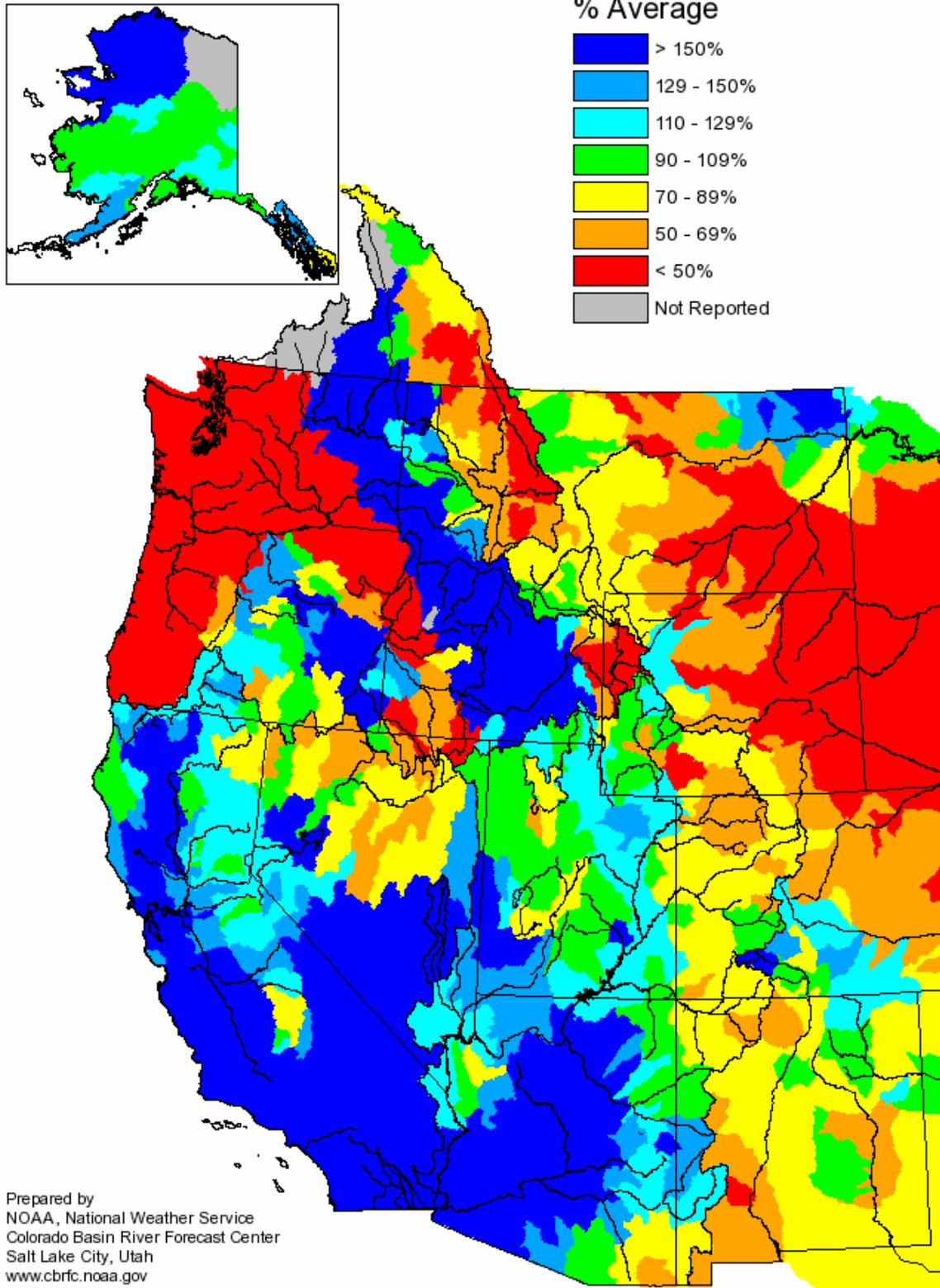


Figure 2. December 2004 Precipitation

Seasonal Precipitation, October 2004 - December 2004

(Averaged by Hydrologic Unit)

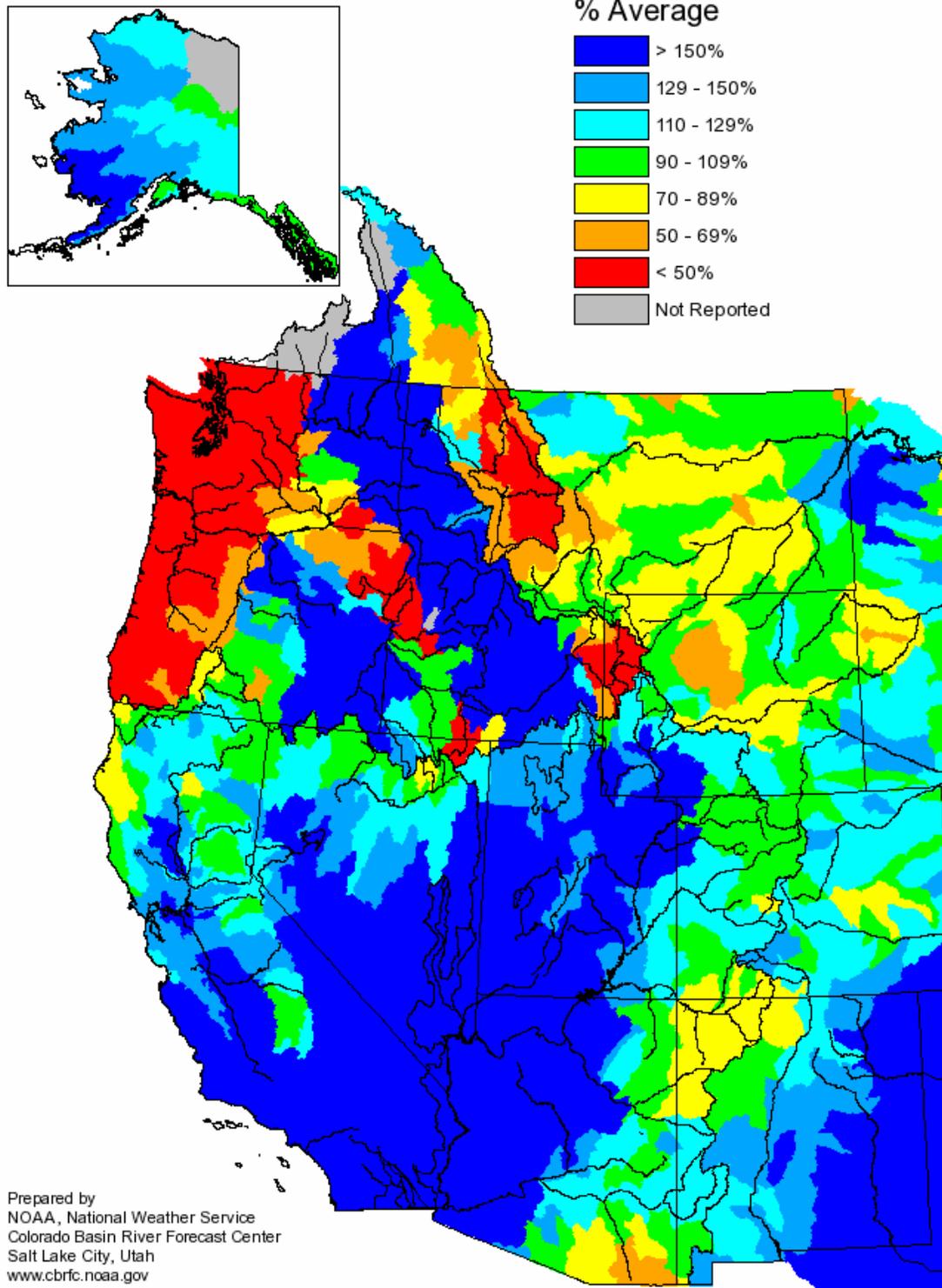
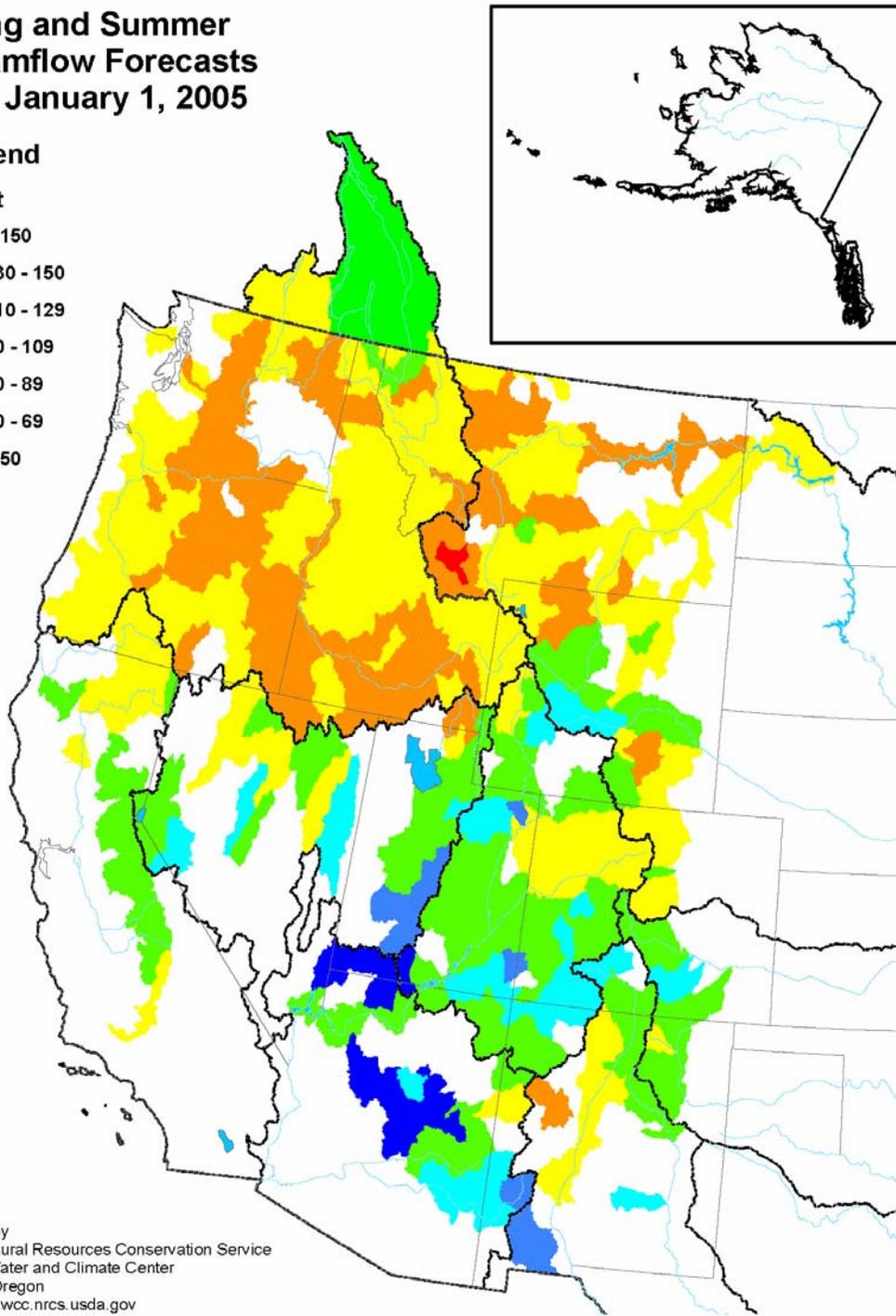


Figure 3. Seasonal Precipitation, October 1, 2004 to December 31, 2004

Spring and Summer Streamflow Forecasts as of January 1, 2005

Legend

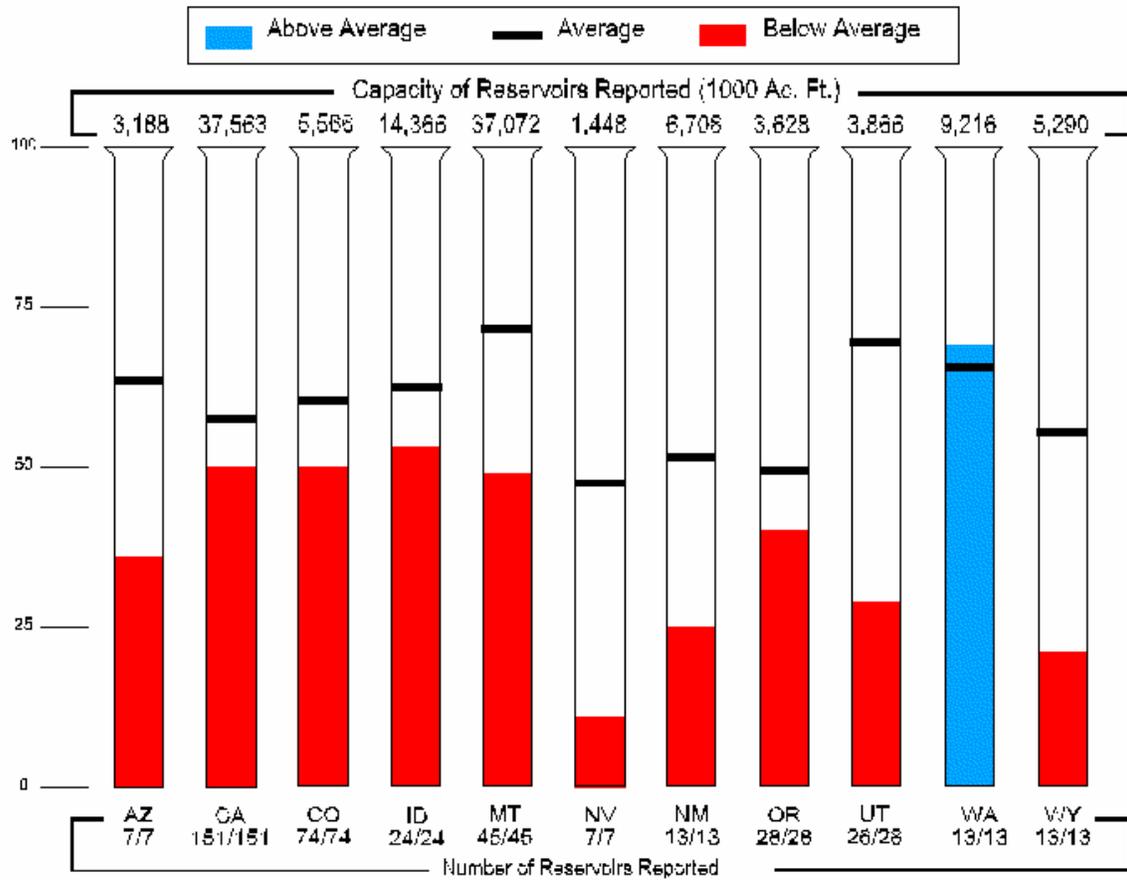
- percent
- > 150
 - 130 - 150
 - 110 - 129
 - 90 - 109
 - 70 - 89
 - 50 - 69
 - < 50



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Figure 4. Seasonal Water Supply Forecasts - January 1, 2005

Reservoir Storage as of January 1, 2005



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

Figure 5. Reservoir Storage - January 1, 2005