



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

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**Date: April 20, 2006**

**Subject: April 1, 2006 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 April 1, 2006.

## **OVERVIEW**

Record low snowpacks continue in the Southwest, while snowpacks were above, to well above average in California, Oregon, southern Washington, southern and central Idaho, western Wyoming, northern Utah and northwestern Colorado.

Seasonal precipitation is extremely low in the Southwest and well above average in most Pacific Northwest basins in response to a series of warm, sub-tropical storms that have moved through the region starting in September and October of 2005.

Extremely low seasonal streamflow is forecast for most basins in Arizona and New Mexico as a result of record low snowpacks and lack of precipitation. Streamflow forecasts are above average in northern Colorado, northern Utah, southern and western Wyoming, northern Nevada, southern Idaho, the Sierras of California, most of Oregon, southwestern Washington, and parts of western Montana. Near, to slightly below average streamflow is forecast for parts of British Columbia, western Montana, northern Wyoming and southern Utah, southwestern Colorado and Alaska.

As of April 1, reservoir storages for all western states are at or slightly below seasonal averages with the exception of California and Nevada which are slightly above historical averages. Arizona and New Mexico reservoir storage is benefiting from above average runoff from last year's abundant snowpack.

## **SNOWPACK**

The westwide April 1, 2006 snowpack map reflects extremely low (less than 50% of average snowpacks) in Arizona, New Mexico, parts of southern Colorado, and southwestern Utah (Fig. 2). The scarcity of winter storms in the Southwest is the primary reason for the extremely low snowpacks. Many basins in New Mexico and Arizona are now snow-free.

A series of strong winter storms has boosted snowpacks to above, or well above average (111% to over 150%) in central Oregon, the southern Cascades of Washington, southern Idaho, a portion of southwest Montana, western and southern Wyoming, northern Utah, northern Colorado and the central Sierras of California. In Alaska, snowpacks are below average except for central regions.

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.htm>

## **MONTHLY AND SEASONAL PRECIPITATION**

March precipitation was extremely low, less than 50% of average, in central New Mexico, parts of southern Arizona, western Washington and British Columbia (Fig. 3). A large area of much above average precipitation was reported in California, Nevada, Utah, eastern Oregon, southern Idaho, western Colorado, southern Wyoming and parts of eastern Arizona. The rest of the West reported near or slightly below March precipitation. Alaska precipitation varied with most areas reporting near or slight below totals with above average amounts reported in the far north and a small part of the southwestern Alaska.

Seasonal precipitation for the period October 1, 2005 to March 31, 2006 reflects a continuing pattern of extremely dry conditions in the Southwest and very wet conditions in the Pacific Northwest (Fig. 4). The seasonal pattern is near to slightly below normal in southern California, southern Nevada, central Utah and western parts of Colorado and Wyoming. Alaska seasonal precipitation is near to slightly below average.

## **SPRING AND SUMMER STREAMFLOW FORECASTS**

Extremely low seasonal streamflow is forecast for most basins in Arizona and New Mexico as a result of record low snowpacks and lack of precipitation (Fig. 5). Streamflow forecasts are above average in northern Colorado, northern Utah, southern and western Wyoming, northern Nevada, southern Idaho, the Sierras of California, most of Oregon, southwestern Washington, and parts of western Montana. Near, to slightly below average streamflow is forecast for parts of British Columbia, western Montana, northern Wyoming and southern Utah, southwestern Colorado and Alaska. Specific state streamflow summaries can be obtained from the Internet location - <http://www.wcc.nrcs.usda.gov/cqibin/bor.pl>

## **RESERVOIR STORAGE**

As of April 1, reservoir storages for all western states are at or slightly below seasonal averages with the exception of California and Nevada which are slightly above historical averages. Arizona and New Mexico reservoir storage is benefiting from above average runoff from last year's abundant snowpack (Fig. 6).

## **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

Director, Conservation Engineering Division, Natural Resources Conservation Division,  
Washington, DC

# Mountain Snowpack as of April 1, 2006

## Legend

percent

-  > 180
-  150 - 180
-  130 - 149
-  110 - 129
-  90 - 109
-  70 - 89
-  50 - 69
-  25 - 49
-  < 25
-  No Survey

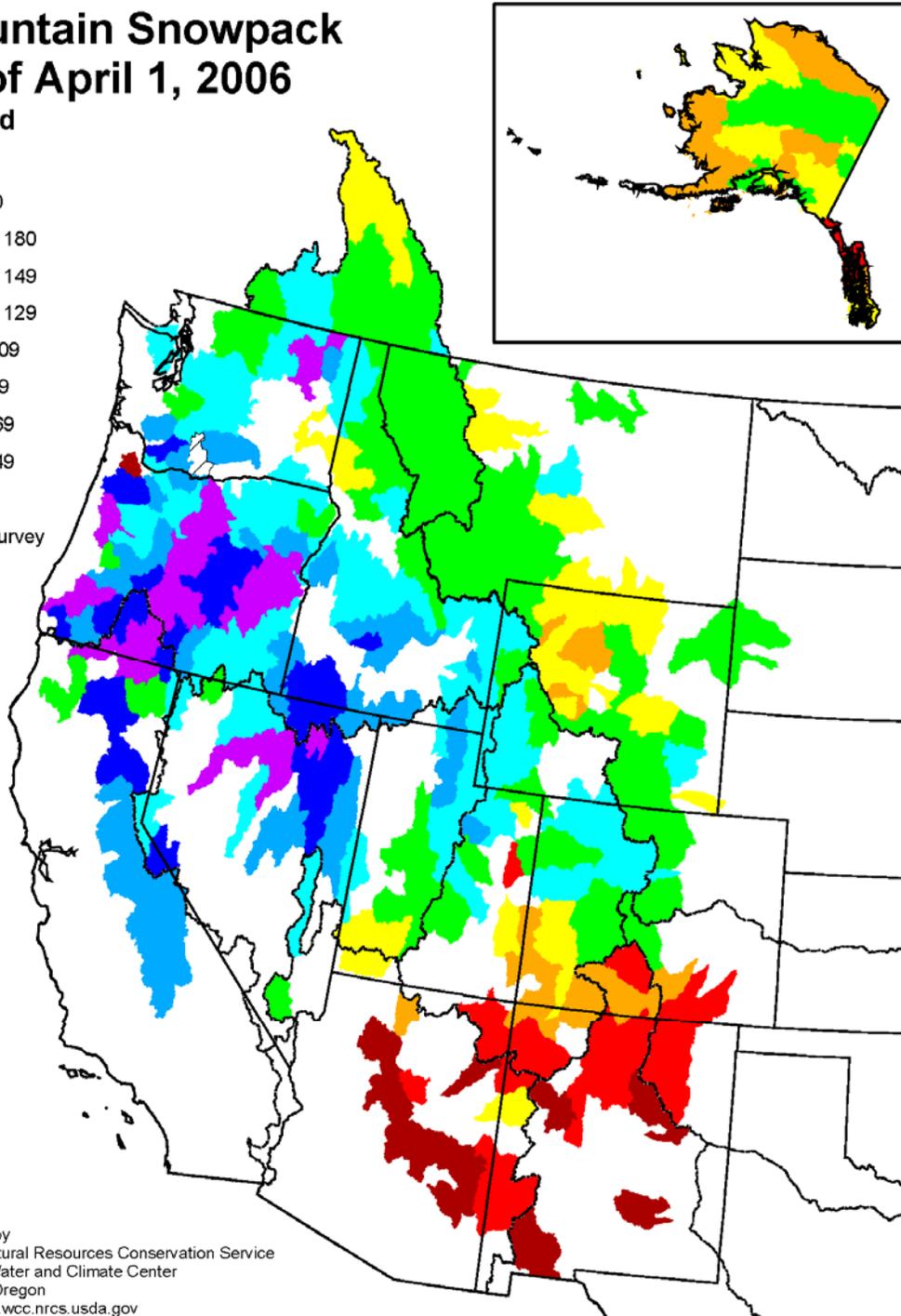
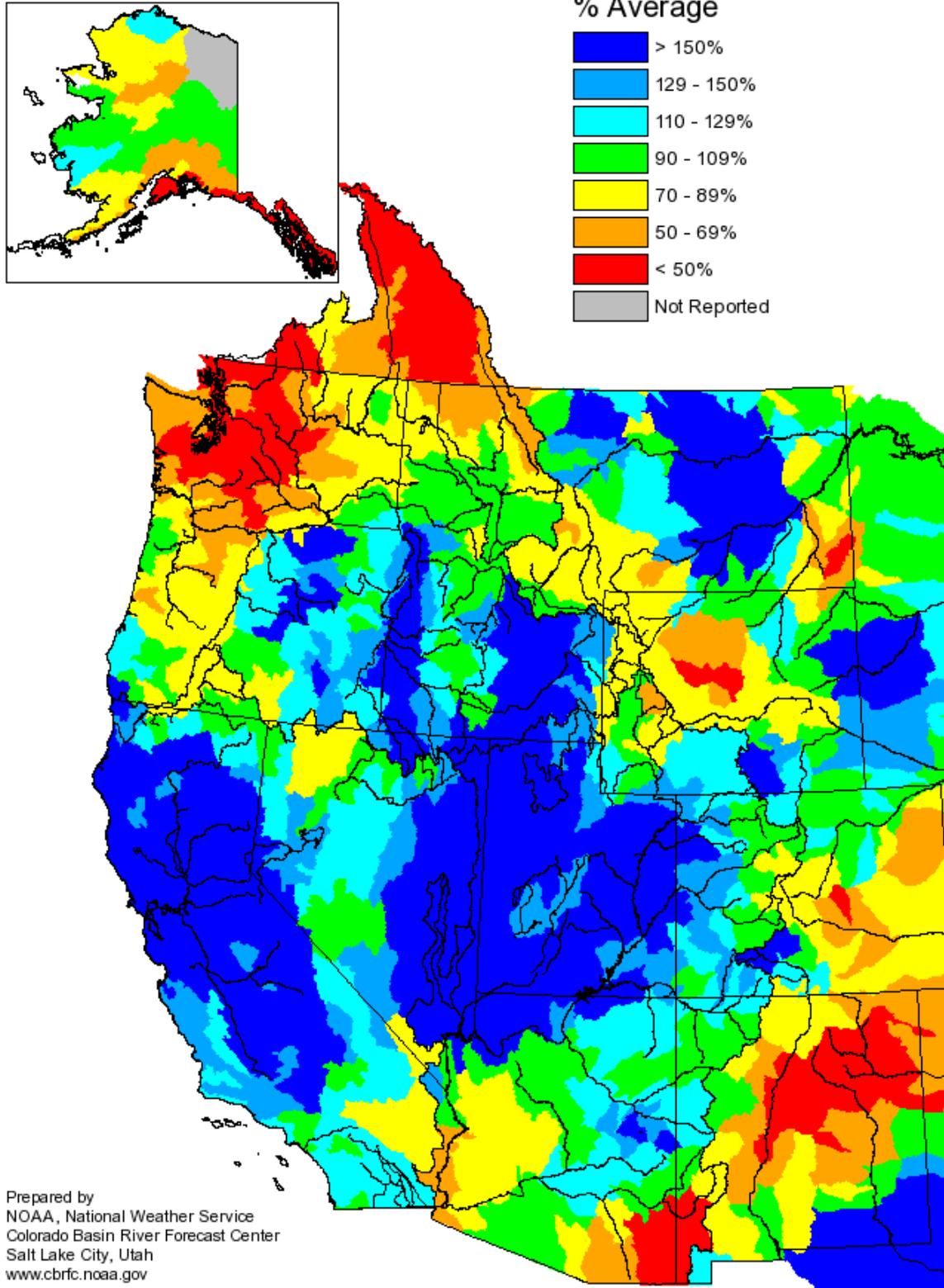


Figure 2. Mountain Snowpack, April 1, 2006

# Monthly Precipitation for March 2006

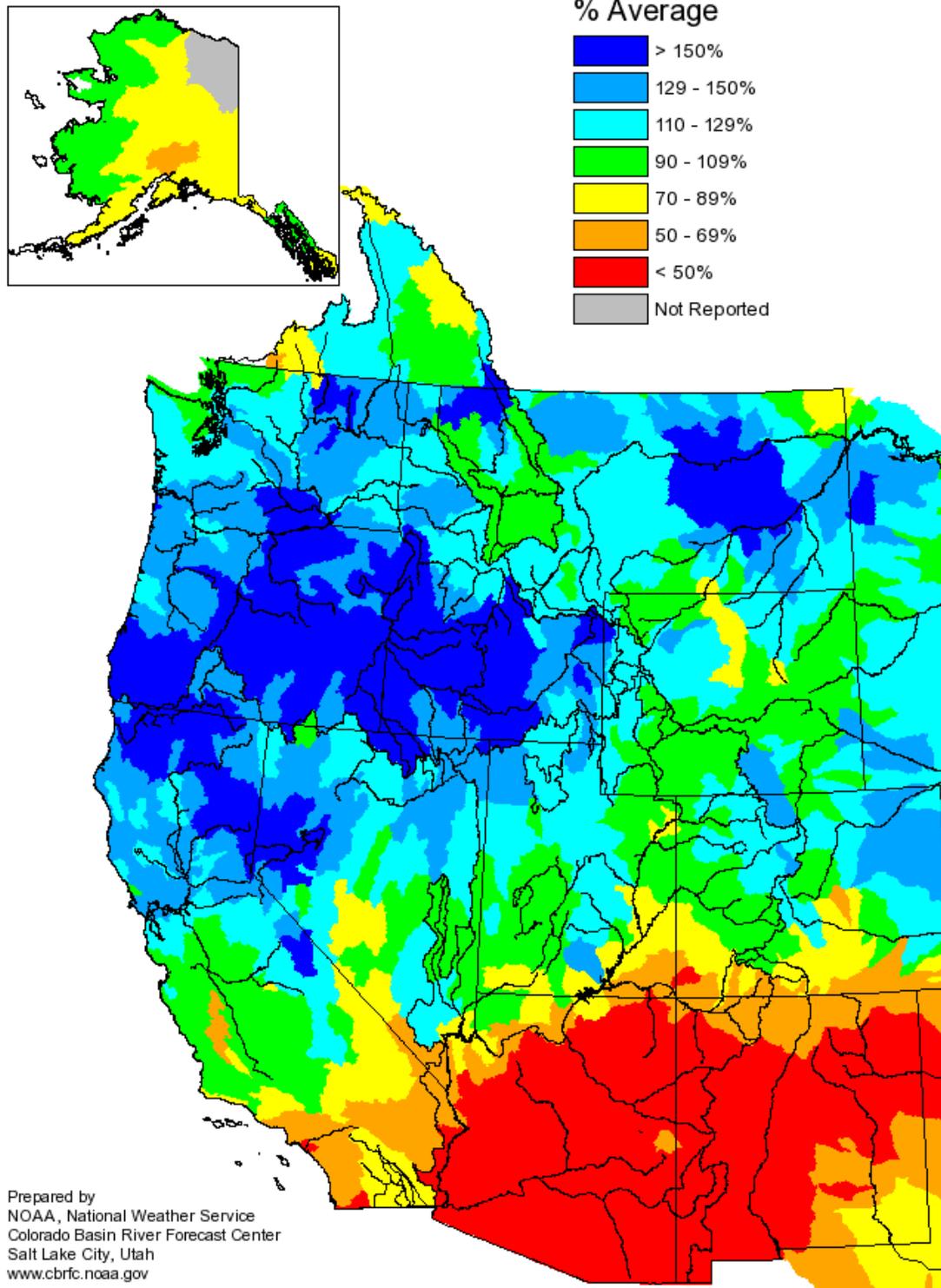
(Averaged by Hydrologic Unit)



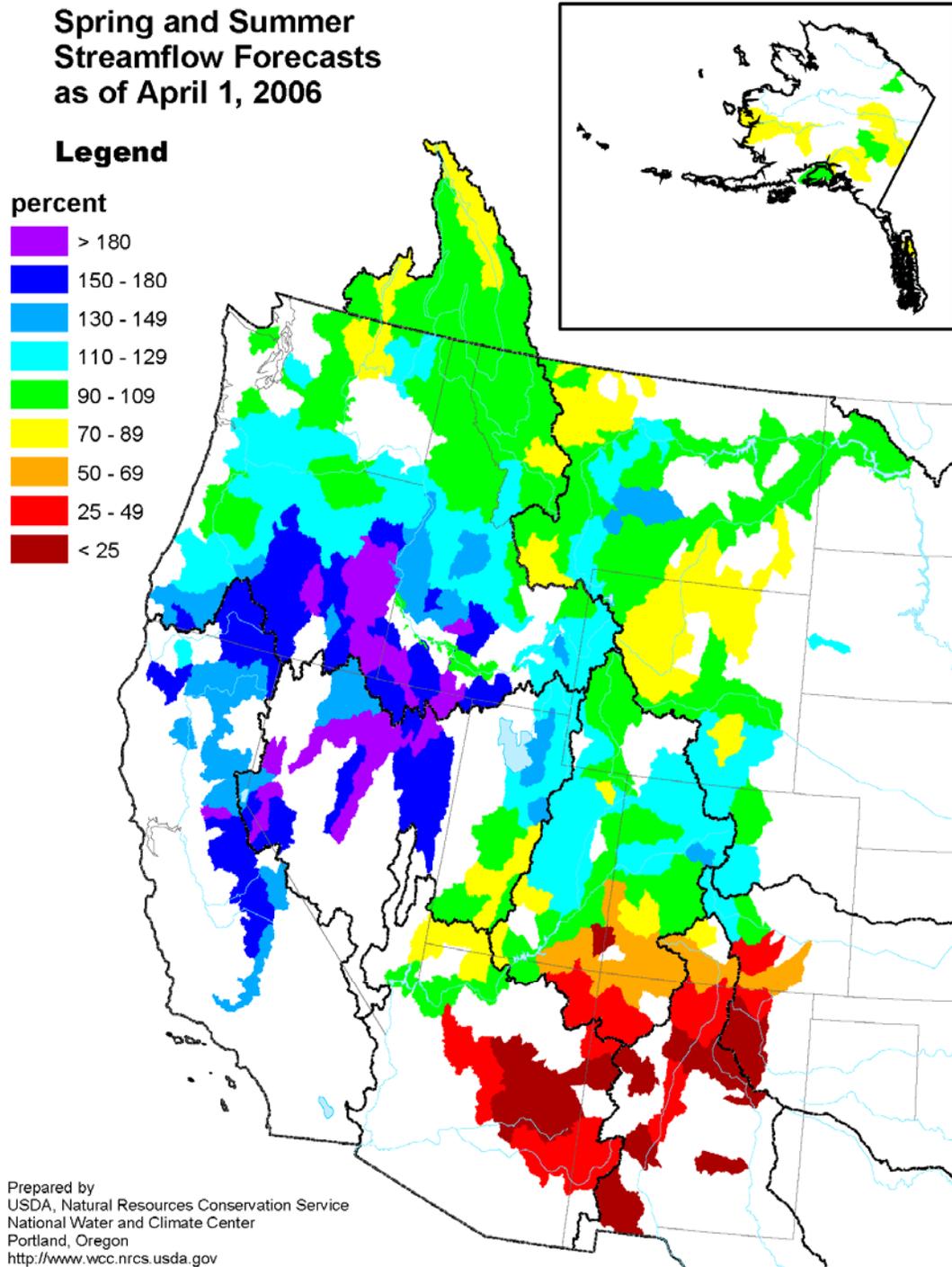
**Figure 3. March 2006 Precipitation**

# Seasonal Precipitation, October 2005 - March 2006

(Averaged by Hydrologic Unit)



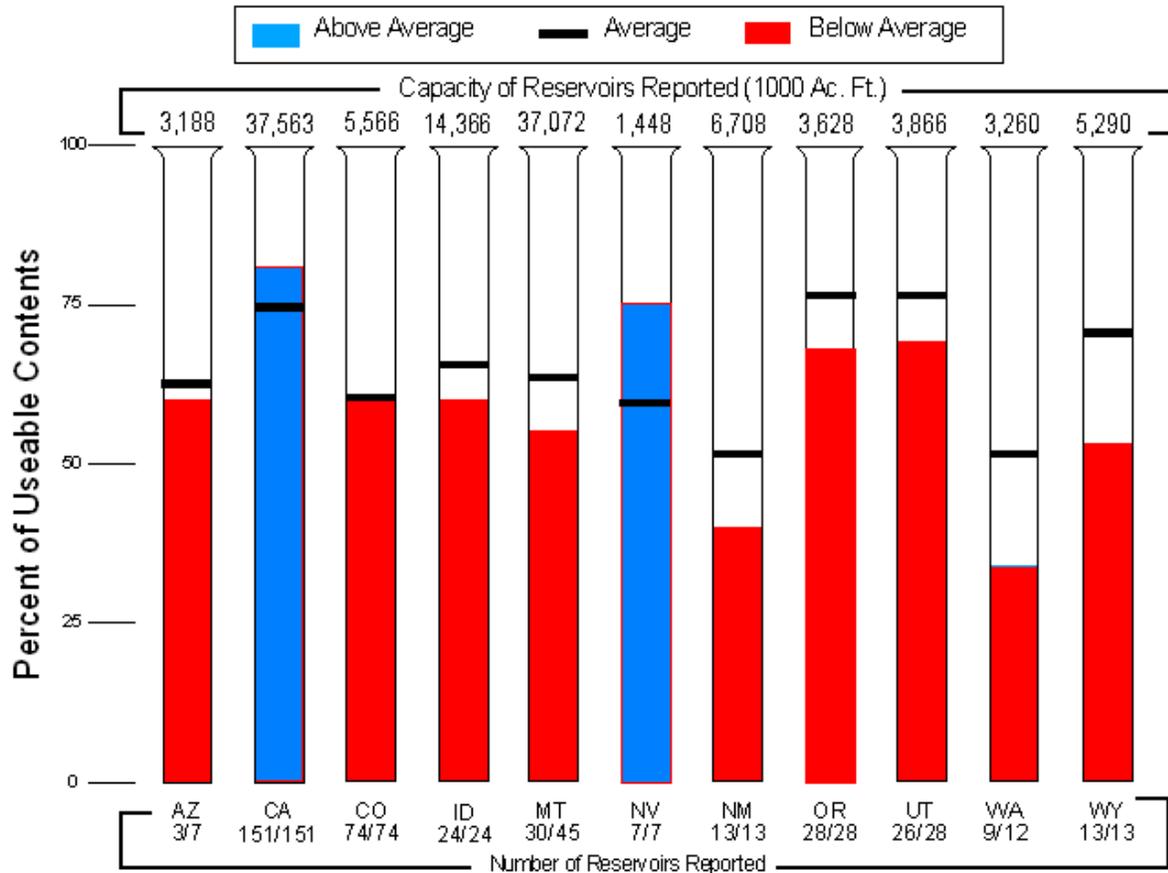
**Figure 4. Seasonal Precipitation, October 1, 2005 to March 31, 2006**



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

**Figure 5. Seasonal Water Supply Forecasts - April 1, 2006**

### Reservoir Storage as of April 1, 2006



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

**Fig. 6. Reservoir Storage - April 1, 2006**