



Natural Resources Conservation Service  
Snow Survey Office  
Denver Federal Center  
PO Box 25426  
Denver, CO 80225-0426  
<http://www.co.nrcs.usda.gov>

# NEWS

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## STATE SNOWPACK MAKES GAINS IN FEBRUARY

Denver, March 5, 2012—February's weather brought welcome increases to snowpack percentages across Colorado, according to March 1 snowpack surveys conducted by the USDA, Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). The statewide snowpack increased to 81 percent of average, up 9 percentage points from the 72 percent of average recorded on February 1. Despite these gains this year's snowpack continues to lag well behind last year's, with the March 1 readings only 71 percent of last year's totals on this same date, according to Phyllis Ann Philipps, State Conservationist with the NRCS.

This year's La Nina pattern has been dramatically different than the previous La Nina pattern. At this time last year many basins in Colorado had broken records that had been in place since the 1930's; this year, average would be a welcome benchmark. February's snowfall seemed to be a turning point for the Yampa, White, and North Platte and combined San Juan, Animas, Dolores and San Miguel basins. The combined Yampa and White basins snowpack increased 14 percentage points reporting at 74 percent of average on March 1. The North Platte basin was at 80 percent of average on March 1 compared to just 69 percent of average on February 1. In the southwest corner of the state, the combined San Juan, Animas, Dolores and San Miguel basins snowpack's were at 86 percent of average on March 1, a 13 point improvement over last month. The Arkansas, Upper Rio Grande and Colorado basins benefited

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the least from the February storm systems but their snowpack percentages still improved. Across the state all major river basins received near or above average snowfall for the month of February.

As of March 1, the state's water supply forecasts closely mirrored the state's snowpack percentages. All major basins in Colorado are expected to have below average runoff conditions this spring and summer. The South Platte basin has the highest snowpack percentage in the state and boasts some of the highest streamflow forecasts.

Fortunately for most water users, reservoir storage is above or near average across most of the state. This available stored water should help alleviate any late-summer shortages.

The table below shows Colorado's snowpack and reservoir storage as of March 1, 2012.

BASIN	% AVERAGE SNOWPACK	% LAST YR.'S SNOWPACK	% AVERAGE RESERVOIR STORAGE	% LAST YR.'S RESERVOIR STORAGE
GUNNISON	79	65	112	100
COLORADO	75	59	116	101
SOUTH PLATTE	89	73	105	106
NORTH PLATTE	80	61	---	---
YAMPA/WHITE	74	60	124	129
ARKANSAS	86	80	98	99
RIO GRANDE	83	94	69	84
SAN JUAN, ANIMAS,	86	87	104	102

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DOLORES				
STATEWIDE	81	71	107	102

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