



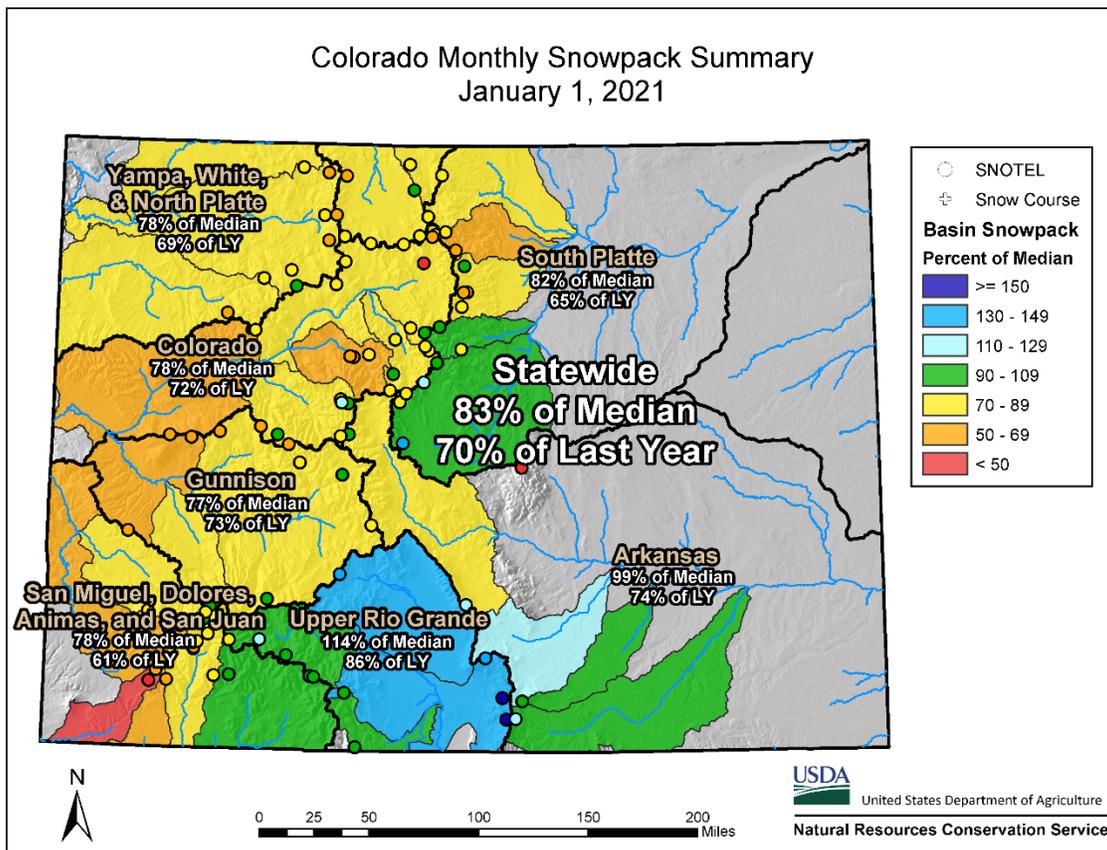
Natural Resources Conservation Service
Colorado State Office
Denver Federal Center
Bldg. 56 Room 2604
PO Box 25426
Denver, CO 80225-0426
<https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/co/snow/>

News Release

Contact:
Brian Domonkos, (720) 544-2852
brian.domonkos@usda.gov

Dry Conditions Persist

Denver, CO – January 13th, 2021 – The 2021 water year is off to a slow start. As of January 1st, 2021, Colorado year-to-date mountain snowpack and precipitation was 83% and 70% of normal respectively. For comparison, the at this time last year snowpack and precipitation were 119% and 92% of normal, respectively. “Persistent dry conditions maintain a firm hold on Colorado, not only in the new water year, but extending back into 2020”, states Brian Domonkos, Snow Survey Supervisor for the USDA NRCS Colorado Snow Survey Program. The 2020 water year, ending on September 30th, 2020, finished on a record dry note. According to the SNOTEL network across the state of Colorado, August and September 2020 combined precipitation totaled the lowest in the 36-year period of record. Adding to the drought, October precipitation across Colorado was 47% of average. Domonkos goes on to say, “These dry fall and late summer conditions will impact spring 2021 runoff in similar ways that dry conditions at the end of 2019 impacted water supplies in 2020.”





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Near normal snowpack and reservoir storage leading into the spring of 2020 helped Colorado stave off significant runoff shortages. However, this year’s snowpack is below normal, as is reservoir storage across the state which sets up a potentially drier situation than last year. Due to below normal precipitation late this past summer streamflow currently remain low and subsequently reservoirs will see little recharge this winter. Currently statewide reservoir storage is at 82% of average.

There is a bright spot in the state. Over the last few years, the Rio Grande has been quite dry, but this year boasts the best snowpack in the state. The basin currently has 114% of median snowpack, driving streamflow forecasts to indicate a considerable chance of near normal streamflow runoff this spring and summer. These same near normal snowpack conditions also extend into portions of the San Juan and Sangre de Cristo Mountains draining to Southern Arkansas and Upper San Juan River Basins which currently have a better chance of near normal streamflow come spring.

Currently, water supplies this spring and summer are projected to range from just above normal in parts of the Rio Grande, to around half the normal runoff in the Gunnison as well as in the combined Yampa-White-North Platte basins. These water supply projections assume near normal future precipitation. Domonkos remains optimistic, “With slightly more than half of the snowpack accumulation season remaining there is potential for snowpack to improve.”

Colorado’s Snowpack and Reservoir Storage as of January 1, 2021

BASIN	% MEDIAN SNOWPACK	% LAST YR.’S SNOWPACK	% AVERAGE RESERVOIR STORAGE	LAST YEAR’S % AVERAGE RESERVOIR STORAGE
GUNNISON	77	73	77	104
COLORADO	78	72	102	107
SOUTH PLATTE	82	65	87	120
NORTH PLATTE	79	70	----	----
YAMPA/WHITE	72	67	106	124
ARKANSAS	99	74	70	98
RIO GRANDE	114	86	71	82
SMDASJ*	78	61	60	107
STATEWIDE	83	70	82	107

*Combined San Miguel, Dolores, Animas and San Juan Basins

For more detailed information about January 1 mountain snowpack refer to the [January 1, 2021 Colorado Water Supply Outlook Report](#). For the most up to date information about Colorado snowpack and water supply related information, refer to the [Colorado Snow Survey website](#).