United States Department of Agriculture

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News Release

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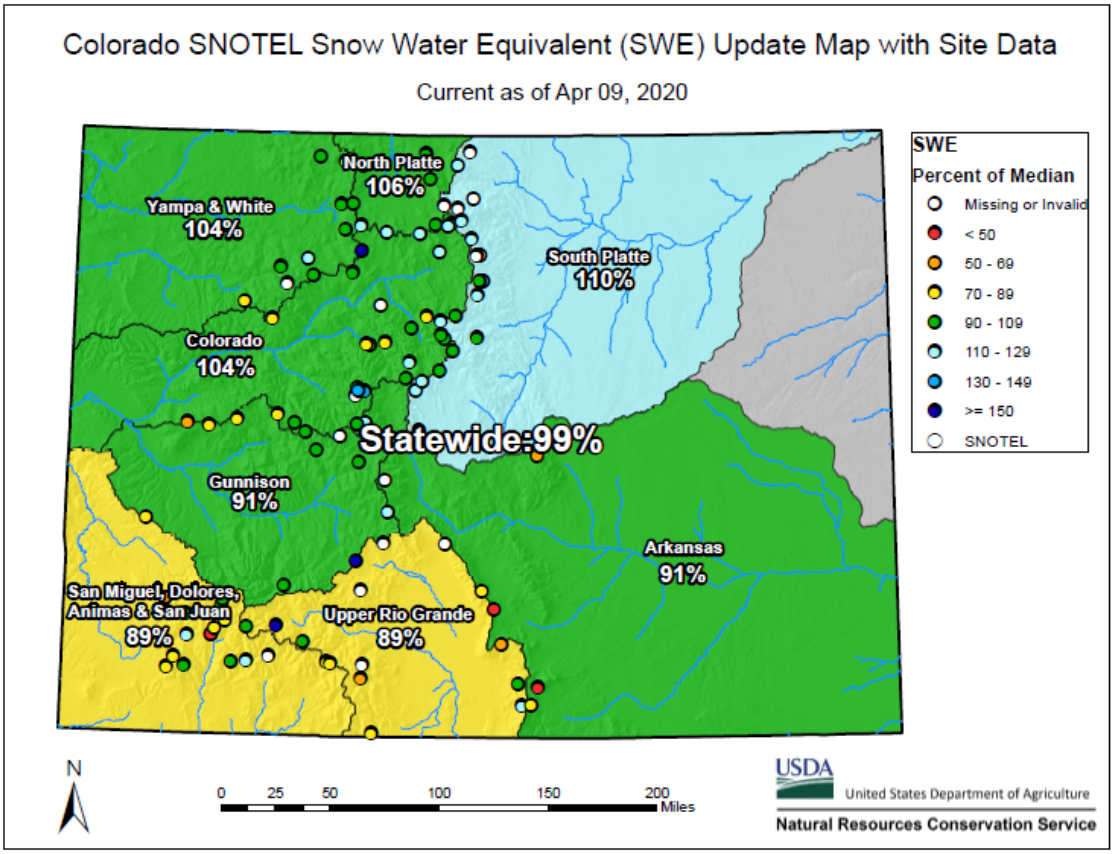
Colorado Snowpack is Near Normal as Peak Accumulation Approaches

Denver, CO – April 9th, 2020 –
Despite below average precipitation across much of the state in March, Colorado's snowpack is currently very near normal at 99 percent of median statewide. There is a south to north trend in snowpack with below normal snowpack across southern Colorado and above normal snowpack across the northern half of the state. The Gunnison, combined San Miguel, Dolores, Animas, and San Juan, Rio Grande, and Arkansas basins have very similar snowpack amounts, near 90 percent of normal. The Colorado and combined Yampa and White River basins both have 104 percent of normal snowpack, right behind the North Platte at 106 percent of normal. The South Platte basin is holding the most substantial snowpack in the state at 110 percent of normal. NRCS Hydrologist Karl Wetlaufer notes "This is a very important time of the year when it comes to water resources because peak snowpack accumulation generally occurs in mid-April. Notable snowmelt has already been observed at a substantial amount of SNOTEL sites across the state".



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Despite a generally near normal snowpack, streamflow forecasts are mostly for lower values than would commonly be expected given snow amounts. These lower forecast values are the result of a very dry late summer and fall experienced by much of the state last year. “Those conditions led to very low soil moisture amounts going into the snow accumulation season, a deficit which will have to be replenished by melting snow and will likely reduce streamflow volumes.” Wetlaufer explains.

Reservoir storage has remained relatively steady over the last few months, with respect to normal. Only the Arkansas and Rio Grande basins in southern Colorado are currently holding below average storage volumes. Statewide reservoir storage is 107 percent of average.

While snow can certainly continue to accumulate in the high country this is a very pivotal part of the year when it comes to water resources. Much can still change over the coming months but it is an encouraging start to have near normal snowpack and reservoir conditions in most of the state. Now that substantial snowmelt is being observed at SNOTEL sites across the state it will be worth keeping a close eye on changing conditions given the dynamic nature of mountain weather conditions during the spring season.

Colorado’s Snowpack and Reservoir Storage as of April 1, 2020

BASIN	% MEDIAN SNOWPACK	% LAST YR.’S SNOWPACK	% AVERAGE RESERVOIR STORAGE	LAST YEAR’S % AVERAGE RESERVOIR STORAGE
GUNNISON	97	65	111	67
COLORADO	113	88	115	90
SOUTH PLATTE	117	98	110	102
NORTH PLATTE	114	93		
YAMPA/WHITE	107	92	125	106
ARKANSAS	105	71	92	90
RIO GRANDE	100	68	83	78
SMDASJ*	99	62	104	58
STATEWIDE	107	80	107	84

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

For more detailed information about April 1 mountain snowpack refer to the April 1, 2020 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.