



Drought Information Statement for South Central and Southeast Colorado Valid April 19th, 2026

Issued By: National Weather Service Pueblo, Colorado

Contact Information: nws.pueblo@noaa.gov

- This product will be updated by May 21st, 2026 or sooner if drought conditions change significantly.
- Please see all currently available products at <https://drought.gov/drought-information-statements>.
- Please visit <https://www.weather.gov/pub/DroughtInformationStatement> for previous statements.
- Please visit <https://www.drought.gov/drought-status-updates> for regional drought status updates.

- 97% of Colorado experiencing Moderate to Exceptional Drought conditions





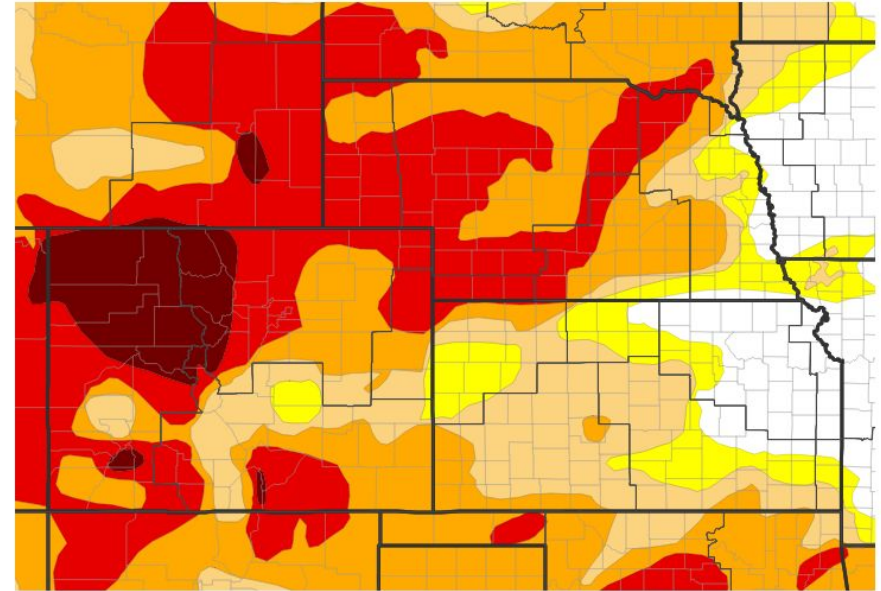
U.S. Drought Monitor

Link to the [latest U.S. Drought Monitor](#) for Colorado

- **Drought intensity and Extent**

- **D4 (Exceptional Drought):** Lake, northwestern Chaffee and extreme eastern Costilla counties.
- **D3 Extreme Drought:** Northern Chaffee, northern and southwestern Saguache, Mineral, western Rio Grande, western Conejos, eastern Costilla, Huerfano, and the western 2/3rds of Las Animas counties.
- **D2 Severe Drought:** South central Chaffee, western and east central Saguache, central Rio Grande, central Conejos, southern Custer, central Costilla, southern Pueblo, Otero, eastern Las Animas, Baca, and most of Bent and Prowers counties.
- **D1 Moderate Drought:** Southern Chaffee, eastern Saguache, eastern Rio Grande, Alamosa, western Costilla, northern Custer, Fremont, Teller, northern El Paso, central Pueblo, Crowley, western 2/3rds Kiowa, northeastern Bent and northeastern Prowers counties.
- **D0: Abnormally Dry:** Southern El Paso, northern Pueblo, and eastern Kiowa counties.

U.S. Drought Monitor



U.S. Drought Monitor



Source(s): NDMC, NOAA, USDA, NASA; image courtesy of Drought.gov

Data Valid: 04/14/26



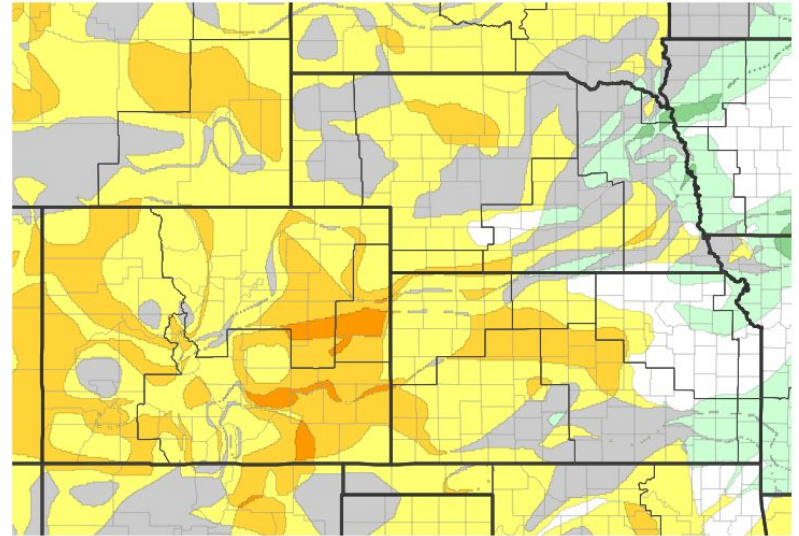


Recent Change in Drought Intensity

Link to the latest [4-week change map](#) for Colorado

- 4 Week Drought Monitor Class Change.
 - **Drought Worsened:** All of south central and southeast Colorado
 - **No Change:** N/A
 - **Drought Improved:** N/A

U.S. Drought Monitor 4-Week Change Map



Drought Degradation



Drought Improvement



Source(s): NDMC, NOAA, USDA, NASA; image courtesy of Drought.gov

Data Valid: 04/14/26

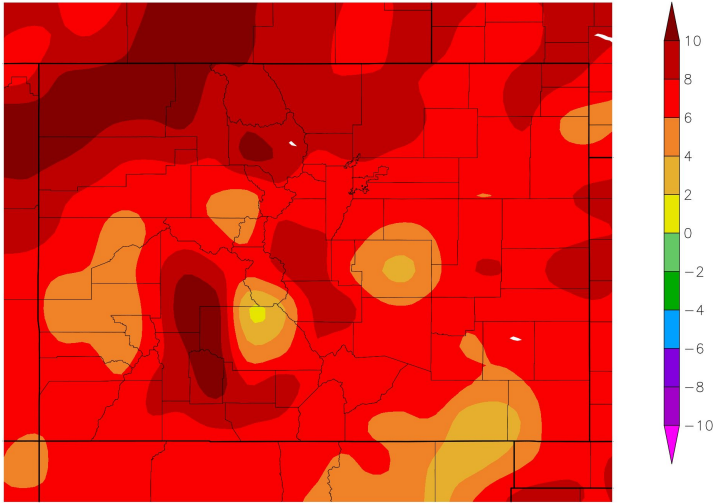




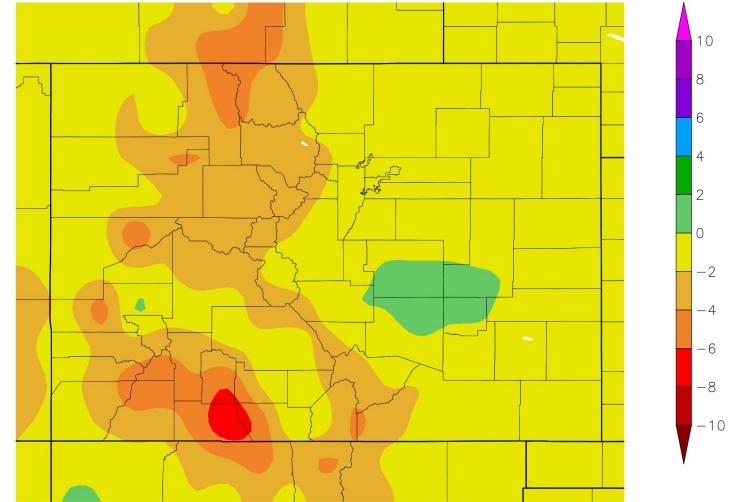
Past 3 Month Temperature and Precipitation Departure

Links to the latest [HPRCC Mean Temperature](#) and [Precipitation](#) departures from normal over the past 3 months

Departure from Normal Temperature (F)
1/1/2026 – 3/31/2026



Departure from Normal Precipitation (in)
1/1/2026 – 3/31/2026



Generated 4/10/2026 using provisional data.

ACIS Web Services

Generated 4/10/2026 using provisional data.

ACIS Web Services

The Jan-Mar 2026 timeframe was one of the warmest 1st three months of the year on record across SC and SE CO. January saw a few passing weather systems bringing precipitation and colder temperatures to the region, especially across Eastern Colorado, which saw an Arctic airmass at the end of the month. February was very warm and occasional windy, creating high fire danger and hazardous travel conditions at times, with areas of blowing dust. March started out unsettled, however, strong upper ridging through the 2nd half of the month, brought record shattering heat which quickly depleted the already record low snowpack across the state.

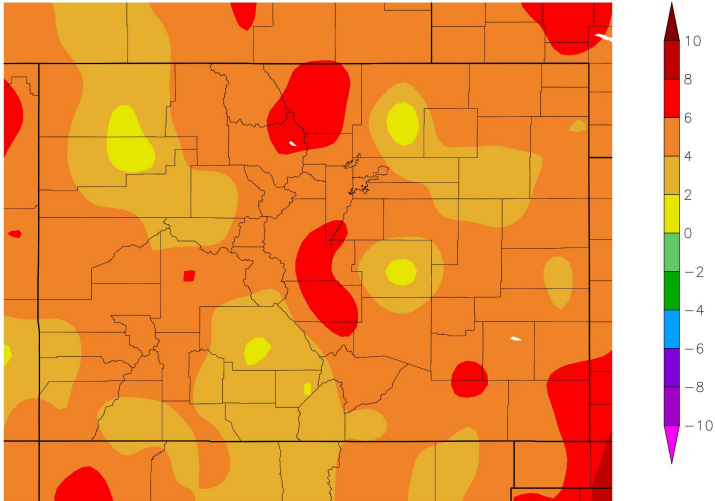




Month to Date Temperature and Precipitation Departure

Links to the latest [HPRCC Mean Temperature](#) and [Precipitation](#) departures from normal month to date

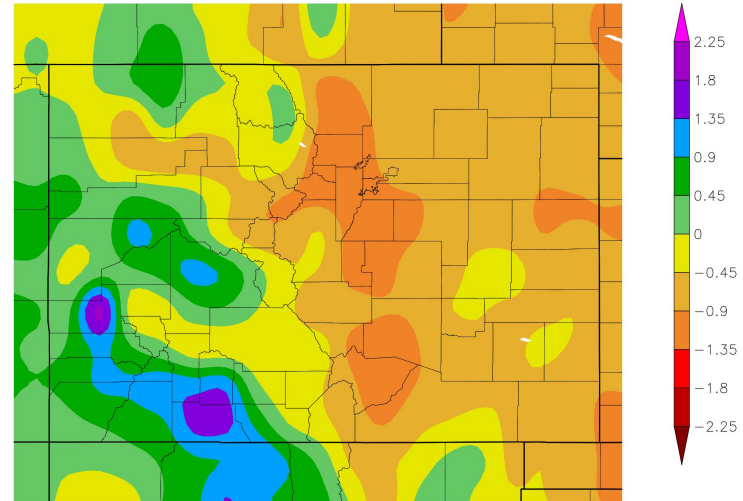
Departure from Normal Temperature (F)
4/1/2026 – 4/17/2026



Generated 4/18/2026 using provisional data.

ACIS Web Services

Departure from Normal Precipitation (in)
4/1/2026 – 4/17/2026



Generated 4/18/2026 using provisional data.

ACIS Web Services

April, thus far, has been unseasonably warm, with a few quick moving weather systems bringing some beneficial moisture to areas along and west of the Continental Divide.



Summary of Impacts

Links: See/submit [Condition Monitoring Observer Reports \(CMOR\)](#) and view the [Drought Impacts Reporter](#)

Hydrologic Impacts

- Statewide snowpack continues to run at historically low levels, with 103 of 117 Colorado SNOTEL sites reporting SWE around the 0th percentile at the end of March. 95 percent of sites were also at the lowest or second lowest values on record.
- Streamflow runoff forecasts remain well below normal levels, with many streams already experiencing peak flows from snowmelt runoff.

Agricultural Impacts

- Soil moisture is running below seasonal levels across south central and southeast Colorado. ([CPC Daily Soil Moisture Ranking](#))

Fire Hazard Impacts

- Warm and dry conditions has led to increased fire danger across south central and southeast Colorado. The earlier snow melt seasonal will bring an increased potential for significant wildfires across Colorado into the early Summer.

Mitigation Actions

- Please refer to your municipality and/or water provider for mitigation and water restriction information.

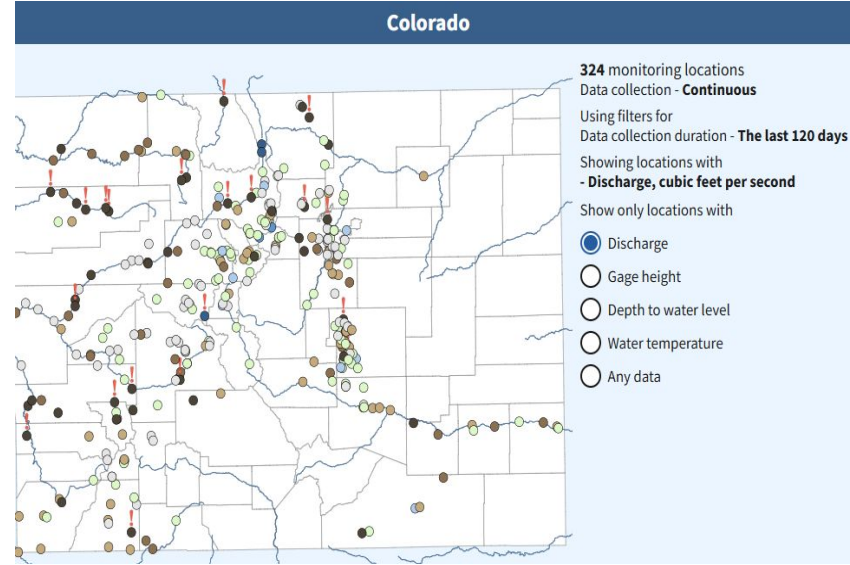




Hydrologic Conditions and Impacts

Links to [Current NRCS Mountain Precipitation](#) and [NWS Western Water Supply and Streamflow Forecasts](#)

- Latest stream flows are generally at and below seasonal normals across south central and southeast Colorado.
- NRCS data indicates **statewide mountain precipitation** for the month of **March was 37 percent of median**, as compared to 104 percent of median at this time last year. This brings statewide WY 2026 precipitation to 74 percent of median, as compared to 92 percent of median at this time last year.
- In the **Arkansas basin, March precipitation was 31 percent of median**, as compared to 77 percent of median at this time last year. This brings Arkansas basin WY 2026 precipitation to 70 percent of median, as compared to 92 percent of median at this time last year.
- In the **Upper Rio Grande basin, March precipitation was 14 percent of median**, as compared to 85 percent of median at this time last year. This brings Upper Rio Grande basin WY 2026 precipitation to 77 percent of median, as compared to 79 percent of median at this time last year.



[USGS Colorado streamflow](#) valid April 18th, 2026

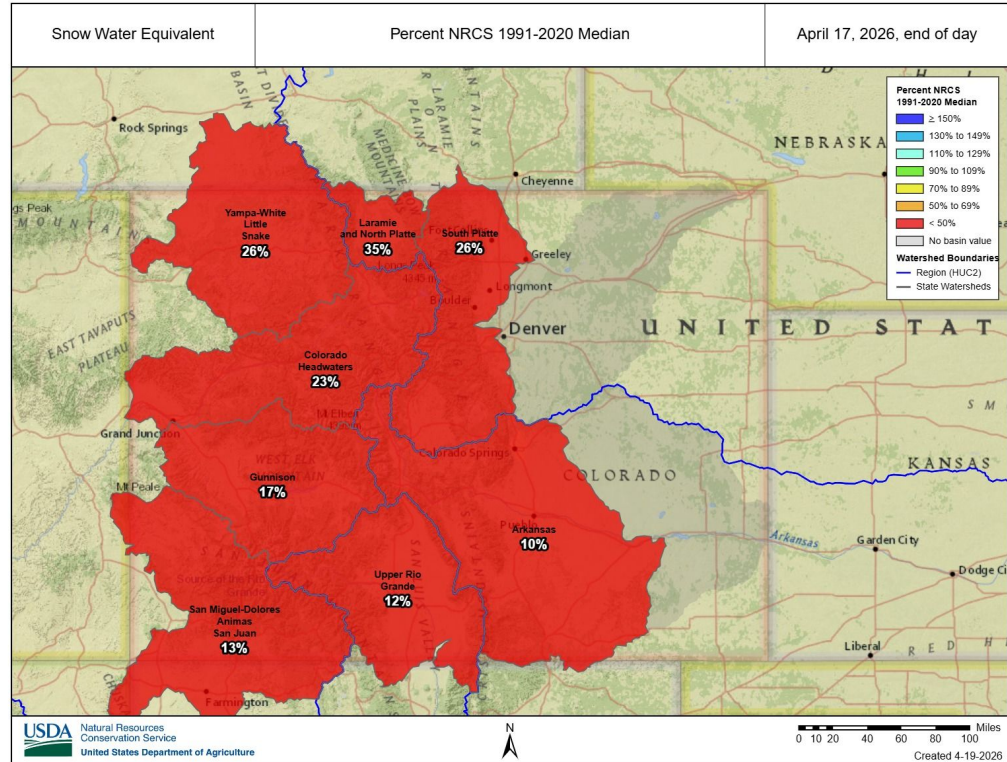




Hydrologic Conditions Colorado Snowpack

Links to Current [NRCS Colorado Basin Report](#) and [NRCS Colorado Water Supply Outlook \(January-June\)](#)

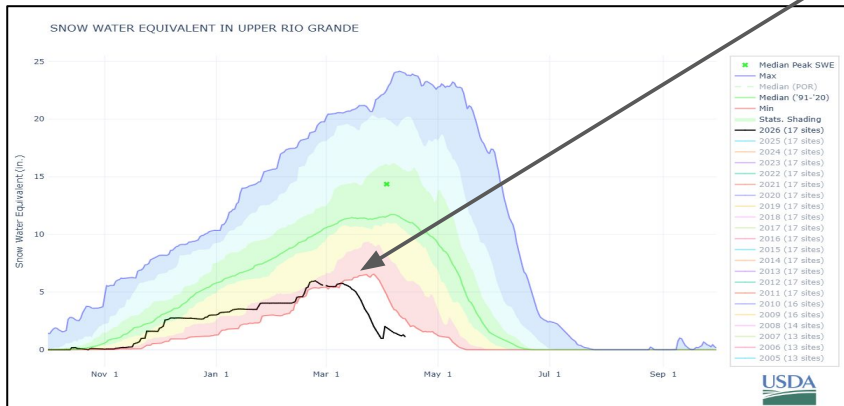
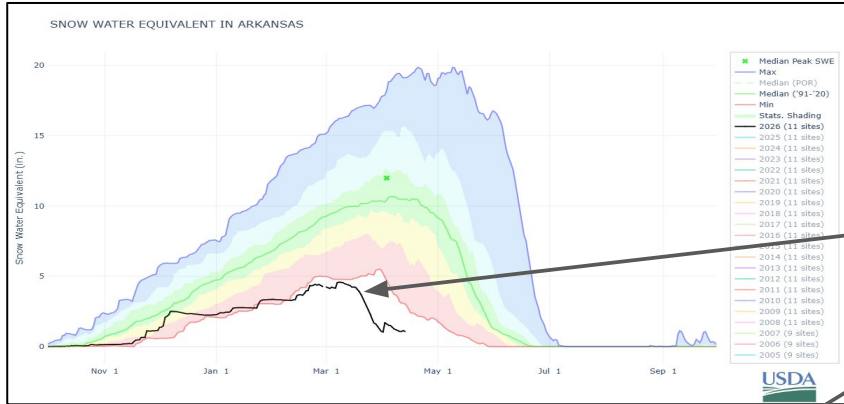
- On April 1st, NRCS data indicated [Colorado Statewide Snowpack](#) was at 20 percent of the 30 year median, as compared to 86 percent of median at this time last year. Across the Colorado SNOTEL network, 103 of 117 sites were reporting SWE around the 0th percentile at the end of March, with 95 percent of sites at the lowest or second lowest values on record.
- April 1st snowpack in the [Arkansas basin](#) was at 15 percent of median, as compared to 74 percent of median at this time last year.
- April 1st snowpack in the [Upper Rio Grande basin](#) was at 8 percent of median, as compared to 56 percent of median at this time last year.





Mountain Snowpack

Historical Context - Basin-wide Snowpack SWE and Early Melt Out



- Basin-wide snow water equivalent (SWE) almost completely depleted by the time SWE would normally be peaking around April 3rd.

Arkansas Basin Peak Date: March 7th

Rio Grande Basin Peak Date: March 10th

- Well above normal temperatures and below normal precipitation for March helped drive the record low peaks and early melt out
 - **Some streams have experienced peak flows from snowmelt runoff almost 2 months earlier than normal**

NRCS snow water equivalent basin-wide charts:
<https://nwcc-apps.sc.egov.usda.gov/awdb/basin-plots>





April 1st 2026 Runoff Forecasts

Percent of Normal, April-September Runoff Volume

Arkansas River Basin

- Runoff outlook slightly more favorable for rivers and streams draining from the east slope of the Continental Divide in the upper Arkansas River Valley.
 - Runoff outlook still **Well Below Normal**
 - Greater than 20% reduction in projected runoff volumes from March 1st forecasts
- Conditions degrade further southward for streams draining from the east slope of the Sangre de Cristos

Forecast Location	Percent of 30-yr Normal
Arkansas River	
Granite, CO	36%
Salida, CO	38%
Cañon City, CO	39%
above Pueblo Reservoir	40%
Chalk Creek	
Nathrop, CO	40%
Grape Creek	
near Westcliffe, CO	34%
Huerfano River	
near Redwing, CO	31%
Cucharas River	
Boyd Ranch near La Veta, CO	26%
Purgatoire River	
Trinidad, CO	31%





April 1st 2026 Runoff Forecasts

Percent of Normal, April-September Runoff Volume

Forecast Location	Percent of 30-yr Normal
Rio Grande	
Thirty Mile Bridge	38%
Wagon Wheel Gap	39%
Del Norte, CO	40%
South Fork Rio Grande	
South Fork, CO	42%
Saguache Creek	
near Saguache, CO	43%
Alamosa River	
above Terrace Reservoir	48%
La Jara Creek	
Gallegos Ranch near Capulin	34%
Conejos River	
below Platoro Reservoir	35%

Rio Grande Basin

- Runoff Outlook slightly more favorable for rivers and streams draining from the eastern San Juans and La Garitas
- Extremely below normal outlook for most streams draining from the west slope of the Sangre de Cristos

Conejos River contd.	
Mogote, CO	36%
Ute Creek	
Fort Garland, CO	10%
Sangre de Cristo Creek	
Fort Garland, CO	1%
Trinchera Creek	
above Turner Ranch	6%
Culebra Creek	
San Luis, CO	26%

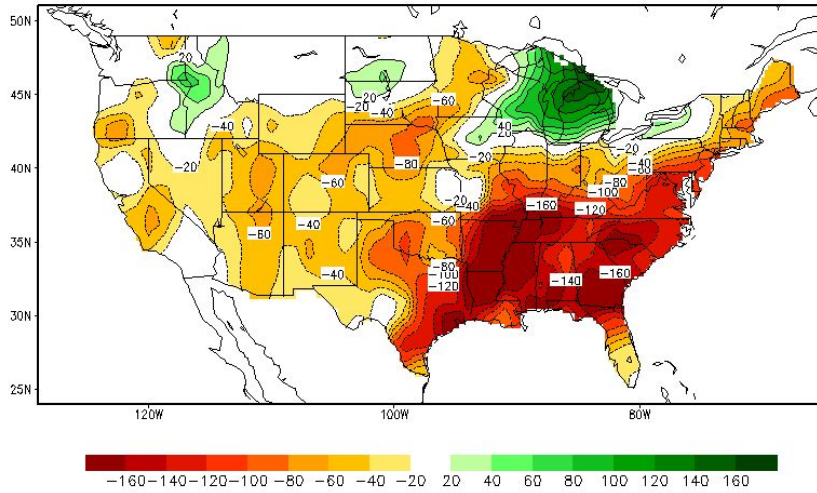




Agricultural and Water Supply Impacts

- The latest CPC data indicates soil moisture is running below seasonal norms across south central and southeast Colorado

Calculated Soil Moisture Anomaly (mm)
APR 17, 2026



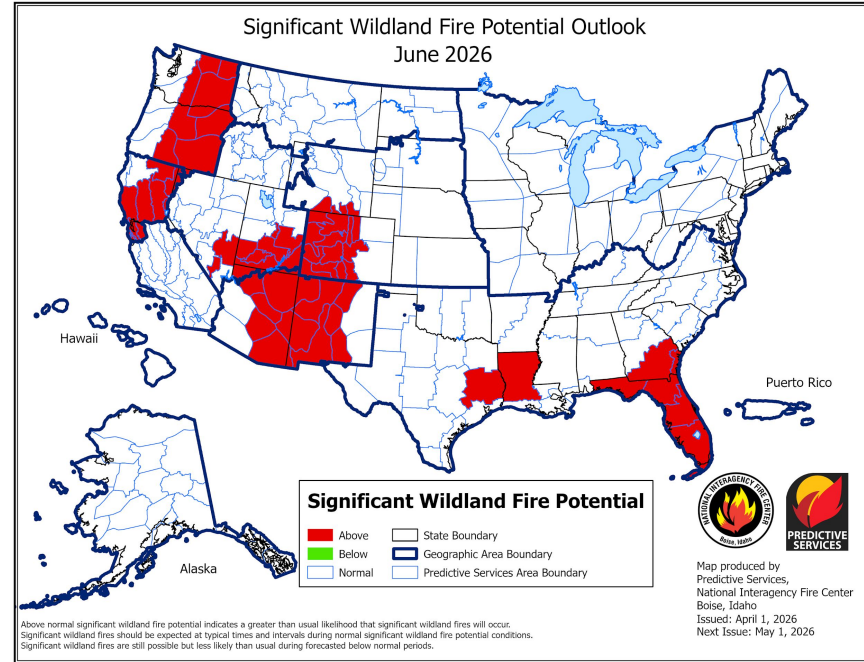
- NRCS data indicated [statewide Colorado Reservoir Storage](#) was at 89 percent of median at the end of March, as compared to 90 percent of median at this time last year.
- In the [Arkansas basin](#), reservoir storage was at 99 percent of median at the end of March, as compared to 111 percent of median at this time last year.
- In the [Rio Grande basin](#), reservoir storage was at 118 percent of median at the end of February, as compared to 121 percent of median at this time last year.





Fire Hazard Impacts

Link to [Wildfire Potential Outlooks from the National Interagency Coordination Center.](#)



With drier than normal conditions predicted across southeast Colorado into the spring, the potential for significant wildland fires will continue to increase across south central and southeast Colorado, with an earlier and lesser snow melt season.



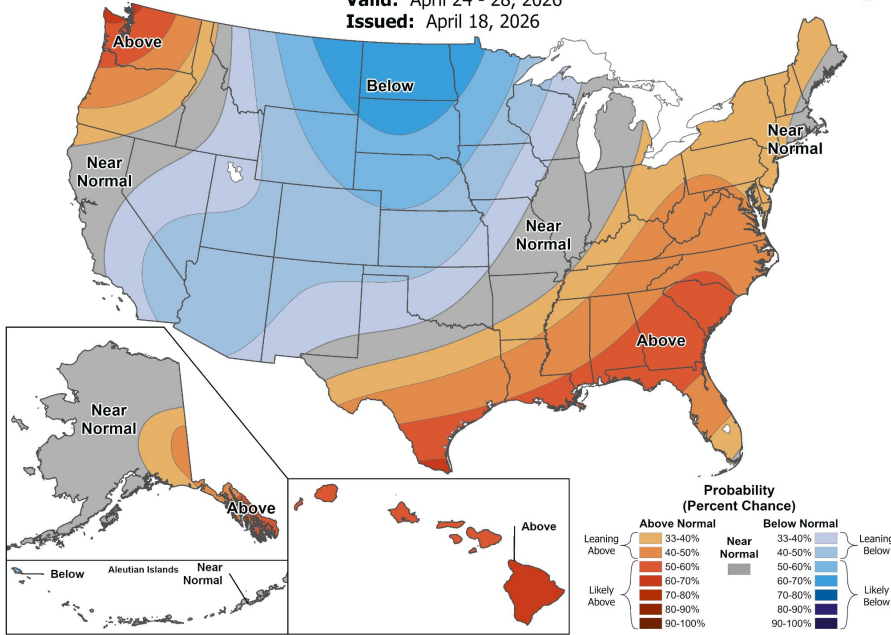


Monthly Temperature and Precipitation Outlook

The latest monthly and seasonal outlooks can be found on the [CPC homepage](#)

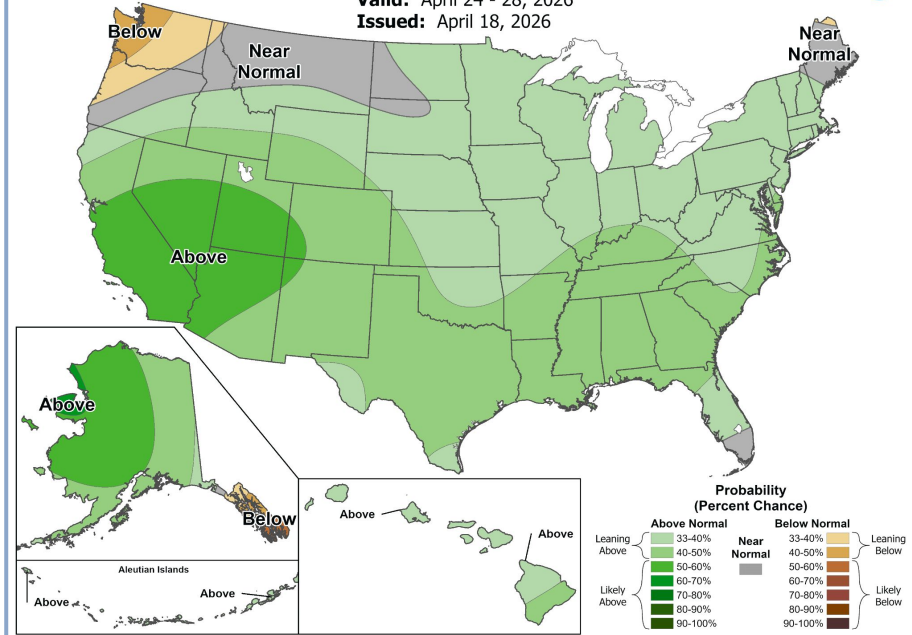
6-10 Day Temperature Outlook

Valid: April 24 - 28, 2026
Issued: April 18, 2026



6-10 Day Precipitation Outlook

Valid: April 24 - 28, 2026
Issued: April 18, 2026



The CPC 6 to 10 day outlook, valid April 24th-28th, indicates better chances of temperatures at to slightly below normal, along with above normal precipitation across south central and southeast Colorado.





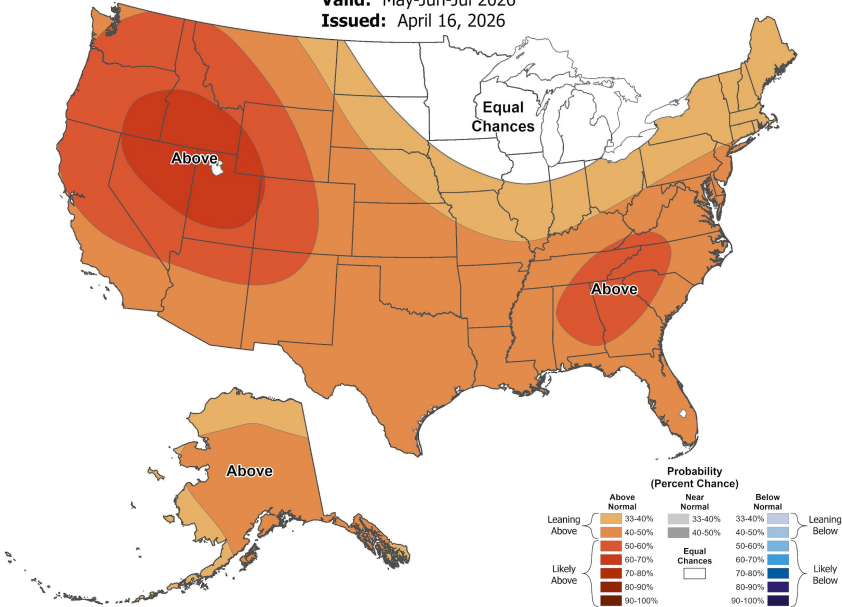
Seasonal Temperature and Precipitation Outlook

The latest monthly and seasonal outlooks can be found on the [CPC homepage](#)



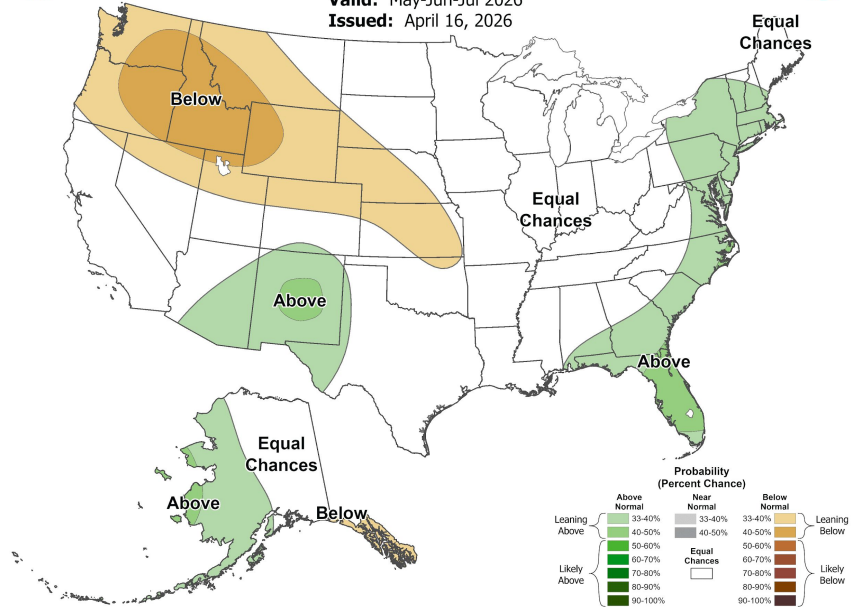
Seasonal Temperature Outlook

Valid: May-Jun-Jul 2026
Issued: April 16, 2026



Seasonal Precipitation Outlook

Valid: May-Jun-Jul 2026
Issued: April 16, 2026



The CPC outlook for May through July supports warmer conditions with near normal precipitation across most of south central and southeast Colorado with expected emergence of El Niño conditions through the Summer.



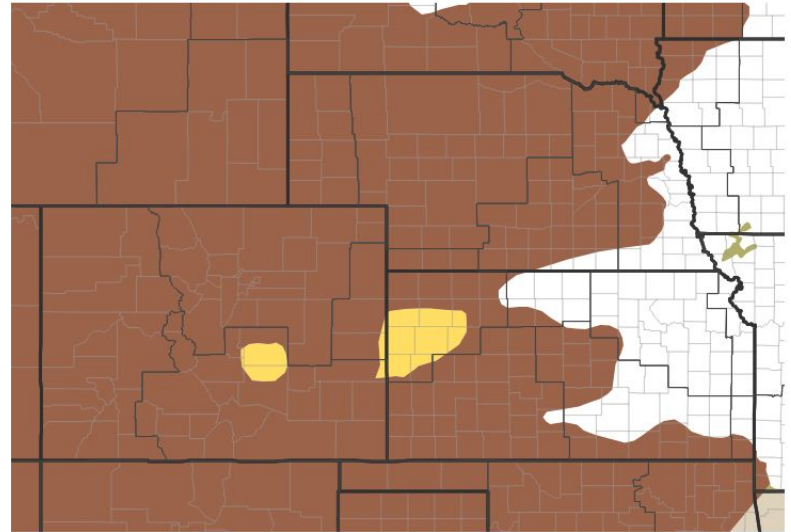


Drought Outlook

The latest monthly and seasonal outlooks can be found on the [CPC homepage](#)

Drought conditions are expected to persist and deepen across south central and southeast Colorado through the early summer.

Seasonal (3-Month) Drought Outlook for April 16, 2026–July 31, 2026



Drought Is Predicted To...



Source(s): Climate Prediction Center; image courtesy of Drought.gov

Last Updated: 04/16/26

Links to the latest:

- [Climate Prediction Center Monthly Drought Outlook](#)
- [Climate Prediction Center Seasonal Drought Outlook](#)

