

A Review of the 2000 Water Year in Colorado

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Abstract. After a very wet spring and summer of 1999, weather patterns changed as the 2000 water year began. Winter snowpack got off to a slow start and winter temperatures in Colorado were near the warmest ever observed for an entire winter season. Occasional winter storms brought late winter snowpack values close to average in central and northern Colorado at high elevations. However, low elevation snowpacks never developed due to unusually warm temperatures. A very warm and dry spring, especially May, produced an early snowmelt. Drought conditions emerged quickly, first with dryland agriculture and then with wildfires. Disaster declarations were issued for several counties of the state following the extreme heat and dry conditions of May and June. Precipitation increased in late summer, and a few heavy storms brought localized flooding. But overall, the 2000 water year ended up as one of the driest years in terms of annual precipitation totals since the 1970s. A consequence was a dramatic draw down in reservoir levels across the state from the much above average conditions that were present at the beginning of the year. Results for precipitation, snowpack, streamflow and reservoir levels will be shown and compared. Examples of new information products now available from the National Resource Conservation Service revised snow survey web pages will also be shown.

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