



March 29, 2004

United States
Department of
Agriculture

INFORMATIONAL MEMORANDUM

Risk
Management
Agency

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Administrator

Topeka
Regional Office

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SUBJECT: Regional Irrigation Assessment
Topeka Regional Office

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In accordance with the Loss Adjustment Manual Standards Handbook (FCIC-25010), which directs the Regional Office (RO) to provide a regional assessment in order to identify areas and water districts where inadequate irrigation water supply is suspected, the following is the list of counties from the Topeka RO:

Kansas:

As of January 12, 2004, the following irrigation districts are expected to deliver less than their normal supply. The irrigation districts and their expected delivery amounts along with the percentage of the full supply are as follows:

<u>Irr District</u>	<u>Est. Farm Delivery (Ac. Inches as of 01/14/03)</u>	<u>% of Full Supply</u>
Almena	1.5"	30%
Kansas-Bostwick		
Upper Courtland	2.0"	13%
Lower Courtland	6.0"	40%
Kirwin	4"	33%
Webster	4"	33%

The counties affected by the above allocations are: **Norton, Phillips, Osborne, Republic, Rooks, and Smith.**



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Nebraska:**Southwest and Central and Sheridan County, Nebraska:**

The following information was received from the Bureau of Reclamation in McCook, Nebraska. The irrigation districts with estimated water allocations are shown below, with the percent change based on a comparison to a full supply.

<u>Irr District</u>	<u>Est. Farm Delivery (Ac.Inches as of 01/14/03)</u>	<u>% of Full Supply</u>
Mirage Flats	3.5"	50%
Frenchman Valley and H & RW	.5"	13%
Frenchman-Cambridge		
Meeker, Red Willow &		
Bartley	4.0"	33%
Cambridge Canal	8.0"	67%
Bostwick In Nebraska	1.5"	13%

Counties affected by the above allocations are **Franklin, Furnas, Harlan, Hayes, Hitchcock, Nuckolls, Red Willow, Sheridan, and Webster.**

The **Central Nebraska Public Power and Irrigation District** that stores water in Lake McConaughy has indicated that it will provide a full supply (up to 18 acre/inches) to its irrigators. However, it may not be able to supply additional water as it has in past years. **Nebraska Public Power District** has indicated that it expects to deliver a full supply to its irrigators, but may not be able to sell water to the **Cozad, 30 Mile, 6 Mile and Orchard-Alfalfa** canals as they have in past years. Central Nebraska Public Power and Irrigation District has indicated that it is unlikely that they will be able to supply additional water to the **Paxton-Hershey, Suburban, Keith-Lincoln, Lisco, and Platte Valley Districts** as it does not look as though Lake McConaughy will reach the 800,000 acre/ft level by April 1st of this year. Central Nebraska Public Power and Irrigation has agreed, however, to hold these irrigation districts' direct steam flow rights that they would normal be released in May until July and August to allow them to have water during the most critical irrigation period.

Counties affected by these irrigation districts are **Buffalo, Deuel, Dawson, Garden, Gosper, Phelps, Kearney, and Lincoln.**

Nebraska Panhandle:

Currently the outlook for water supplies for Irrigation Districts in the North Platte River Valley points to a high probability of less than normal allocations. The snow pack that provides inflows to the reservoirs and streams that supply these districts is currently at 89% of normal. The reservoir storage is at 30% of normal. Early projections are for about 600,000 ac/ft of runoff and 200,000 ac/ft of storage for a total of 800,000 ac/ft for the irrigation season. This compares to 1,100,000 ac/ft, which is considered a full supply for these districts. This could change a great deal by planting time, as the month of March is a critical month for snow pack. The timing of the snowmelt is also critical as to the amount of water available.

The Pumpkin Creek Groundwater Management Sub-Area will have their allocation reduced from 15” to 14” for the 2004 irrigation season.

Counties affected include **Banner, Scottsbluff, and Morrill.**

Colorado:**South Platte Basin (Northeast Colorado)**

The South Platte irrigation district covering all of northeast Colorado is expected to have some irrigation water shortages but the situation has much improved from a month earlier. Surface Water Supply Index (SWSI) value was reported at -1.2 at the end of February. A SWSI value below 0 is drier than normal and a -4.0 is the most severe drought. Reservoir storage, the major component in computing the SWSI value, was 63% of normal as of February 1. The Natural Resources Conservation Service reported that March 1 snow pack is 70% of normal. Filling the reservoirs remains a major concern at this point in time.

Arkansas Basin (Southeast Colorado):

The Arkansas basin has a Surface Water Supply Index (SWSI) value of -2.0 as of the end of February. The Natural Resources Conservation Service reported that as of March 9 snow pack is 93% of normal. Storage in the Basin's reservoirs is 54% as of March 1. Snow pack and resulting stream flows from snowmelt account for most of the irrigation supply with storage amounting to around 25 percent of the irrigation supply in the area. Improved snow pack and soil moisture conditions raised some hopes for a better supply for surface diversions with the best prospects west of John Martin reservoir. The city of Aurora received approval for a substitute water supply plan to gain consumptive use credits from dry up of approximately 37% of the Rocky Ford Highline Ditch at the end of January. Aurora has still not made a final decision on operation of the pending receipt of a storage water contract in Pueblo Reservoir from the Bureau of Reclamation that would facilitate exchange of the consumable credits.

This plan, if operated, would be one of the largest interruptible supply agreements entered into by a municipal entity to date in Colorado.

Rio Grande Basin (The San Luis Valley):

The Rio Grande basin has a SWSI value of +1.0 as of the end of February. March 1 snow pack is reported at 108% of normal. Reservoir storage for the Basin is 55% of average as of March 1. With the highest basin snow pack in the state, local water administrators ought to be optimistic about the upcoming runoff. With the exception of streams in the Sangre de Cristo Range, the Natural Resources Conservation Service stream flow forecasts are predicting runoff in area streams to be in the range of 88 to 114% of average during the 2004 irrigation season.

Gunnison Basin (West Central Colorado):

The Gunnison Basin had a Surface Water Supply Index (SWSI) value of -0.3 at the end of February, which indicated basin water supplies, were near normal. The NRCS reported that March 1 snow pack was 102% of normal. Storage in Taylor Park, Crawford, and Fruitland reservoirs totaled 104% of normal as of March 1. The outlook for a good spring and summer runoff is the best it's been in years. Water users are hoping that this snow does not melt too fast and increase the river flows before it can be utilized for irrigation.

Colorado Basin (Northwest Colorado):

The Colorado Basin had a SWSI value of -2.2, which indicated that for February the basin water supplies were below normal. . The NRCS reported March 1 snow pack was 85% of normal. Storage in Green Mountain, Ruedi, and Williams Fork reservoirs totaled 98% of normal as of the end of February.

Yampa/White Basin (Northwest Colorado):

The Yampa/White basin has a SWSI value of - 1.7, which indicated for February the basin water supplies were below normal. The NRCS reported that March 1 snow pack was 89% of normal. Reservoir storage in the Basin was 110% of average as of February. The February 1st runoff forecast prepared by the Natural Resources Conservation Service is predicting below-normal spring runoff for much of the drainage. The percent of average runoff under the most probable forecast is 80% for the North Platte River near Northgate, 78% for the Yampa River near Maybell, and 78% for the White River near Meeker. These forecasts are all down from the February 1st numbers. Only the Little Snake River is near average, with a forecast of 100%.

San Juan/Dolores Basin (Southwest Colorado):

The San Juan/Dolores Basin had a SWSI value of +1.1 at the end of February indicating water supplies were normal. Snow pack was 108% of normal as of March 1. The reservoir storage in the Basin is 68% of average as of March 1. The water supply outlooks improved considerably during February.

The counties most critically affected by potential irrigation water shortages at this time are in the South Platte and Arkansas River Basins. They are:

Adams, Arapahoe, Boulder, Larimer, Logan, Morgan, Phillips, Sedgwick, Washington, Weld, and Yuma in the South Platte Basin and **Bent, Crowley, Otero, Prowers, and Pueblo** in the Arkansas River Basin.

If you have any questions or need further assistance, please contact our office.