



COLORADO

Governor Jared Polis

Here in Colorado, water is the lifeblood of our state. It fuels essential sectors of our economy, such as agriculture and outdoor recreation, and supports the incredible quality of life that we all enjoy. Unfortunately we're witnessing the very real impacts of climate change in our own backyard, and states across the American West are battling historic drought. Last year, all 64 Colorado counties experienced severe drought, and this year we're seeing similar conditions along the entire Western Slope. In 2020, this drought fueled the largest wildfires in our state's history, and we're still feeling their impacts today. Flooding and mudslides aided by the burn scars from the Cameron Peak and Grizzly Creek fires have resulted in loss of life, the destruction of property, as well as the intermittent closing of major roadway I-70 in Glenwood Canyon. Governor Polis has worked closely with our federal partners, Colorado lawmakers, local governments, and key stakeholders to protect Colorado's water.

Colorado Water Plan

Colorado's Water Plan is a comprehensive document that brings together stakeholder input, years of research, and policy guidance to create a framework of solutions for tackling Colorado's toughest water challenges. This plan is a dynamic set of goals that is continuously evolving based on the latest information available. First developed in 2015, we expect to release an updated plan in 2022. Goals in this plan are focused around eight main categories, including:

- Supply-Demand Gap
- Conservation
- Land Use
- Agriculture
- Storage
- Watershed Health, Environment, and Recreation
- Funding
- Education, Outreach, and Innovation

Four drought-related task forces are currently activated as advised under the 2018 Colorado Drought Mitigation & Response Plan. These include:

1. Drought Task Force // Initiated April 23, 2020; Comprised of state directors and four lead agencies (DNR, CDA, DOLA, and DPS). This cabinet continues to meet monthly throughout the period of activation to ensure coordination among state agencies, the Governor's Office, and federal partners.
2. Water Availability Task Force // Comprised of water supply, climatology, and weather forecast specialists, this monthly task force is always activated (regardless of drought conditions) as the primary monitoring element of the Drought Plan; co-chaired by DWR and CWCB.

3. Agriculture Impact Task Force // Initiated June 22, 2020; Comprised of agricultural industry representatives and federal land management agencies; co-chaired by CDA and CWCB.
4. Municipal Water Task Force // Initiated November 30, 2020; Comprised of municipal water supply and public health representatives; co-chaired by DOLA and CWCB.

Previous Drought Declarations

- June 22, 2020 Phase 2 of the State's Drought Plan was activated for forty counties.
- Sept. 21, 2020 The remaining 24 counties were activated into Phase 2 as exceptional drought expanded across the state, bringing all 64 counties under a "potential drought emergency declaration."
- Sept. 28, 2020 USDA updates national drought disaster designations cover 64 of 64 Colorado counties; Gov. Polis sent a notice of current drought impacts to U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Sonny Perdue
- Nov. 30, 2020 Moved into Phase 3 (highest activation level) of the State Drought Plan for all 64 counties.
- June 7, 2021 Drought Task Force recommended that a Drought Emergency be declared by Proclamation of the Governor for 21 west slope counties. The Proclamation was signed June 30th, 2021.
- July 6, 2021 Governor Polis requested financial assistance for Colorado from the Reclamation States Emergency Drought Relief Act in a letter to Secretary of the Interior, Deb Haaland, and Bureau of Reclamation Deputy Commissioner, Camille Touton.

Legislative Accomplishments and Actions Taken by the Administration

- In total, during the 2021 legislative session, the Governor signed legislation allocating \$50 million to support the implementation of Colorado's State Water Plan, and fund Colorado Water Conservation Board grants supporting local projects.
- The Governor also signed legislation allocating \$25 million for forest restoration and wildfire recovery projects and another \$20 million toward watershed restoration grants.
- HB21-1260, General Fund Transfer Implement State Water Plan allocates \$20 million to the Colorado Water Conservation Board to implement the state's water plan.
- HB21-1242, Create Agricultural Drought And Climate Resilience Office. The legislation establishes a new office which will provide voluntary technical assistance, non-regulatory programs, and incentives that increase the ability to anticipate, prepare for, mitigate, adapt to, and respond to drought or climate impacts.
- SB21-189, Colorado Water Conservation Board Construction Fund Projects Bill. This bill is an annual bill that appropriates \$5 million to support water projects and carry out the state's water plan and water infrastructure needs.
- After a historic legislative session, legislative interim committees will be meeting to discuss how to best utilize the remaining federal stimulus funds in the 2022 session, including uses to support the Colorado Water Plan and other local water projects.
- In March 2021, Governor Polis and the Department of Natural Resources established the Water Equity Task Force to better understand existing equity, diversity and inclusivity challenges in Colorado water issues and inform the Colorado Water Plan.