



WESTERN WATER ASSESSMENT

A NOAA RISA TEAM

September 2021 Newsletter

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Successes

Program Renewal Success

We are thrilled to share that Western Water Assessment has been renewed as a NOAA Regional Integrated Sciences and Assessments (RISA) program through August 2026! We look forward to continuing to conduct innovative research and working with our partners to advance climate resilience in Colorado, Utah, and Wyoming.

Extreme weather events, climate change, and societal stressors are challenging the resilience of Colorado, Utah, and Wyoming like never before. Our work has never been more urgent.

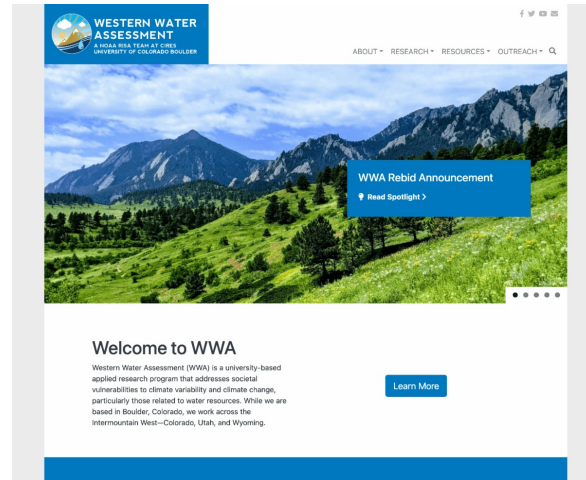
Over the coming five years, we will advance climate, resilience, and adaptation research and on-the-ground activities in partnership with communities, water providers, agencies, and others who are navigating these challenges. Our activities will increase the resilience of communities and water systems, with a particular focus on those at the frontline of climate change, including Tribes and smaller rural communities.

We are excited that our team is growing to include Karen Bailey from CU Boulder, Court Strong from the University of Utah, and Corrie Knapp from the University of Wyoming, establishing formal partnerships and deepening our

commitment to serving the entire region. For more information, please contact Benét Duncan at benet.duncan@colorado.edu.

New WWA Website

The Western Water Assessment website has a new look! We invite you to visit wwa.colorado.edu. All of your favorite resources are still there, including the [Intermountain West Climate Dashboard](#), the [Colorado River Basin State of the Science Report](#), the [Extreme Events Database](#), and more. Huge thanks to the CIRES IT team, especially Matt Price, for their excellent work. If you have questions, please contact Ethan Knight at ethan.knight@colorado.edu.



Research and Products

Liz Payton Appointed to the NCA5 Team

Liz Payton was appointed the Water Chapter Lead for the Fifth National Climate Assessment (NCA). The NCA is a congressionally mandated quadrennial report prepared and submitted by the US Global Change Research Program. The report analyzes current climate

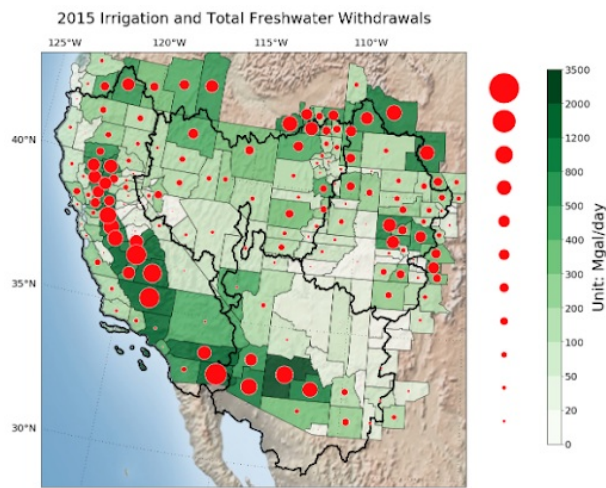


trends and projects future trends for the next 25 to 100 years. As Water Chapter Lead, Liz is responsible for selecting and managing an author team, for chapter development and writing, and for ensuring that the chapter tells a "cohesive, consistent, compelling, and clear narrative." She is honored to be selected and grateful for the opportunity, and recognizes and appreciates that it arose from her work with Jeff Lukas and the WWA team on the [Colorado River Basin Climate and Hydrology: State of the Science](#) report.

Photo: Levee repair along the San Joaquin River in California, Feb. 2017, from NCA4 Chapter 3, Water

Michigan State and WWA Receive Funding for ACCESS

The National Science Foundation has funded a collaborative research project between Michigan State University and CU Boulder called ACCESS (Anthropogenic water management, Climate Change, and Environmental Sustainability in the Southwestern US). Led by Yadu Pokhrel and Lifeng Luo at Michigan State and WWA's Ben Livneh and Liz Payton,



the 3-year project examines whether future water demands in the southwestern US can be met under projected climate and current water management practices while maintaining environmental flow requirements, and if not, whether there are alternative approaches to achieving sustainability. The project directly engages regional stakeholders in co-producing key aspects of the research and ensuring deliverables that are of the greatest value for improved water resource management.

We are Water Video Series

With support from rural communities and their libraries, the We are Water project creates a place to talk, explore, and learn about water together through informal STEAM learning experiences and a traveling exhibition.



In partnership with Western Water Assessment, We are Water is producing short videos exploring water topics important to the people and communities in the Four Corners region, including water rights and the impacts of climate change. These videos will be displayed in the exhibit for visitors to view and will be archived on the We are Water website for people who are unable to see the exhibit in person.

<https://wearewater.colorado.edu/>

Climate Event

Monsoonal Rains in August

Heavy monsoonal precipitation

broke daily and monthly precipitation records across central and northern Utah during August 2021. August monthly precipitation records were broken at 119 of 340 sites in Utah. Many sites exceeded average August precipitation by 200 – 400% and 15 sites received more than 6” of rainfall. A surge of monsoonal moisture on August 18 – 19 broke daily rainfall records at 35 sites in Utah with 19 of those sites receiving over 1” of rain. The high August rainfall totals were particularly unusual because the monsoonal precipitation pushed further west in Utah and north into Utah and Wyoming than is typical. August rainfall was very helpful to short-term drought impacts like fire danger, but did not end long-term drought in Utah. Heavy August rains did cause a one category improvement of drought conditions throughout much of Utah.



Photo: Rockslide in Big Cottonwood Canyon, Utah associated with one of the August rain events, from Salt Lake County Unified Fire Authority

WWA Features



Colorado Flash Flood History: More Than 530 Deaths Documented Since 1864

[Read article](#)



Colorado Arrives at the Dawn of Megafires, Part Two

[Read article](#)



Why Are There So Many
Flash Flood Warnings This
Year In Colorado?

Read
article



Booming Colo. town asks,
'Where will water come
from?'

Read
article

Background photo by [Kevin Wenning](#) on [Unsplash](#)

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