

An Overview of NOAA's Colorado Basin River Forecast Center



The NOAA National Weather Service has 13 River Forecast Centers (RFCs) located within major

river basins throughout the U. S. The mission of the RFCs is to produce the Nations river, flood and water supply forecasts in support of saving lives and property and to enhance the economy and environment of the country. RFC Hydrologists are the technical experts in operational river and water management forecasting. RFC products and services support many NWS programs including: Flash Flood, River Flooding, River Forecasts, Recreation, Reservoir Management, Drought, and Seasonal Water Supply.

The Colorado Basin River Forecast Center (CBRFC) is responsible for the entire Colorado Basin and the Great Basin, including all or part of seven states with an area of 303,450 square miles (Figure 16a). The basin includes topography ranging from elevations of 200 to over 14,200 feet, from dry desert regions to snowy alpine areas. The basin is distinct in that nearly 80% of the runoff Basin comes from snowmelt, and it has the largest evaporation rates of any RFC. Flooding events range from flashy arroyos due to thunderstorms in the southwest, to longer term rises resulting from snowmelt of large snowpacks.

The CBRFC works closely with local Weather Forecast Offices (WFOs) within the RFC's area of responsibility (Figure 16a). The RFCs provide river forecasts and other hydrologic technical support to the WFOs. In turn, the WFOs prepare Flood Watches, Flood and Flash Flood Warnings and disseminate these products and River Flood Warnings to local emergency

managers, media, and the public. The CBRFC also works closely with the Natural Resource Conservation Service, which collects data on snowpack and analyzes streamflows, to issue joint seasonal volume forecast products. The CBRFC distributes much of its products and services through an interactive web page located at: <http://www.cbrfc.noaa.gov>. Many features of the web page allow a user to customize their request for river forecasts and data (Figure 16b). Seasonal water supply and reservoir supply and snowmelt peak flow products are also available on their web page.

The text of the article is adapted from a CBRFC publication.

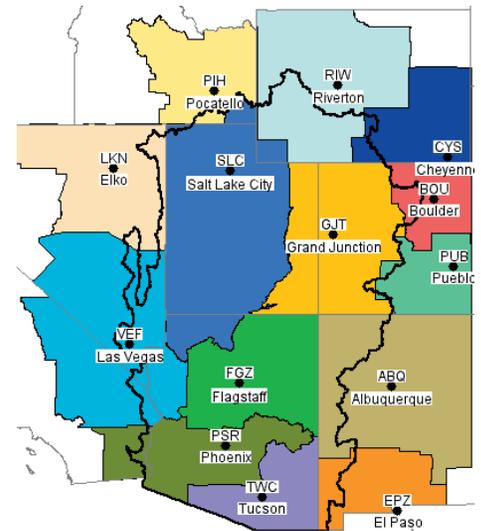


Figure 16a. Map showing NWS weather forecast offices in the western U. S. with an outline of the area that is the responsibility of the Colorado Basin River Forecast Center.

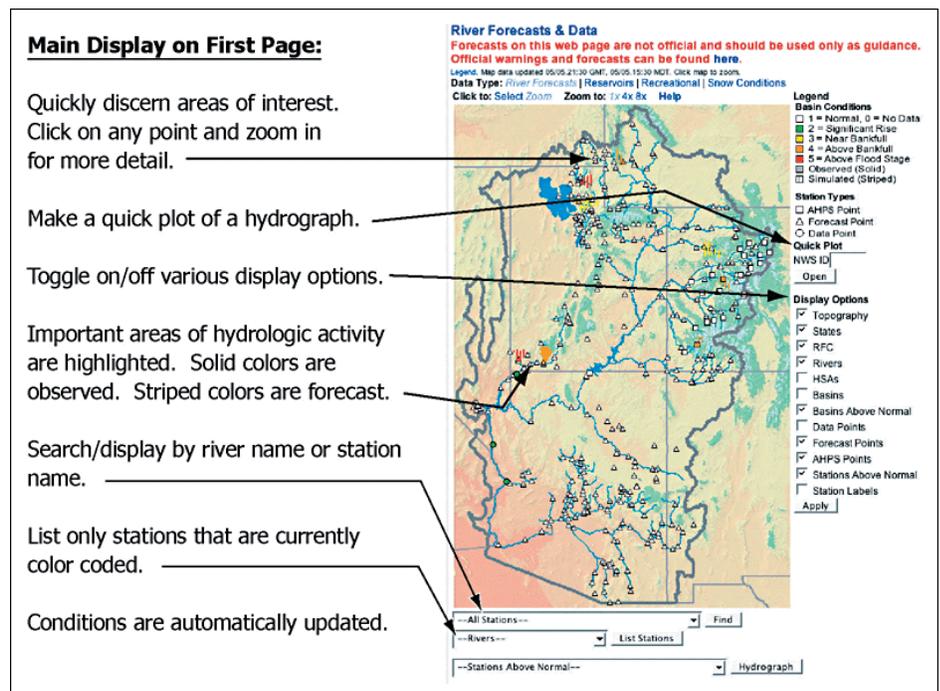


Figure 16b. Interactive map of the Colorado River Basin as seen on the CBRFC website. Text explains all the interactive user choices.

On the Web

The Colorado Basin River Forecast Center's website can be found at: <http://www.cbrfc.noaa.gov/>.

