



WESTERN WATER ASSESSMENT

A NOAA RISA TEAM

December 2020 Newsletter

In this newsletter...

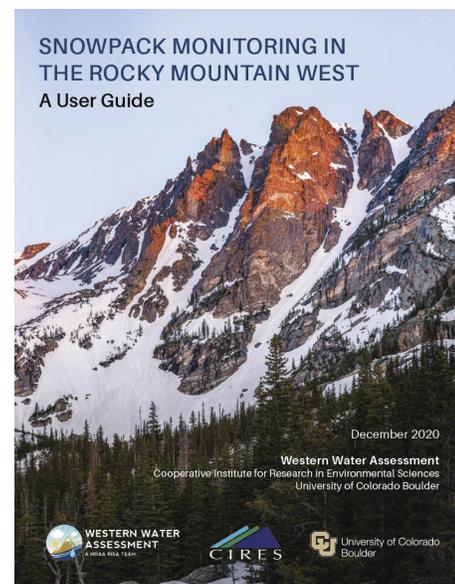
- Snowpack User Guide
- State of the Science Webinars
- East Troublesome Fire
- Jeff's Farewell
- Featured Articles
- Mark Your Calendar

Research and Products

Snowpack User Guide

We are excited to share our new Snowpack User Guide for water managers, decision makers, forecasters, researchers, and others who use, collect, and produce snow information! The guide includes:

- An overview of the fundamental characteristics of the Rocky Mountain snowpack, the processes that drive its variability, and the challenges of sampling such a dynamic resource.
- Information about the key role of snowpack in seasonal water supply forecasting.
- Descriptions of SNOWpack TELEmetry (SNOTEL), snow course, and other networks of point observations.
- A summary of remote sensing systems and models for obtaining spatial estimates of snowpack.
- Practical guidance on accessing, interpreting, and applying snow data.



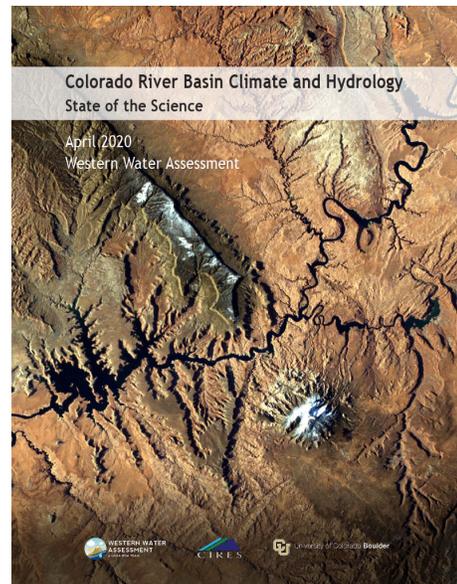
We will be hosting a webinar to share more about the User Guide in late January—keep a lookout for that email in the new year!

State of the Science Webinars

Since the release of the *Colorado River Basin Climate and Hydrology: State of the Science* report in April, WWA has shared its contents with the public through three webinars. The first was an overview of the report, the second was a deeper dive into observed and estimated weather and hydrologic data in the basin, and the third was an in-depth presentation on the current hydroclimatic trends in the basin.

The Southern Nevada Water Authority and partners from the Colorado River Climate and Hydrology Work Group hosted an additional three webinars expanding on the opportunities identified in the report. The first webinar was a discussion of new models and data to inform water supply forecasts, followed by a review of prospects for advancing hydroclimatic prediction in the second. The third webinar focused on applications of decision science in the basin.

All of these webinars may be found on the project [webpage](#).

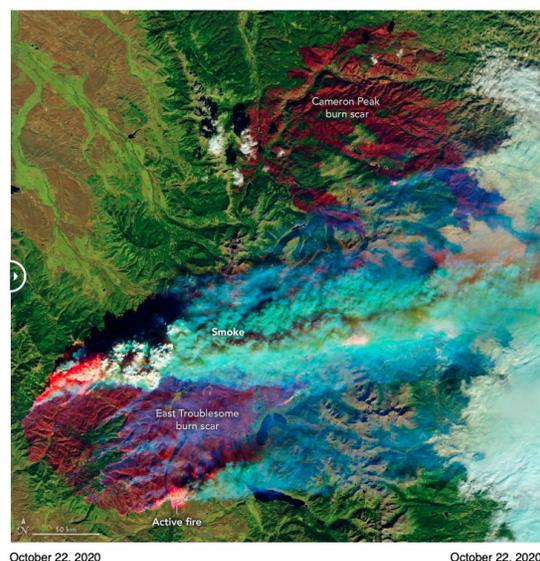


Climate Event

East Troublesome Fire

The East Troublesome Fire started in Grand County, CO on October 14th and grew to become Colorado's second largest wildfire in history, destroying or damaging 366 homes, leading to the evacuation of over 35,000 people, and causing two deaths. Over a four-day period, the fire exhibited unprecedented and extreme behavior, increasing in size from 18,000 acres to 188,000 acres, including a staggering 24-hour run of 87,000 acres burned.

During its explosive growth, the fire burned across the Continental Divide and



through forest types typically resistant to fire. Only the Cameron Peak Fire, which also burned this fall, was larger. Two other regional fires (Pine Gulch and Mullen) also exceeded 130,000 acres, making this a record-breaking fire season that extended later into the year than the historic average.

For more information:

[Intermountain West Climate Dashboard](#)

[Historical High-Impact Weather and Climate Events](#)

WWA News

Jeff's Farewell

Jeff Lukas left the university at the end of September to start his own private practice, Lukas Climate Consulting and Research. Jeff was a member of the WWA research team since 2004, and a full-time staff member since 2009. In addition to being a very talented researcher, Jeff's synthesis and communication skills mean that he has had a huge impact on the production and use of climate information in Colorado. For example, he led the development of the 2014 *Climate Change in Colorado* report that has become a critical reference for the state. He was awarded the 2019 CO-LABS Governor's Award for High-Impact Research as part of a team that evaluated climate impacts on precipitation to inform dam safety. Most recently, Jeff was co-lead author of the *Colorado River Basin Climate and Hydrology: State of the Science*. Needless to say, Jeff was an integral part of the WWA team and a joy in and outside of the office. We wish him all the best in his future endeavors!



WWA Features



The high cost of climate



Degrees of warming: How a

change is already straining the budgets of Colorado towns

Read article

hotter, thirstier atmosphere wreaks havoc on water supplies in Pitkin County

Read article

Mark Your Calendar

- **Snowpack User Guide Webinar:** Look for a save-the-date in early January.
- **WWA Webinar Series:** We'll be hosting a webinar to share science every other month in 2021. A full announcement is coming in the new year.

Western Water Assessment | wwa@colorado.edu | <http://wwa.colorado.edu/>

See what's happening on our social sites:

