

INTERMOUNTAIN WEST CLIMATE SUMMARY



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Weekly Climate, Water and Drought Assessment for the Upper Colorado Basin: A new webinar series from the Colorado Climate Center and NIDIS

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In March 2010, the Colorado Climate Center (CCC) at Colorado State University began conducting weekly web-based water and climate briefings to stakeholders and agencies within the Upper Colorado River Basin (Figure 1). These “webinars” are part of the National Integrated Drought Information System (NIDIS) Upper Colorado River Basin Pilot Project. The overarching goal of the Pilot Project is to provide better drought early warning for the region, and improve coordination and collaboration of researchers and producers working on drought and water supply conditions for the Upper Colorado River Basin.

The webinars provide an opportunity for data providers and users to discuss updated drought and water supply conditions and ensure accuracy and consistency of conditions across climate and water supply products and information sources. The webinars are held on Tuesdays at 10 AM MDT from March through the snowmelt season into mid-June. The webinars are scheduled for 30 minutes, plus follow-up discussion of the US Drought Monitor. Each webinar presentation is also posted as a PDF file by the following day, on the CCC website: http://climate.colostate.edu/drought_webinar.php.

Each webinar features several presenters, representing data and other input from multiple federal agencies and state and local partners, including NOAA, the NWS Colorado Basin

How Do the Webinars Work?

Each week a teleconference call-in number and URL for the webinar is e-mailed to a listserv of participants. Participants call in to hear the discussion, and through the web, view the corresponding PowerPoint presentation on their own computers. The teleconference line allows participants to engage with regional climate and water supply experts in real-time. A summary of conditions is emailed to listserv subscribers after each webinar.

How Do I Register for the Webinars?

To register for the webinar, go to http://climate.colostate.edu/drought_webinar.php and click on “Register for weekly Webinar here” located on the left navigation tab. You can select upcoming webinars to register by date. You must register separately for each webinar to allow the planning team to set up an appropriate number of teleconference lines for each webinar. For questions about the registration process, please contact Henry Reges (hreges@atmos.colostate.edu).



Figure 1: Title slide of the Weekly Climate, Water and Drought Assessment webinars.

River Forecast Center (CBRFC), US Geological Survey, Colorado State University, Utah State University, and the University of Wyoming. The state climatologists of Colorado and Wyoming provide additional regional perspectives on current conditions.

The information covered in each webinar includes:

- Upper Colorado River Basin precipitation
- SNOTEL snowpack and water-year precipitation updates at varying elevations
- USGS streamflow updates
- CBRFC (Colorado Basin River Forecast Center) streamflow forecasts
- Selected reservoir level updates and historic context
- Temperature departures from normal
- Soil moisture conditions
- Precipitation outlook for upcoming week
- Assessment and recommendations for weekly updates to the US Drought Monitor (USDM)

Figure 2 shows a sample of the information and products covered in each webinar. At the conclusion of each webinar, presenters have the opportunity to give recommendations to the authors of the USDM on changing the classification and/or spa-



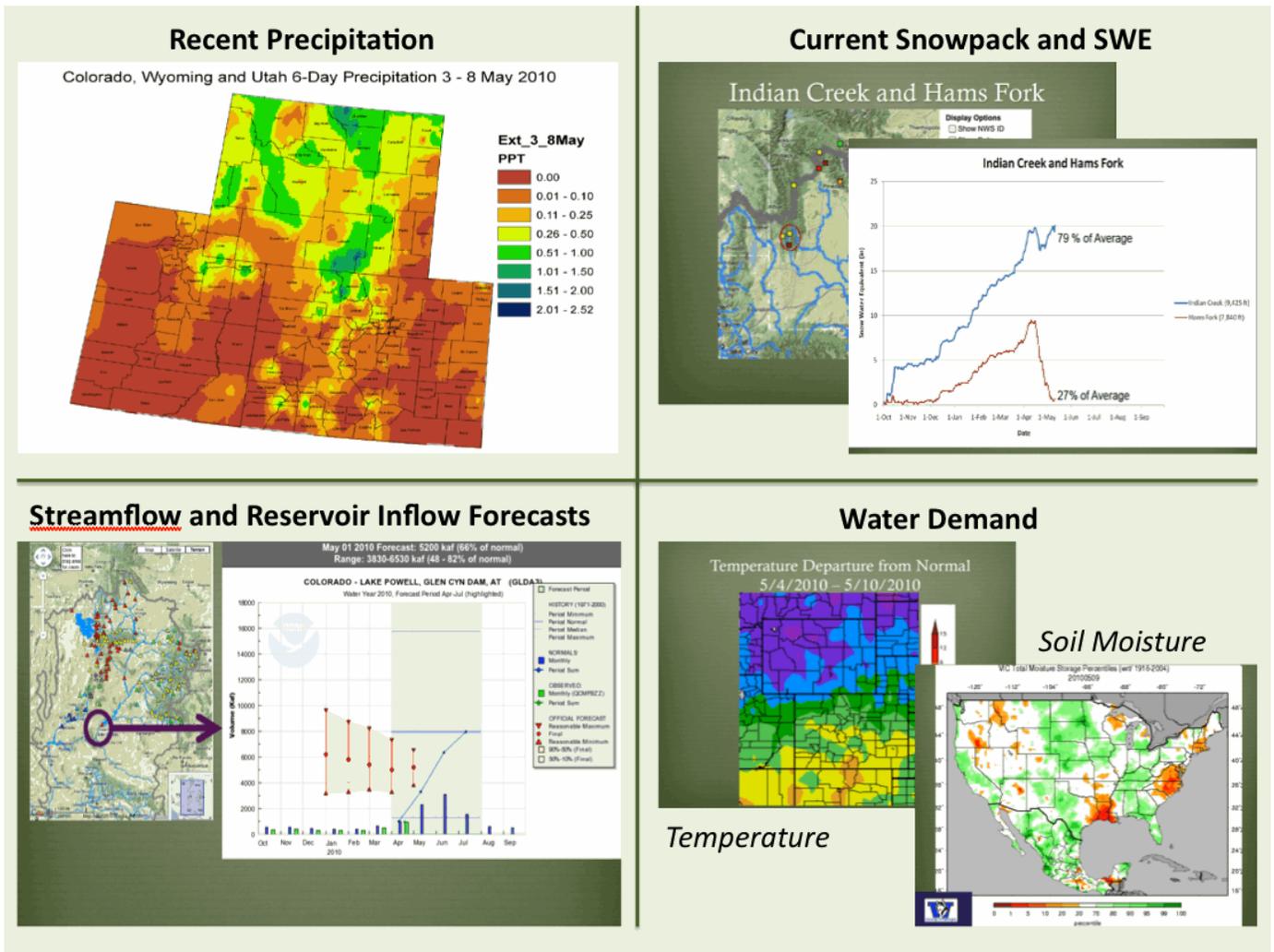


Figure 2: Several examples of the climate, water supply and drought information presented in the webinars.

tial extent of drought areas for the upcoming USDM, released every Thursday.

The webinars originated from interviews conducted in summer 2009 by Nolan Doesken, Colorado State Climatologist, to better understand the data and information needs of stakeholders in the basin. The interviews identified several needs, including better depiction of reservoir levels and how they relate to the past, water demand status and projections for the Front Range, timely updates on snowpack conditions during critical snow accumulation and melt periods, and access to professional interpretation of water supply information and forecasts.

As this weekly webinar series winds down in June, the CCC will determine how often similar webinars should be presented during summer, fall and winter of 2010-2011. In spring 2011, the webinars will resume on a weekly basis. If you have any questions, comments, suggestions to improve the webinars, please contact Wendy Ryan at the Colorado Climate Center (wendy@atmos.colostate.edu).

