



WESTERN WATER ASSESSMENT

A NOAA RISA TEAM

November 2023 Newsletter

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Fifth National Climate Assessment Release

The [Fifth National Climate Assessment](#) is out! It was released on November 14th with an announcement by President Biden. WWA team member **Liz Payton** and PI **Corrie Knapp** were chapter lead authors for the Water chapter (Ch 4) and the Northern Great Plains chapter (Ch 25), respectively.

This iteration of the NCA, led by **Allison Crimmins**, has several new features designed to engage a broader audience: an [art competition](#), companion [podcasts](#), a Spanish translation of the full report, and a [poem](#) written for the NCA5 by **Ada Limón**, the 24th Poet Laureate. In addition to the sector and regional chapters found in previous NCAs, it adds two new chapters to expand its representation of the human side of climate change: Ch 12-Economics, and Ch 20-Social Systems and Justice. And finally, it includes an interactive atlas [tool](#) with county-level temperature and precipitation projections. USGCRP is also planning a



series of webinars for each NCA5 chapter, beginning in late November. Liz and her coauthors will share more about the Water chapter in a webinar on **December 4 from 1-2pm MST (3-4pm EST)**. Register for the Water chapter webinar [here](#) or find [details and registration links for all of the NCA5 webinars here](#).

Photo: "[Keep It Together](#)". Credit: Tammy West. View the rest of the NCA5 Art x Climate Gallery [here](#).

Research and Products

Lander Community Planning for Climate Hazards Workshop

On July 12-13, decision-makers and community members from Lander, Wyoming participated in the Lander Community Planning for Climate Hazards workshop, organized, supported, and facilitated by WWA. The workshop focused on understanding and planning for the impacts of flooding within city limits. WWA team members **Katie Clifford** and **Seth Arens**, summer intern **Wilzave Quiles-Guzmán**, and **Caitlin Ryan** from University of Wyoming's WyACT (Wyoming Anticipating Climate Transitions) worked with local community members to identify town officials, staff, and other community stakeholders to participate in the workshop. Through a survey, the group of participants collectively identified flooding as their key climate hazard concern. During the workshop, participants explored existing and anticipated community impacts of flooding, identified gaps in knowledge, and brainstormed strategic short- and long-term actions that may reduce the impacts of flooding.

Governor's Awards for High-Impact Research

On October 11, the CIRES [We Are Water](#) project team received prestigious recognition at the annual [CO-LABS Governor's Awards](#) with the Pathfinding Partnerships Award. Members of the We Are Water team, including project leads **Anne Gold** and **Brigitta Rongstad Strong**, and WWA team members **Benét Duncan** and **Ethan Knight**, accepted their award at the Denver Museum of Nature and Science. Dr. Rongstad Strong, the team Program Manager, noted that the award is an important reminder about the many voices that made this project possible.

We Are Water is a collaboration between CIRES Education & Outreach, WWA, Indigenous education organizations, local libraries, and climate scientists. The NSF-funded program is hosted in public libraries in Colorado, New Mexico, and Arizona. The primary goal was to engage a lot of people in important conversations about the desert Southwest's most critical topic: water.



Members of the We Are Water team accepting their award. Photo credit: Studio Copan.

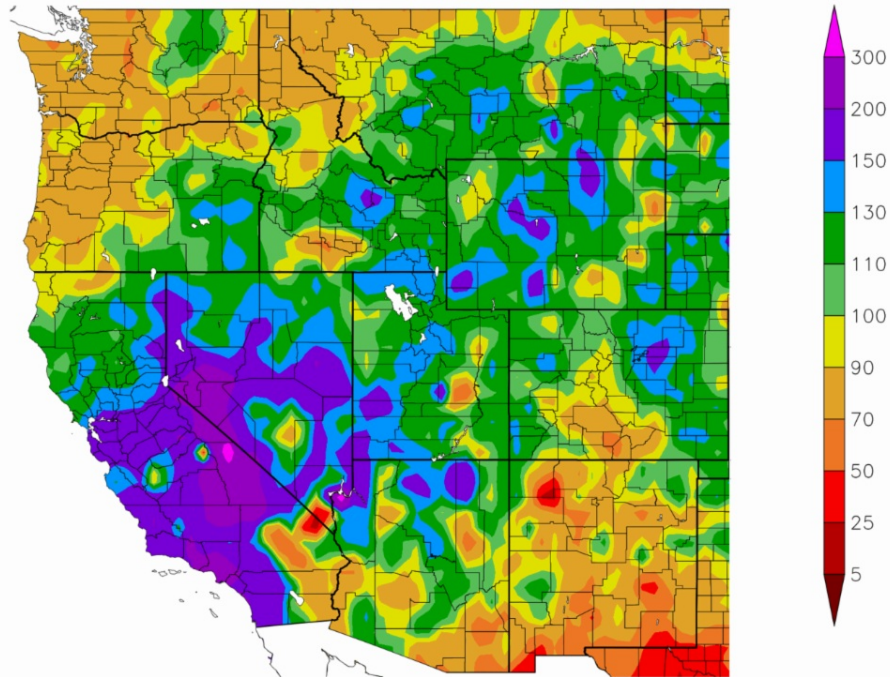
Climate Section

Water Year Summary

WWA released a summary of the recent water year, available [here](#).

The 2023 water year began with nearly two-thirds of the Intermountain West in drought. Much-above average precipitation fell across nearly the entire region during winter and many long-term monitoring sites in Utah and western Colorado broke snow-water equivalent (SWE) records. Above average winter precipitation and snowfall caused above-to-much-above average seasonal streamflow volumes across nearly the entire region. Wet winter conditions alleviated drought in many locations. An active North American monsoon season caused areas of above average precipitation in late summer and fall which alleviated drought conditions in all but 8% of the region.

Percent of Normal Precipitation (%) 10/1/2022 – 9/30/2023



Generated 10/2/2023 at HPRCC using provisional data.

NOAA Regional Climate Centers

[Learn more](#)

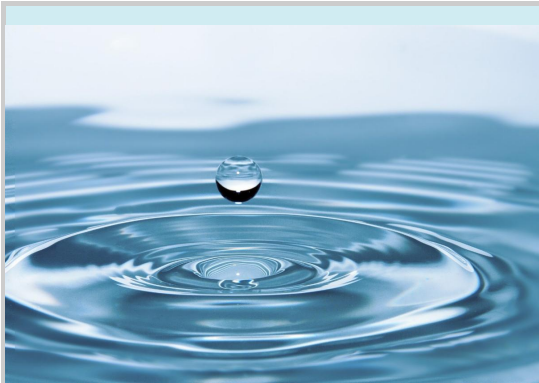
Halloween Weekend Snowstorm in Colorado

From October 28-29, a stalled jet streak over Colorado coupled with the coldest air of the season caused scattered bands of heavy snow to develop throughout the state. Thanks to this storm, Denver received its first snowfall of the season, with up to 8" of snow. Many areas in the Denver metro area received more than 8" of snow, including Aurora at 10.4", Englewood at 10.2", and Cherry Creek Reservoir at 9.5". Castle Rock received 12.5" of snow and Colorado Springs received 11". Other locations receiving heavy snow included Eldora with 14", Estes Park with 13", and Evergreen with 11.5". The heaviest snow totals were recorded in the central mountains, with a high of 24" just north of Crested Butte in Gothic. Additionally, Crested Butte received 19", Copper Mountain received 16.9", Breckenridge received 16", and Silverthorne received 15.6".



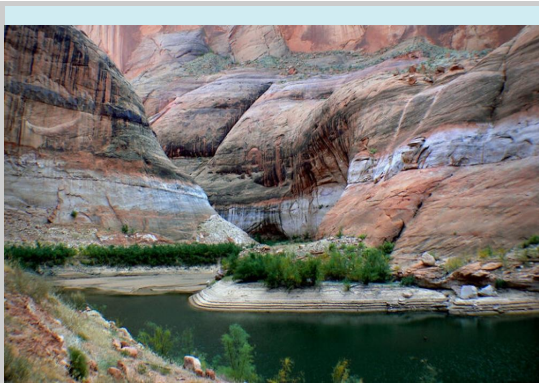
"A snowy day in Leadville. October 28, 2023." Photo credit: Hart Van Denburg/CPR News.

WWA Features



Climate change impacts on water are profound and unequal

[Read article](#)



An ecosystem resurges in the desert as Lake Powell dries up

[Read article](#)



CIRES We Are Water team receives Governor's Award

Read article

First place-based education event connects Wind River youth to land, elders, and community

Read article



California Is Out of Its Epic Drought—For Now

Read article



CU Boulder geographer among inaugural group of public scholars

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Background photo by [Adam Chang](#) on [Unsplash](#).

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

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Western Water Assessment | CIRES, University of Colorado, Boulder, CO 80309

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