

STATE OF UTAH GENERAL OUTLOOK

March 1, 2009

SUMMARY

February 2009 seemed to be a snowy month with a lot of stormy days, especially early on, but the amount accumulated at the higher elevations was much less than what our backs told us we had shoveled. The Weber, Sevier and southwest Utah all received average accumulations and the rest of the state got about 75% to 85% of average February accumulation. Snowpacks across the state now range from 83% over the Uintas to 119% in southwestern Utah. The pattern of more snow in the south and less in the north and on the east side of the Wasatch and Sevier Plateaus remains. The probability of getting enough snow in March to reach an average April 1 snowpack is pretty low at this point: Bear – 13%, Weber – 32%, Provo – 24%, Uintas – 13%, SE Utah – 16%, Sevier – 50%, SW Utah – 68%. February precipitation was near normal in most areas and above normal (121%) in southwest Utah which brings the year-to-date precipitation to near normal in the northwest, above average in the southwest and below average in the east. Current soil moisture saturation levels in runoff producing areas are: Bear – 56%, Weber – 58%, Provo – 46%, Uintah Basin – 34%, SE Utah – 36%, Sevier – 47% and SW Utah – 43%, a 0% to 5 % change from last month. Drier soils typically mean less runoff from snowmelt. Reservoir storage is currently at 62% of capacity statewide compared to 58% last year. General water supply conditions are near average in northern Utah, except for the Bear, above average on the Virgin and Beaver and near to below average in central Utah. Streamflow forecasts range from 57% for the Duchesne nr Randlett to 124% of average on Coal Creek near Cedar City. Surface Water Supply Indices range from 14% on the Bear River to 74% for the Virgin. The extremely low value for the Bear River is a reflection of Bear Lake storage which continues to be well below normal.

SNOWPACK

March first snowpacks as measured by the NRCS SNOTEL system are as follows: Bear - 90%, Weber - 97%, Provo - 94%, Uintas - 83%, southeast Utah - 85%, Sevier - 100%, southwest Utah - 119% and the statewide figure is 94% of average. With only March remaining in the snow accumulation season, the range of potential outcomes has narrowed, however future climatic conditions can still impact spring runoff. If drought prevails, snowpacks could range between 40% and 70% of average. Given maximum accumulations, April 1 snowpacks could range between 105% and 174% of average. With normal accumulations, April 1 snowpacks will be between 86% and 117% of average. A very large March snow accumulation (110%-180%) is necessary over most areas except southern Utah to reach an average snowpack by April 1. The area with lowest snowpack average is the north slope of the Uintas – 69% and the highest is southwest Utah at 119%.

PRECIPITATION

Mountain precipitation during February was: Bear – 91%, Weber – 99%, Provo – 89%, Uintas – 87%, SE Utah – 84%, Sevier – 98%, SW Utah – 121% and the statewide figure is 95% of average. This brings the seasonal accumulation (Oct-Feb) to 100% of average statewide.

RESERVOIRS

Storage in 46 of Utah's key irrigation reservoirs is at 62% of capacity up 4% compared to March of last year. There is some good news on the reservoir repair front as all previously restricted fill reservoirs are now able to store, including Willard Bay.

STREAMFLOW

Snowmelt streamflows are expected to have a wide range from much below average to above average across the state of Utah this year. Forecast streamflows range from 57% on the Duchesne nr Randlett to 124% on Coal Creek near Cedar City. Most flows are forecast to be in the below to near average range.

