

Water Year 2026 In Review

Compiled by the Colorado Climate Center
Dept. of Atmospheric Science
Colorado State University



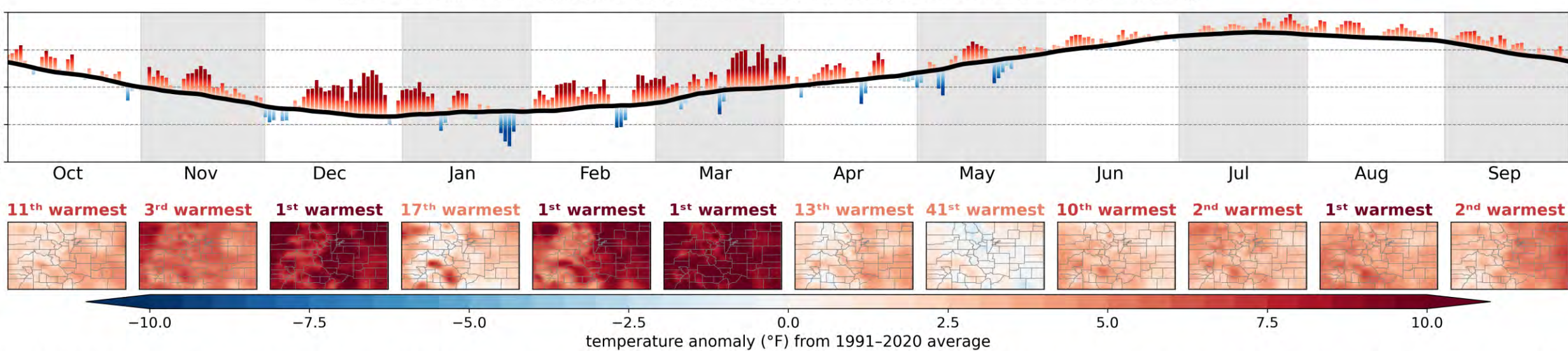
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**View our ArcGIS StoryMaps version of this
summary!**

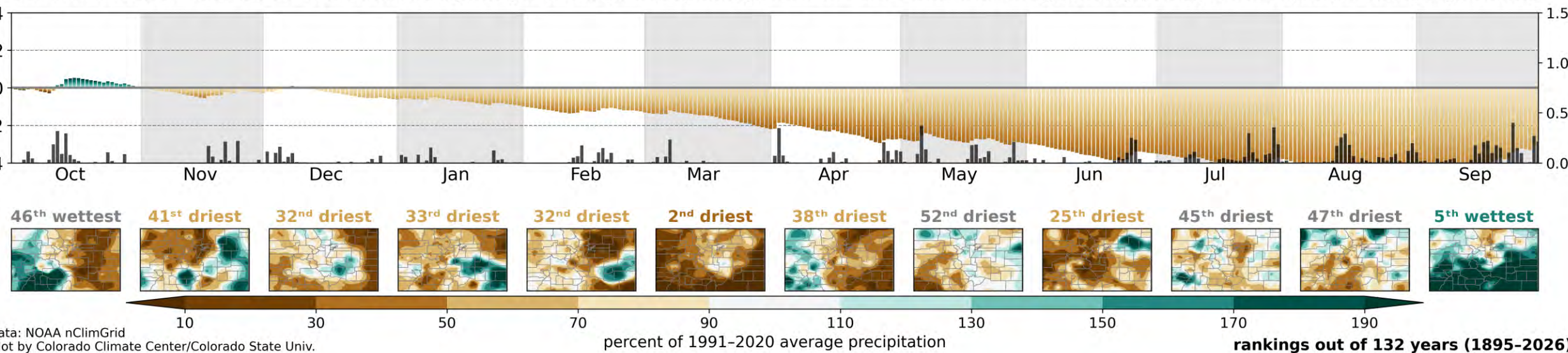
<https://col.st/aenlo>

Water Year 2026 at a glance

Colorado Water Year 2026 temperatures (°F) compared to 1991-2020 average



Colorado Water Year 2026 accumulated precipitation (inches) compared to 1991-2020 average; daily precipitation (black bars, right axis)



data: NOAA nClimGrid
plot by Colorado Climate Center/Colorado State Univ.

https://climate.colostate.edu/co_cag/index.html

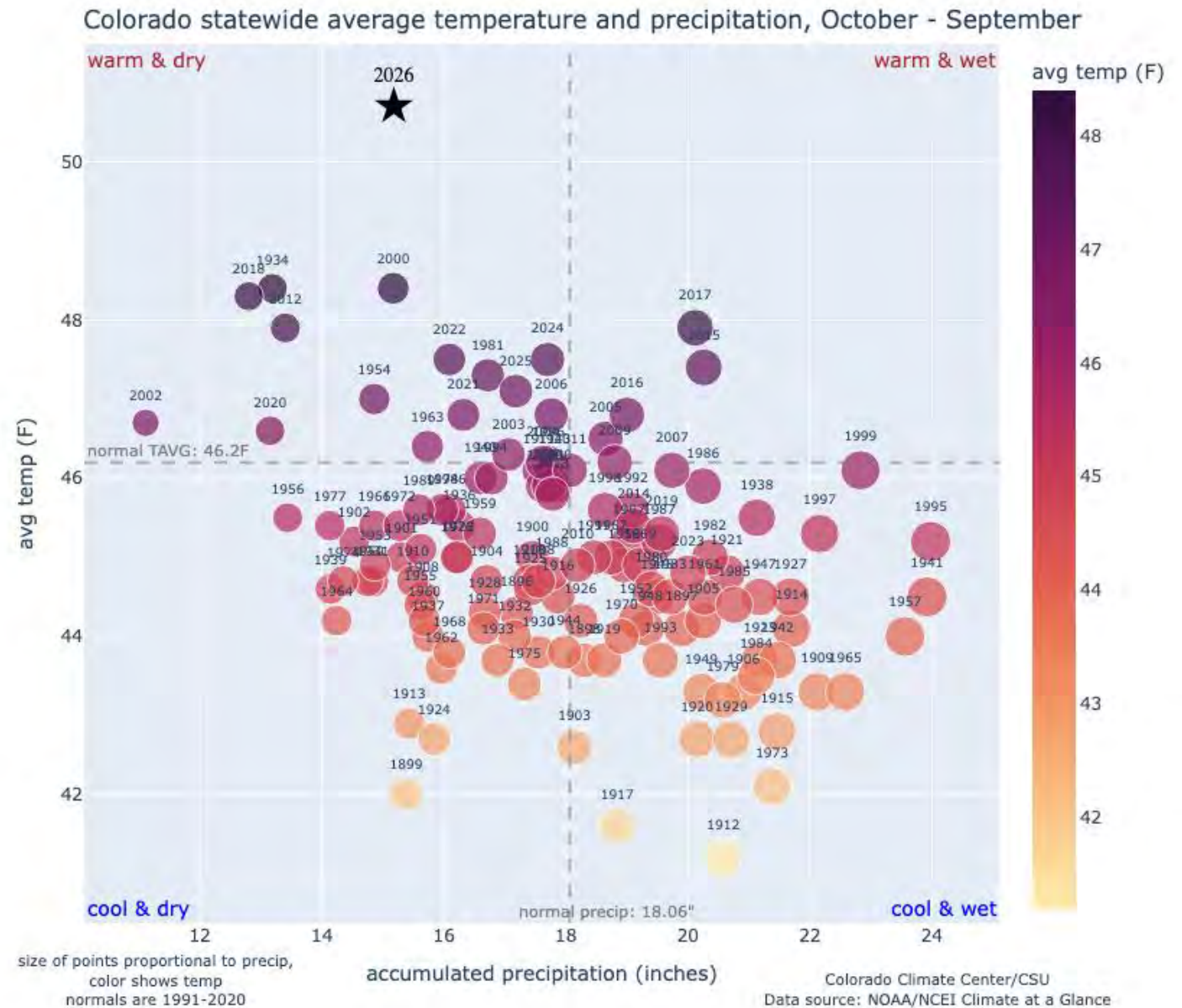


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Water Year 2026 was one for the record books in Colorado. It was our **warmest on record** by a substantial margin, and it was also **one of our driest**. Our state also recorded its **lowest snowpack**, which strained water resources and contributed to widespread drought. This year's climatic conditions had substantial impacts across numerous sectors: from agriculture and wildlife to human health and recreation.

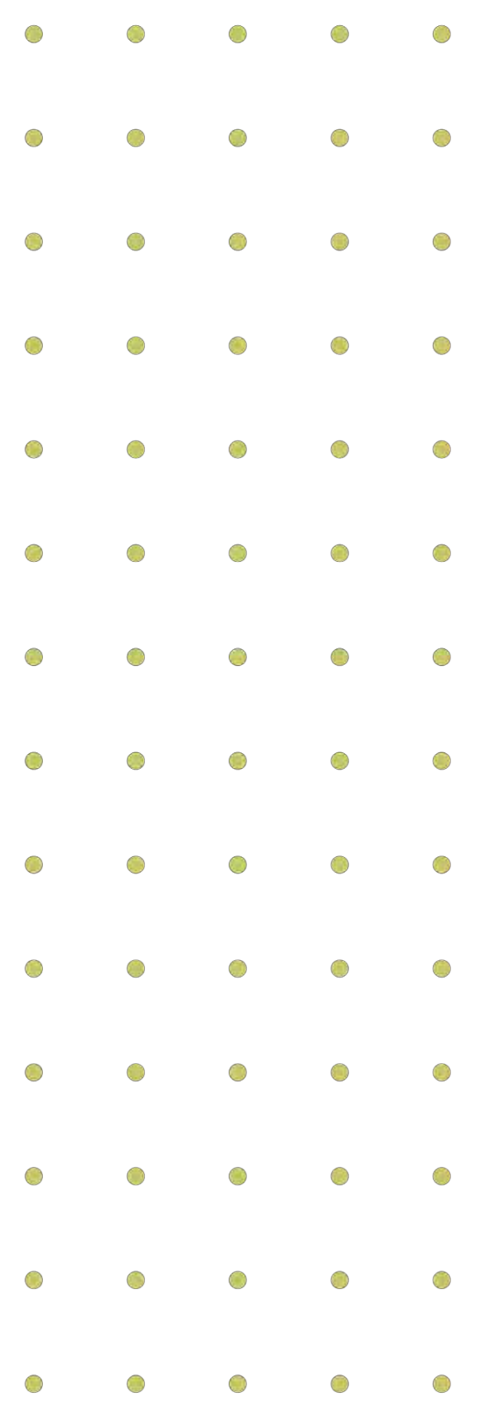
In this summary, we'll cover the records, trends, and impacts that were recorded across Colorado over the past 12 months.



Follow the Water: What is a Water Year?

- In the western US, a water year runs from Oct 1 to Sep 30.
- **Why track climate trends in this way?**
 - It follows the natural movement of water: from snowpack buildup in the winter, to spring melt off, to flows along our streams and into our reservoirs in the summer, and use of those water resources by crops over our growing season.



A decorative graphic on the left side of the slide consisting of a grid of small green dots arranged in 5 columns and 15 rows.

Outline

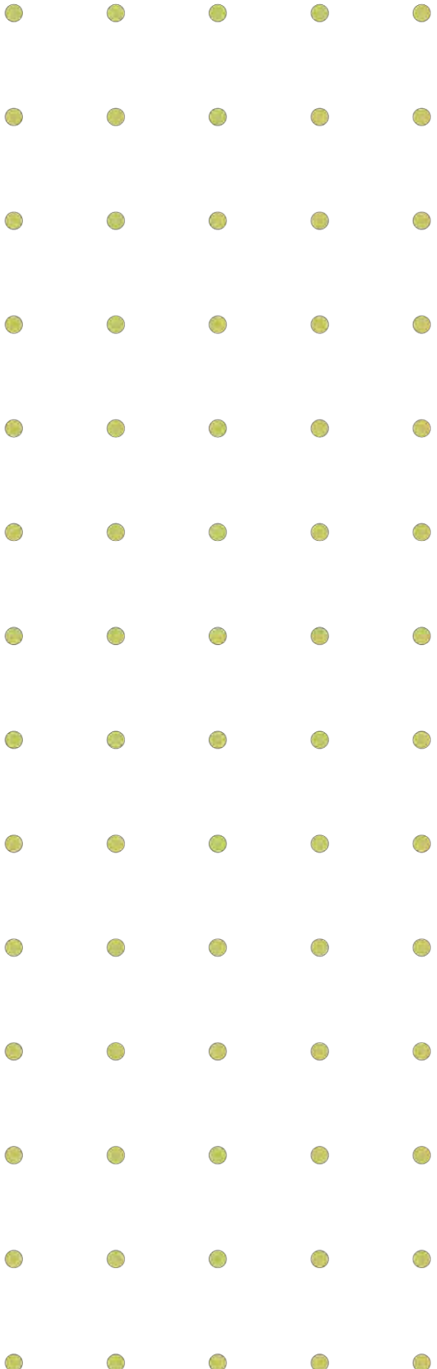
I. Temperature and Precipitation

II. Drought

III. Water: Snowpack, Streamflow & Reservoirs

IV. Notable Events

V. Contact

A decorative graphic on the left side of the slide consisting of a 15x5 grid of small green dots.

Temperature and Precipitation

Temperature and Precipitation Ranks for WY 2026

Month	T Rank (of 131 years)	Above, below, or near 20 th century avg?
Oct	11th warmest	much above
Nov	3 rd warmest	much above
Dec	1st warmest	record warm
Jan	17 th warmest	above
Feb	1 st warmest	record warm
Mar	1 st warmest	record warm
Apr	13 th warmest	much above
May	36 th warmest	above
Jun	10 th warmest	much above
Jul	2 nd warmest	much above
Aug	1 st warmest	record warm
Sep	2 nd warmest	much above

Month	P Rank (of 131 years)	Above, below, or near 20 th century avg?
Oct	46 th wettest	near normal
Nov	42 nd driest	below
Dec	34 th driest	below
Jan	34 th driest	below
Feb	37 th driest	below
Mar	3 rd driest	much below
Apr	36 th driest	below
May	50 th driest	near normal
Jun	17 th driest	below
Jul	45 th driest	near normal
Aug	49 th driest	near normal
Sep	5 th wettest	much above

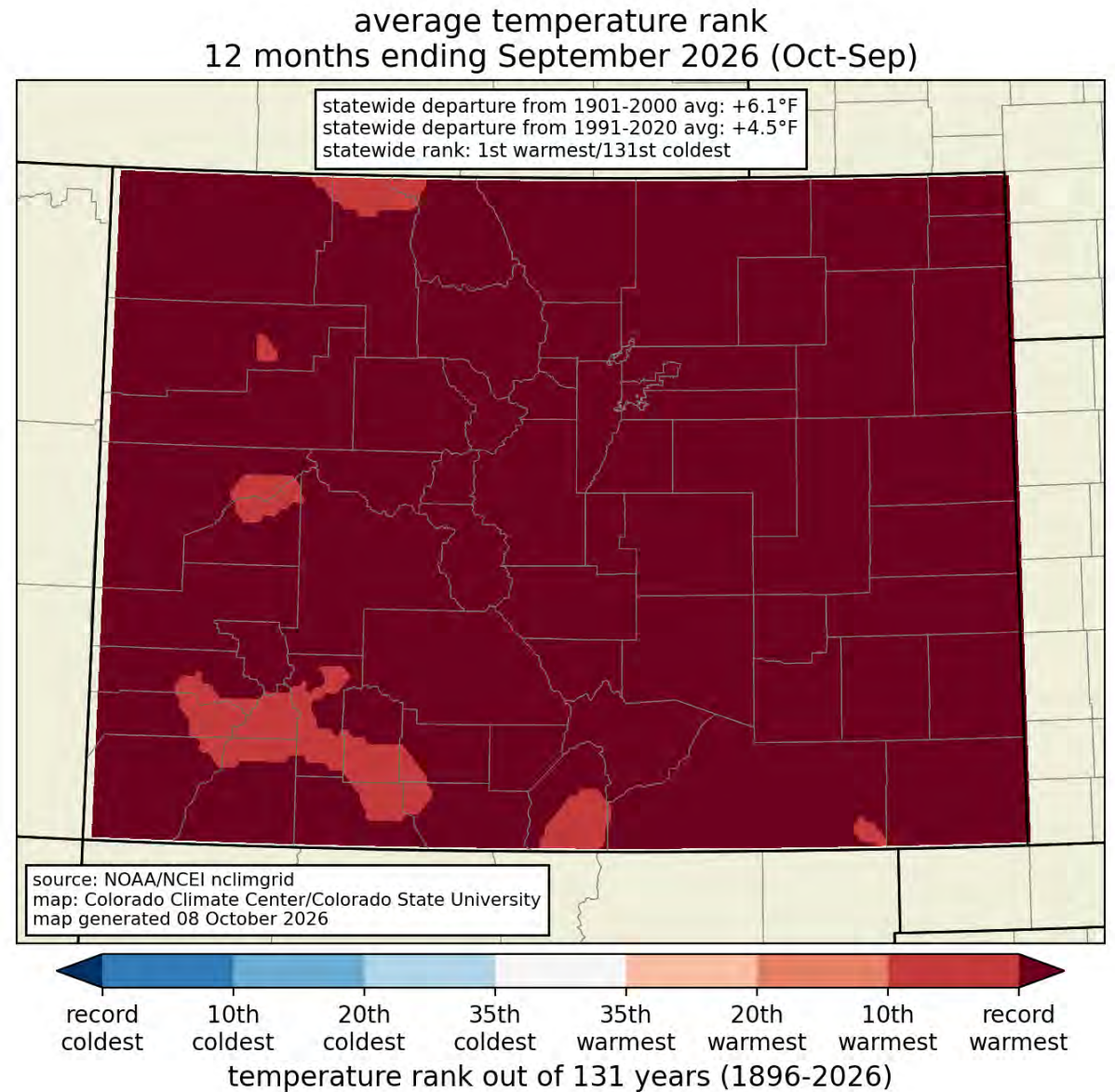
Water Year 2026 was filled with temperature superlatives

According to statewide temperature (data since 1895), Colorado saw its:

- Warmest December
- Warmest February
- Warmest March
- Warmest August
- Warmest winter
- Warmest spring
- Warmest summer
- Warmest water year

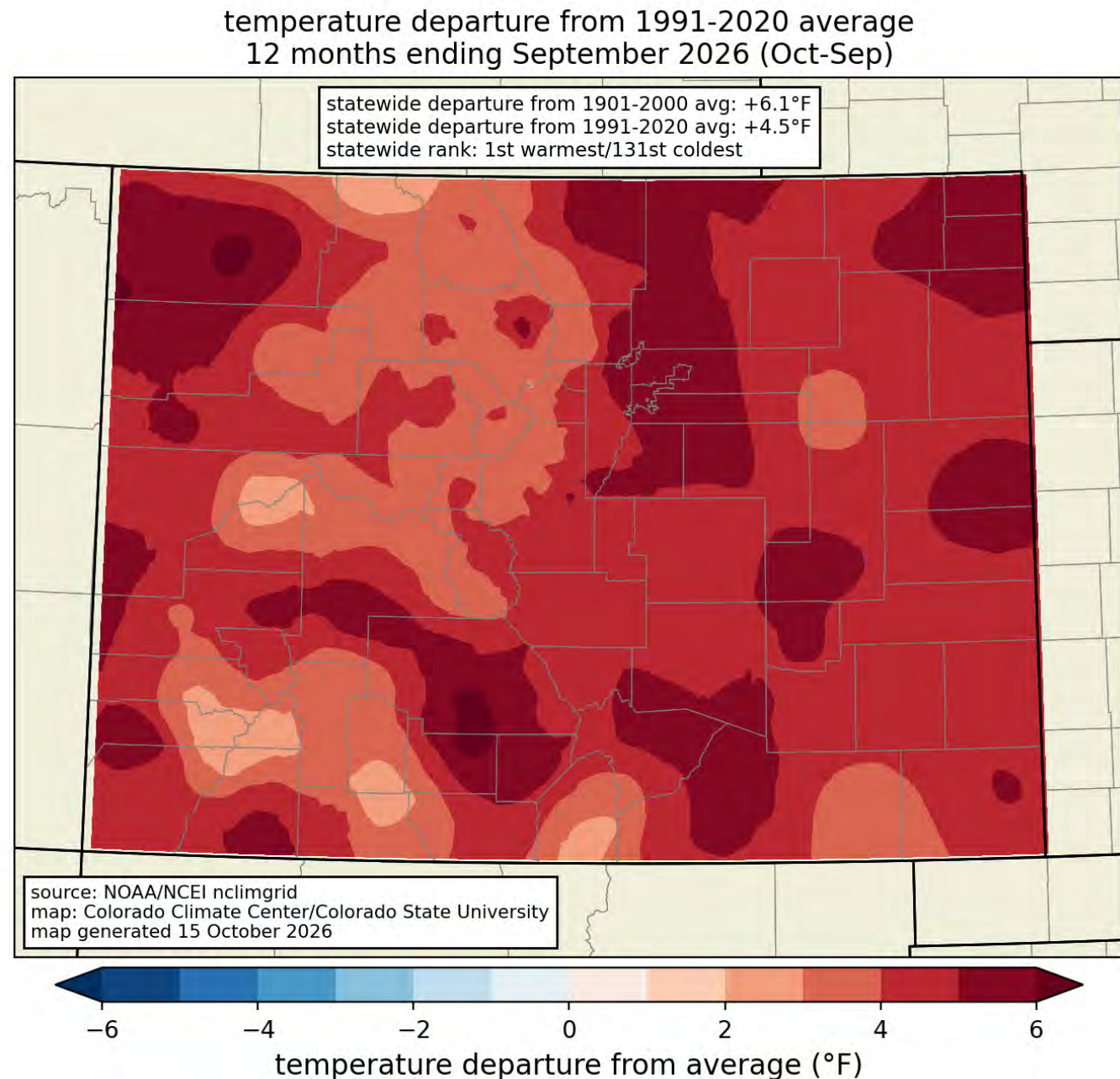
Colorado's Warmest Water Year on Record

Out of 131 years of data, Water Year 2026 was easily Colorado's warmest on record. The record-setting warmth was consistent throughout the state, with only a few areas *not* being record-warm



Colorado's Warmest Water Year on Record (by a lot)

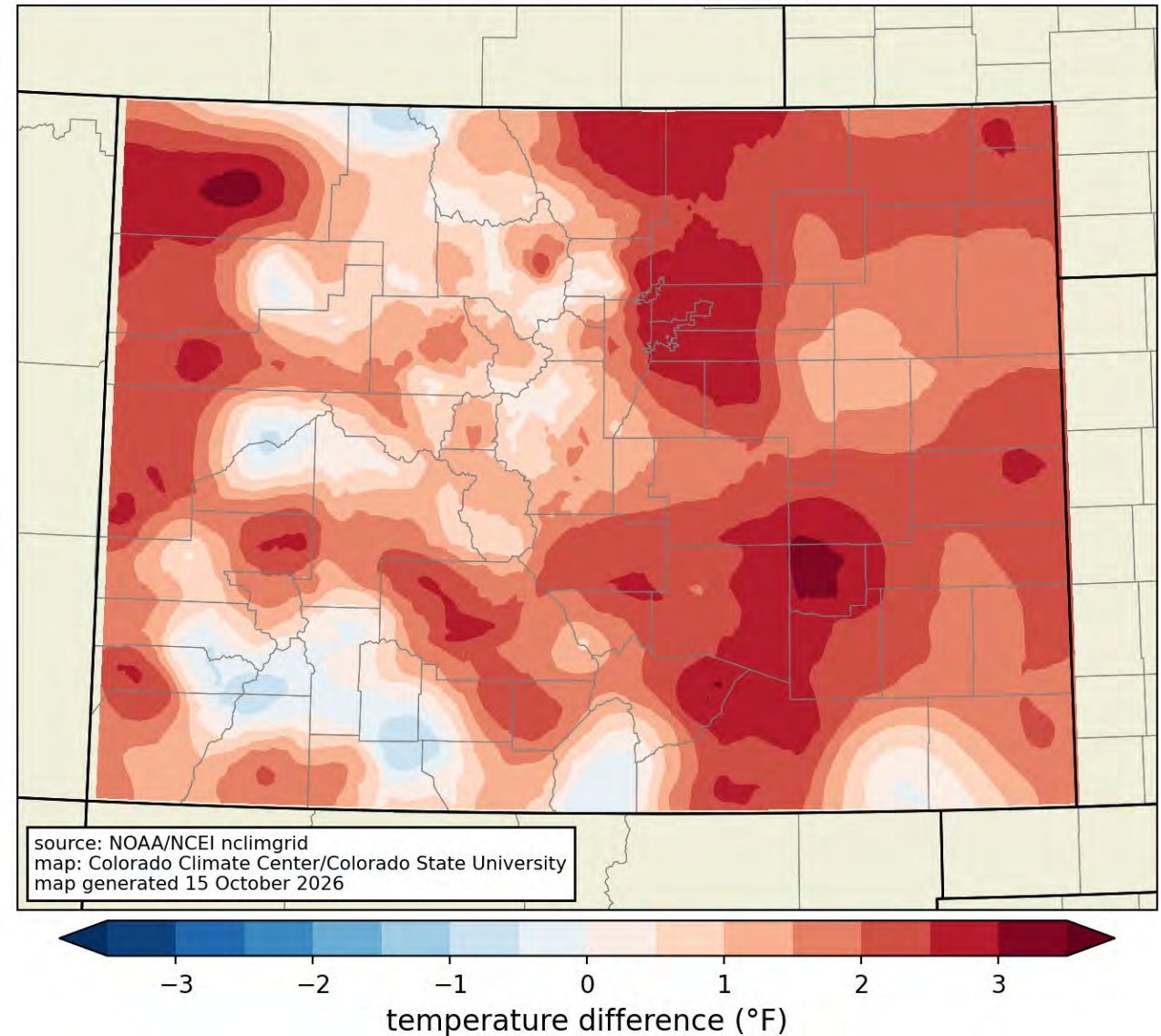
Statewide temperatures were 4.5 °F above the 1991-2020 normal and over 2 °F warmer than our 2nd-warmest water year on record (1934).



Colorado's Warmest Water Year on Record (by a lot)

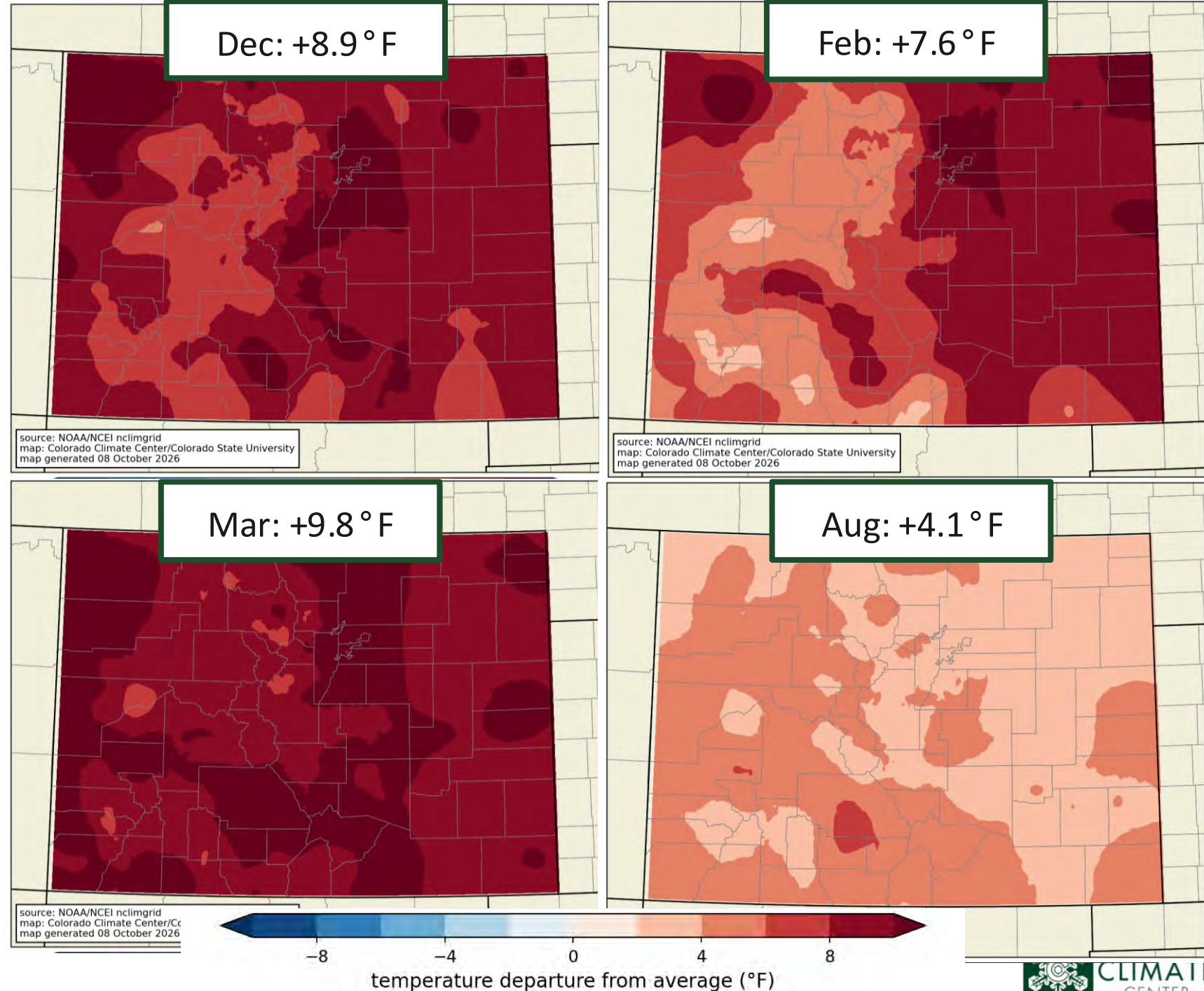
In some locations, Water Year 2026 average temperatures were 2.5-3 °F+ warmer than the previous record-warm water year—a very impressive margin.

Margin between Water Year 2026 average temperature and previous record-warm water year



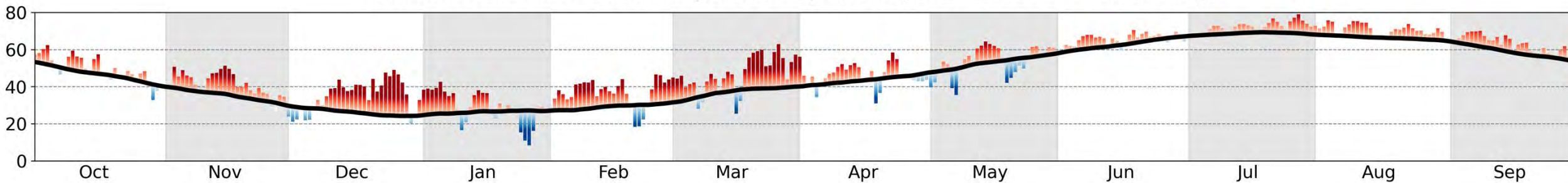
Four different months were record-warm

March was the most anomalous month relative to 1991-2020 average temperatures (more on this in the notable events section)



Statewide, for every below-average day in WY 2026, there were ~3.6 above-average days.

Colorado Water Year 2026 temperatures (°F) compared to 1991–2020 average



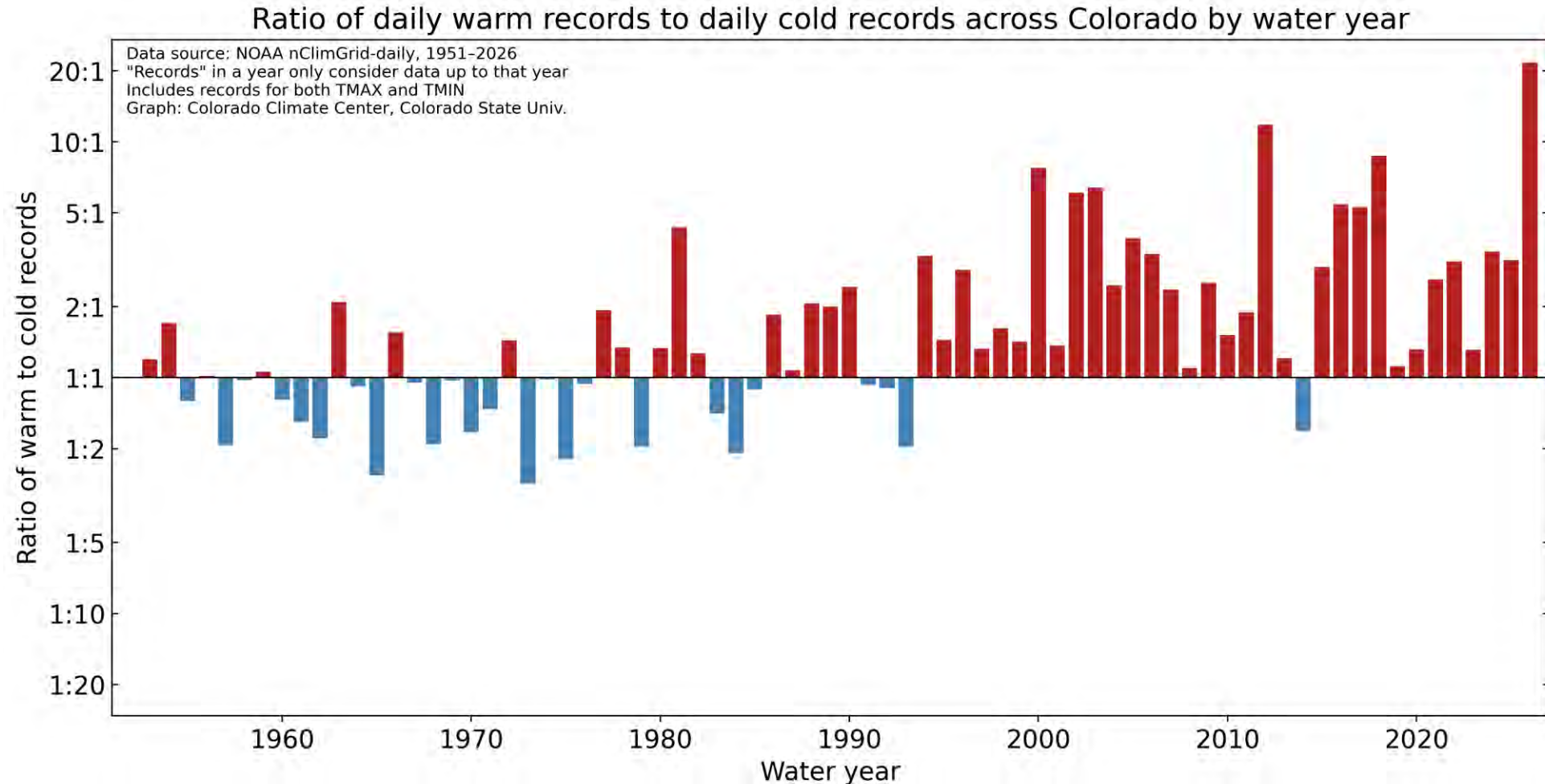
Statewide, we saw the following during WY 2026:

- 286 days were above average (only 79 days were below average).
- Nearly half the year (165 days) was at least 5 °F above average (only 29 days were at least 5 °F below average).
- 75 days (~2.5 months) were at least 10 °F above average (only 13 days were at least 10 °F below average).



In gridded temperature data, daily warm records outpaced cold records by more than 21 to 1 in Water Year 2026.

There were 21.7 times more daily warm records (both record high temperatures and record warm lows) than cold records (record lows and cool highs) in WY2026, the most unbalanced this ratio has ever been.



Daily Station Records

Across individual station records, warm records outweighed cold records ~14:1. For comparison, the ratio last year was ~2:1.

	Max (Tmax)		Min (Tmax)		Max (Tmin)		Min (Tmin)		Precipitation		Snowfall	
	Tied	Broken	Tied	Broken	Tied	Broken	Tied	Broken	Tied	Broken	Tied	Broken
Oct	25	30	0	1	66	402	0	1	20	120	0	0
Nov	67	196	1	4	79	249	1	0	8	38	0	4
Dec	137	989	3	9	106	1079	0	4	19	66	2	24
Jan	48	116	18	177	65	284	21	166	13	42	9	33
Feb	80	233	3	79	60	407	4	20	31	56	4	10
Mar	153	1645	4	22	146	1395	5	15	6	18	2	12
Apr	35	57	9	35	51	205	4	9	24	79	1	7
May	64	190	17	102	52	178	14	44	8	58	4	33
Jun	34	44	2	6	38	133	13	50	16	34	0	0
Jul	153	341	0	4	216	627	3	4	22	91	0	0
Aug	253	818	6	32	183	580	7	8	22	75	0	0
Sep	33	44	8	22	162	612	0	0	36	144	0	0
Total	1082	4703	71	493	1224	6151	72	321	225	821	22	123



Record-breaking statewide warmth

*Hottest days
(average of high and low temperature
statewide)*

Rank	Statewide average temperature (°F)	Start date
1	78.88	July 27, 2026
2	77.23	July 21, 2005
3	77.13	July 26, 2026
4	76.92	June 26, 2012
5	76.92	June 27, 2012
6	76.67	July 21, 2026
7	76.54	July 22, 2005
8	76.26	June 25, 2012
9	76.24	July 23, 2005
10	76.13	July 26, 2003

Averaged across the state, and considering both daily high and low temperatures, July 27, 2026 was the hottest single day on record for Colorado, breaking the previous record from July 21, 2025. Three of the 10 hottest days on record happened this July.

We also recorded the warmest October day (October 4), the two warmest December days (December 25 and 23), the nine warmest March days (the 26th, 22nd, 21st, 25th, 20th, 30th, 31st, 19th, and 27th), and the three warmest August days (the 3rd, 9th, and 10th).

Data from NOAA nClimGrid-daily, 1951-present. “Days” in this dataset are defined from 6am-6am, so August 3 is the average of the high temperature on August 2 and the low on the morning of the 3rd



Heat waves and cold snaps

Using the heat wave definition from the [Climate Change in Colorado report](#), Colorado experienced seven statewide heat waves in WY2026, the most in any year (data back to 1951). The previous most heat waves in one year was five, in 2002, 2003, and 2022.

The heat wave from July 25-28 was the hottest on record statewide, and three of the top 10 heat waves happened this year. And this doesn't even include the record-breaking warmth in December and March, because "heat waves" as defined here are based on the very highest temperatures rather than how unusual they were for the time of year.

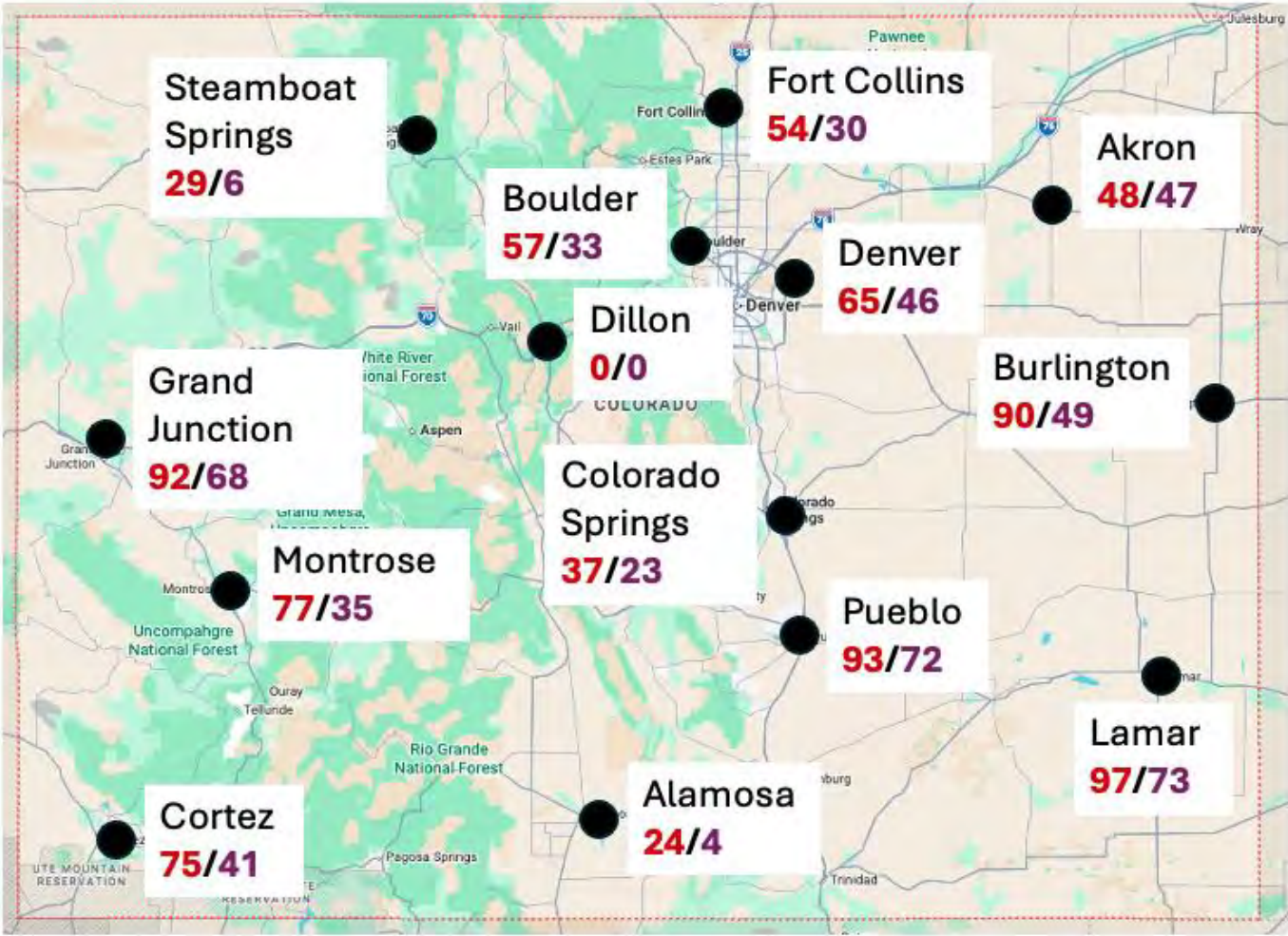
Although there was one period of cold weather in late January, it was not quite persistent enough to qualify as a statewide "cold wave".

Top statewide 4-day heat waves since 1951

Rank	Statewide average temperature (°F)	Start date	End date
1	76.72	July 25, 2026	July 28, 2026
2	76.51	June 24, 2012	June 27, 2012
3	76.13	July 20, 2005	July 23, 2005
4	75.36	July 16, 2003	July 19, 2003
5	75.06	June 29, 1990	July 2, 1990
6	74.87	July 24, 2003	July 27, 2003
7	74.84	August 9, 2026	August 12, 2026
8	74.6	July 20, 2026	July 23, 2026
9	74.58	July 5, 2001	July 8, 2001
10	74.57	June 15, 2021	June 18, 2021

Data from NOAA nClimGrid-daily, 1951-present. "Days" in this dataset are defined from 6am-6am, so August 3 is the average of the high temperature on August 2 and the low on the morning of the 3rd

90 degree days were frequent, and some stations recorded their most on record.



Number of 90 Degree Days in Water Year 2026

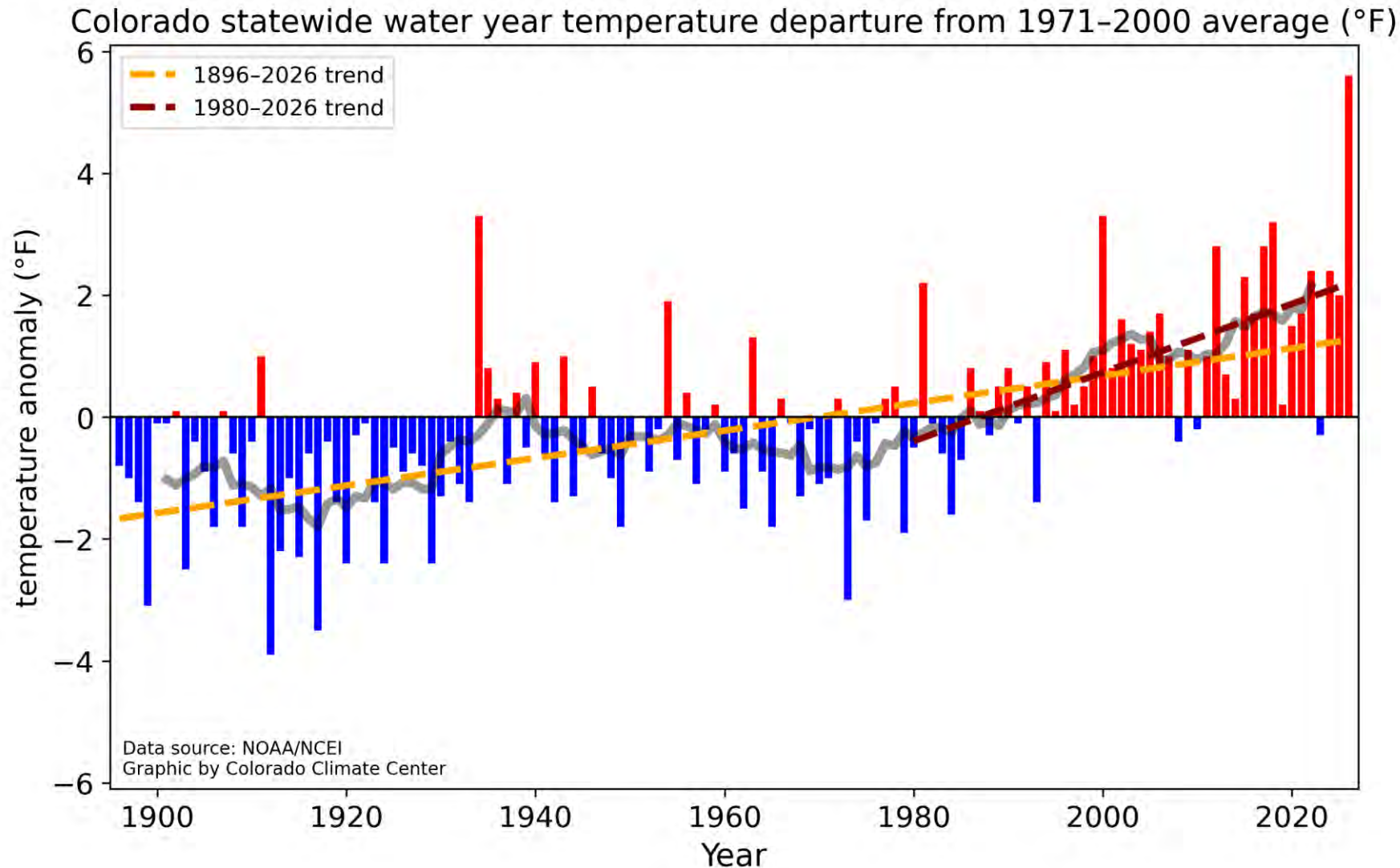
2026/1991-2020 Average

Location	2026	1991-2020 Average
Akron	48	47
Alamosa	24	4
Boulder	57	33
Burlington	90	49
Colorado Springs	37	23
Cortez	75	41
Denver	65	46
Dillon	0	0
Fort Collins	54	30
Grand Junction	92	68
Lamar	97	73
Montrose	77	35
Pueblo	93	72
Steamboat Springs	29	6

Broken or tied records in red



Temperatures have been steadily increasing in Colorado, but this year stood out even in our changing climate.

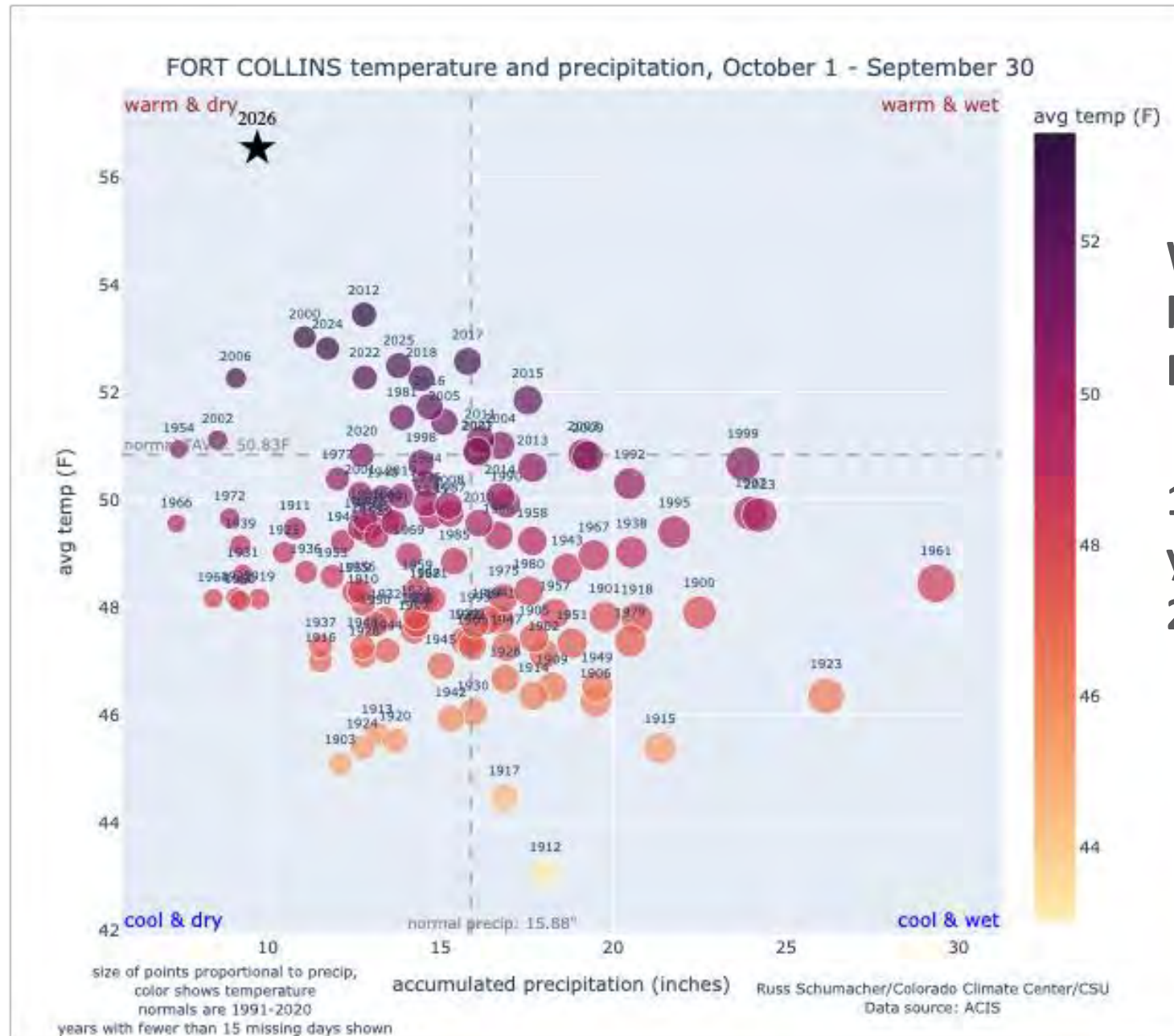


The difference between the 1st and 2nd place years (2026 and 1934) is equal to the difference between the 2nd and 24th place years.

Water Year 2026, Fort Collins

Warm & dry

Cool & dry



Warm & wet

Warmest water year
by a large margin for
Fort Collins

11th driest water
year; driest since
2006

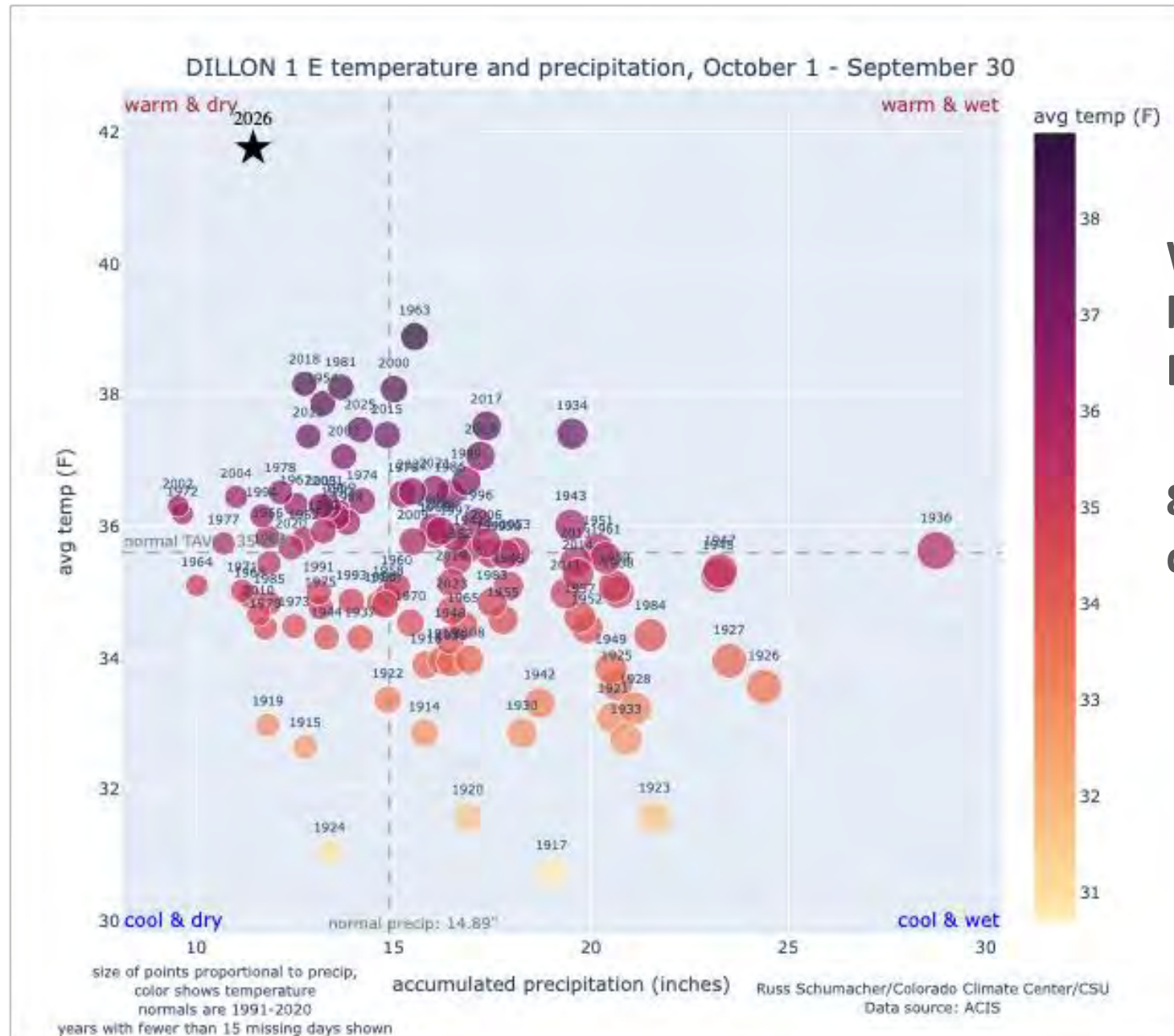
Cool & wet



Water Year 2026, Dillon

Warm & dry

Cool & dry



Warm & wet

Warmest water year
by a large margin for
Dillon

8th driest water year;
driest since 2004

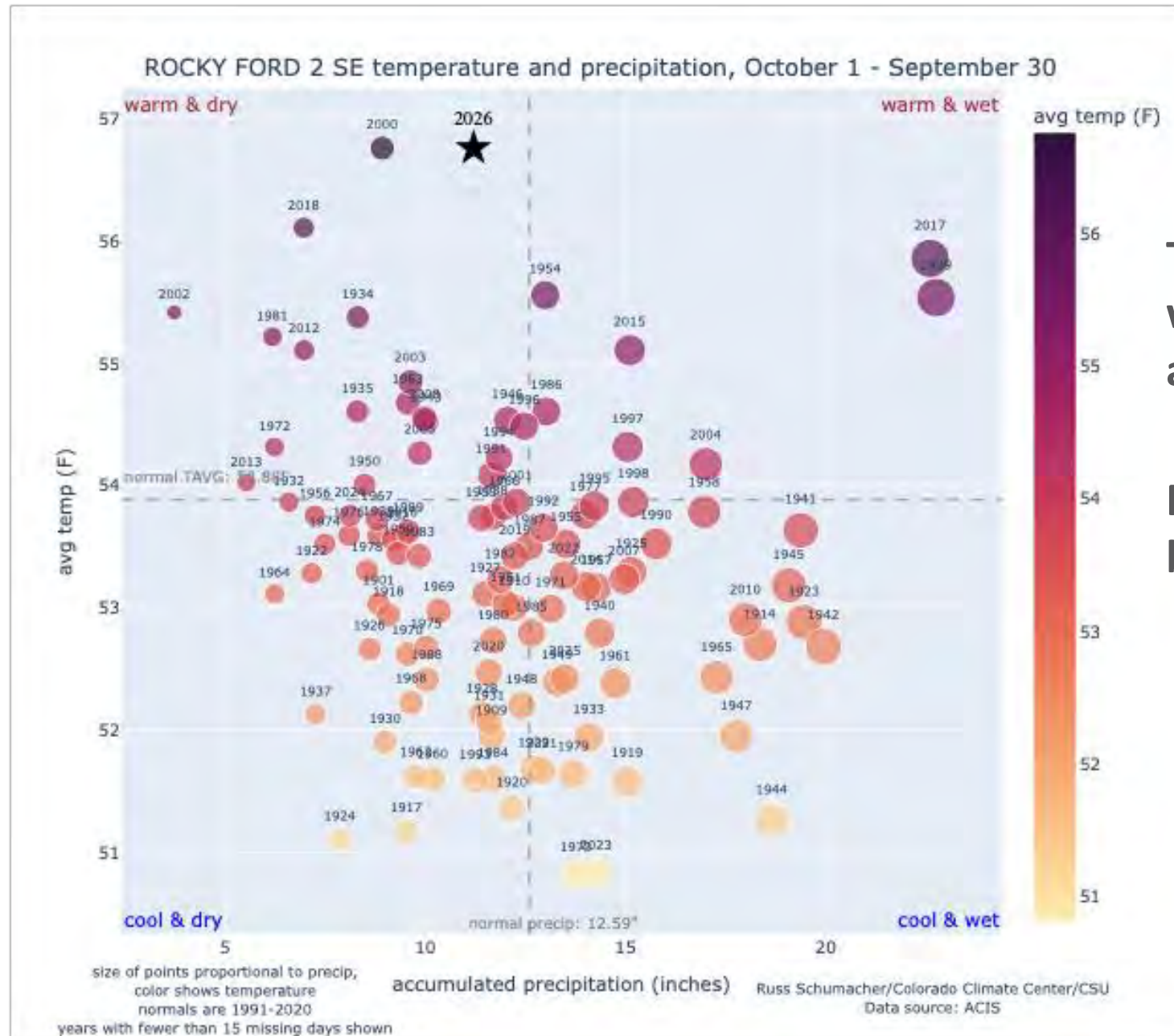
Cool & wet



Water Year 2026, Rocky Ford

Warm & dry

Cool & dry



Warm & wet

Tied with 2000 for
warmest water year
at Rocky Ford

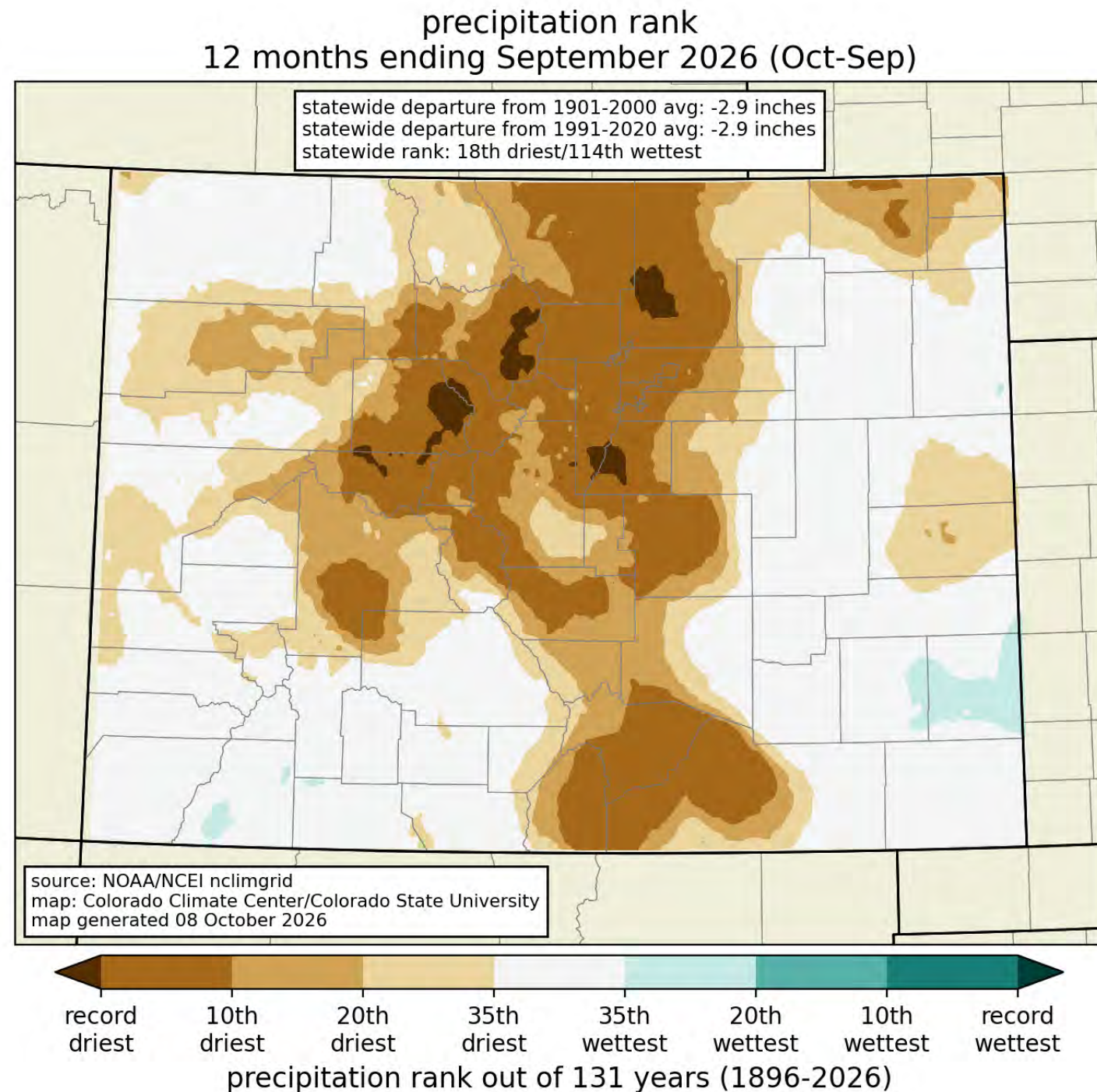
Precipitation slightly
below average

Cool & wet



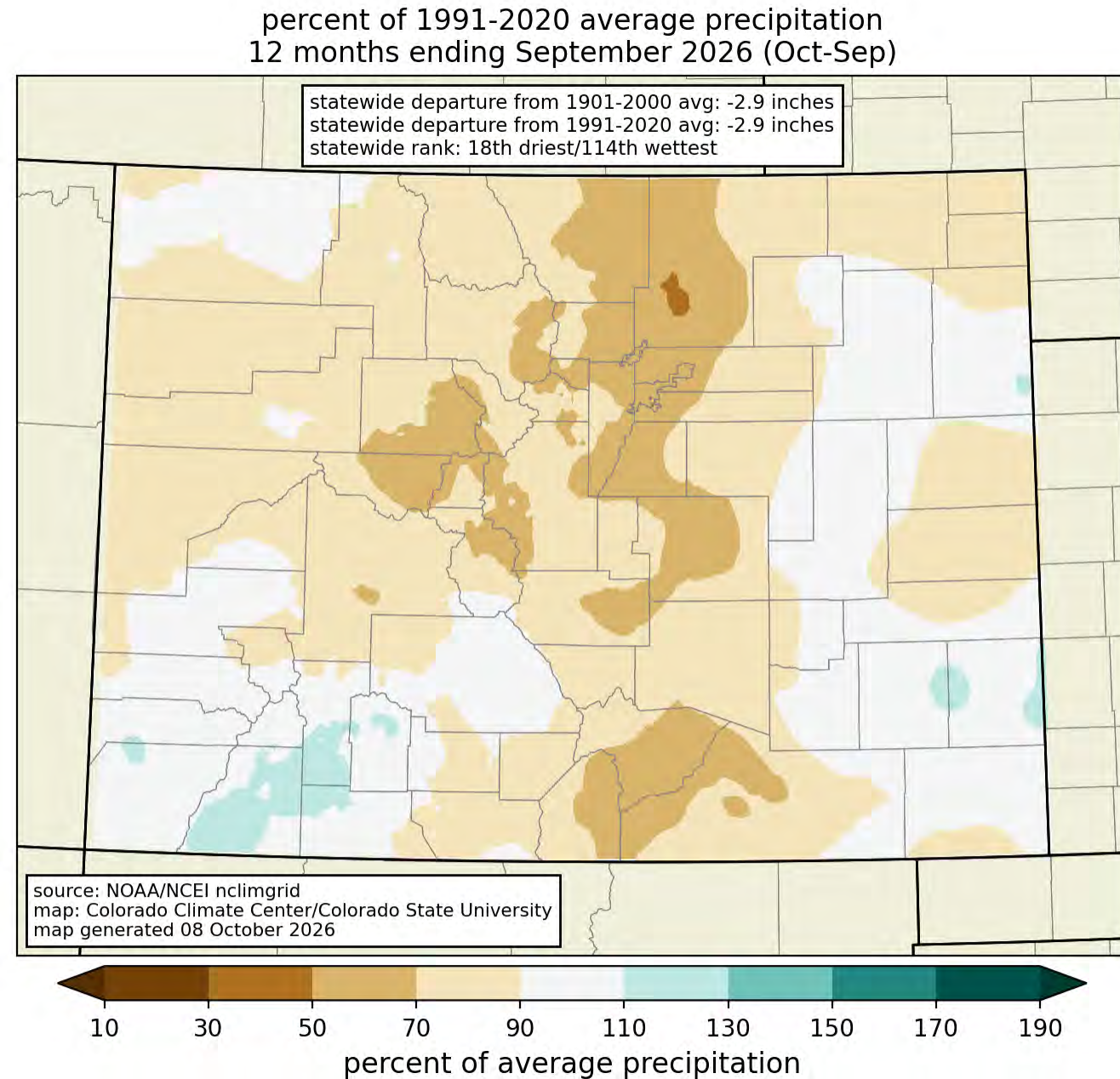
Statewide, Colorado saw its 18th-driest Water Year on record

However, there were notable disparities among different locations in the state. For the North-central Rockies, Front Range, Urban Corridor, and parts of the Eastern Plains, it was top-10 dry.



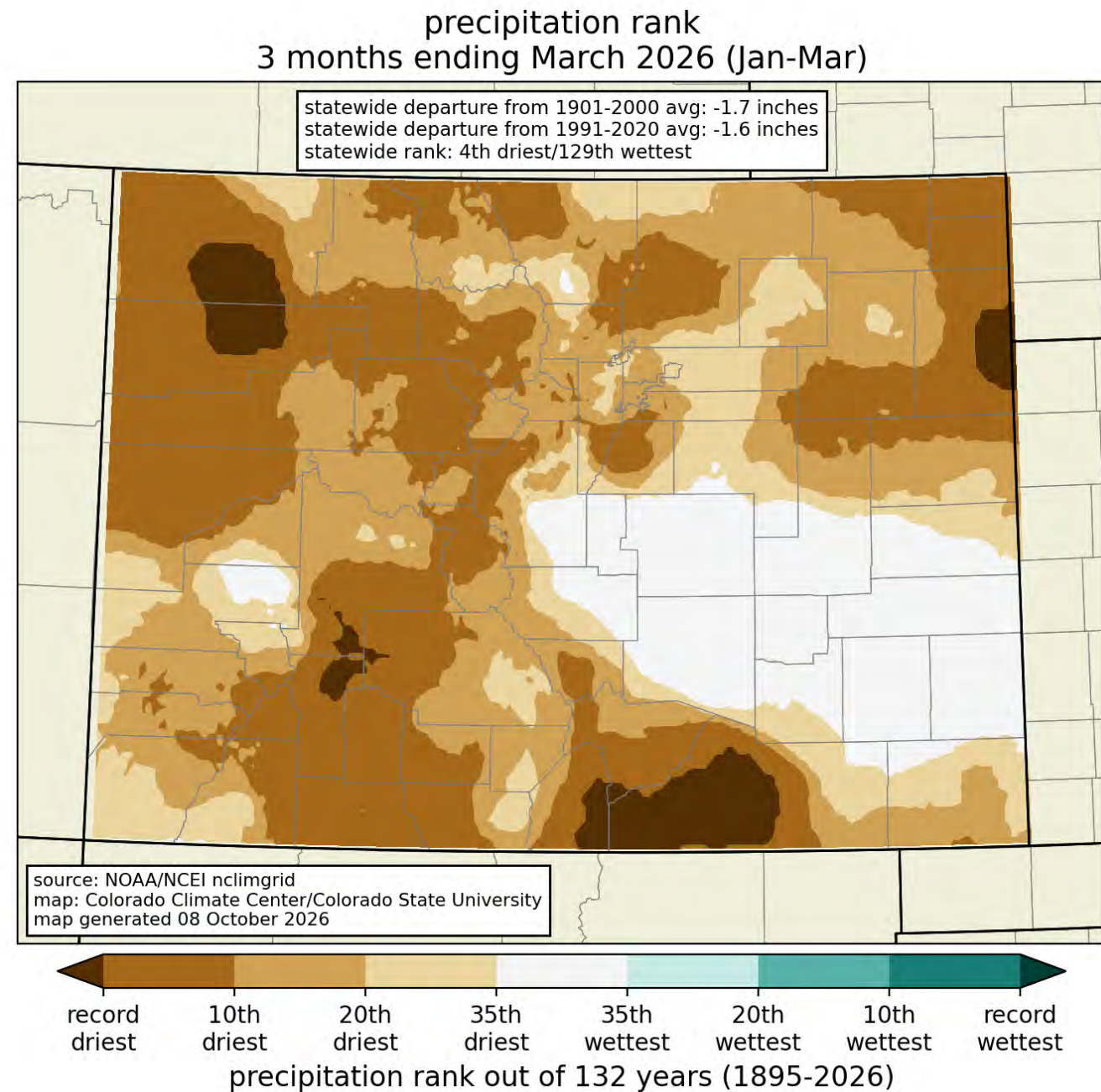
Precipitation across most of the state was below average

Precipitation deficits were felt throughout the state over the past 12 months, though a few wet periods balanced out drier stretches in some areas, especially for the San Juans and parts of the Eastern Plains.



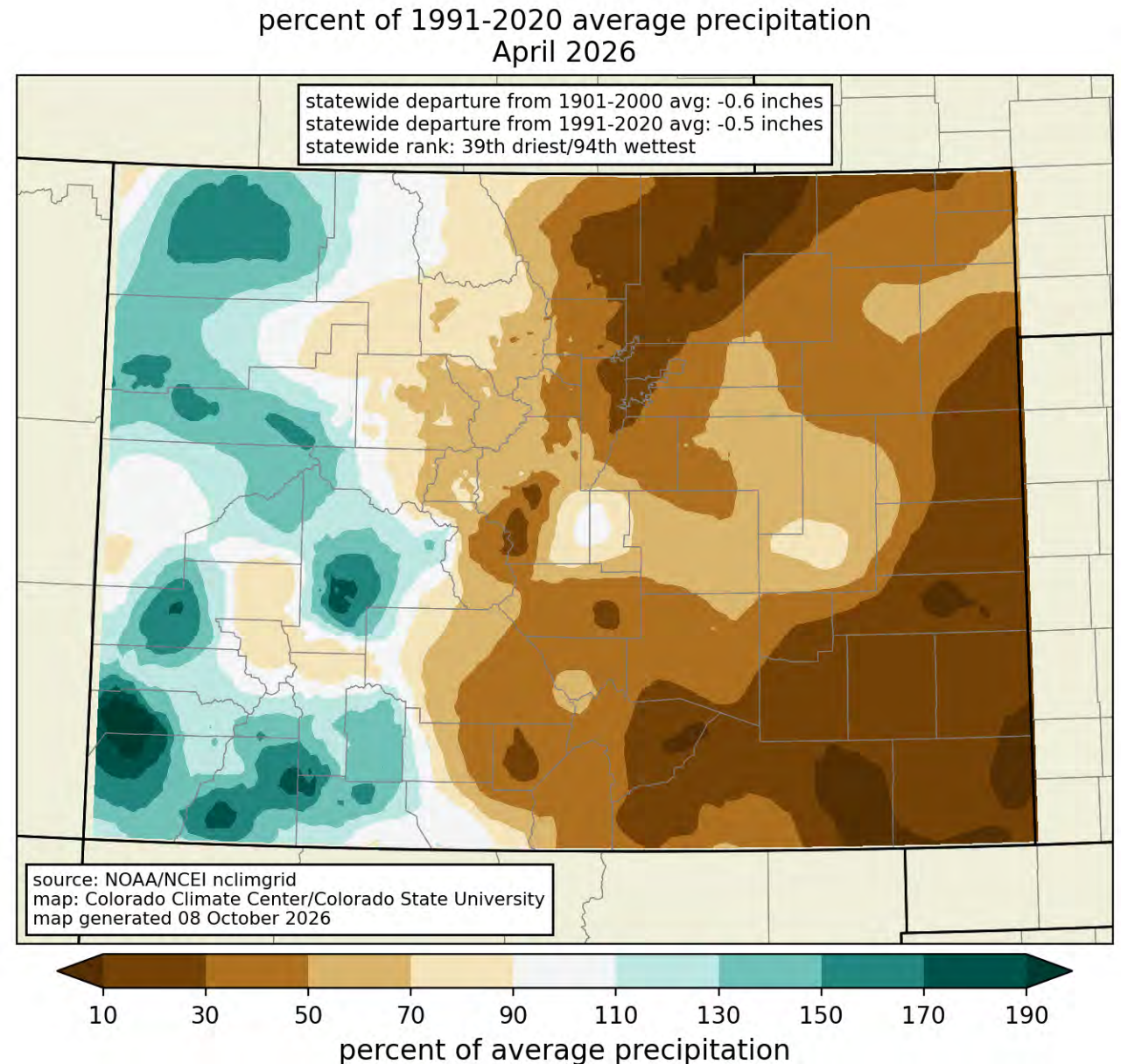
The peak snow season months were dry

January-March was the 4th-driest on record statewide. It was at least top-10 dry across most of the mountain areas, where snowpack buildup occurs.

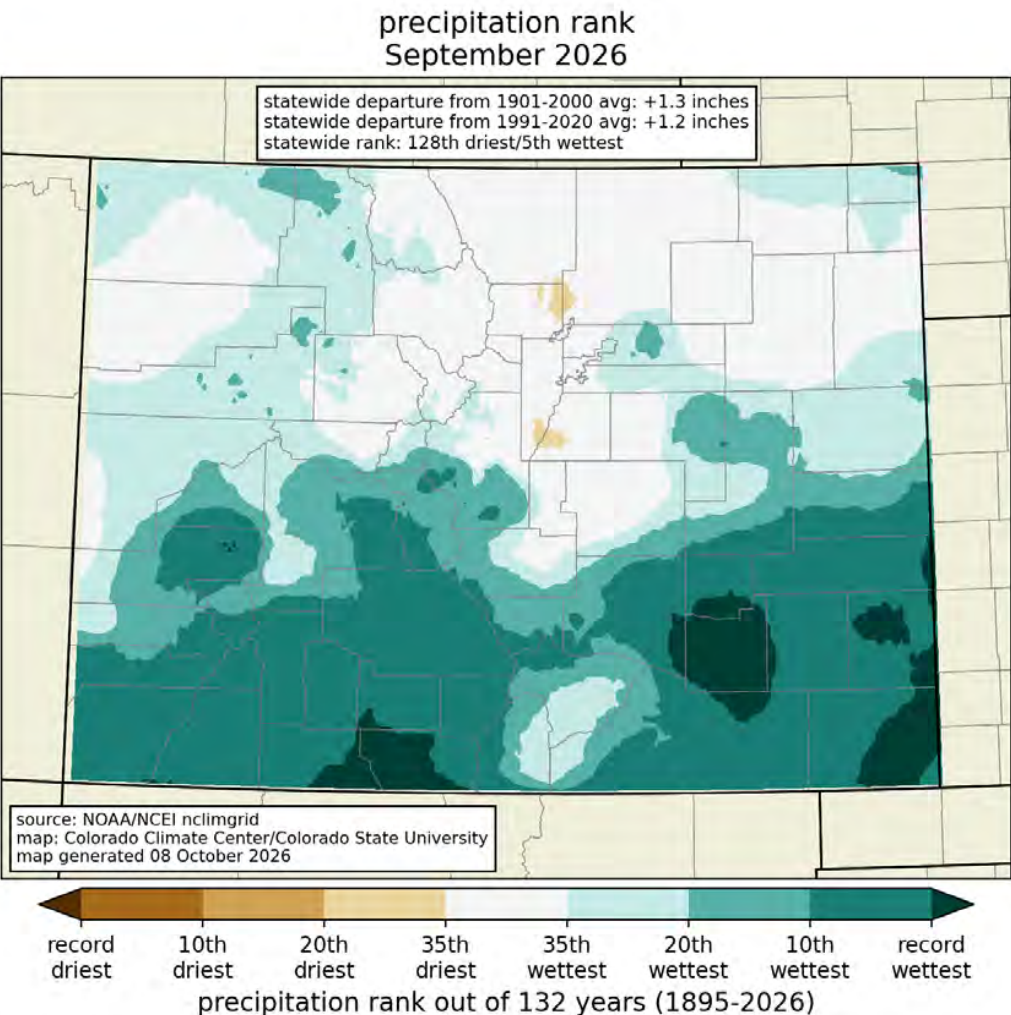
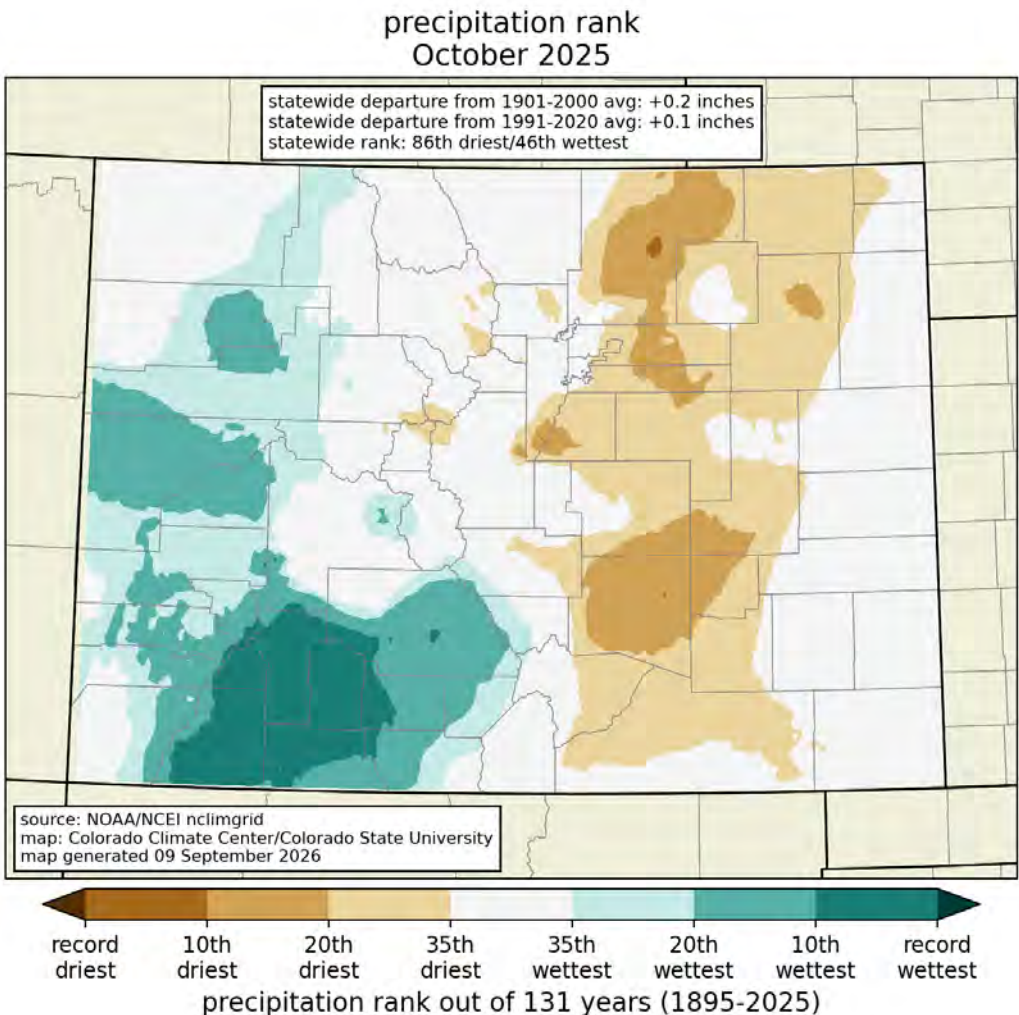


Agricultural areas were dry at a key moment in the season

April precipitation is crucial for both crops and rangelands across the eastern Plains, and it was way below average this year. Coupled with much above-average temperature, drought quickly developed and agricultural lands suffered severe impacts.



October 2025 and September 2026 were two of the wettest months in the WY. In October 2025, precipitation fell in the form of heavy rain causing flooding in the San Juans. And while September precipitation can be helpful for readying soils for winter crops (e.g., winter wheat), it's less helpful for crops that get harvested in the fall.

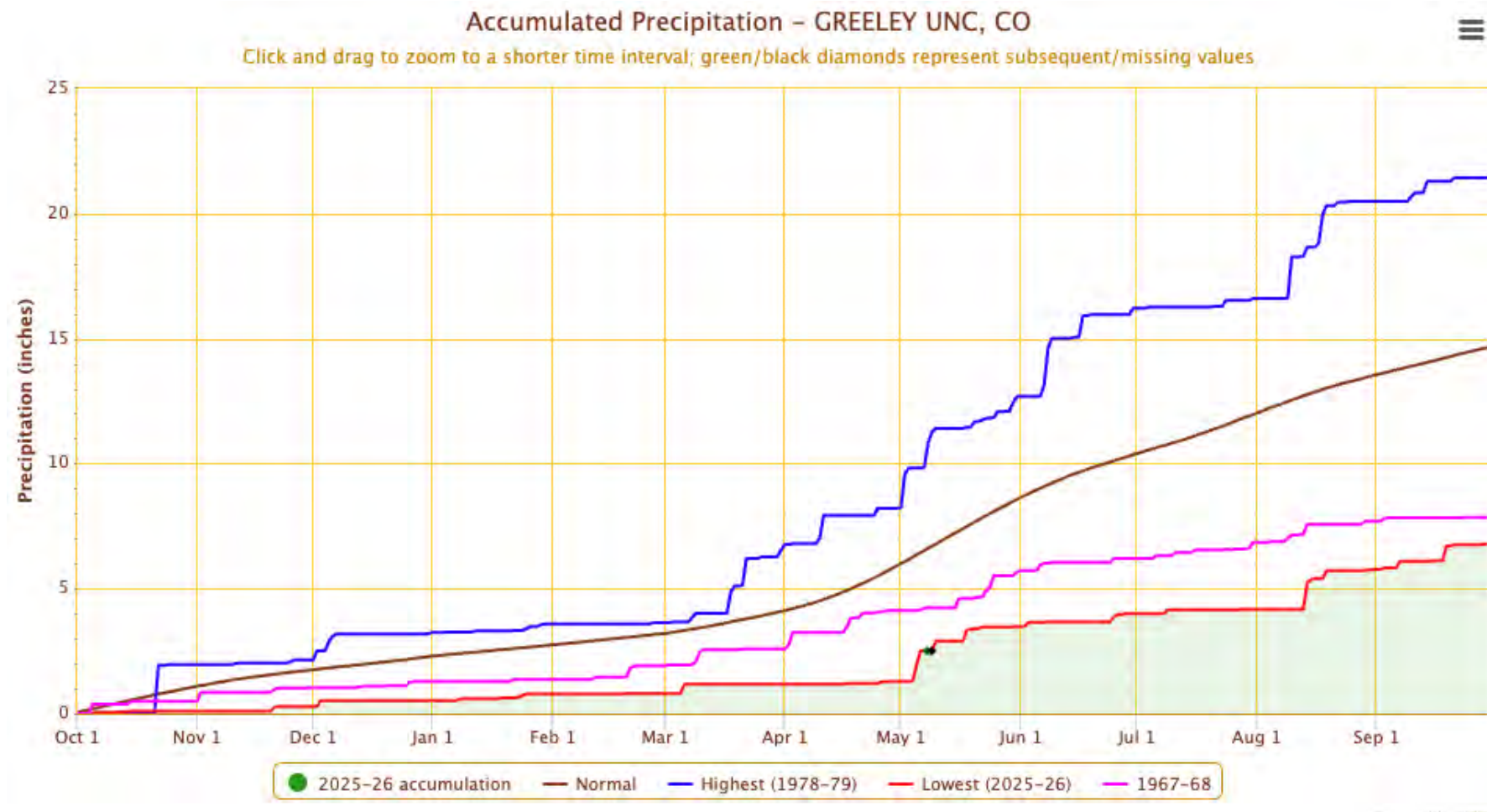


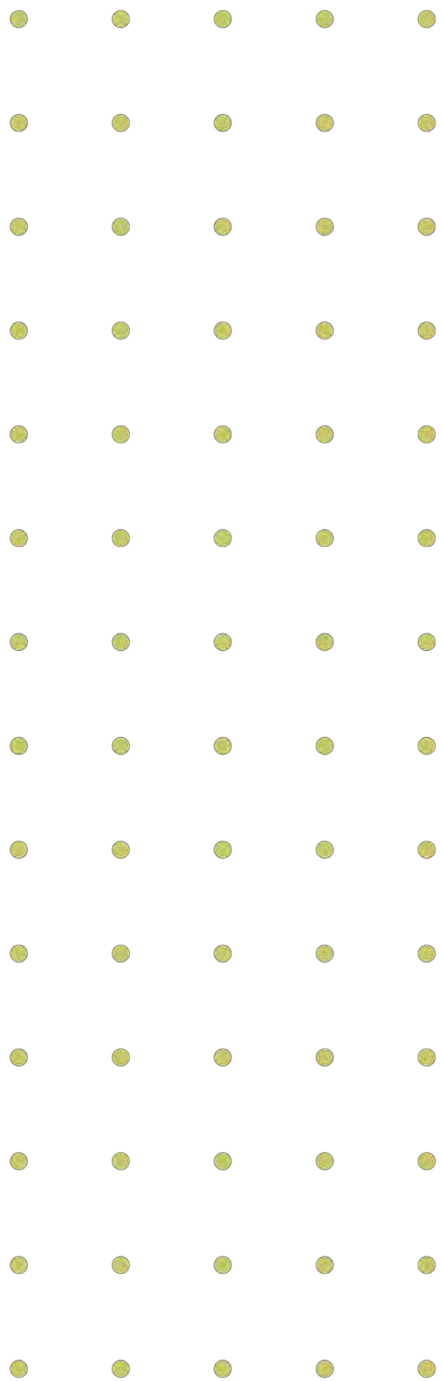
Had it not been for the wet September, WY2026 would have ranked much drier: the first 11 months of the Water Year (October-August) was the 6th driest on record.

And November-August ranked as the 3rd driest for that period.

In Greeley, only 6.78" of precipitation fell during WY 2026, less than half of the normal of 14.62".

It was also more than an inch less than the previous record (7.84" in WY 1968).





Drought

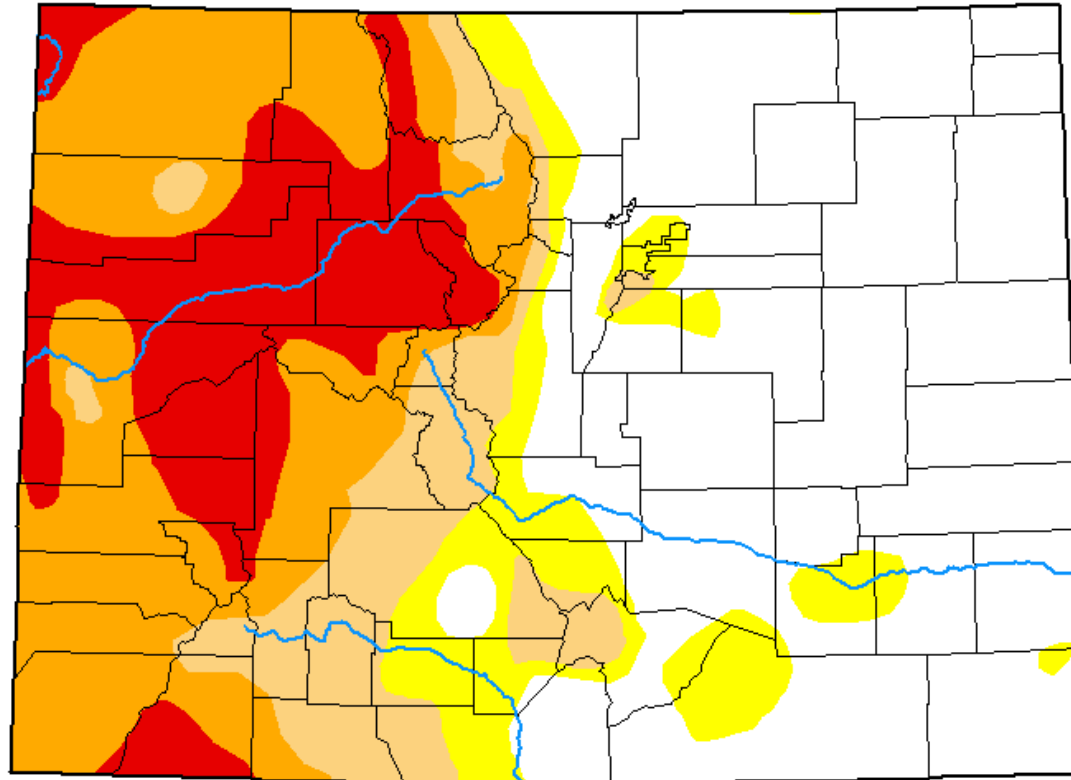
U.S. Drought Monitor Colorado

October 7, 2025
(Released Thursday, Oct. 9, 2025)
Valid 8 a.m. EDT

US Drought Monitor for WY 2026

Most of the water year featured widespread drought across Colorado.

Drought has been relentless in some locations. For instance, parts of Garfield and Pitkin County have been in D3 or D4 for 15 straight months and counting



Intensity:

- None
- D0 Abnormally Dry
- D1 Moderate Drought
- D2 Severe Drought
- D3 Extreme Drought
- D4 Exceptional Drought

The Drought Monitor focuses on broad-scale conditions. Local conditions may vary. For more information on the Drought Monitor, go to <https://droughtmonitor.unl.edu/About.aspx>

Author:

Curtis Riganti
National Drought Mitigation Center



droughtmonitor.unl.edu



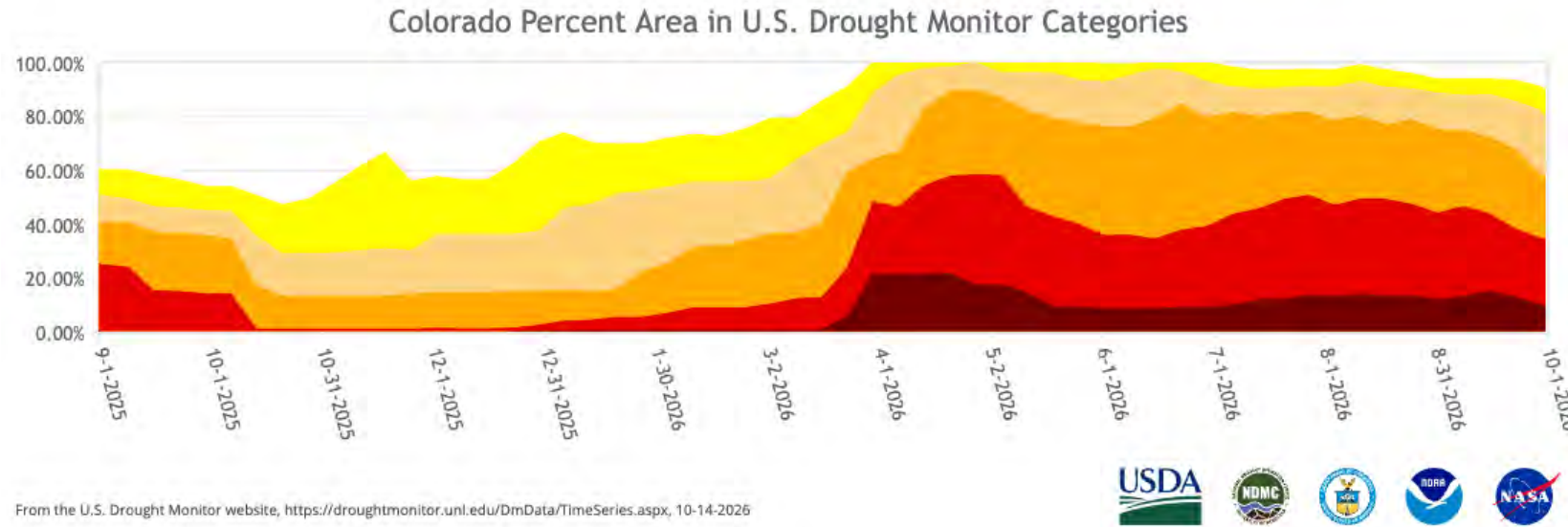
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WY2026 USDM evolution: we ended the WY worse off than when we started.

Key moments in the 2026 USDM:

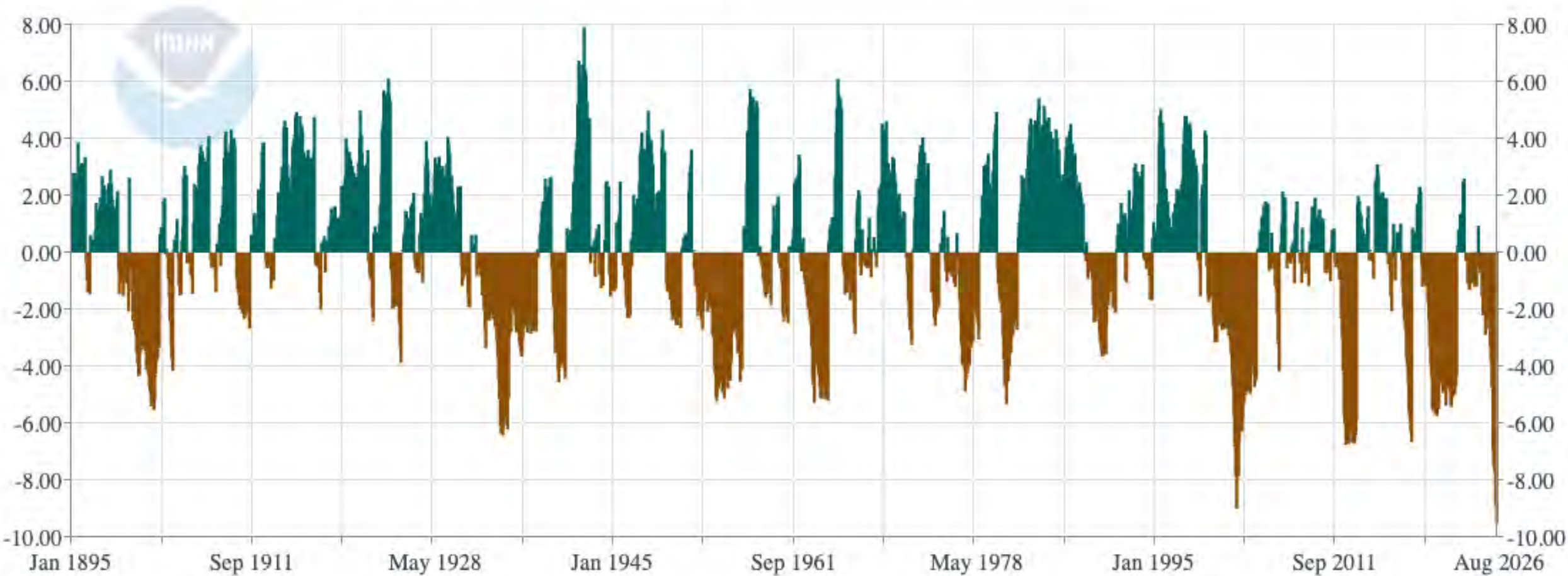
- 12/23: D4 drought returns to Colorado
- 1/20: Over 50% of the state goes into D1+ conditions
- 4/28: 100% of the state goes into D1+ conditions



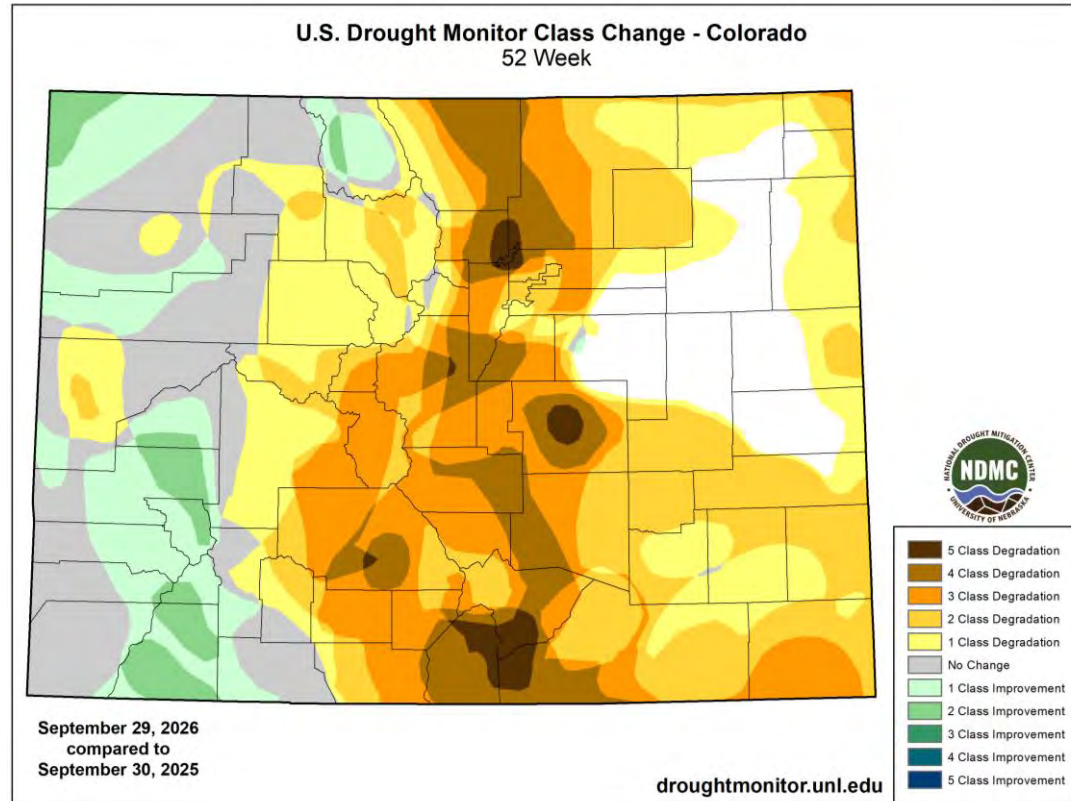
Percent of Colorado in various drought categories throughout Water Year 2026.

Statewide Palmer Drought Severity Index was the lowest on record at the end of August, slightly worse than 2002.

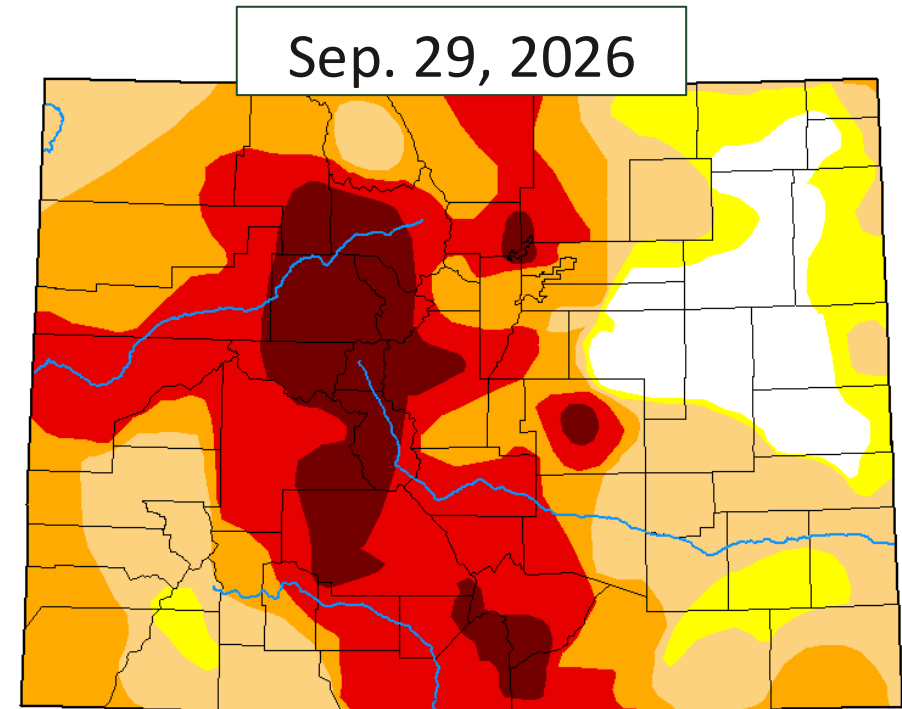
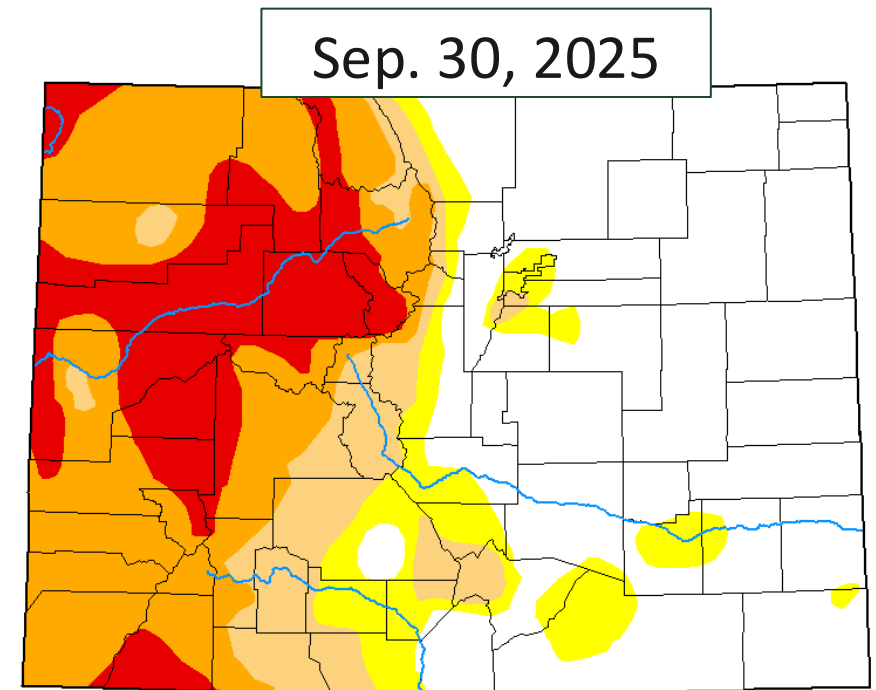
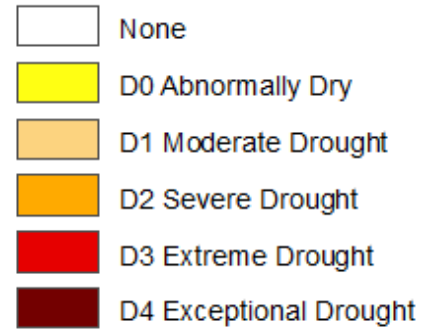
Colorado Palmer Drought Severity Index (PDSI)



USDM Maps: beginning vs. end of WY 2026



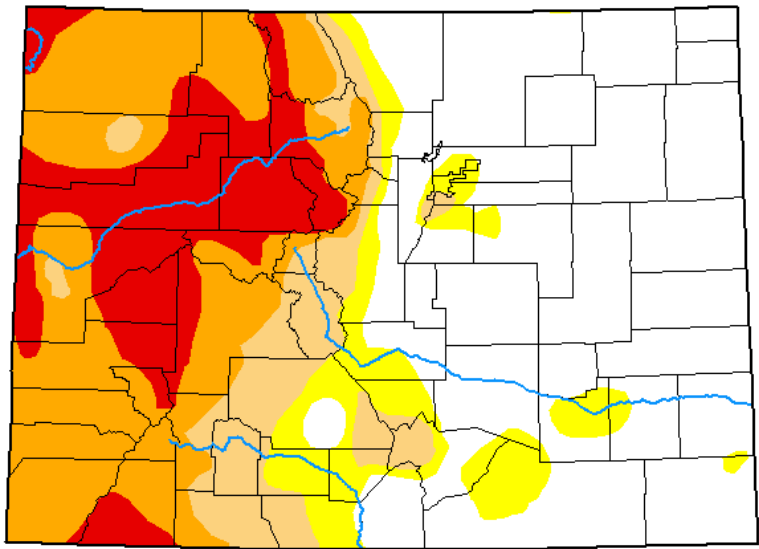
Intensity:



Start of WY 2026: A divide between west and east

At the start of WY2026, there was a prominent east-west divide in drought conditions: widespread D2-D3 conditions were in place across western Colorado, while most of the eastern half of the state was drought-free.

U.S. Drought Monitor Colorado



September 30, 2025

(Released Thursday, Oct. 2, 2025)

Valid 8 a.m. EDT

Drought Conditions (Percent Area)

	None	D0-D4	D1-D4	D2-D4	D3-D4	D4
Current	45.82	54.18	45.19	35.88	14.34	0.00
Last Week 09-23-2025	43.43	56.57	46.17	36.77	15.23	0.00
3 Months Ago 07-01-2025	42.28	57.72	44.30	23.25	8.15	0.00
Start of Calendar Year 01-01-2025	71.40	28.60	10.78	4.08	0.98	0.00
Start of Water Year 10-01-2024	48.27	51.73	24.40	4.62	0.00	0.00
One Year Ago 10-01-2024	48.27	51.73	24.40	4.62	0.00	0.00

Intensity:

None	D2 Severe Drought
D0 Abnormally Dry	D3 Extreme Drought
D1 Moderate Drought	D4 Exceptional Drought

The Drought Monitor focuses on broad-scale conditions. Local conditions may vary. For more information on the Drought Monitor, go to <https://droughtmonitor.unl.edu/About.aspx>

Author:

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National Drought Mitigation Center



droughtmonitor.unl.edu

% area in moderate (D1) drought or worse: 45%

% area in extreme (D3) drought or worse: 14%



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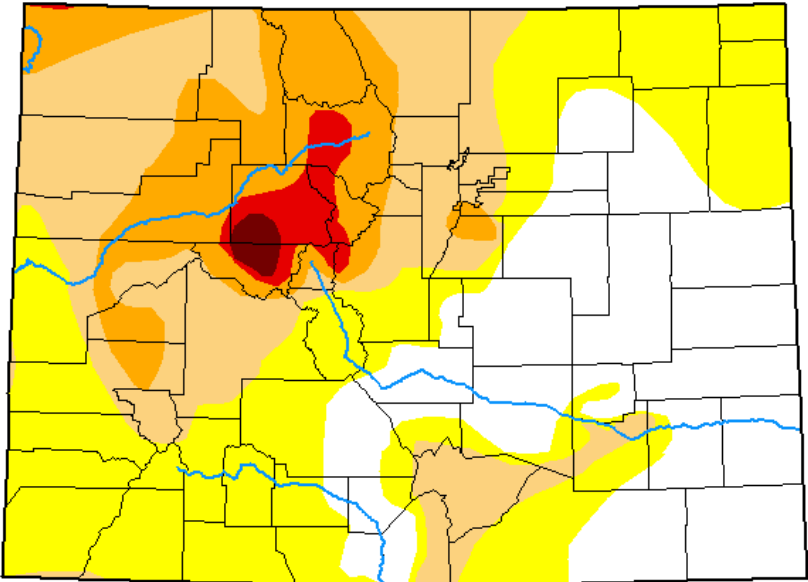


Early winter warmth worsens conditions in the High Country

After a record warm December, a near record-warm November, and below-average precipitation, large snow deficits were already starting to appear across the Central Mountains areas.

U.S. Drought Monitor Colorado

December 30, 2025
(Released Wednesday, Dec. 31, 2025)
Valid 7 a.m. EST



Drought Conditions (Percent Area)

	None	D0-D4	D1-D4	D2-D4	D3-D4	D4
Current	29.36	70.64	37.59	15.21	2.69	0.53
Last Week 12-23-2025	37.36	62.64	36.43	15.21	1.70	0.53
3 Months Ago 09-30-2025	45.82	54.18	45.19	35.88	14.34	0.00
Start of Calendar Year 01-07-2025	71.40	28.60	10.78	4.08	0.98	0.00
Start of Water Year 09-30-2025	45.82	54.18	45.19	35.88	14.34	0.00
One Year Ago 12-31-2024	75.05	24.95	10.15	4.08	0.98	0.00

Intensity:

None	D2 Severe Drought
D0 Abnormally Dry	D3 Extreme Drought
D1 Moderate Drought	D4 Exceptional Drought

The Drought Monitor focuses on broad-scale conditions. Local conditions may vary. For more information on the Drought Monitor, go to <https://droughtmonitor.unl.edu/About.aspx>

Author:
Rocky Bilotta
NCEI/NOAA



droughtmonitor.unl.edu

% area in moderate (D1) drought or worse: 38%

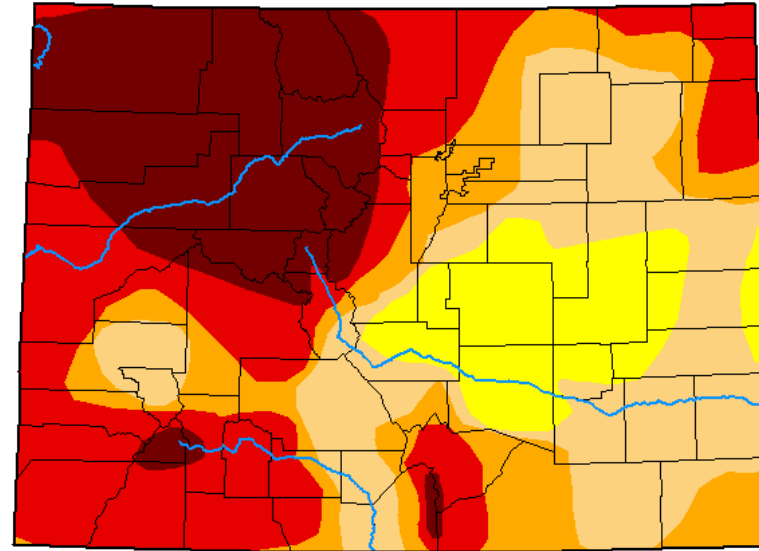
% area in extreme (D3) drought or worse: 3%

Drought worsens throughout the spring

Snowpack deficits continued to build throughout the spring, leading to worsening and expanding drought in the mountain areas. Below-average precipitation across the lower elevations also allowed drought to creep in across the Plains.

The record-setting March heat prompted conditions to deteriorate more quickly. By the end of that month, about half of the state was experiencing extreme or exceptional drought.

U.S. Drought Monitor Colorado



March 31, 2026

(Released Thursday, Apr. 2, 2026)

Valid 8 a.m. EDT

Drought Conditions (Percent Area)

	None	D0-D4	D1-D4	D2-D4	D3-D4	D4
Current	0.00	100.00	88.62	64.36	48.33	21.59
Last Week 03-24-2026	8.97	91.03	74.28	58.99	23.97	5.87
3 Months Ago 12-30-2025	29.36	70.64	37.59	15.21	2.69	0.53
Start of Calendar Year 01-06-2026	25.96	74.04	46.22	15.77	4.35	0.67
Start of Water Year 09-30-2025	45.82	54.18	45.19	35.88	14.34	0.00
One Year Ago 04-01-2025	44.61	55.39	31.39	12.60	0.66	0.00

Intensity:

None	D2 Severe Drought
D0 Abnormally Dry	D3 Extreme Drought
D1 Moderate Drought	D4 Exceptional Drought

The Drought Monitor focuses on broad-scale conditions. Local conditions may vary. For more information on the Drought Monitor, go to <https://droughtmonitor.unl.edu/About.aspx>

Author:

David Simeral
Western Regional Climate Center



droughtmonitor.unl.edu

% area in moderate (D1) drought or worse: 89%

% area in extreme (D3) drought or worse: 48%



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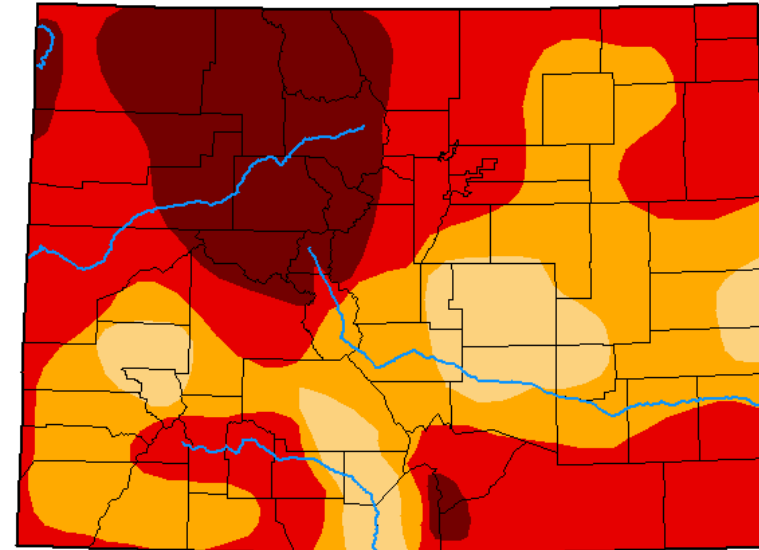


April flash drought

April precipitation was well below-normal across the Eastern Plains, leading to flash drought conditions there (more on this in the “notable events” section). At this point in the WY, 100% of the state was experiencing drought.

U.S. Drought Monitor Colorado

April 28, 2026
(Released Thursday, Apr. 30, 2026)
Valid 8 a.m. EDT



Drought Conditions (Percent Area)

	None	D0-D4	D1-D4	D2-D4	D3-D4	D4
Current	0.00	100.00	100.00	89.78	58.54	17.69
Last Week 04-21-2026	0.00	100.00	98.27	89.44	57.86	21.91
3 Months Ago 01-27-2026	30.06	69.94	52.36	22.73	5.67	0.83
Start of Calendar Year 01-06-2026	25.96	74.04	46.22	15.77	4.35	0.67
Start of Water Year 09-30-2025	45.82	54.18	45.19	35.88	14.34	0.00
One Year Ago 04-29-2025	38.54	61.46	43.74	17.27	3.81	0.00

Intensity:

None	D2 Severe Drought
D0 Abnormally Dry	D3 Extreme Drought
D1 Moderate Drought	D4 Exceptional Drought

The Drought Monitor focuses on broad-scale conditions. Local conditions may vary. For more information on the Drought Monitor, go to <https://droughtmonitor.unl.edu/About.aspx>

Author:

Brad Rippey
U.S. Department of Agriculture



droughtmonitor.unl.edu

% area in moderate (D1) drought or worse: 100%

% area in extreme (D3) drought or worse: 59%



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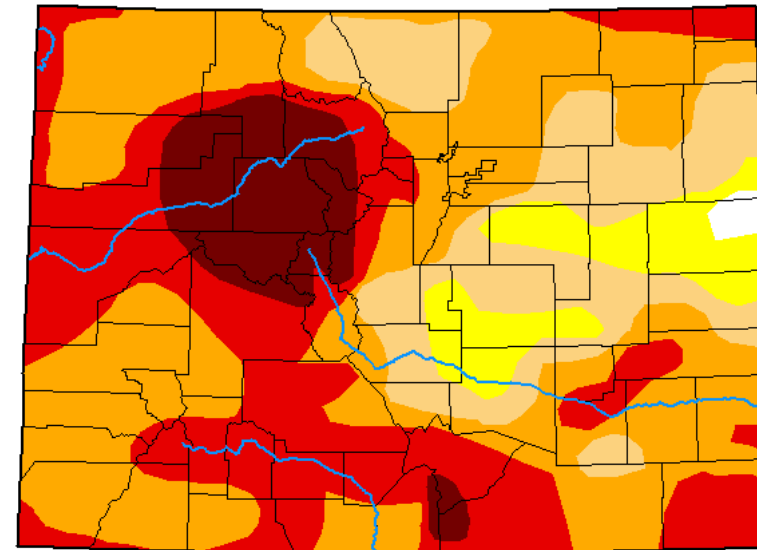


Early June improvements

May was cooler and wetter than previous months, which brought some drought relief to the Eastern Plains and northwest CO.

Still, evidence of severe hydrological drought was present throughout the state: record-low peaks in streamflow were being reported around this time.

U.S. Drought Monitor Colorado



June 2, 2026

(Released Thursday, Jun. 4, 2026)

Valid 8 a.m. EDT

Drought Conditions (Percent Area)

	None	D0-D4	D1-D4	D2-D4	D3-D4	D4
Current	0.55	99.45	92.66	75.98	35.95	8.82
Last Week 05-26-2026	0.00	100.00	93.58	77.67	40.24	9.51
3 Months Ago 03-03-2026	20.66	79.34	56.89	36.64	10.47	0.83
Start of Calendar Year 01-06-2026	25.96	74.04	46.22	15.77	4.35	0.67
Start of Water Year 09-30-2025	45.82	54.18	45.19	35.88	14.34	0.00
One Year Ago 06-03-2025	35.39	64.61	48.18	21.12	6.17	0.00

Intensity:

None	D2 Severe Drought
D0 Abnormally Dry	D3 Extreme Drought
D1 Moderate Drought	D4 Exceptional Drought

The Drought Monitor focuses on broad-scale conditions. Local conditions may vary. For more information on the Drought Monitor, go to <https://droughtmonitor.unl.edu/About.aspx>

Author:

Adam Allgood
NOAA/NWS/NCEP/CPC



droughtmonitor.unl.edu

% area in moderate (D1) drought or worse: 93%

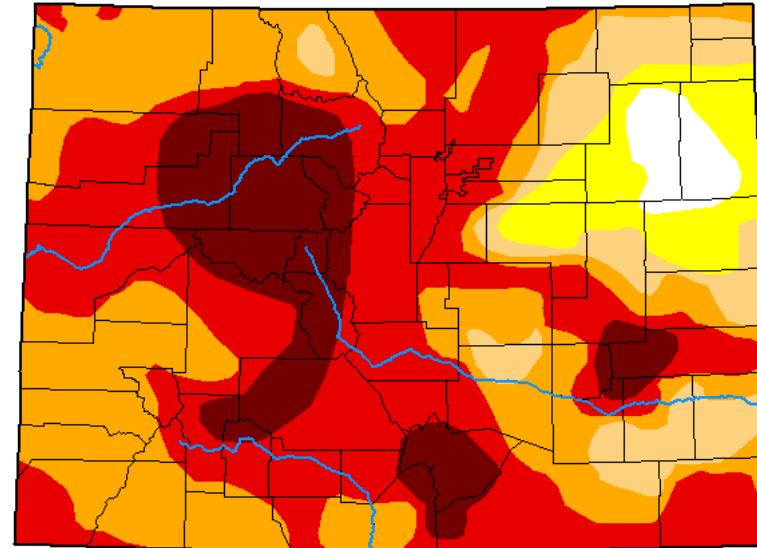
% area in extreme (D3) drought or worse: 36%

Conditions worsen over the summer

Very warm weather in June and July along with spotty precipitation allowed existing drought to worsen further.

Parts of the Northeast Plains benefitted from heavier precipitation, leading to drought-free conditions across a small area.

U.S. Drought Monitor Colorado



July 28, 2026

(Released Thursday, Jul. 30, 2026)

Valid 8 a.m. EDT

Drought Conditions (Percent Area)

	None	D0-D4	D1-D4	D2-D4	D3-D4	D4
Current	2.50	97.50	91.12	81.62	50.76	13.89
Last Week 07-21-2026	2.86	97.14	90.63	81.16	49.34	12.17
3 Months Ago 04-28-2026	0.00	100.00	100.00	89.78	58.54	17.69
Start of Calendar Year 01-06-2026	25.96	74.04	46.22	15.77	4.35	0.67
Start of Water Year 09-30-2025	45.82	54.18	45.19	35.88	14.34	0.00
One Year Ago 07-29-2025	45.79	54.21	44.09	31.38	11.87	0.00

Intensity:

None	D2 Severe Drought
D0 Abnormally Dry	D3 Extreme Drought
D1 Moderate Drought	D4 Exceptional Drought

The Drought Monitor focuses on broad-scale conditions. Local conditions may vary. For more information on the Drought Monitor, go to <https://droughtmonitor.unl.edu/About.aspx>

Author:

David Simeral
DRI/WRCC



droughtmonitor.unl.edu

% area in moderate (D1) drought or worse: 91%

% area in extreme (D3) drought or worse: 51%

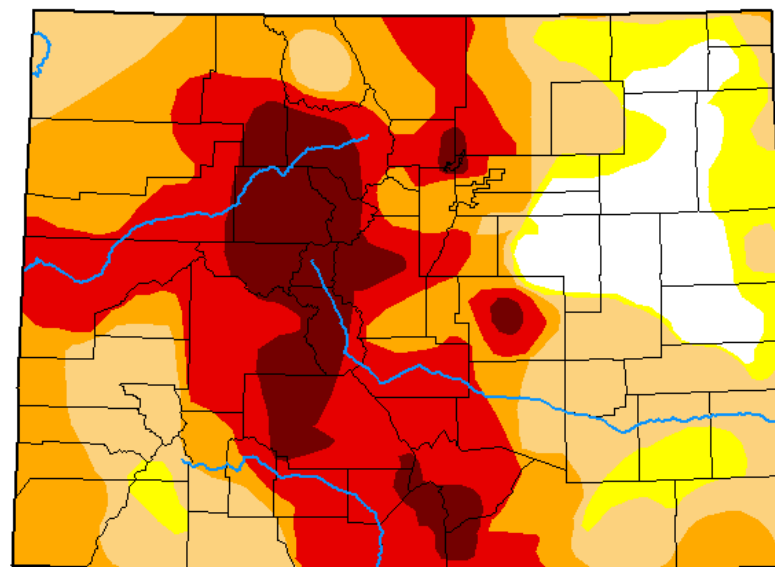
Rounding out WY2026 with improvements

Noteworthy improvements in drought conditions were not made until late September, as several rounds of heavier precipitation fell, particularly across the southern half of the state.

Note that additional precipitation fell during the last couple of days in the month that led to improvements in the Oct. 6 USDM.

U.S. Drought Monitor Colorado

September 29, 2026
(Released Thursday, Oct. 1, 2026)
Valid 8 a.m. EDT



Drought Conditions (Percent Area)

	None	D0-D4	D1-D4	D2-D4	D3-D4	D4
Current	8.94	91.06	82.30	58.19	34.98	10.01
Last Week 09-22-2026	6.48	93.52	85.72	67.86	38.47	13.37
3 Months Ago 06-30-2026	0.00	100.00	92.96	79.52	39.20	9.32
Start of Calendar Year 01-06-2026	25.96	74.04	46.22	15.77	4.35	0.67
Start of Water Year 09-30-2025	45.82	54.18	45.19	35.88	14.34	0.00
One Year Ago 09-30-2025	45.82	54.18	45.19	35.88	14.34	0.00

Intensity:

None	D2 Severe Drought
D0 Abnormally Dry	D3 Extreme Drought
D1 Moderate Drought	D4 Exceptional Drought

The Drought Monitor focuses on broad-scale conditions. Local conditions may vary. For more information on the Drought Monitor, go to <https://droughtmonitor.unl.edu/About.aspx>

Author:

Jonathan Case
NASA/MSFC/UAH



droughtmonitor.unl.edu

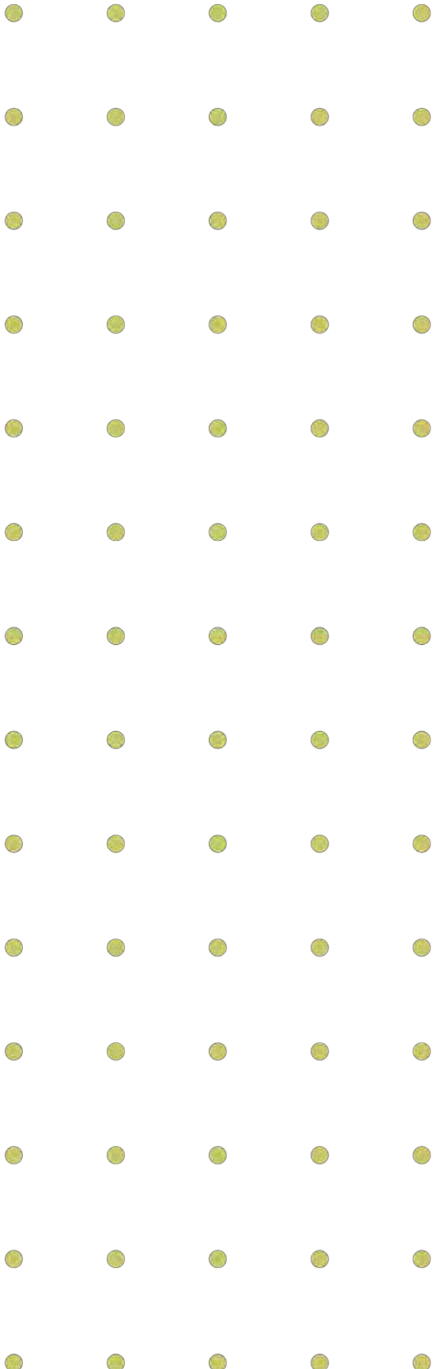
% area in moderate (D1) drought or worse: 82%

% area in extreme (D3) drought or worse: 35%



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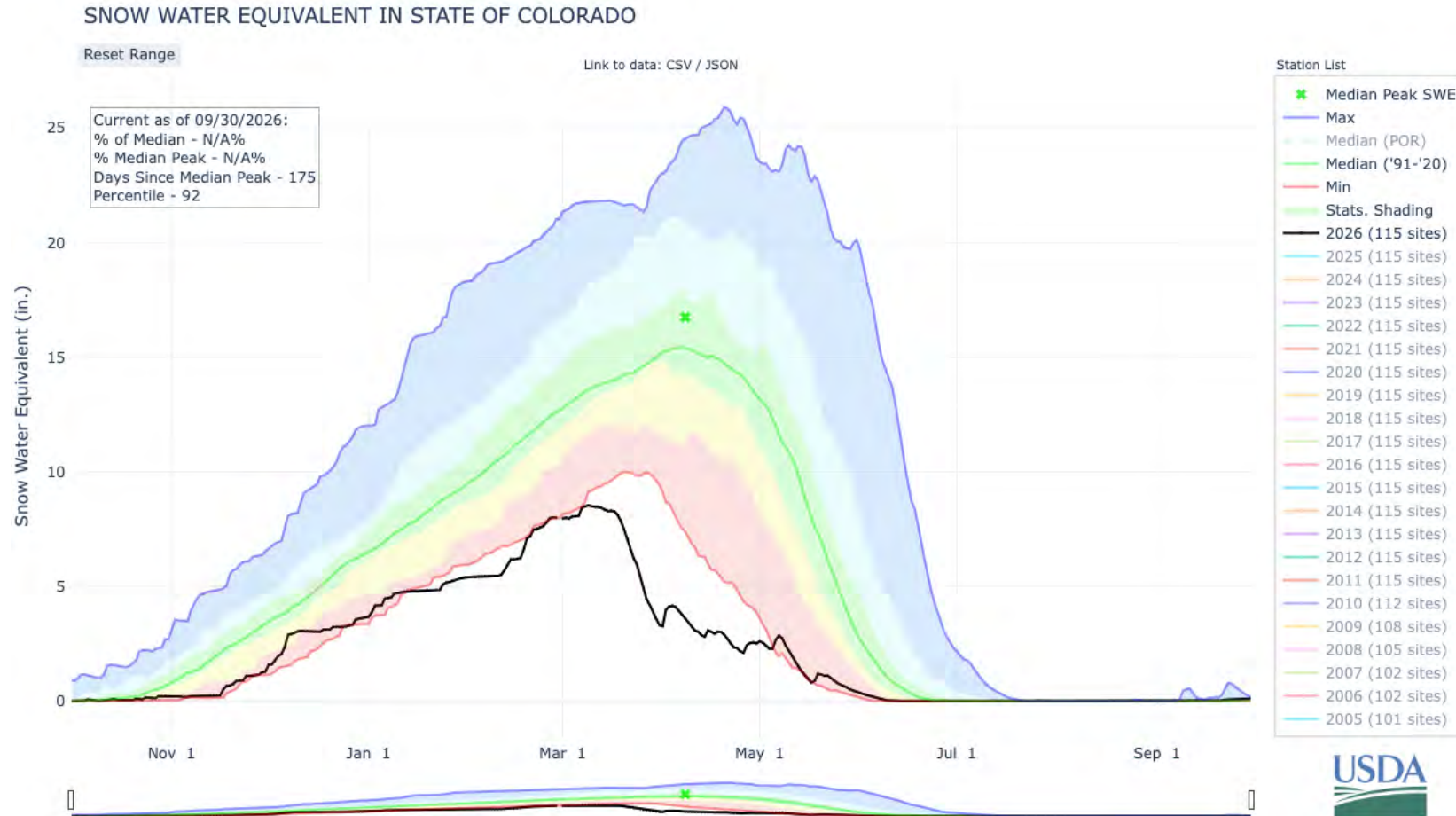




Water: Snowpack, Streamflow & Reservoirs

This year's mountain snowpack was the lowest on record for Colorado

The peak was very low (51% of average statewide) and about a month early, followed by rapid melting in the unprecedented March heat wave



Statewide averaged snow water equivalent for WY 2026 (black line) at automated SNOTEL stations. Source: NRCS.



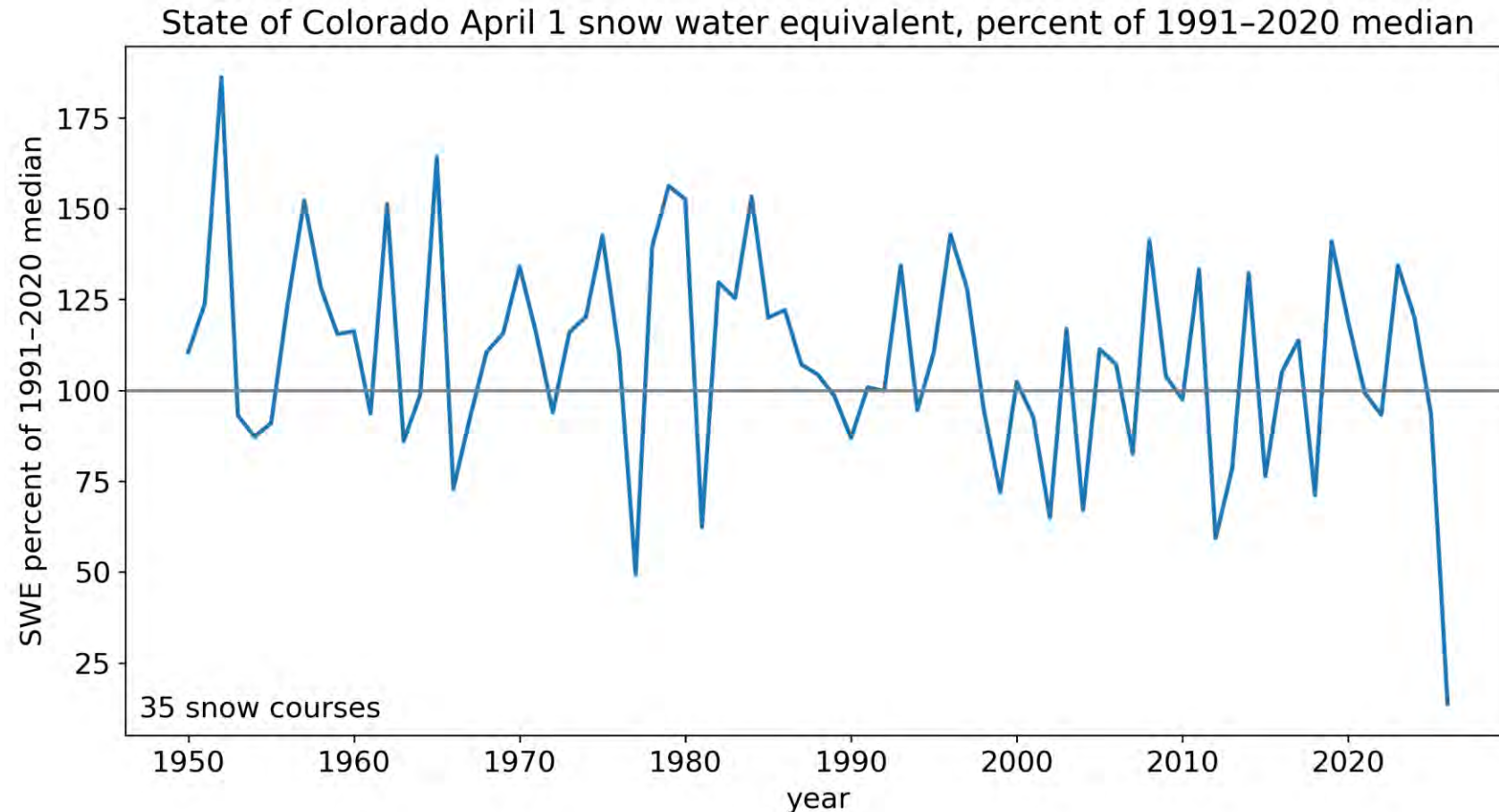
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A snowpack unlike any on record

The worst water years for Colorado snowpack in recent times were 1977, 1981, 2002, and 2012.

As of April 1 (and May 1), this year was well below all of those years.



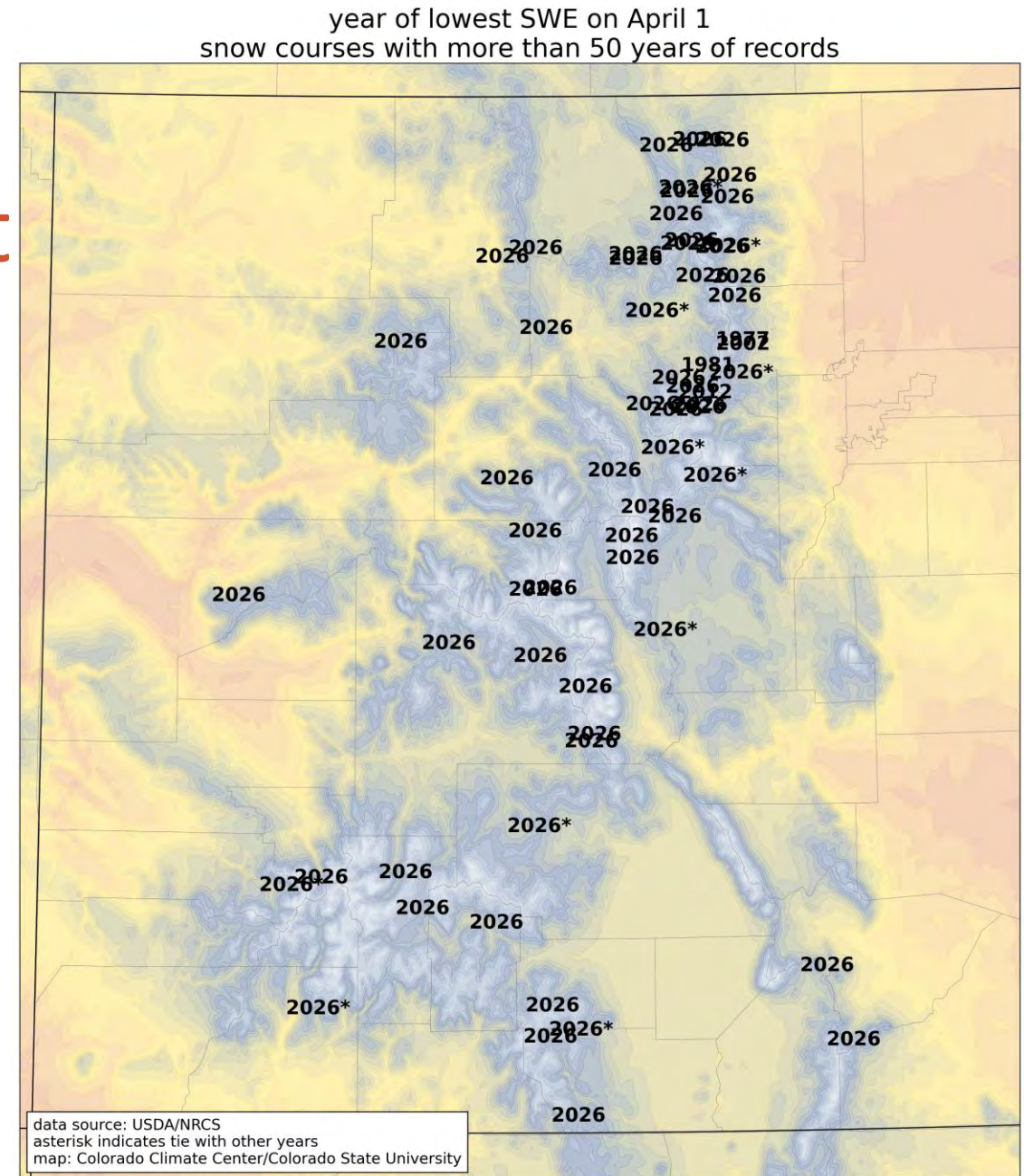
April 1 data from 35 manual snow courses across Colorado with records back to at least 1950. Data from NRCS.



Snowpack was consistent low throughout the state

60 of 64 snow course sites reported 50+ year lows on April 1

For even more on this year's snow drought, check out our [blog post](#) on this topic.



Year with the lowest snow water equivalent on April 1, for snow course sites with at least 50 years of data. Data from NRCS.

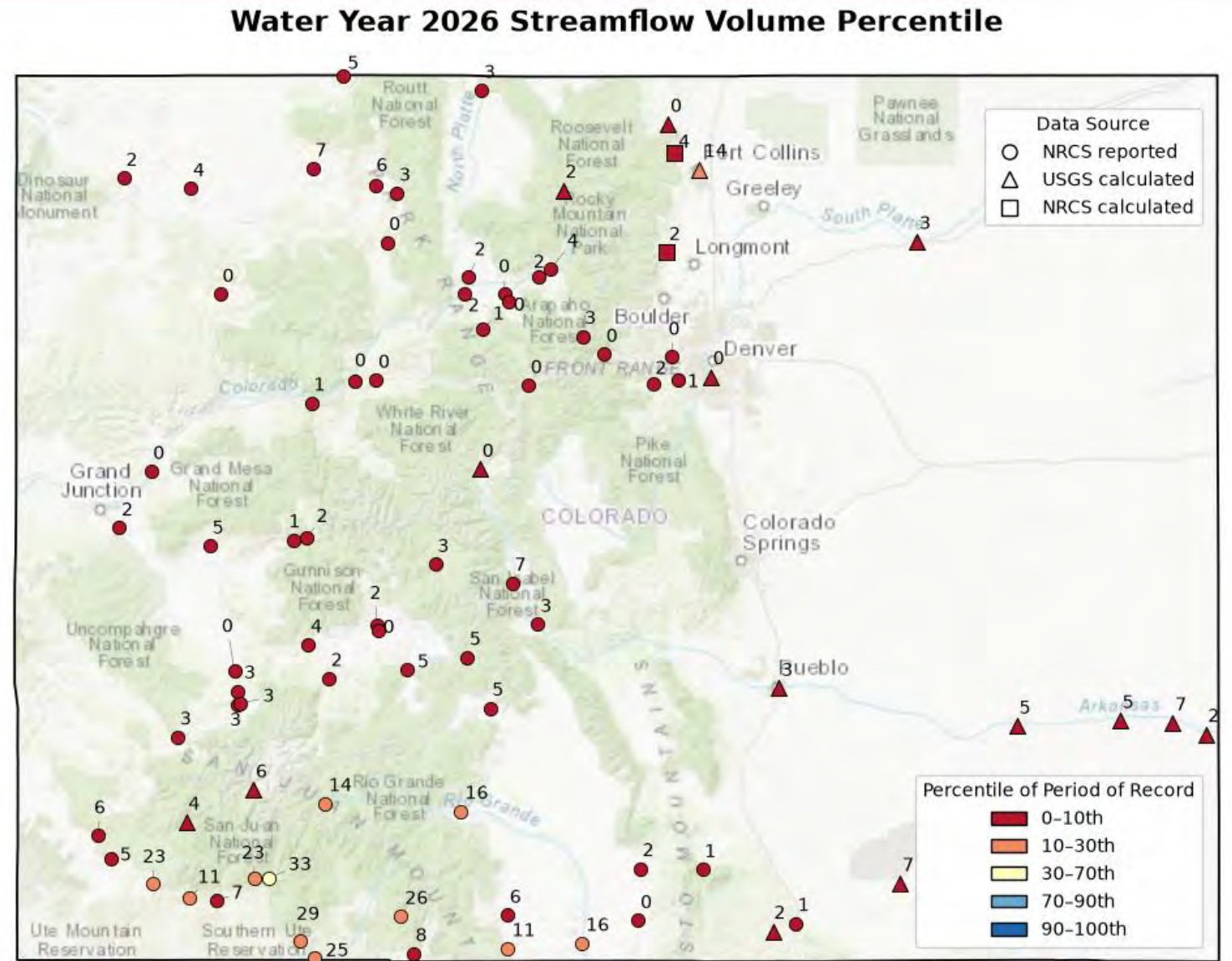
Snow courses that never before had less than 4-6” of SWE on April 1 reported none on that date this year

Snow course site	County	Elevation (feet)	Median April 1 SWE (inches)	Previous minimum April 1 SWE (inches)	April 1, 2026 SWE (inches)
Yampa View	Routt	8220	13.8"	6.5" in 2012	0
Middle Fork Campground	Grand	8990	9.9"	5.8" in 1981	0
Iron-ton Park	Ouray	9610	12.8"	5.2" in 1966	0
Keystone	Gunnison	9950	15.3"	4.4" in 2012	0
Mc Intyre	Larimer	9020	8.8"	4.2" in 1981	0



With record-low snowpack came record-low streamflow

Runoff from mountain snowpack is our primary source of water in Colorado. Given that was in limited supply this year, low flows along rivers were reported throughout the state.

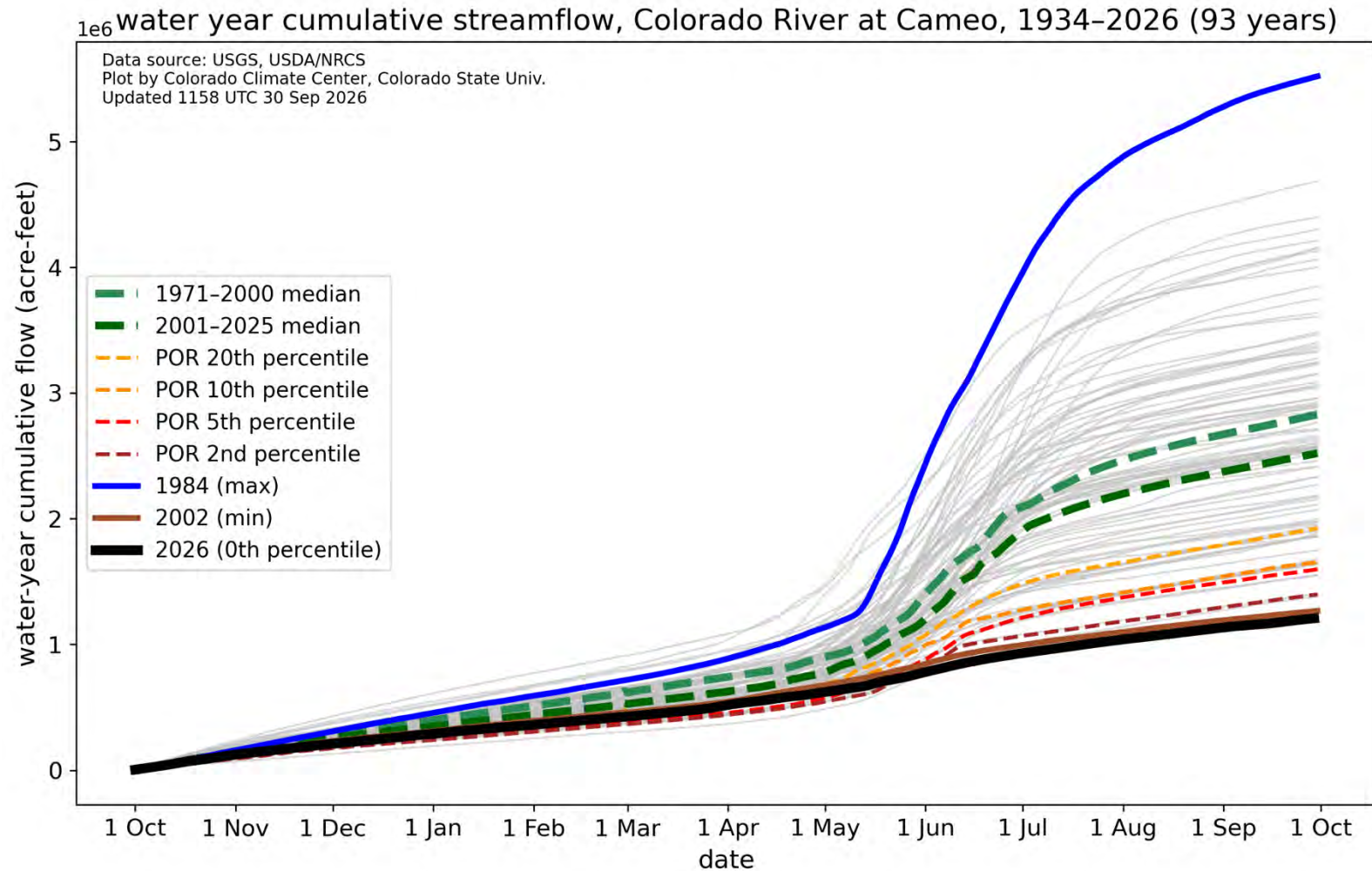


2026 WY cumulative streamflow percentiles for USGS and NRCS streamgauge sites.



The Colorado River was one of many locations where record-low streamflows were reported

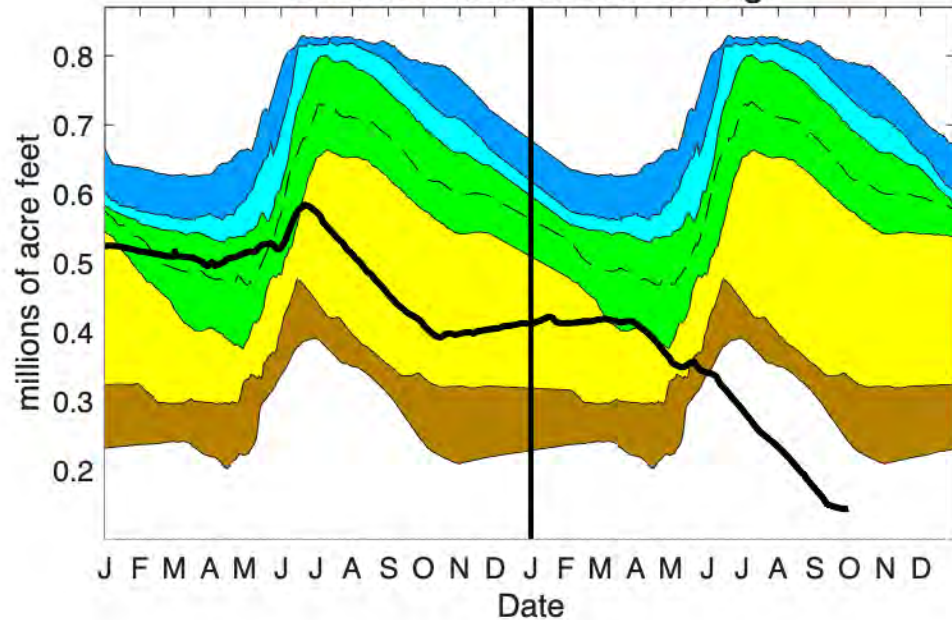
Cumulative streamflow throughout the WY was worse than 2002 (a very bad drought year in CO)



Cumulative streamflow for WY 2026 (black line) for the Colorado River at Cameo compared to historical flows. Data from USGS.

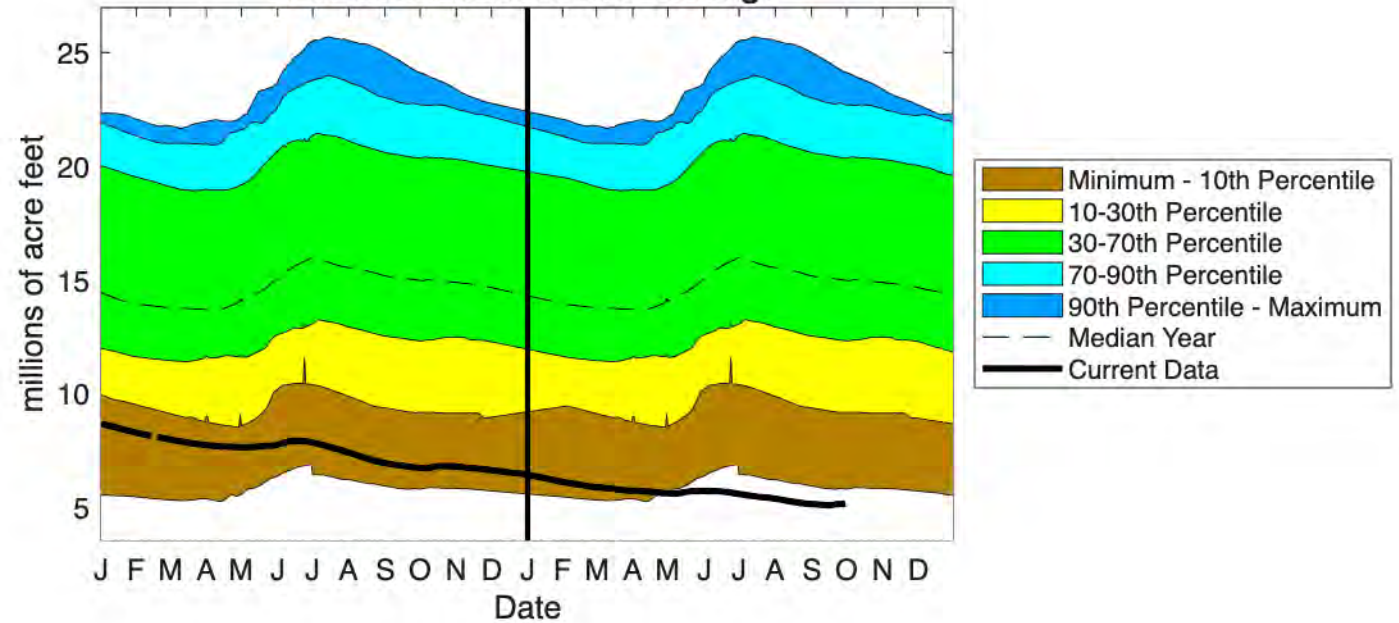
Low streamflow meant high demand for water and storage reductions in reservoirs.

Blue Mesa Reservoir Level 10/01/2026
24 Percent of 1981-2024 Average



Blue Mesa far below previous summer low

Lake Powell Level 10/01/2026
32 Percent of 1981-2024 Average



Powell (& Mead) at record lows since filling

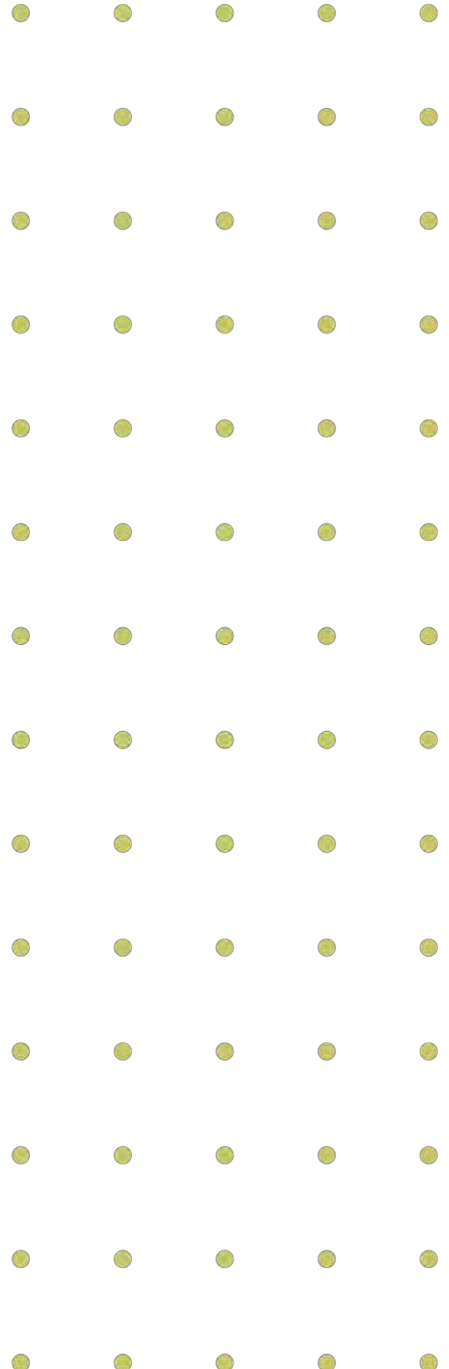


Storage in Colorado's reservoirs was more than 2 million acre-feet below average, the lowest levels since 2002

Departure from median storage in Colorado reservoirs



Source:
[USDA/NRCS](#)

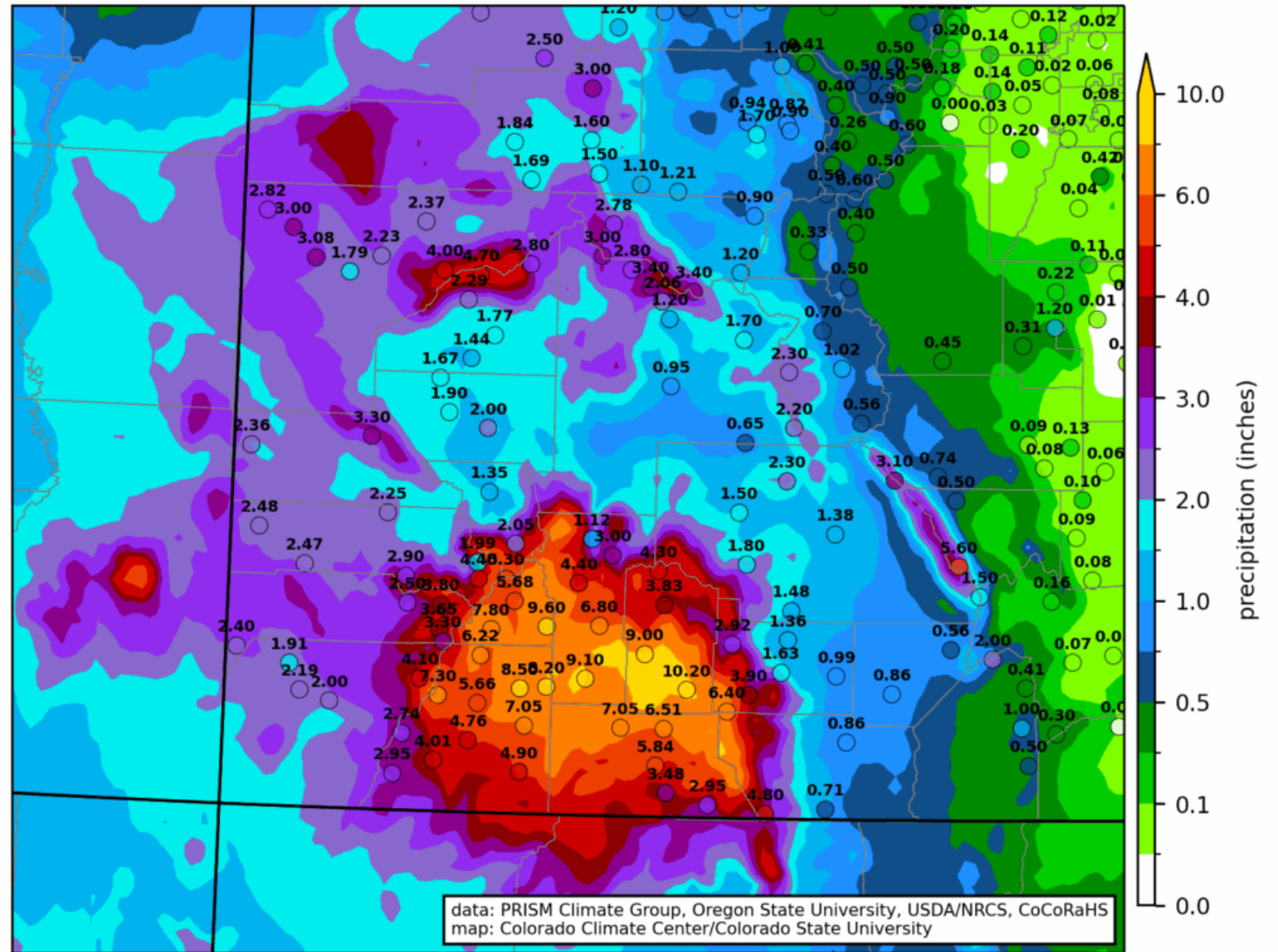


Notable Events

October 2025: Very heavy rainfall and flash flooding in SW Colorado

Over 8" of
precipitation fell in
some locations

PRISM, SNOTEL, and CoCoRaHS total precipitation, 9-15 Oct 2025



See our [blog](#) for more on the October floods.

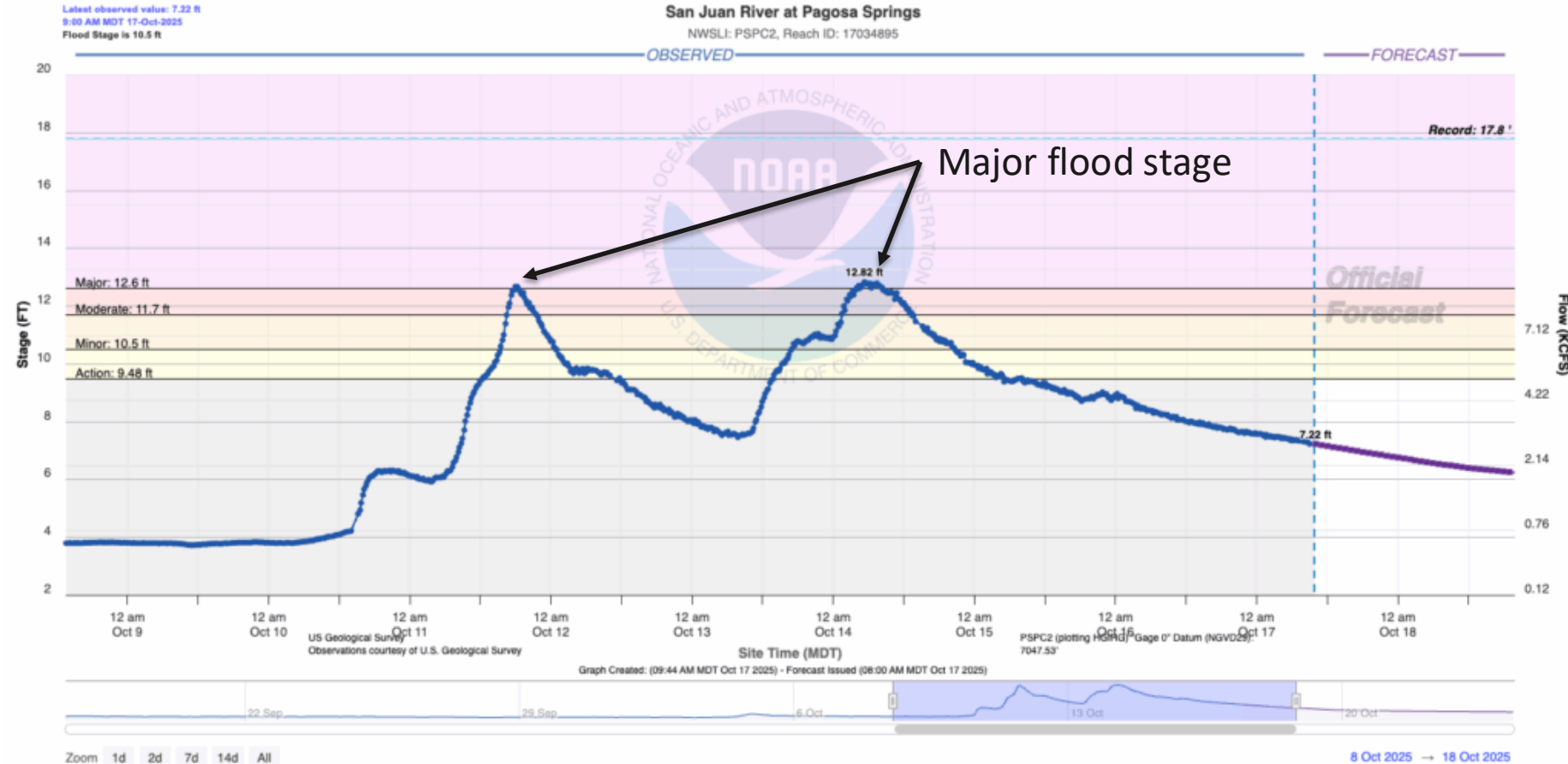


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San Juan River at Pagosa Springs

The flood event resulted from two back-to-back remnant tropical systems (Hurricane Priscilla and Tropical Storm Raymond) that brought abundant warm, moist air to SW CO over the course of several days.



The San Juan River was one of the impacted areas, reaching major flood stage twice (Oct 11 and 14).

See our [blog](#) for more on the October floods.

The amount of rain that fell was highly unusual for the area. The Upper San Juan SNOTEL station (right) reported its 3rd-highest 7-day precipitation total on record (dating back to 1978), and its highest 7-day total in the fall months.

In terms of fall rainstorms in SW CO, only the “Sonora Hurricane” of October 1911 rivals this event.

**Upper San Juan SNOTEL
largest 7-day precipitation totals
Data since 1978**

Rank	Precipitation (inches)	Dates
1	11.0	2005-01-05 through 2005-01-11
2	10.6	2010-12-17 through 2010-12-23
3	10.2	2025-10-08 through 2025-10-14
4	10.0	2007-12-05 through 2007-12-11
5	9.2	1989-01-31 through 1989-02-06

Southwest CO Flooding



Flood damage in Vallecito, which was evacuated due to the heavy rain-driven flooding. Images from Jeremy McBride/the [Durango Herald](#).

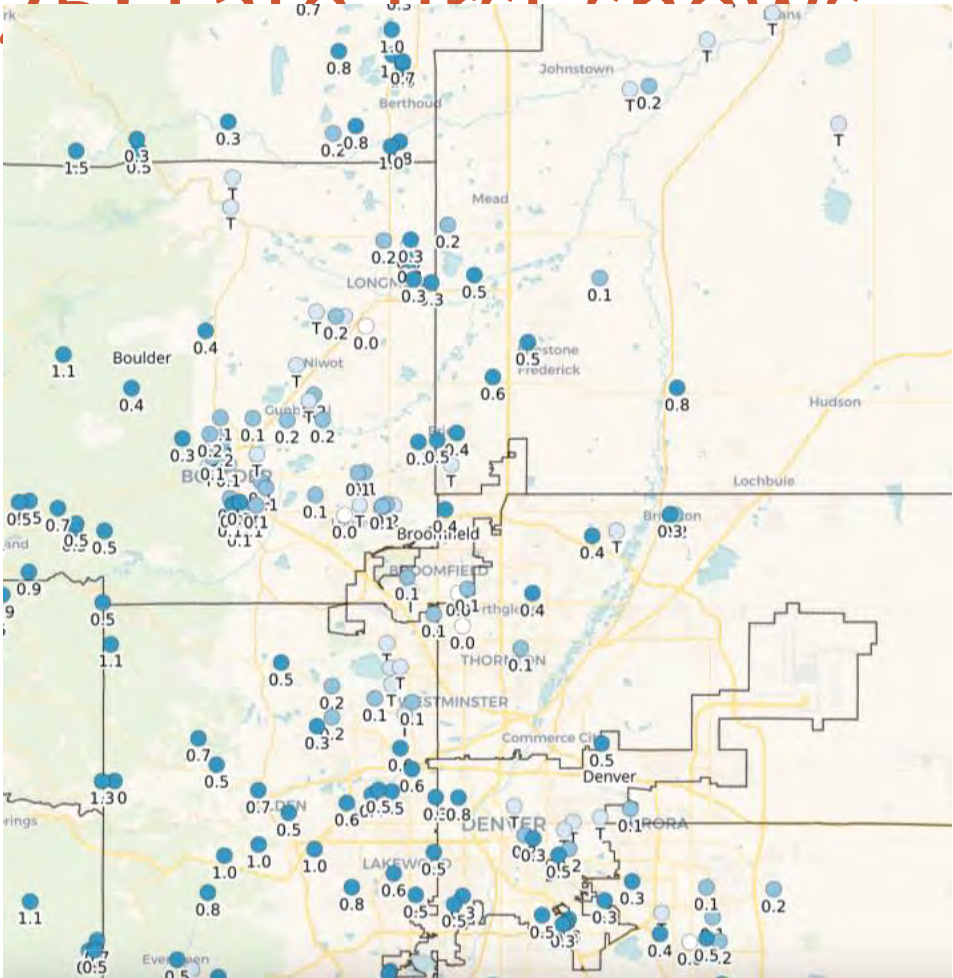


Flooding in downtown Pagosa Springs. (photo by Gwen Dunn/Sherpa Real Estate, obtained via the [Denver Gazette](#)).

November 2025: Late first snows

First snows arrived very late for parts of Colorado’s Front Range Urban Corridor. Average first snow dates for this area of CO usually occur in mid-Oct. This year, we saw the following:

- Boulder: Record late
- Loveland: Record late
- Evergreen: Record late
- Denver: 2nd latest
- Greeley: 2nd latest
- Colorado Springs: 3rd latest
- Fort Collins: 5th latest



Very mediocre snow totals on 11/29, the first snow of WY 2026 for much of the Front Range Urban Corridor. Data from CoCoRaHS.

Year	Date of First Snow: Boulder, CO
2025	11/29
1978	11/26
1931	11/19
1930	11/18
2021	11/17

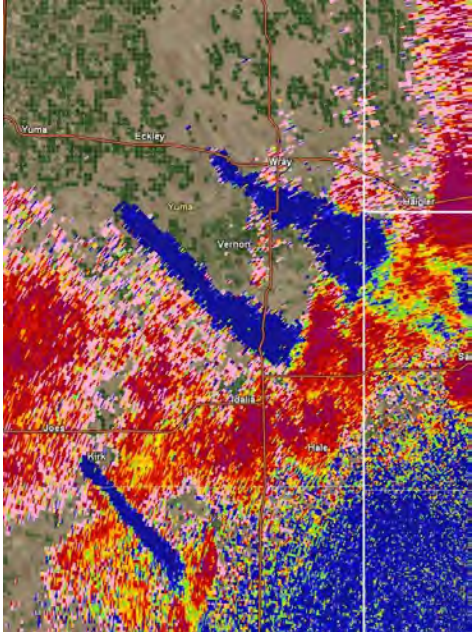
Year	Date of First Snow: Denver, CO
2021	12/10
2025	11/29
1934	11/21
1931	11/19
2016	11/17

December 2025: Record-setting heat

December 2025 was our first record-warm month of WY 2026. One of the notable stats that came out of that month was the frequency of unusually warm days. Several long-standing climate stations set new records for most number of 60 ° F+ December days, including sites that rarely see temperatures that warm during this time of year. **For some locations, more days in December were at least 60 ° F than were not.**

City	# days ≥ 60°F in Dec 2025	Previous record (year)
Akron	14	12 (1980, 1939)
Alamosa	3	2 (2021)
Boulder	18	17 (1980)
Colorado Springs	15	13 (1939)
Cortez	11	8 (1939)
Denver	18	15 (1980)
Fort Collins	17	13 (1980)
Grand Junction	3	2 (several)
Greeley	18	17 (1980)
Trinidad	19	18 (1980)

December 2025: Winds and wildfires



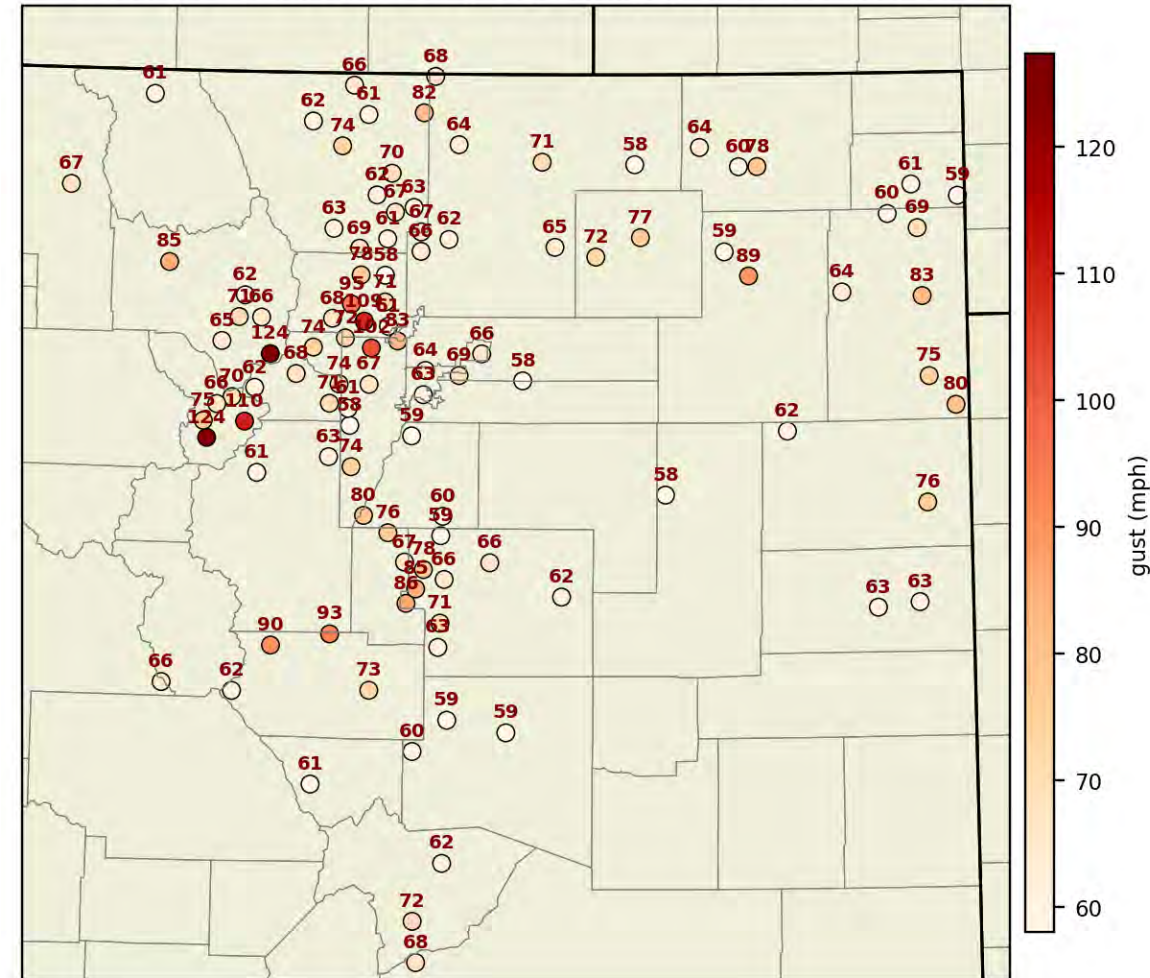
Radar image from NWS Goodland, KS, showing multiple wildfire smoke plumes on Dec. 17.

Several downslope windstorms prompted power outages (both preventative and due to downed powerlines). In one of the events, several wildfires broke out across the eastern Plains, burning more 10,000 acres.



Photo from Joshua Baumgardner/obtained from Denver7.

Colorado local storm reports for wind gusts (mph): 17-18 December 2025



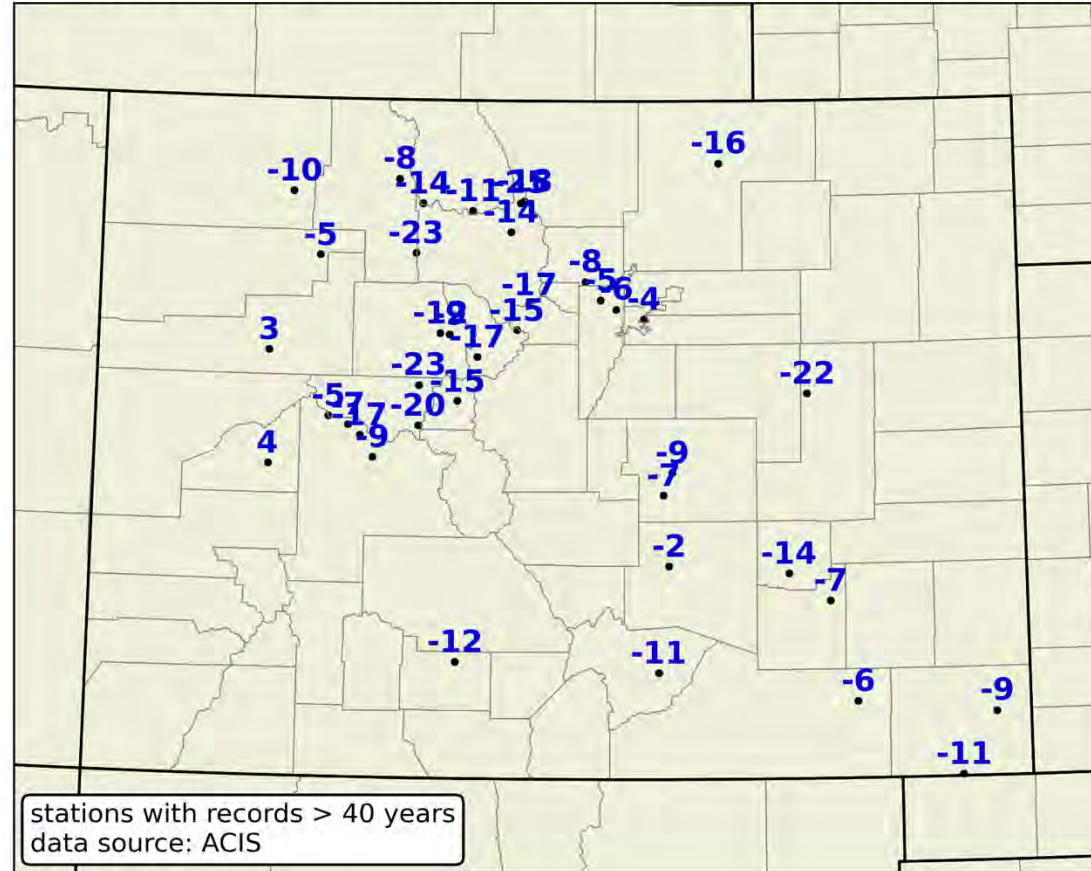
Widespread local storm reports showing numerous wind gusts > 60mph on Dec. 17-18.



January 2026: Our only real cold snap of WY 2026

Several daily record low temperatures (both for minimum and maximum temperatures) were set during a multi-day cold snap in late Jan.

record daily low minimum temperatures for 2026-01-26 (°F)



STATION RECORDS (PREVIOUS)		
BERTHOUD SUMMIT:	-17	(-14; 1989)
BRIGGSDALE:	-16	(-16; 1996)
BUTTE:	-9	(-6; 2017)
CAMPO 7 S:	-11	(6; 1996)
COLORADO SPRINGS MUNICIPAL AP:	-9	(-3; 1976)
COLUMBINE:	-14	(-16; 1943)
COLUMBINE:	-14	(-10; 1989)
COPPER MOUNTAIN:	-17	(-13; 2017)
CRAIG 4SW:	-10	(-9; 1989)
DEAD HORSE COLORADO:	-5	(-3; 2017)
DEL NORTE 3ENE:	-12	(-12; 2010)
DENVER LOWRY AFB:	-4	(-1; 1963)
DOWD JUNCTION COLORADO:	-12	(-4; 2017)
DRY LAKE COLORADO:	-8	(-4; 2009)
FORT CARSON BUTTS AAF:	-7	(-3; 1996)
GRIZZLY PEAK:	-15	(-9; 2017)
GROSS RESERVOIR:	-8	(-2; 2025)
INDEPENDENCE PASS:	-20	(-19; 1996)
JAY COLORADO:	4	(9; 2023)
KILN:	-23	(-15; 2017)
KIM 15 NNE:	-6	(-0; 1996)
LA JUNTA MUNICIPAL AIRPORT:	-7	(-6; 1996)
LAKE IRENE:	-18	(-13; 2017)
LEADVILLE LAKE COUNTY AP:	-15	(-14; 2017)
LIMON:	-22	(-19; 1980)
MC CLURE PASS:	-5	(-4; 2017)
NORTH LOST TRAIL:	-7	(-7; 2017)
ORDWAY 4 W:	-14	(-8; 1996)
PHANTOM VALLEY:	-25	(-16; 1989)
PORCUPINE CREEK COLORADO:	-23	(-17; 2017)
PUEBLO RESERVOIR:	-2	(-1; 1996)
RALSTON RESERVOIR:	-5	(3; 2025)
RIFLE COLORADO:	3	(6; 2004)
SCHOFIELD PASS:	-17	(-16; 2017)
STILLWATER CREEK:	-14	(-10; 2017)
VAIL MOUNTAIN:	-9	(-6; 2017)
WALSENBURG 1 NW:	-11	(-3; 1940)
WALSH 1 W:	-9	(-2; 1978)
WHEAT RIDGE 2:	-6	(-6; 1996)
WILLOW CREEK COLORADO:	-11	(-5; 2004)

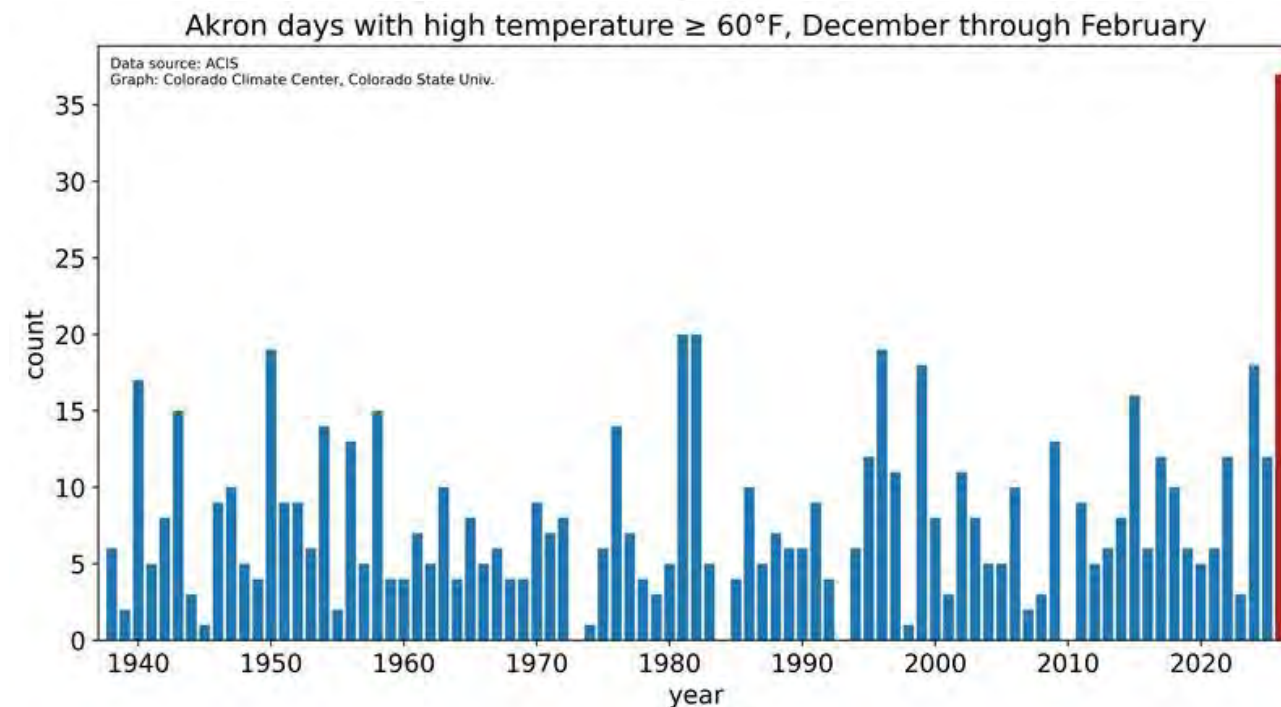
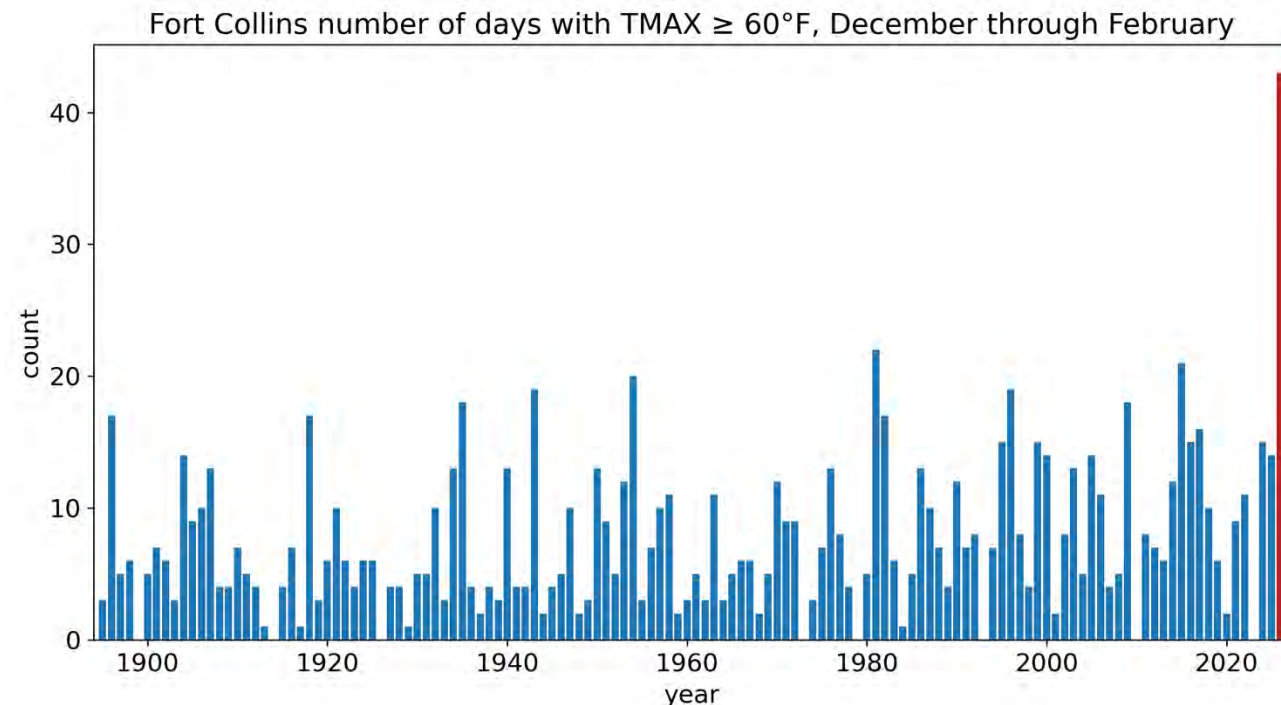
Record low temperatures set on January 26 for stations with at least 40 years of data.



February 2026: our remarkably warm winter continued

February solidified our ridiculously warm winter as several long-term climate sites continued to tally $\geq 60^{\circ}\text{F}$ days

For example, **Fort Collins (top panel)** recorded more than twice as many $\geq 60^{\circ}\text{F}$ days than it had seen in any other winter in its 125+ year history.

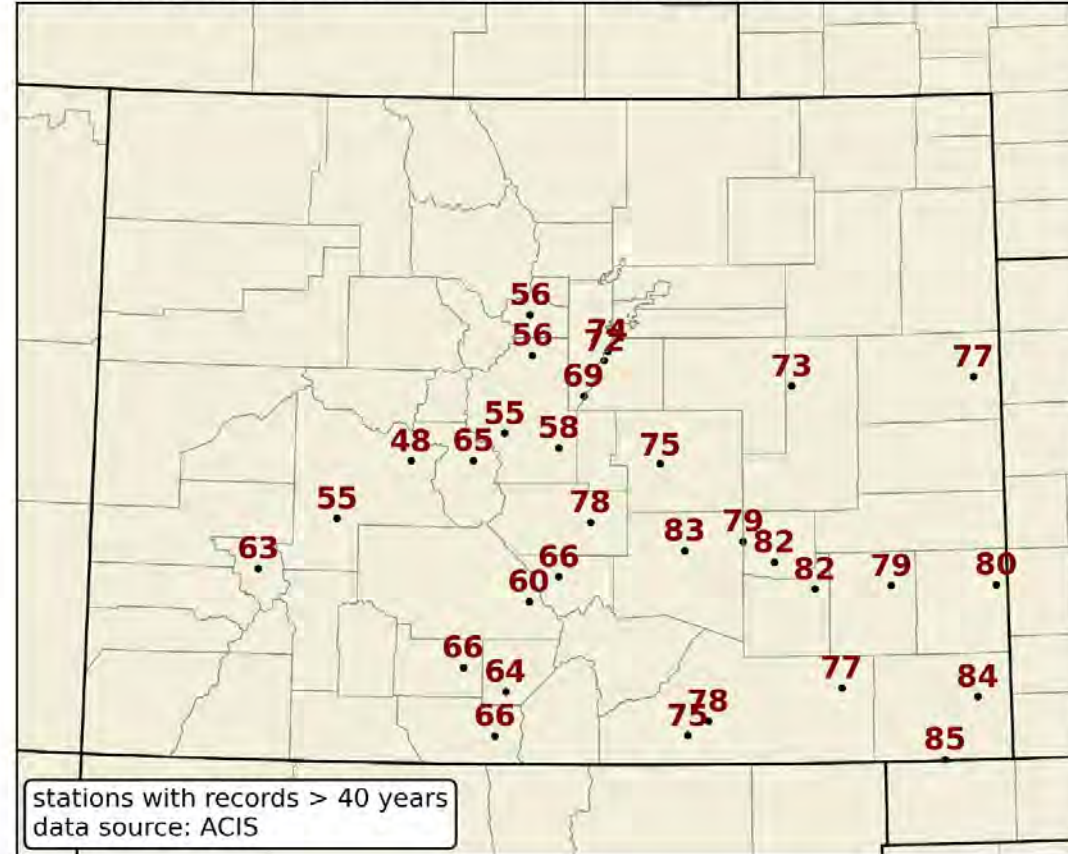


February 2026: our remarkably warm winter continued

Daily, monthly, and seasonal
high temperatures were set late
in the month

While notable in its own way,
this record-setting heat would
be overshadowed by March...

record daily high maximum temperatures for Feb. 24-25, 2026 (°F)



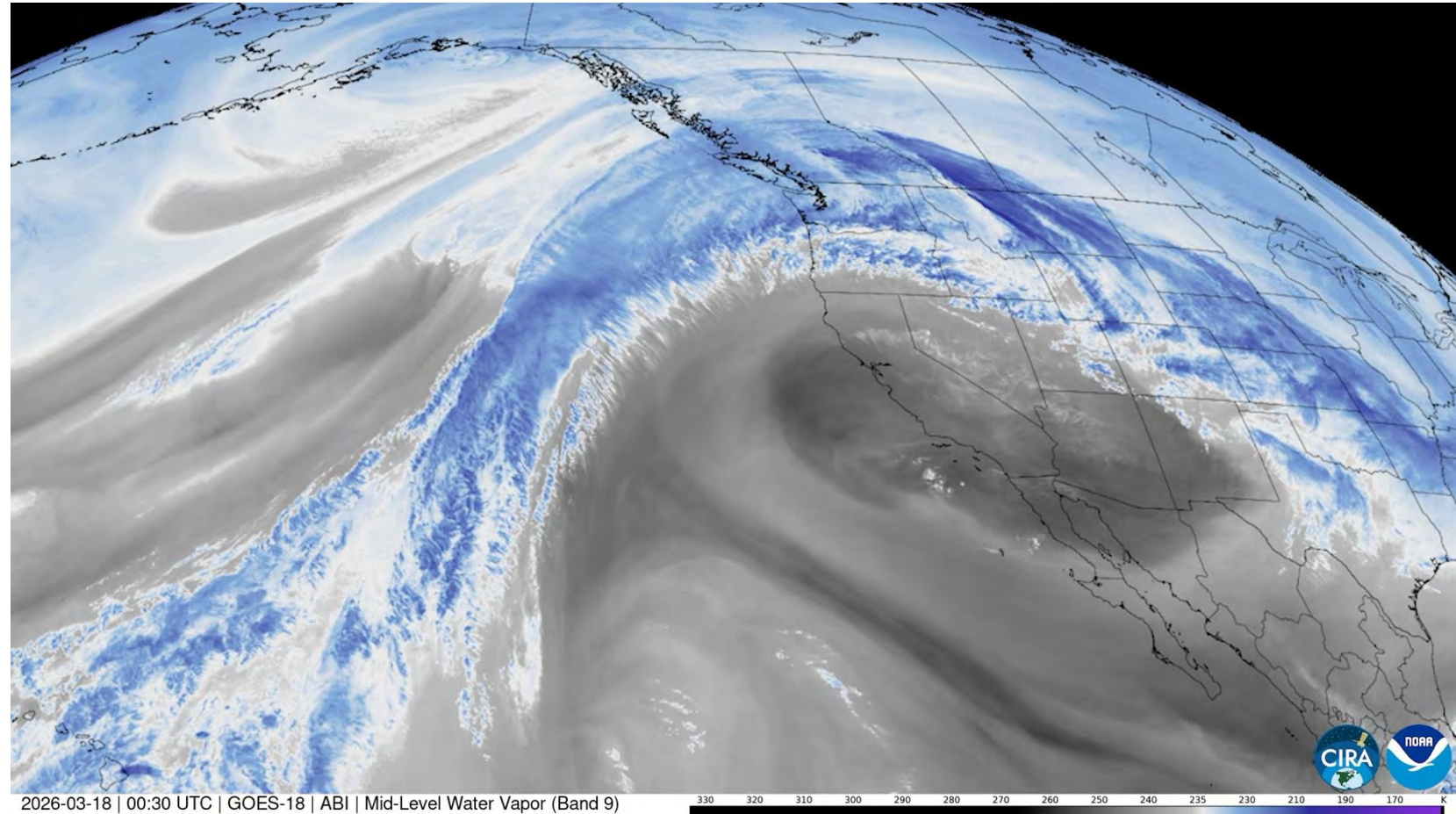
STATION RECORDS (PREVIOUS)		
ALAMOSA-BERGMAN FIELD:	64	(64; 2025)
ANTERO RESERVOIR:	55	(52; 2002)
BLUE MESA LAKE:	55	(50; 1995)
BUENA VISTA 2S:	65	(61; 1930)
BURLINGTON:	77	(75; 1917)
CAMPO 7 S:	85	(80; 1986)
CANON CITY:	78	(75; 1986)
CHEESMAN:	69	(69; 1986)
COLORADO SPRINGS MUNICIPAL AP:	75	(71; 1986)
CRESTONE 2 SE:	60	(59; 2025)
GEORGETOWN:	56	(56; 1995)
GRANT:	56	(54; 1995)
HOLLY:	80	(80; 1904)
JOHN MARTIN DAM:	79	(77; 1986)
KASSLER:	74	(73; 1995)
KIM 15 NNE:	77	(75; 1981)
LA JUNTA MUNICIPAL AIRPORT:	82	(79; 1986)
LAKE GEORGE 8 SW:	58	(54; 1986)
LIMON:	73	(69; 1986)
MANASSA:	66	(64; 1986)
MONTE VISTA 2W:	66	(60; 2025)
ORDWAY 4 W:	82	(78; 1986)
PUEBLO MEMORIAL AIRPORT:	83	(79; 1986)
RIDGWAY:	63	(60; 2025)
STRONTIA SPRINGS DAM:	72	(72; 1995)
TACONY 13 SE:	79	(76; 1986)
TAYLOR PARK:	48	(48; 1989)
TRINIDAD:	75	(72; 1936)
TRINIDAD AP:	78	(77; 1986)
WALSH 1 W:	84	(74; 1998)
WESTCLIFFE:	66	(65; 1921)

Record high temperatures set on February 24-25 for
stations with at least 40 years of data.



March 2026: An unprecedented heat dome for the time of year

- Records smashed across Colorado and the western US
- 10 states with their warmest March on record



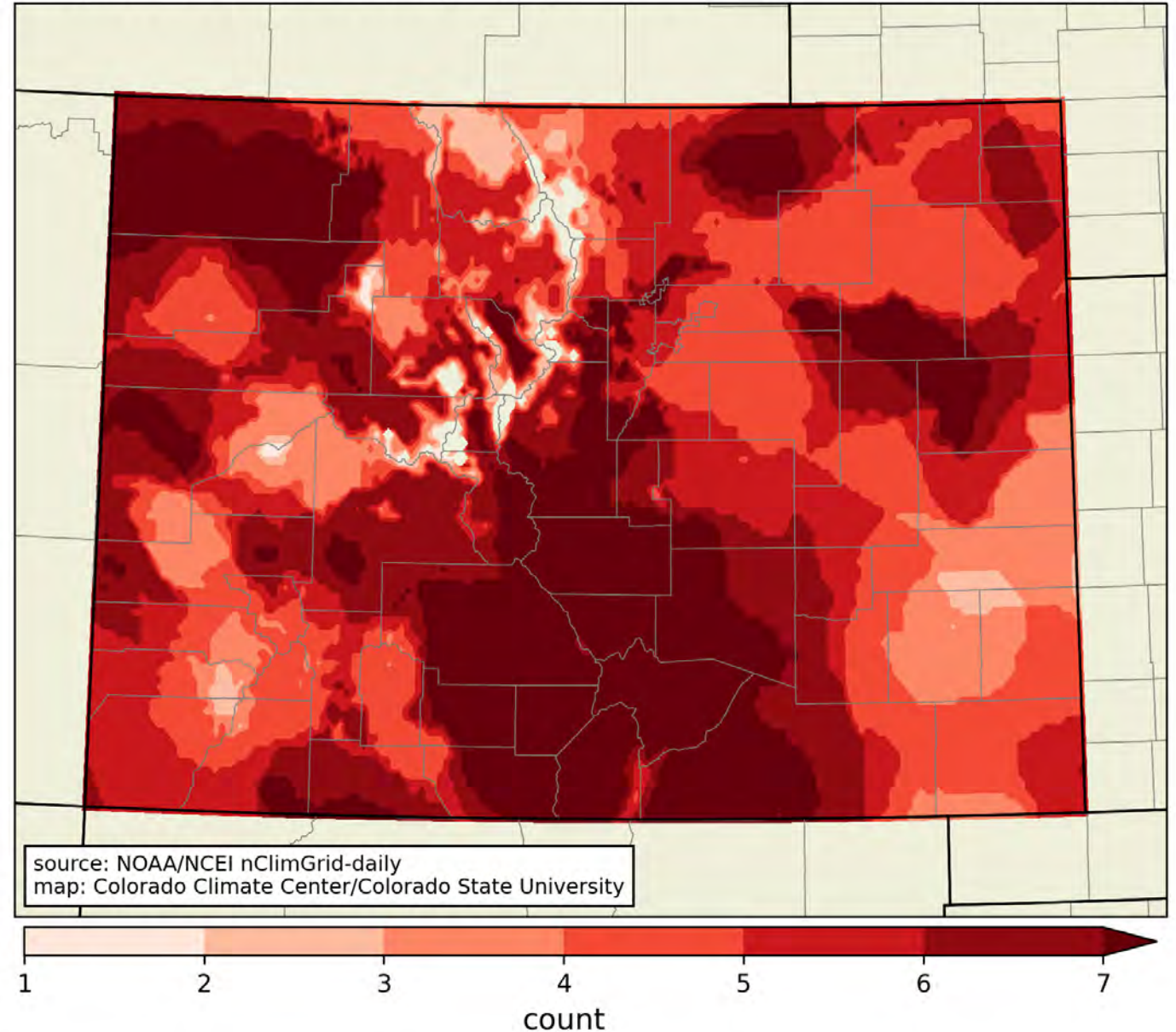
Satellite imagery of the heat dome, courtesy of [CIRA/CSU/NOAA](#)

See our [blog post](#) for more on the March heatwave.

March 2026: Record-smashing warmth

In much of Colorado, March 2026 had a week's worth of days warmer than any March day in the last 75 years

of days in March 2026 with high temperature > 1951–2025 March monthly record

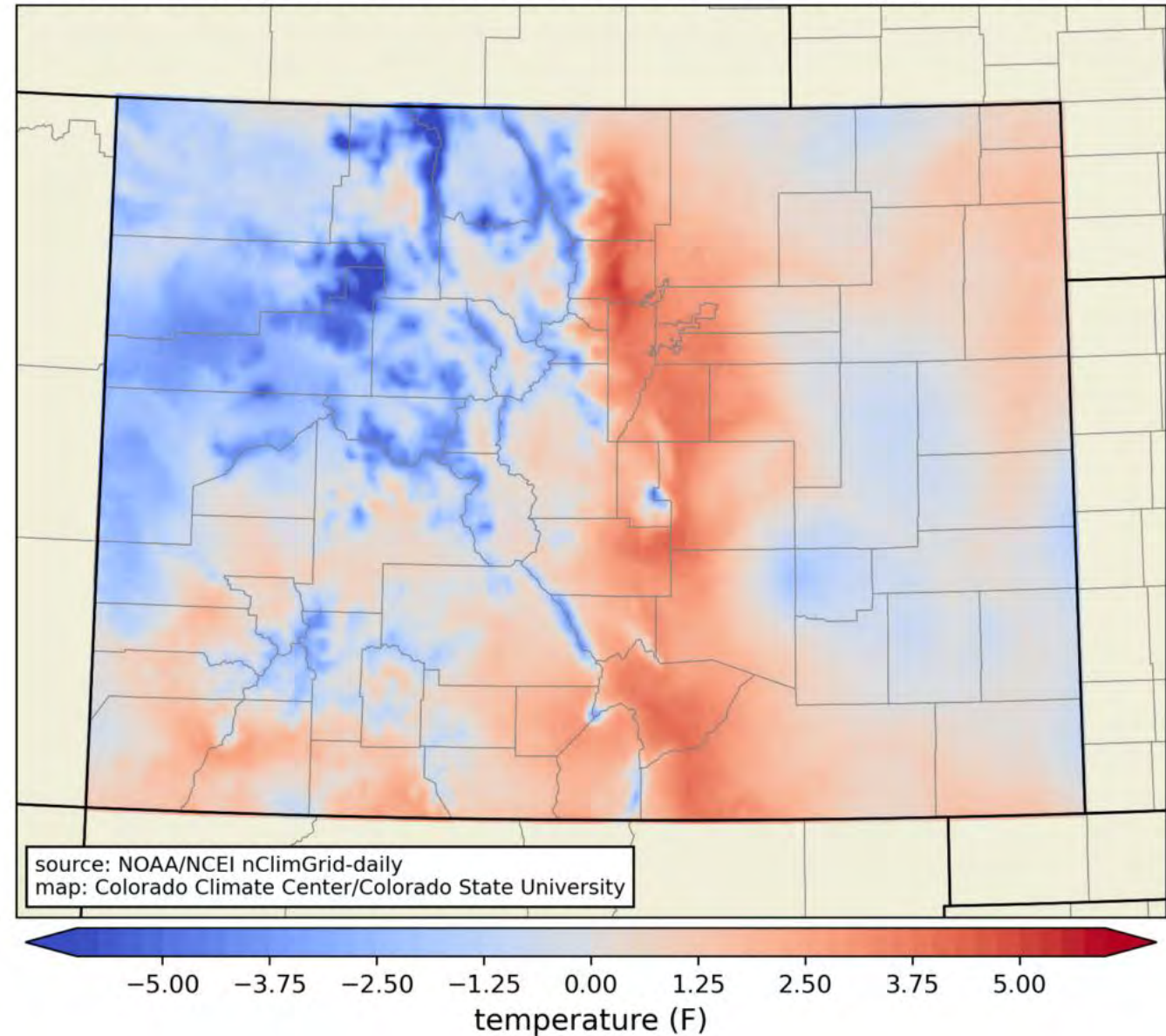


March 2026: Record-smashing warmth

For some locations, maximum temperatures in March 2026 were so warm that they exceeded all-time maximum *April* temperatures between 1951-2025

Statewide, April 2026 would go on to be more than 1°F cooler than March 2026 (even though April was still warmer than average)

maximum temperature in March 2026 minus max during April 1951-2025



See our [blog post](#) for more on the March heatwave.



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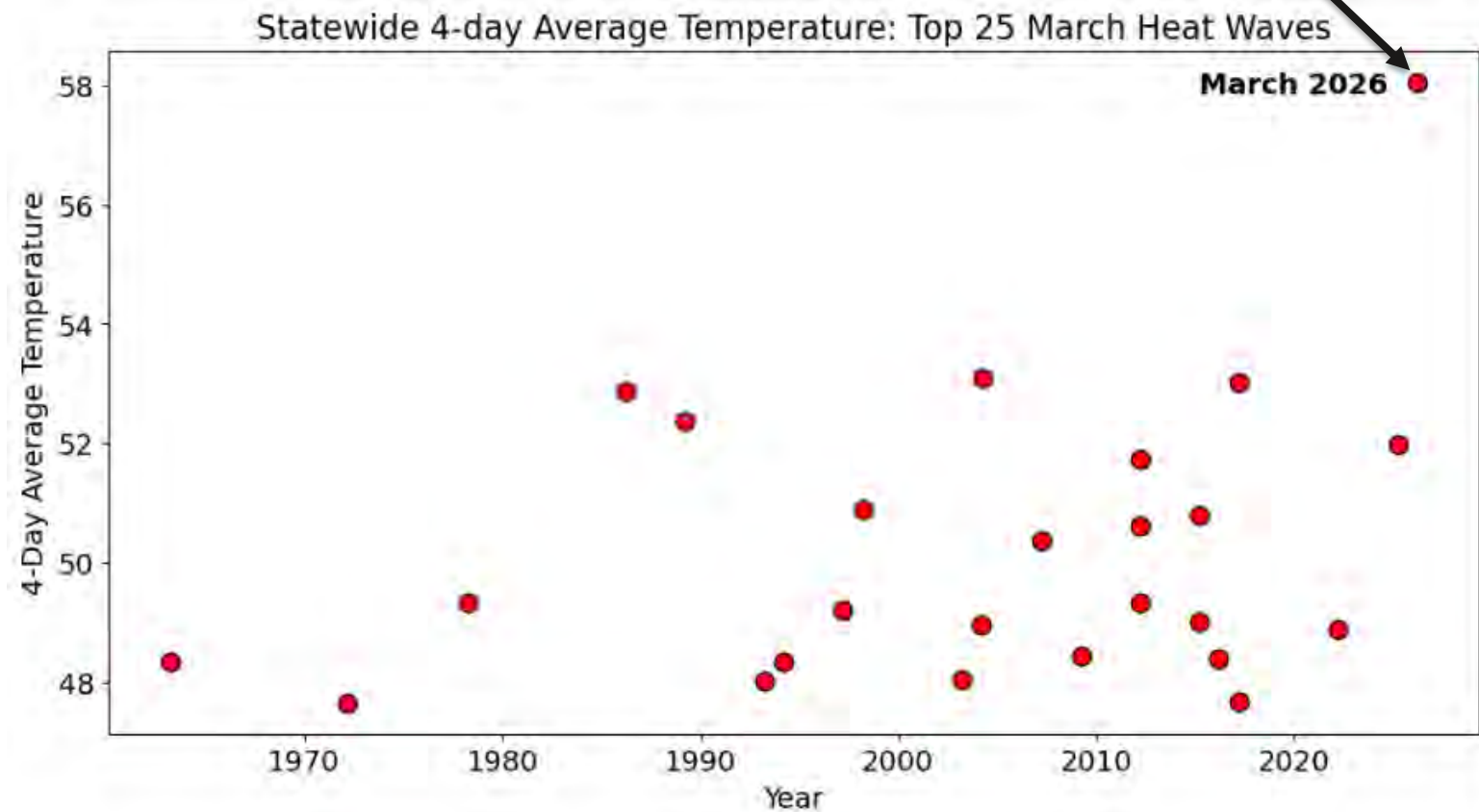


March 2026: Record-smashing warmth

The heat lasted multiple days, and it was far warmer than any heat wave that we've seen in the month of March.

The nine warmest March days on record statewide happened in March 2026.

Mar. 18-21



Colorado's top-25 March heat waves since 1951, defined as 4-day averaged statewide temperatures. Data from NCEI nclimgrid.

See our [blog post](#) for more on the March heatwave.

March 2026: Record-smashing warmth

Several hundred stations across Colorado set new **monthly** March records, some by as much as 10° F (!!)

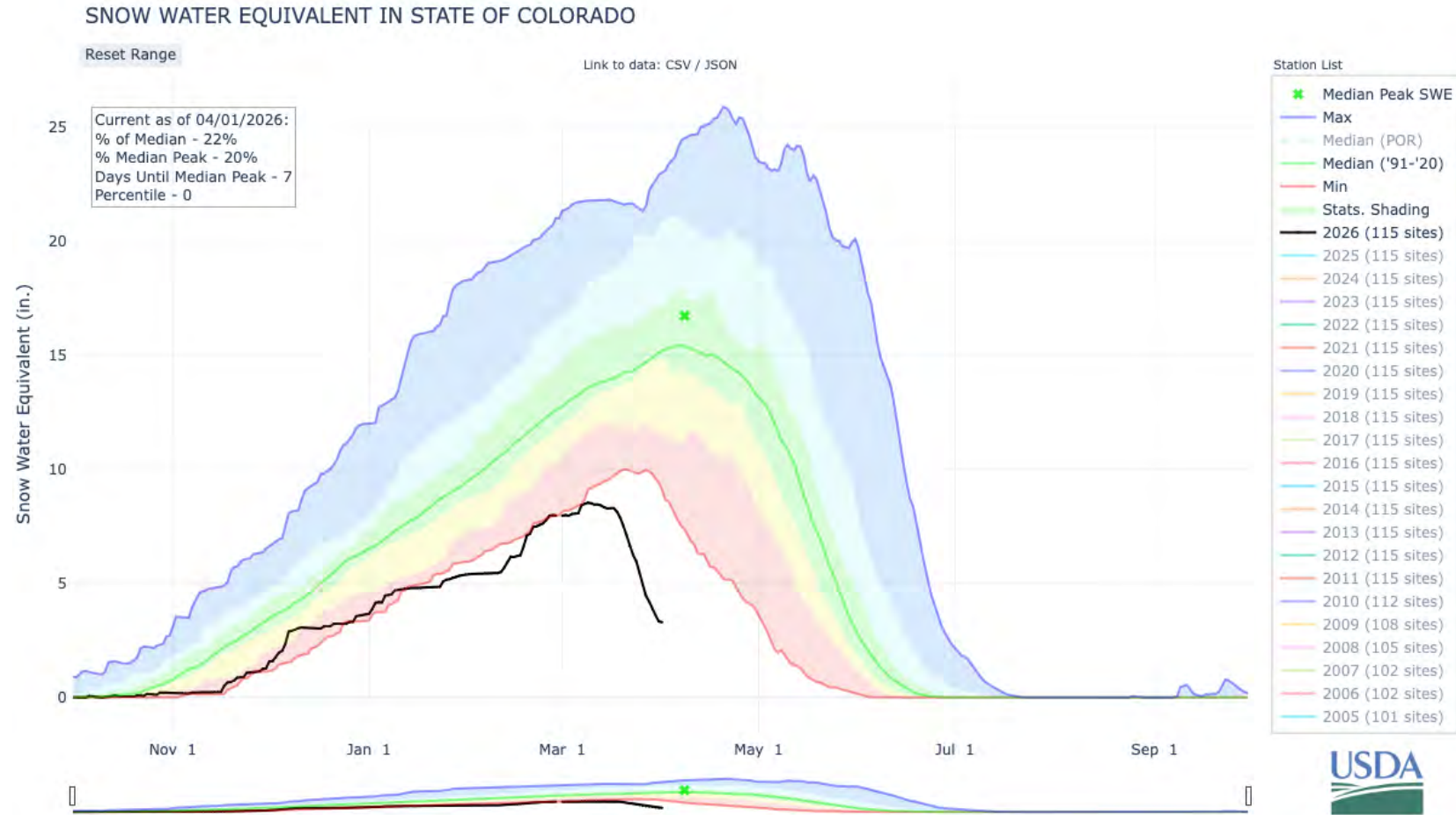
Location	Previous Record High March Temperature	March 2026 Max Temperature
Akron	85°F (1963)	89°F
Alamosa	76°F (2012)	83°F
Boulder	83°F (1910)	89°F
Buena Vista	73°F (2015)	78°F
Colorado Springs	81°F (1971)	86°F
Cortez	80°F (2025)	86°F
Crested Butte	58°F (2015)	70°F
Denver	84°F (1971)	87°F
Dillon	63°F (2012)	71°F
Fort Collins	81°F (2012)	91°F
Grand Junction	81°F (2004)	88°F
Gunnison	75°F (1928)	79°F
Limon	82°F (1989)	87°F
Pueblo	86°F (2017)	93°F
Steamboat Springs	70°F (2004, 2012, 2017)	81°F
Trinidad	84°F (1971)	90°F
Walden	70°F (1987)	73°F

See our [blog post](#) for more on the March heatwave.



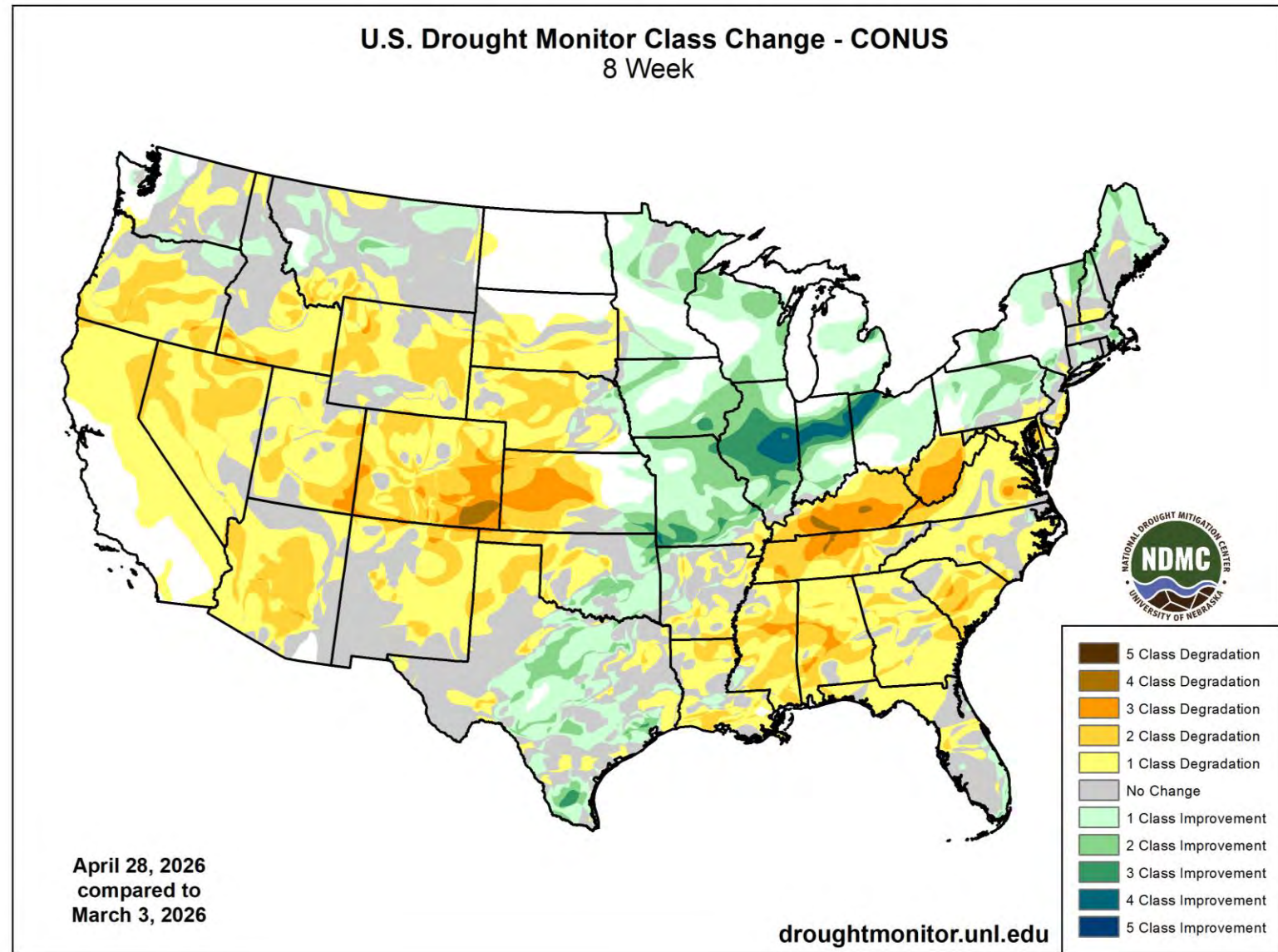
March 2026: Record-smashing warmth

The heat led to rapid decline in snowpack that occurred much earlier than usual (comparable to what we typically see in May-June)



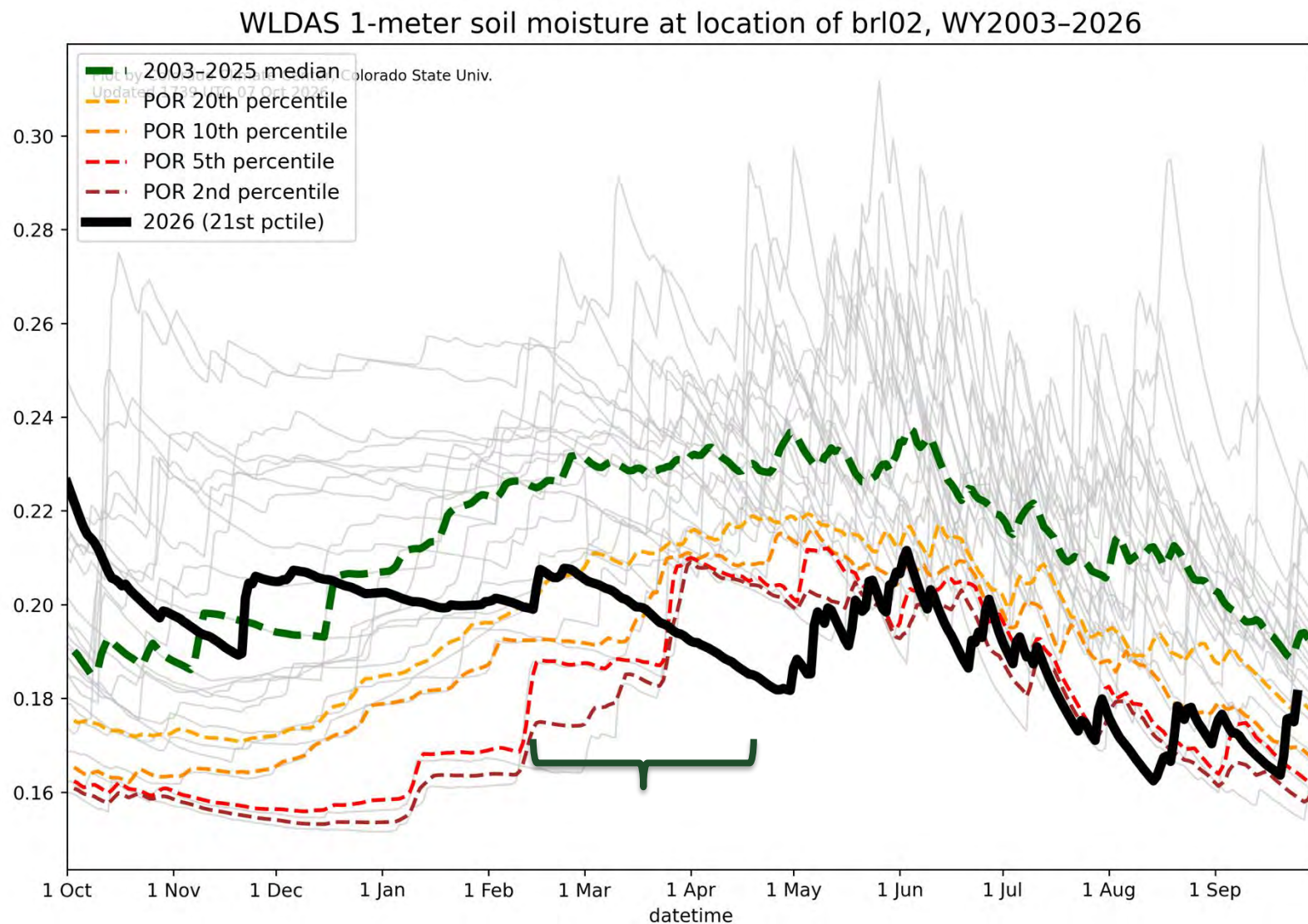
April 2026: Flash drought across the Eastern Plains

4-category degradations in 8 weeks across southeastern Colorado amid the hot and dry conditions



April 2026: Flash drought across the Eastern Plains

Rapid declines in soil moisture at a critical time of year for agriculture



Soil moisture for Burlington, CO for WY2026. Data from WLDAS.



April 2026: Flash drought across the Eastern Plains

The drought caused major impacts to rangelands later in the spring and summer



Condition Monitoring Observation
CO-CR-7: Sugar City 9.6 N
Obs Date: 2026-06-15



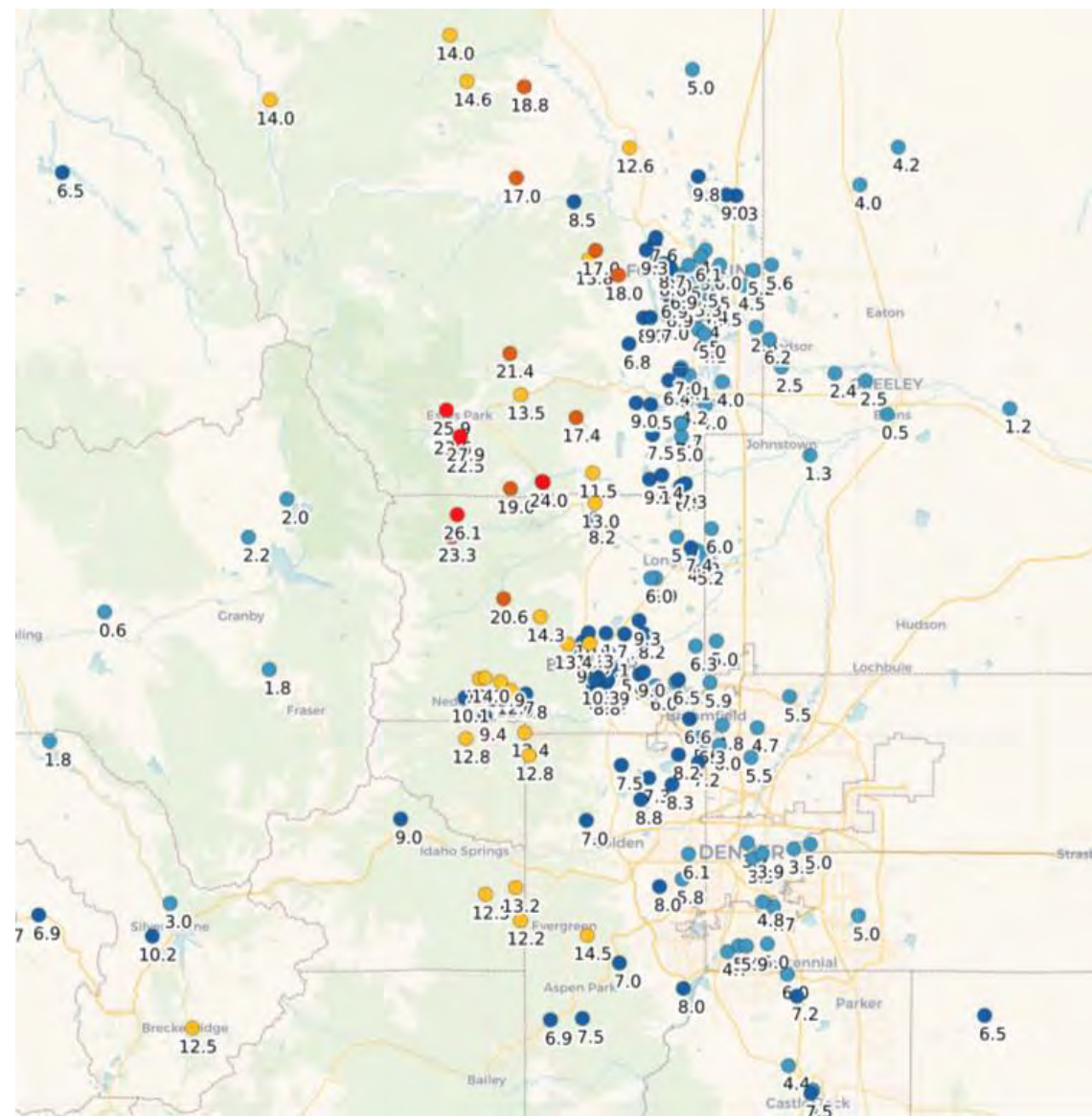
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May 2026: A late-season Front Range snowstorm

After a lackluster winter, the Front Range foothills and Urban Corridor saw a big snow (for many, the largest of the year). Over 2ft fell in the Estes Park area.

Unfortunately, the snow had little to no impact on the overall winter snowpack.



CoCoRaHS snowfall reports for May 5-6.



June 2026: Severe Storms

June is Colorado's climatological peak in severe weather, and there were several rounds of storms that brought high winds, flash flooding, and hail



CO-EP-385 2026-06-23

Hail in Colorado Springs on June 23. Photo from [CoCoRaHS](#).



Flooding near Evergreen on June 24. Photo from [CBS Colorado](#).



Wind damage in Akron on June 22, where there were reported gusts in excess of 100mph. Photo from [AccuWeather](#).



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June-July 2026: Wildfires ignite across the state

Persistent above-average temperatures, below-normal precipitation, and early melt-off promoted dry conditions across the state.

Numerous wildfires ignited at the end of June and early July.



Smoke plume and pyrocumulus clouds from the Aspen Acres fire. Photo from July 1, obtained from Watch Duty.



Flames and smoke from the Gold Mountain Fire near Ouray on June 28, obtained via [CPR](#).

June-July 2026: Wildfires ignite across the state

High winds promoted extreme fire behavior and rapid growth. For example, the Aspen Acres Fire, discovered on June 29th, had grown to over 35,000 acres by July 1st.

Extreme weather conditions also presented life-threatening challenges for firefighting efforts. Tragically, the Knowles Fire (located near the larger Snyder Fire) claimed the lives of four firefighters.



2026-06-29 | 15:01 UTC | GOES-18 | ABI | GeoColor

Smoke plumes from wildfires in Colorado and neighboring states on 6/29 as seen by GOES-18. Imagery courtesy of [CIRA/CSU/NOAA](#).

June-July 2026: Wildfires ignite across the state

Ultimately, two of the 10
largest Colorado wildfires in
terms of acres burned were
this year: Aspen Acres (#7)
and Ferris (#10)

2026 5000+ acre wildfires



July-August 2026: Flash flooding and debris flows



Palm Theater in Telluride filled with mud on July 17. From [Telluride Fire Protection District](#)

Debris flow at Curecanti National Recreation Area, July 16. From Black Canyon of the Gunnison National Park.



Flooding in Beulah, August 15. From [Pueblo County Sheriff's Office](#).



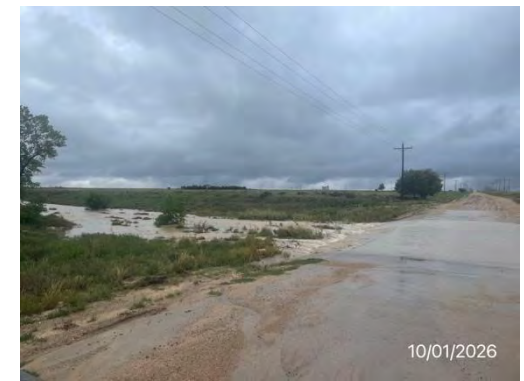
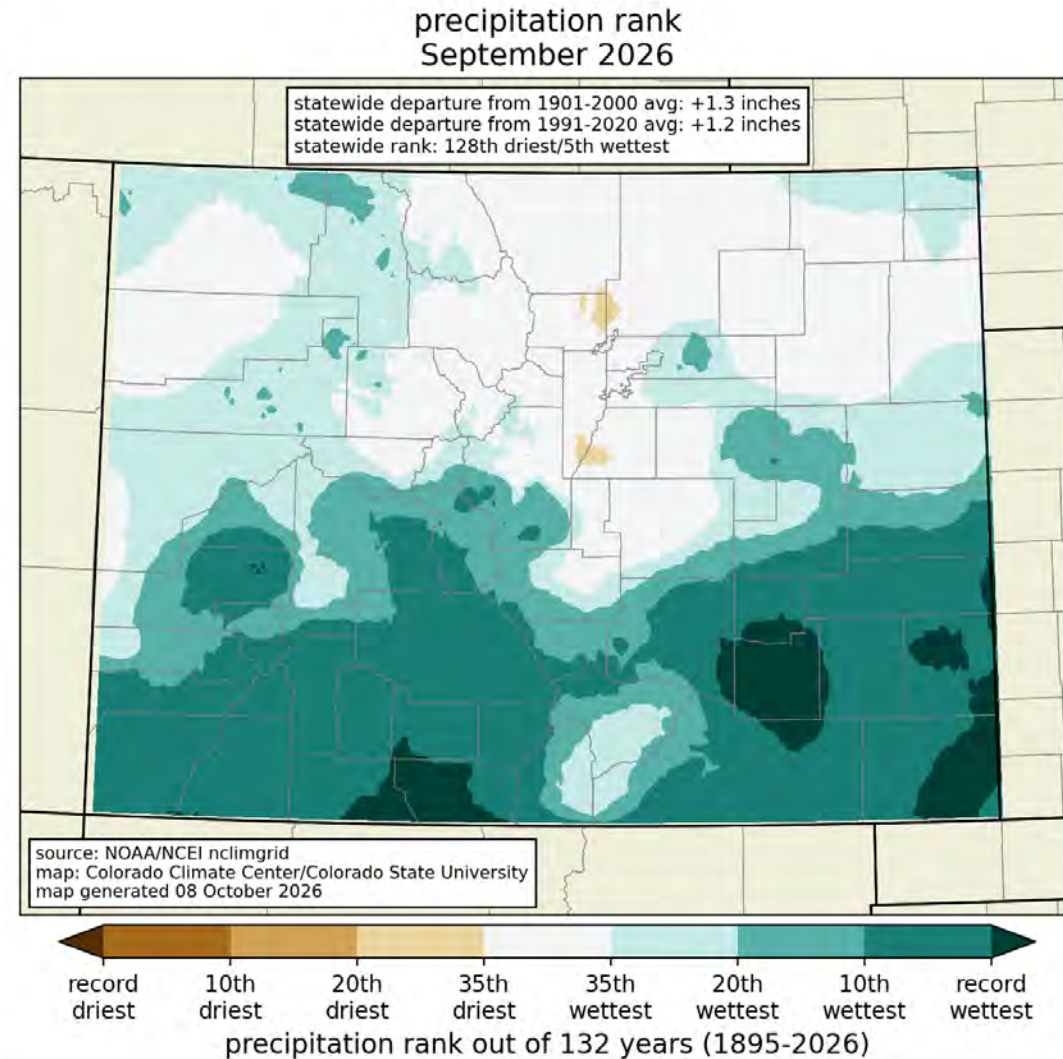
Flooding in Ouray County, July 29. From [Ouray County Government](#).

Heavy rains brought flash flooding and debris flows across southwest Colorado, including in some burn scar areas



September 2026: heavy rain continues

Water Year 2026 ended wet, especially for southern Colorado, leading to additional localized flooding and debris flows. Some places had their wettest September on record after extreme drought earlier in the water year.



Flooded roadway near the CSU Plainsman Research Station near Walsh on October 1. Photo courtesy of Zane Jenkins.



Flood debris clean up at Chimney Rock National Monument near Pagosa Springs around September 17. Photo from the [Pagosa Daily Post](#).



September 2026: rounding out a record- warm Water Year

The prolonged warmth of WY2026 was on full display when St. Mary's Glacier, a semi-permanent snowfield known as a summertime ski destination, fully melted out in mid-September



St. Mary's Glacier on Sep. 12, 2024 (left) compared to Sep. 17, 2026 (right). Photos by Matt Siegfried and Ryan Venturelli, obtained via [Colorado Public Radio](#).

Thank you!

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