

HEAVY SNOWPACK BRINGS FLOOD POTENTIAL WHILE OTHER RIVER BASINS STRUGGLE

Earlier this month, at the Colorado River District's "State of the River" meeting in Montrose, they discussed drought and overuse conditions of the Colorado River and other river basins throughout the state.

Experts warned this year's snowpack could cause flooding locally.

The Colorado River Basin Forecast Center predicts an April 1 through July 31 runoff total at 117,000 acre-feet for Ridgway Reservoir. This amounts to 23,000 acre-feet more than the reservoir's typical average for the same period. Current storage levels will have to be adjusted to accommodate the expected runoff. Tri-County Water is releasing stored water from Ridgway Reservoir to help reduce higher runoff flows in the Uncompahgre directly below Ridgway Dam and mitigate potential flooding in the Uncompahgre River which is supplemented by uncontrolled runoff from the Cow Creek drainage.

According to Bob Hurford, State Division of Water Resources Division IV Engineer, expects the spring runoff in the Uncompahgre Valley to be high. The US Geological Survey's SnoTel site at Columbine Pass is registering snow water equivalent levels which are 250% of normal. Over 40 inches of water currently sit in the snowpack on the Uncompahgre Plateau.

Today, hydrological conditions in the

Gunnison River Basin, which includes the Uncompahgre Valley, are categorized as "average wet" this year by the Bureau of Reclamation. Reclamation does not expect Blue Mesa to fill but recent estimates have increased end of irrigation season content to be 150,000 acre-feet more than predicted earlier. Federal peak flow targets for the Lower Gunnison this spring are 14,000 cubic feet per second for two days at the Whitewater Gauge near Grand Junction. Half-bank full flow targets of 8,000 cfs for an additional 20 days are also planned.

Paonia Reservoir, on the North Fork of the Gunnison, is predicted to receive 161,000 acre feet during the runoff which will undoubtedly fill the reservoir.

"That's double. This is big. Paonia Reservoir will fill and spill any year, even a bad year. There will be a lot of water coming down through there," Hurford said.

Montrose County emergency management officials are working on a community education campaign complete with a free sandbagging fill site to help empower locals. They are also asking landowners to keep ditches free of debris as much as possible and work with regional agencies to devise drainage plans. Scott Hawkins, Montrose County Emergency Manager asks residents to check montrosecounty.net for updated information, plans and events.

Water Quality Reports are out.

Visit <https://www.project7water.org/ccr.html> for details.

Conservation CORNER

THE KEY PRINCIPLES OF XERISCAPE

Late winter and early spring are the perfect time to make new plans for your yard and garden. Creating a plan with conservation of water and other resources is important.

- Create practical turf areas of manageable size, shape and grade. In areas that receive a lot of foot traffic select a turf that is durable and water efficient keeping those areas to a minimum.
- Selecting water efficient plants and clustering them according to their water needs will minimize waste of water. This is also known as hydrozoning. Research your desired plants to determine their

water needs, then experiment to see what works best for your landscape.

- Use high-quality soil amendments in your planted areas. An organic, #1 or #2 compost is the best choice. The number designation means it has fewer salts in the additive that harm your plants.
- Use organic (like wood chip) or inorganic (like river rock) mulches to reduce evaporation and to keep the soil cooler.
- Irrigate efficiently with properly designed systems that will apply the right amount of water at the right time.

**CURRENT
RIDGWAY
RESERVOIR
LEVEL:
81%
FULL**