



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Drought Update

SALT LAKE CITY (May 5, 2022) – Drought is continuing to stress the state’s natural resources impacting wildlife, rangeland, recreation and the state’s reservoir storage. According to the [U.S. Drought Monitor](#), 99% of the state is in the second and third-worst categories: severe and extreme drought. Utah’s reservoir levels are 10% lower than they were at this time last year.

“Our lands are tinder dry, and with May and June forecasted to be hotter and drier than previous years, we are also gearing up for a challenging wildfire season,” said Brian Steed, executive director of the Department of Natural Resources. “We need people to continue to conserve to stretch our limited water supply and exercise good [Fire Sense](#) to reduce the risk of human-caused wildfires.”

At-a-glance highlights:

- Weber Basin Water Conservancy District has received very little new storage during the last two years and is expected to receive very little again this year. To mitigate the effects of the drought on their storage reservoirs, they have reduced the amount of water they intend to deliver to contract holders this year. They are also purchasing 5,000 acre-feet of Echo shares from users on the Provo River and about 14,000 acre-feet from Deer Creek water users. The delivery of this water into Weber Basin’s reservoirs will be accomplished by modifying the operation of the Weber-Provo Canal.
- Great Salt Lake typically drops a little over 2 feet each summer. With a current elevation of 4191.1, this would mean the lake could hit a new historic low.
- Ongoing drought has significantly impacted deer survival rates, so the Utah Wildlife Board [voted to decrease](#) the number of general-season deer permits issued. A total of 73,075 general-season deer hunting permits will be issued, a 950-permit decrease from the previous year. While it is antlerless (doe) deer permits, not buck permits, that impact deer population numbers, the Utah Division of Wildlife Resources recommended a decrease for both types of permits for the 2022 hunting seasons.
- Statewide snow water equivalent (SWE), or how much water would be in the snowpack if it melted, peaked at 12 inches. This is 75% of the typical median peak of 16 inches for our water year.



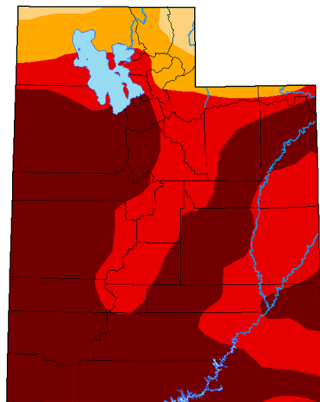
- Twenty-two of Utah's largest 45 reservoirs are below 55% of available capacity. Overall statewide storage is 60% of capacity. This time last year, reservoirs were about 67% of capacity.
- Of the 96 measured streams, 56 are flowing below normal despite spring runoff. Five streams are flowing at record low conditions. Due to low snowpack, streamflows are expected to be lower than normal. This means our reservoirs won't fill as they normally would.
- Current drought conditions have created drier fuels which in turn increase the chance of a wildfire starts. To date, there have been 97 wildfires in the state of Utah that have burned approximately 256 acres. Out of the 97 wildfires, this year 88 of them have been human-caused.
- According to the latest information released by the U.S. Drought Monitor, drought conditions continue to plague the state with 99.45% of the state experiencing "severe" or "extreme" drought conditions. Severe and extreme drought conditions are the Drought Monitor's second and third most serious categories.

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FULL REPORT

U.S. Drought Monitor
Utah

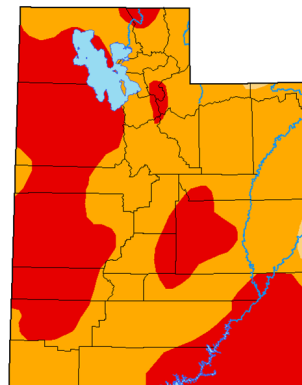
May 4, 2021



2021

U.S. Drought Monitor
Utah

May 3, 2022
(Released Thursday, May 5, 2022)
Valid 8 a.m. EDT



2022

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>

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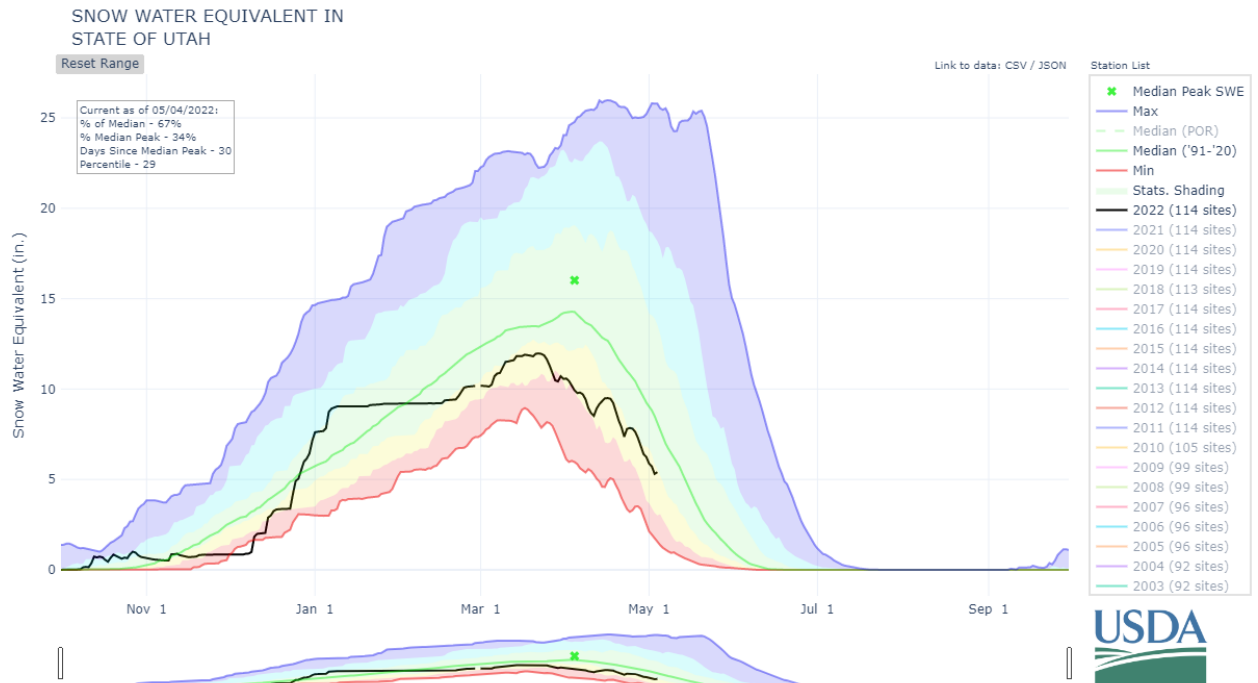


droughtmonitor.unl.edu

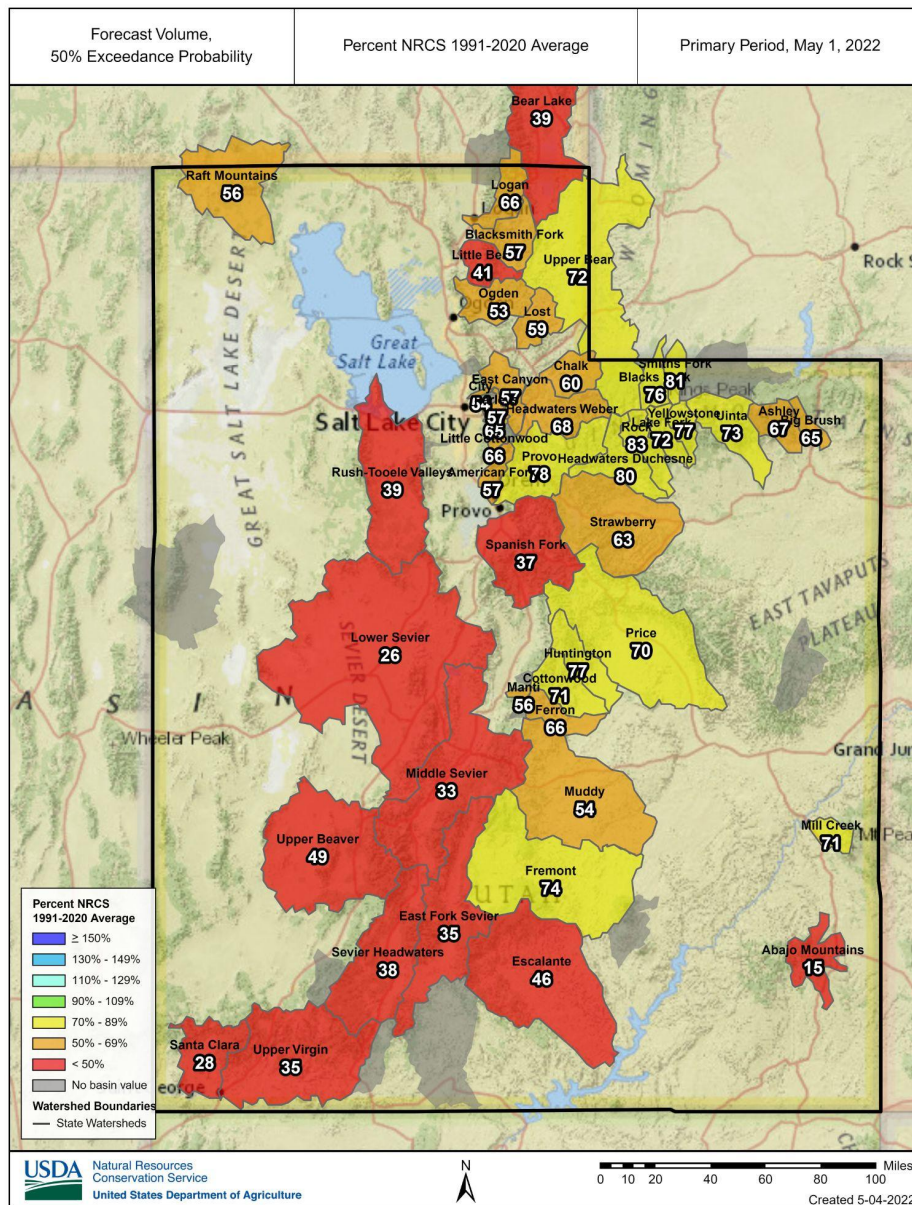
Graphic compares Utah's current drought situation to 2021. Last year at this time 57.21% was in exceptional drought. Currently, no part of the state is in exceptional drought (the worst category), but reservoir storage has dropped significantly due to the extended drought. Currently, 99.45% of the state is in severe drought.

Precipitation and soil moisture

- Statewide snow water equivalent (the amount of water if it melted) peaked at 12 inches almost two weeks earlier than normal. Median peak (16 inches), occurs around the first of April.
- Spring runoff is underway, with the snowpack levels declining as temperatures warm and snow melts. Snowpack was 25% below average and did not refill our reservoirs.



Snow Water Equivalent peaked around March 22 at 12 inches. 16 inches is the normal peak for the year.



Graphic shows streamflow forecasts based on basins. Percentage is the percentage of volume compared to a 30-year average volume of water for the basin.

Temperature and Evaporation

- Temperatures over the last two weeks were about 4 degrees warmer than normal in the southeast corner of the state and 4 degrees cooler than normal in the northwest corner. This produced a statewide average of 0.5 degrees cooler than normal.
- Evaporation followed roughly the same pattern as temperature with above-average evaporation in the southern half of the state and below-average evaporation in the north/northwest of the state.

Streamflows

- Fifty-six of Utah's 96 streams reporting data are flowing below normal.
- Due to low snowpack, streamflows are expected to be lower than normal. This means our reservoirs won't fill as they normally would.
- Five streams had their seven-day average flow reach record low.
- Daily flow from 28 headwater streams is flowing close to the median for this time of year. Early snowmelt brought headwater streamflow up significantly. This higher flow will decline once the snowpack melts.

Reservoir and Lake Levels

- Major reservoirs statewide are at 60% capacity. Reservoirs have begun to receive their spring inflow. Snowpack is needed to refill the reservoirs in the spring prior to the higher use summer months.
- Twenty-two of Utah's 45 reservoirs are below 55% of available capacity.
- After dropping to 4190.2 feet, a new record low, on Oct. 18, winter storms helped refill Great Salt Lake and the elevation rose to 4191.1. Levels have remained nearly unchanged for the last month. Inflow is needed to overcome the typical seasonal summer drop of about 2.3 feet. So far the lake has risen about 1 foot and has likely peaked. With the seasonal summer drop of about 2.3 feet, the lake is likely to hit a new historic low this summer.

Wildlife Impacts

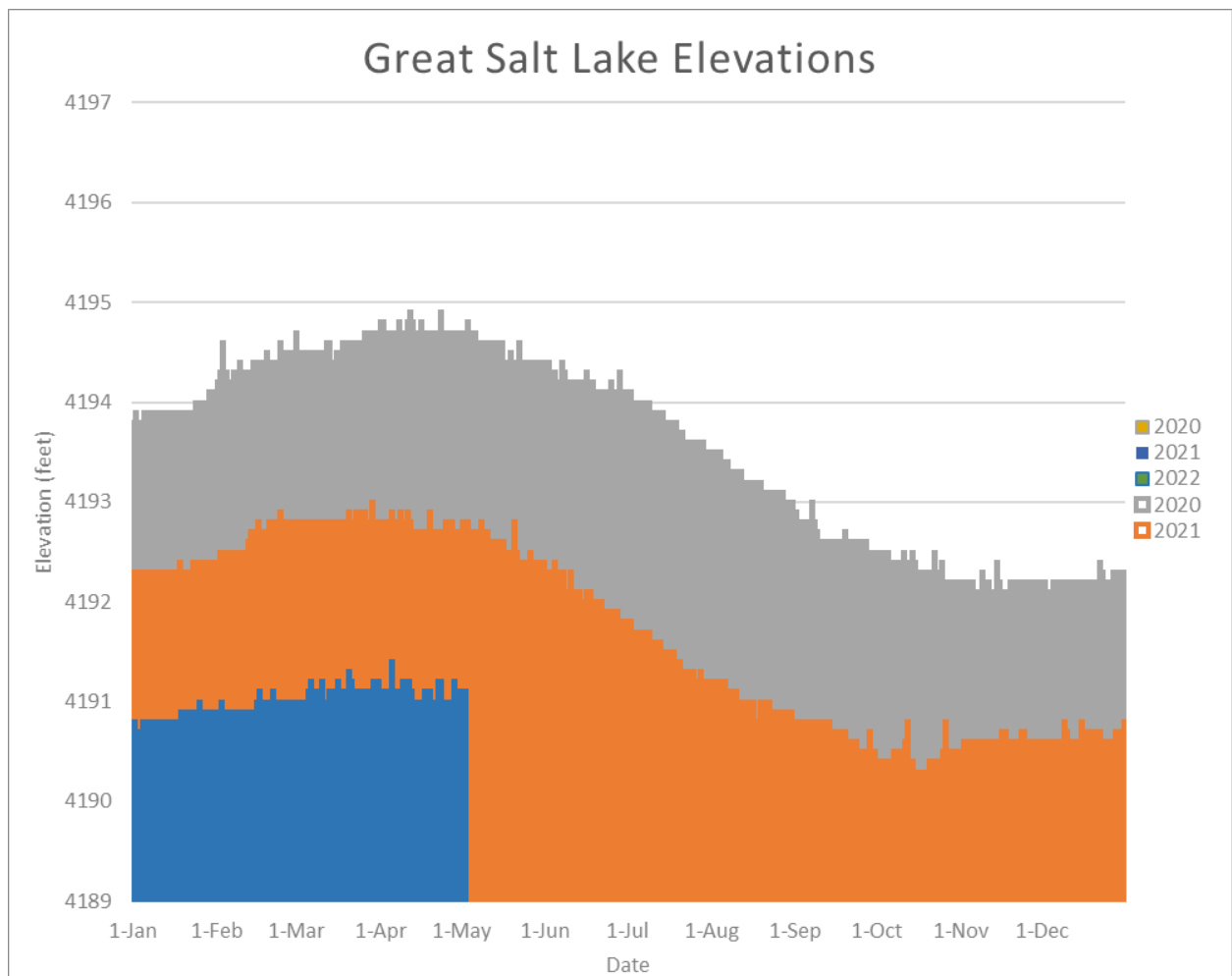
- The state has had several years of drought and is still facing ongoing extreme drought conditions statewide, which has a significant impact on the survival rates of deer.
- In Utah, there is currently a higher demand for deer hunting in the state than we have the supply for. While it is antlerless (doe) deer permits, not buck permits, that impact deer population numbers, the Utah Division of Wildlife Resources recommended a decrease for both types of permits for the 2022 hunting seasons.
- As a result, during its April 28 meeting, the Utah Wildlife Board voted to approve a total of 73,075 general-season deer hunting permits, which is a 950-permit decrease from the previous year. [Visit the Utah Division of Wildlife Resources website for more information.](#)

Water Rights

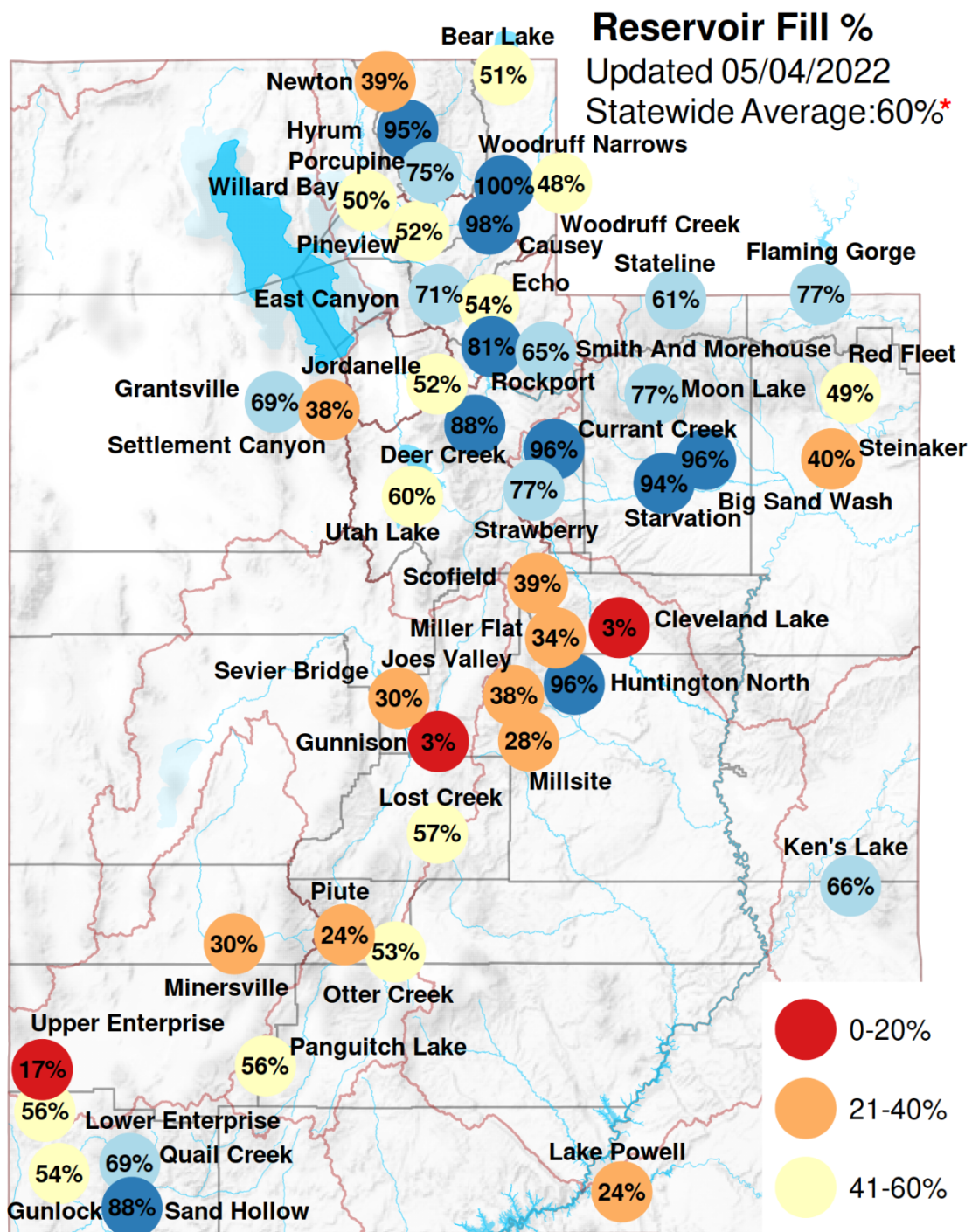
- The state engineer collaborated with the Wyoming state engineer to reach an agreement that will facilitate the distribution of water on Mill Creek, a tributary to the Upper Bear River. The tributary had been a point of contention among users across state lines due to drought and complicated hydrology. The agreement establishes clear distribution guidelines and identifies issues that require further investigation and study.
- The state engineer and her deputies met with representatives of the Weber Basin Water Conservancy District (WBWCD), the Division of Water Resources, and the Department of Natural Resources to discuss challenges that Weber Basin is experiencing with existing water supplies. Due to the ongoing drought, WBWCD has received very little new storage during the last two years and is expected to receive very little again this year. To mitigate the effects of the drought on their storage reservoirs, they have reduced the amount of water they intend to deliver to contract holders this year. In addition to those measures, they are also purchasing 5,000 acre-feet of Echo shares from users on the Provo River and about 14,000 acre-feet from Deer Creek water users. The delivery of this water into Weber Basin's reservoirs will be accomplished by modifying the operation of the Weber-Provo Canal.

Wildfire Risks

- The majority of human-caused wildfires this year have been due to agricultural burning as individuals prepare their canals and property for irrigation.
- According to the [Great Basin Coordination Center](#), fire potential may increase to above normal from mid to late May and by June over higher elevations of central and southern Utah due to drought concerns still in place where there are standing dead fine fuels and where sagebrush may dry earlier than normal. By July, the higher terrain of the Sierra Front into northern Utah will likely see above-normal fire potential due to the drought once the snow melts and fuels cure. The monsoon is expected to be fairly robust and on time with fire potential decreasing over the southern half of the Great Basin by July.



Graph compares elevations of the Great Salt Lake for the last three years.



Data Sources: water.utah.gov/reservoirlevels

*State average excludes Lake Powell & Flaming Gorge to better represent the state's water supply.

Total capacity including these is 45%

