



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Drought Update

SALT LAKE CITY (Nov. 10, 2022) – After a few weeks of consistent storms, Utah’s snowpack is off to a strong start to the water year, which started on Oct. 1. With 95% of our water coming from snowpack, we need this trend to continue in order to make a dent in the drought.

“People tend to think one good storm will pull us out of drought, but it actually takes many storms over the entire winter to reach average,” Candice Hasenyager, director of the Division of Water Resources, said. “With several years of drought behind us, it will likely take several years to recover.”

Soil moisture is critical to an effective spring runoff. October is typically a cooler, wetter month that brings soil moisture up. Unfortunately, the state experienced higher than normal temperatures and a dry first three weeks of the month. Soil moisture is currently below normal for this time of year. Although soil moisture is lower than normal, we aren’t seeing the record dry soils that heavily impacted runoff two years ago.

“Currently, the state has received 145% of normal precipitation. This is good news as the state battles drought,” Hasenyager said. “It’s still early in the season, and once the snow melts in spring, we will have a better idea how much water the state will receive.”

At-a-glance highlights:

- On Nov. 3, Gov. Spencer Cox issued a [proclamation](#) closing the Great Salt Lake Basin to new water right appropriations in an effort to address declining water lake levels. The state engineer will evaluate the suspension and provide an update to the governor by Nov. 1, 2023 to determine if it should remain in effect.
- Thirty-seven of the 47 reservoirs the division monitors are below 55%, which is about the same as last year but still about 9% lower than normal for this time of year.



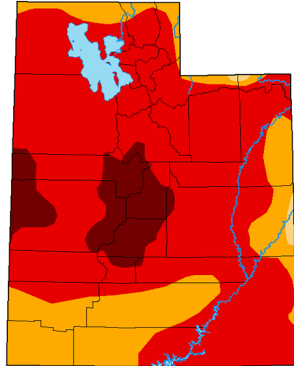
- Of the 99 measured streams, 62 are currently flowing below normal. In last month's report the number of streams below normal was 41.
- Great Salt Lake levels have started to stabilize now that temperatures are dropping, storms are moving in and irrigation has concluded for the season. Levels are expected to slowly rise and peak with spring runoff. Currently, the average [daily surface elevation](#) is 4,188.8. It surpassed the previous record low (4,190.2) on July 3, the division anticipates the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) will announce a new historic low in the coming months.
- Harmful algal blooms still may be present in Utah waters year-round. Hunters should stay alert and keep their dogs out of water if they suspect a HAB is present.
 - Danger Advisories are still in effect for:
 - Big East Lake at Payson Lakes
 - Left and Right Fork of North Creek at Zion National Park
 - Warning Advisories are still in effect for:
 - Highland Glen Pond; Scofield Reservoir; Calf Creek; the North Fork of the Virgin River (including the Narrows)
 - Utah Lake: There is a lakewide advisory in place, and advisories at American Fork Marina, Lindon Marina, Saratoga Springs Marina, Lincoln Marina, Utah Lake State Park, Sandy Beach, and Provo Bay at Utah Lake.
 - Health Watches are in still effect for:
 - Steinaker Reservoir and La Verkin Creek (Zion National Park)
- Residents can find water-saving tips at [SlowtheFlow.Org](#).

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FULL REPORT

U.S. Drought Monitor Utah

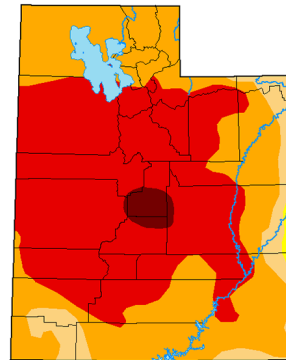
November 9, 2021



2021

U.S. Drought Monitor Utah

November 8, 2022
(Released Thursday, Nov. 10, 2022)
Valid 7 a.m. EST



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>

Author:

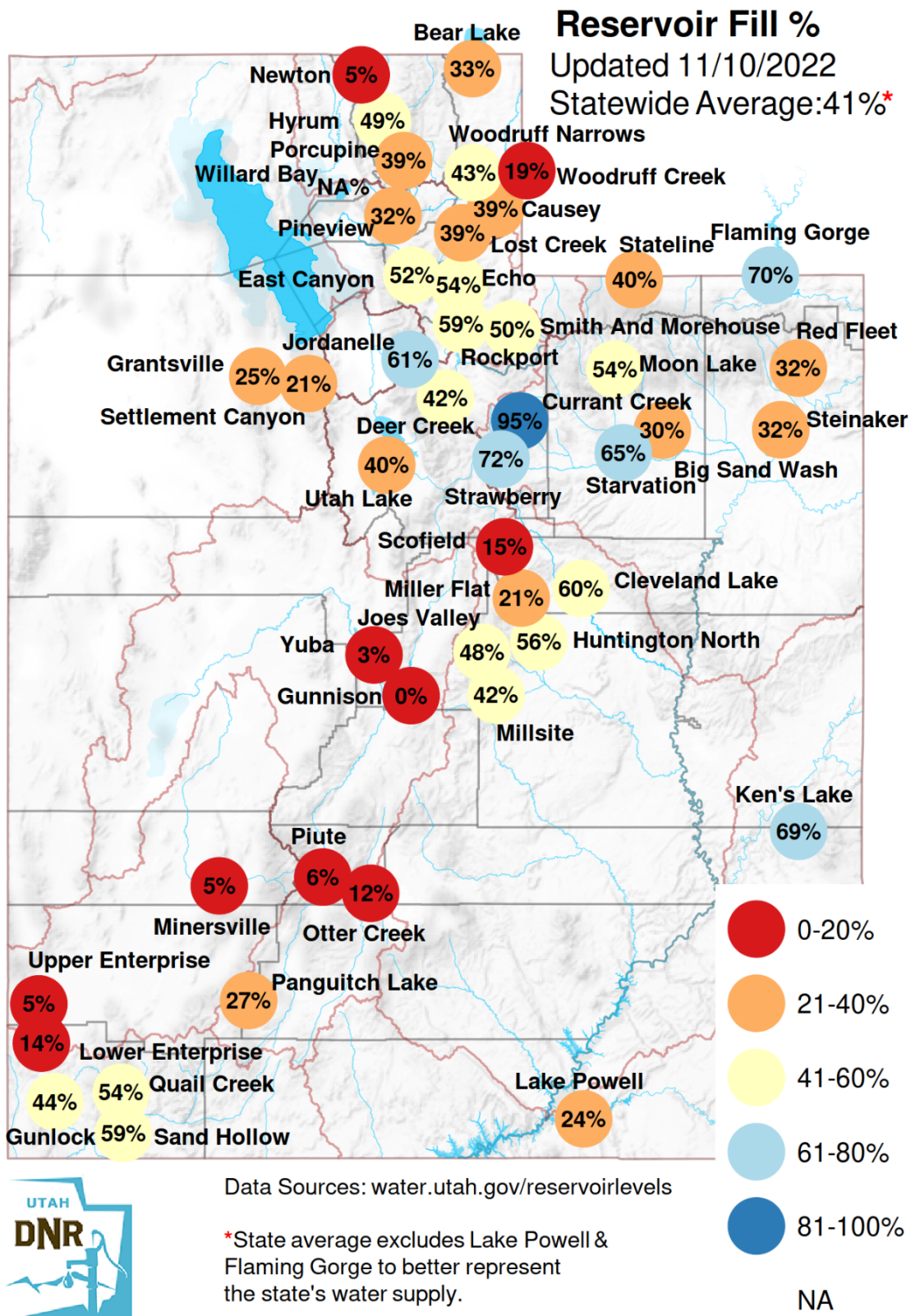
Brian Fuchs
National Drought Mitigation Center



Graphic compares Utah's current drought situation to 2021. Extreme and exceptional drought (the worst category) covers 52% of the state. Last year at this time, 79% of the state was in exceptional drought.

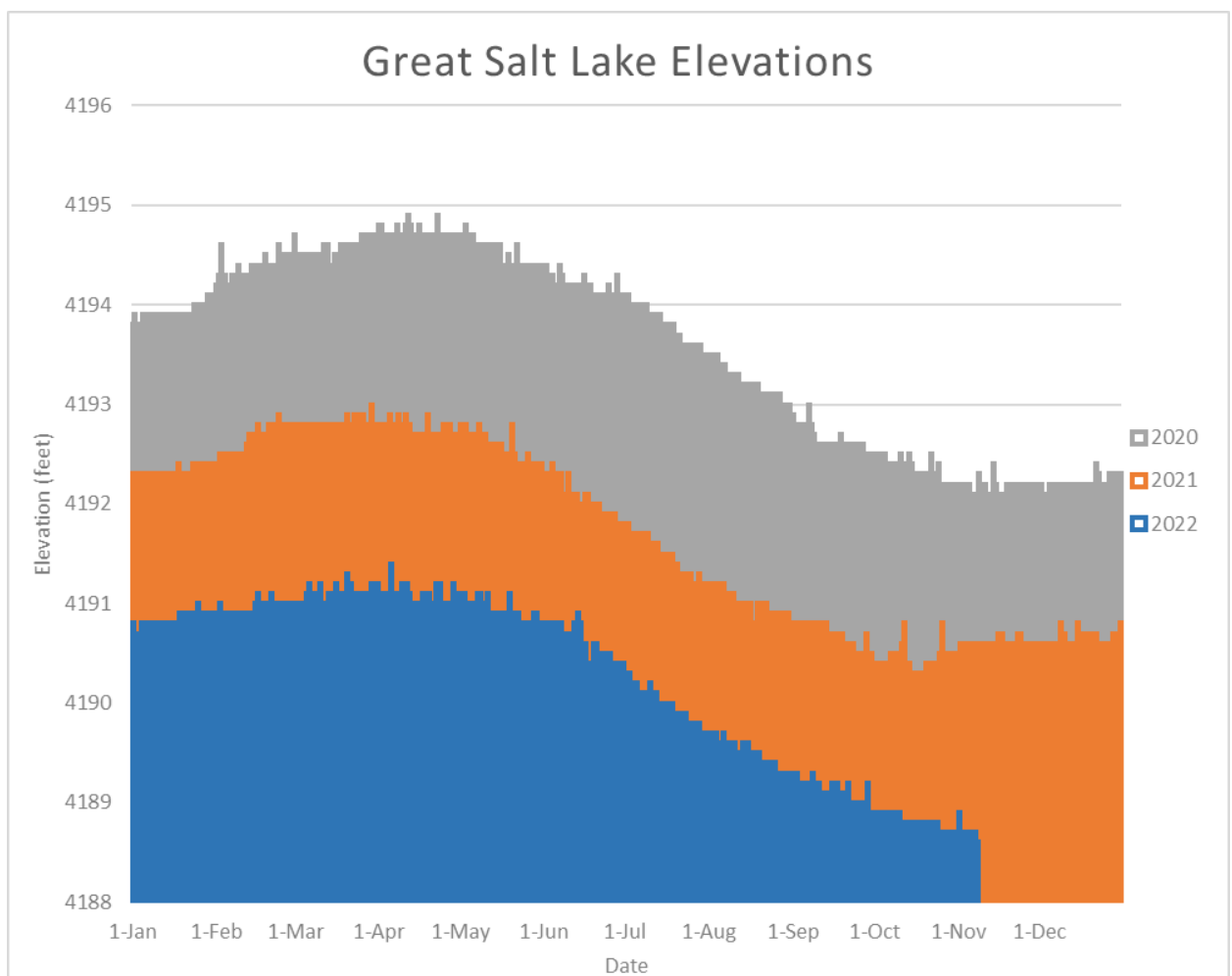
U.S. Drought Monitor

- According to the latest information released by the [U.S. Drought Monitor](https://droughtmonitor.unl.edu/), drought conditions continue to plague the state, with 52% of the state experiencing “Extreme” or “exceptional” drought conditions. Extreme and exceptional drought conditions are the Drought Monitor’s most serious categories. At the same time last year, 88% of the state was in extreme drought.
- Residents looking to report drought impacts can use the U.S. Drought Monitor’s [Condition Monitoring Observer Report](#) system. The report will become part of the permanent record, appearing immediately on an interactive map visible to the public, including authors of the U.S. Drought Monitor and the media.



Reservoir and Lake Levels

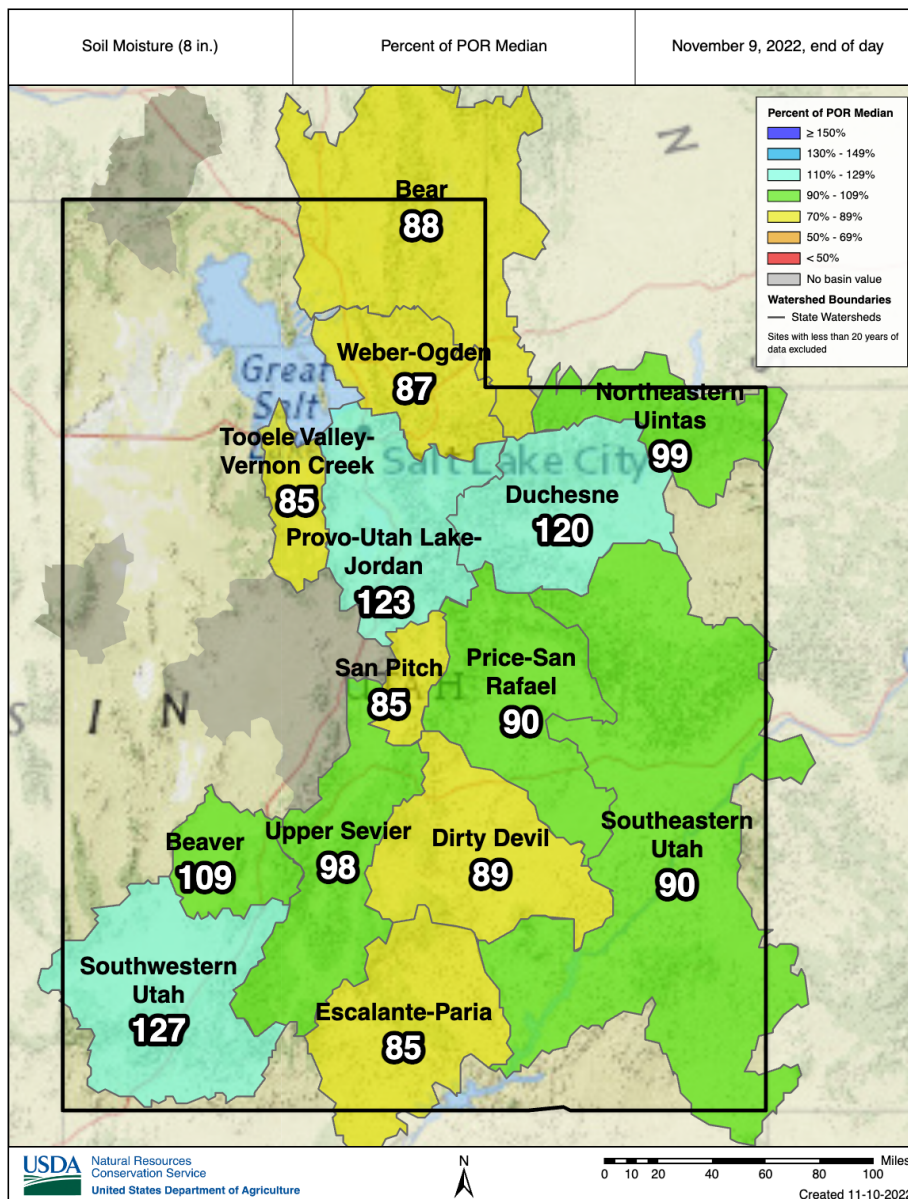
- Reservoir storage statewide continues to drop and now averages 41%. Thirty-seven of Utah's 47 reservoirs are below 55% of available capacity.
- Current statewide reservoir levels are about the same as they were last year at this time.
- Great Salt Lake levels have started to stabilize now that temperatures are dropping, storms are moving in and irrigation has concluded for the season. Levels are expected to slowly rise and peak with spring runoff. Currently, the average [daily surface elevation](#) is 4,188.8. It surpassed the previous record low (4,190.2) on July 3, the division anticipates the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) will announce a new historic low in the coming months.



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

Precipitation and soil moisture

- Soil moisture is critical to an effective spring runoff. October is typically a cooler, wetter month that brings soil moisture up. Unfortunately, the state experienced higher than normal temperatures and a dry first three weeks of the month. Soil moisture is currently below normal for this time of year. Although soil moisture is lower than normal, we aren't seeing the record dry soils that heavily impacted runoff two years ago.
- The National Weather Service is forecasting a third year of La Nina. La Nina typically results in higher than normal temperatures and drier than normal precipitation in southern Utah. The majority of the state has less consistent weather patterns with La Nina depending on where the jet stream lands.



Soil moisture based on regions as compared to other recorded years (Period of Record). Soil moisture is generally good around the state although there are some lower areas of concern. High soil moisture is important in the fall before the soil freezes for the winter.

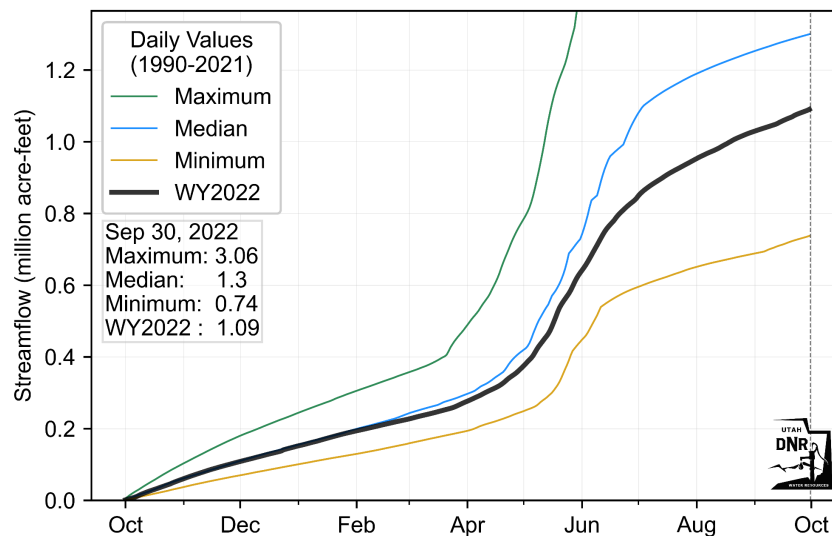
Temperature and Evaporation

- Temperatures ran an average of about six degrees above normal for the last two weeks. Cooler temperatures reduce evaporative demand and increase the chance of precipitation falling as snow, particularly in higher elevations.

Streamflows

- Well over half, 61%, of stream gauges are currently below average. This is likely due to the first three weeks of October being very dry..
- 9 of 99 measured streams are flowing at record low.

Cumulative Flow of 28 Headwater Streams



Total volume of streamflow water for the water year for headwater streams is below average. Headwater streams are unregulated and represent natural runoff conditions. The current year black line is significantly below the median blue line.

Department of Environmental Quality

- Recreational water quality monitoring has ended for the season, with many advisories being lifted across the state. Monitoring for harmful algal blooms (HABs) and waterborne pathogens will resume in summer 2023..
- HABs still may be present in Utah waters year-round. Hunters should stay alert and keep their dogs out of water if they suspect a HAB is present.
 - Danger Advisories are still in effect for:
 - Big East Lake at Payson Lakes
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- Utah Lake: There is a lakewide advisory in place, and advisories at American Fork Marina, Lindon Marina, Saratoga Springs Marina, Lincoln Marina, Utah Lake State Park, Sandy Beach, and Provo Bay at Utah Lake.
- Health Watches are in still effect for:
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Water Rights

On Nov. 3, Gov. Spencer Cox issued a [proclamation](#) closing the Great Salt Lake Basin to new water right appropriations in an effort to address declining water lake levels. The state engineer will evaluate the suspension and provide an update to the governor by Nov. 1, 2023 to determine if it should remain in effect.

“The proclamation provides an opportunity for us to press ‘pause’ and conduct a deliberate study of the existing water use, hydrology, and future demands within the Great Salt Lake basin. Doing so will enable better collaboration among stakeholders and allow us to craft effective and meaningful policy aimed at mitigating the effects of persistent drought on the Great Salt Lake while also protecting existing water rights,” said Teresa Wilhelmsen, State Engineer and Director of the Utah Division of Water Rights.