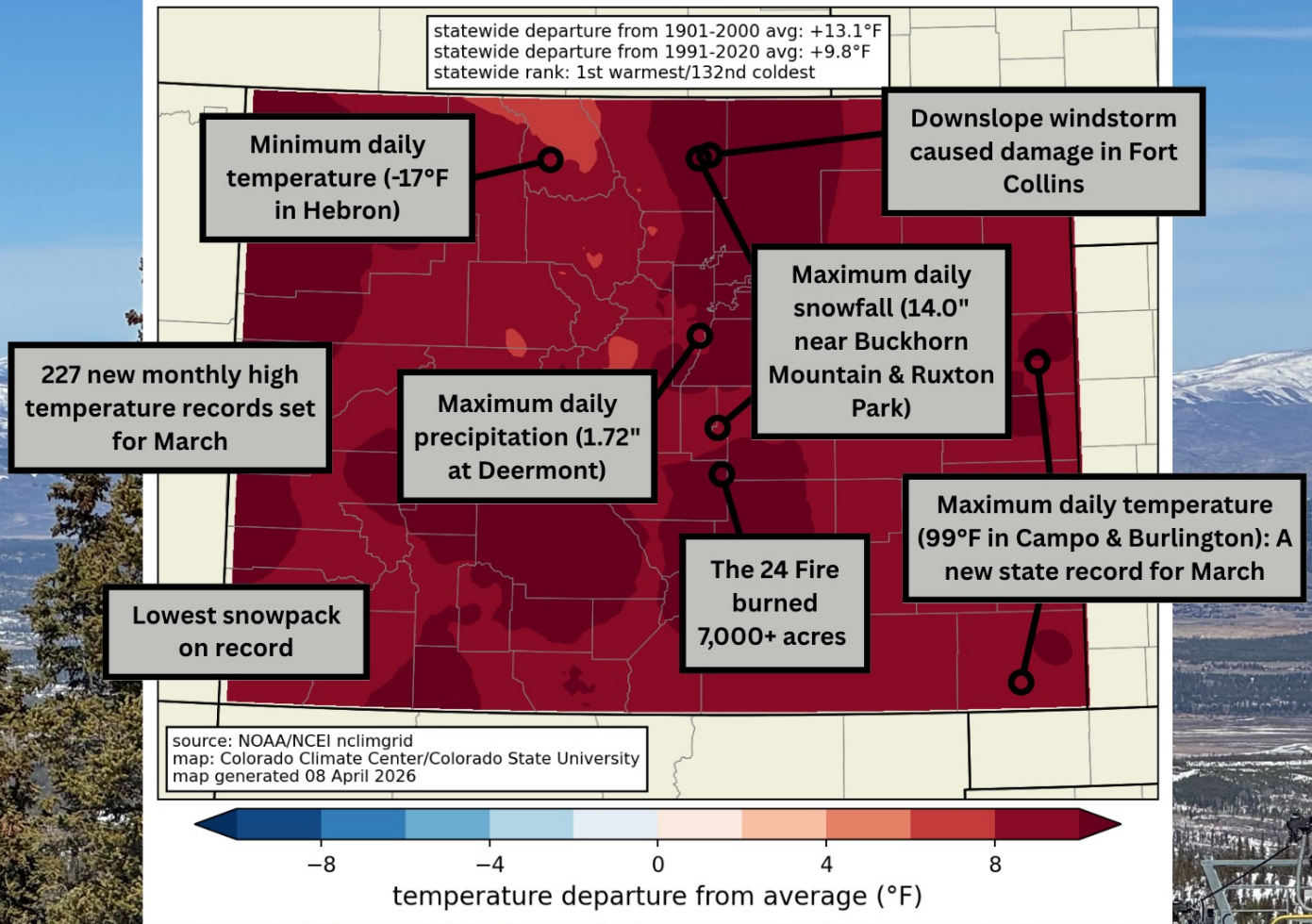


March 2026

Colorado Monthly Climate Summary

temperature departure from 1991-2020 average
March 2026



March 2026 Temperature Departure from Normal (from NCEI nclimgrid)

Statewide Temperature and Precipitation Ranks for March 2026

(based on 1895-2026 data)

1st warmest (record warmest) ■ **Tied for 2nd driest (below average)**



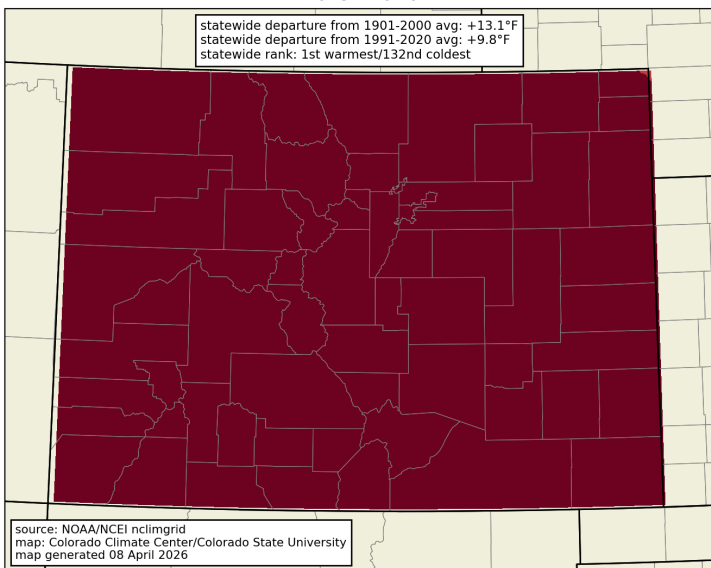
Winter Park
March 18, 2026
Photo by Russ Schumacher



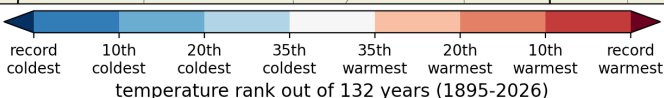
temperature

average temperature rank
March 2026

statewide departure from 1901-2000 avg: +13.1°F
statewide departure from 1991-2020 avg: +9.8°F
statewide rank: 1st warmest/132nd coldest



source: NOAA/NCEI nclimgrid
map: Colorado Climate Center/Colorado State University
map generated 08 April 2026

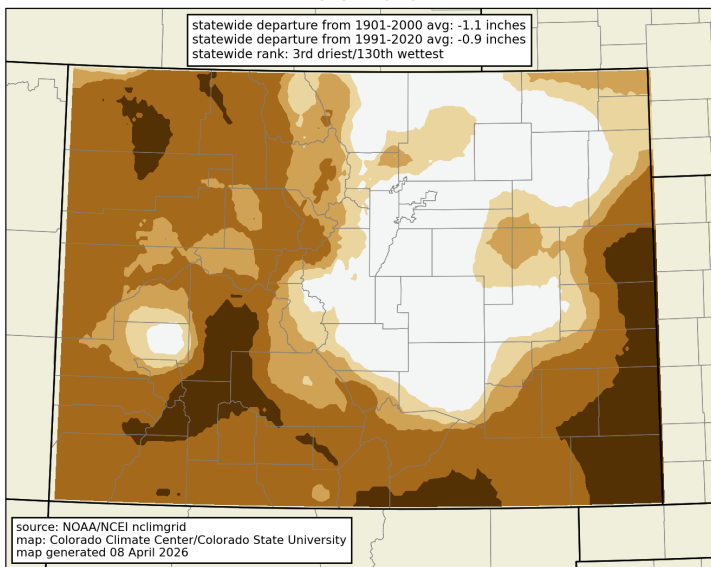


It was the warmest March on record for Colorado, by a large margin. According to NOAA's dataset, all but a tiny sliver in the far northeast corner of the state experienced the warmest March in 132 years of data. March 2026 was warmer than more than 90% of past Aprils. Records for warmth were shattered across the state, which will be discussed in more detail below.

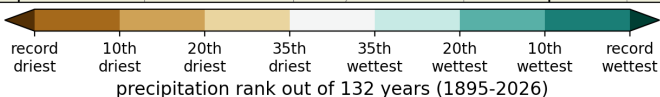
precipitation

precipitation rank
March 2026

statewide departure from 1901-2000 avg: -1.1 inches
statewide departure from 1991-2020 avg: -0.9 inches
statewide rank: 3rd driest/130th wettest



source: NOAA/NCEI nclimgrid
map: Colorado Climate Center/Colorado State University
map generated 08 April 2026



In addition to being extremely warm, March was also very dry across Colorado. Parts of the mountains, western slope, and southeastern plains experienced their driest March on record. A snowstorm early in the month kept some Front Range and adjacent plains areas closer to average precipitation for March.



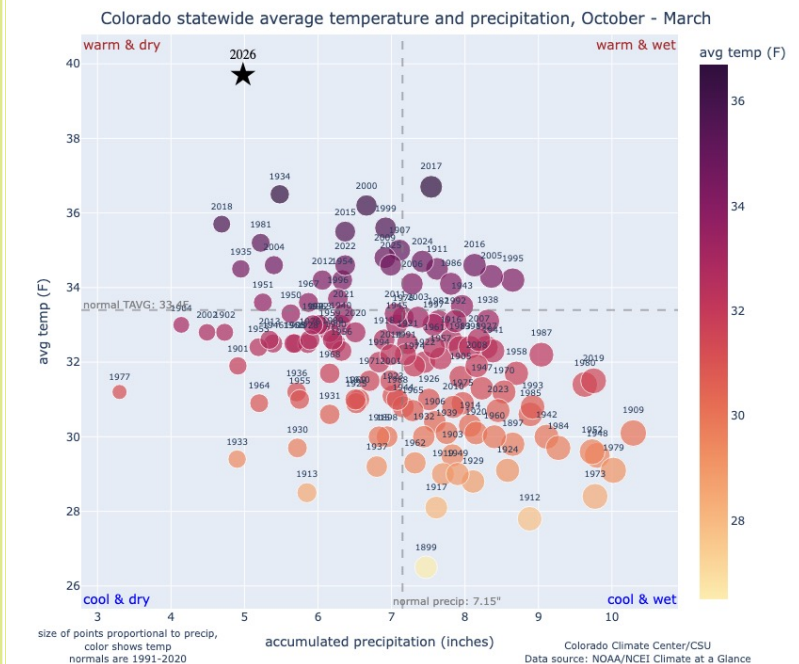
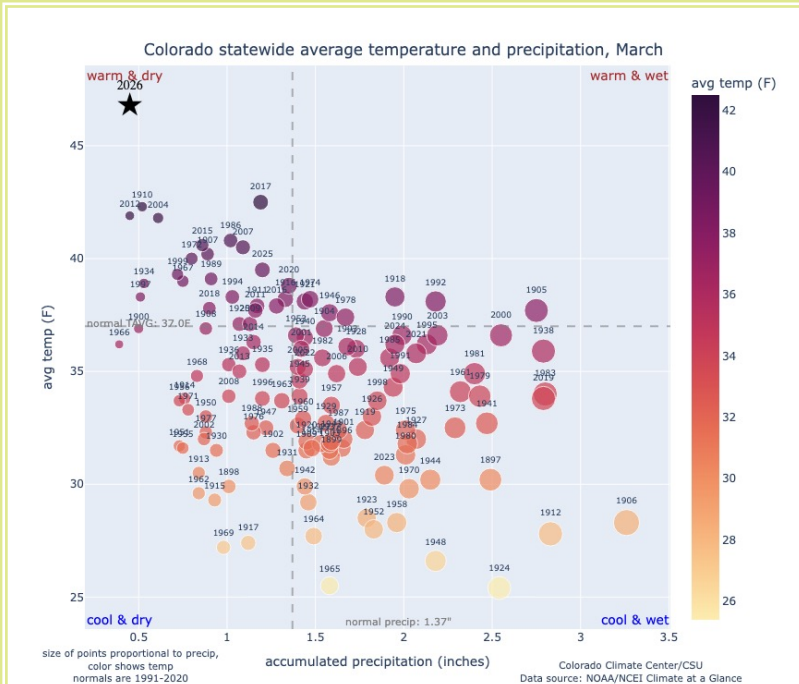
quadrant charts

Each dot plots the precipitation on the horizontal axis and the temperature on the vertical axis. Dots are colored based on temperature and size is based on precipitation. The current year is denoted with a star. The 1991-2020 averages are denoted by the dashed lines.

March 2026 stands far apart from any other March on record in the warm and dry quadrant. Averaged across the state, **March 2026 was an astonishing 13.1°F warmer than the 20th-century average, 9.8°F above the 1991-2020 average, and 4.3°F warmer than any previous March.** It was tied for the 2nd-driest March ---tied with 2012 and ahead of only 1966---with statewide precipitation 1.07" below the 30-year average.

The first half of water year 2026 has also been by far the warmest on record, 8°F warmer than the 20th-century average, 6.3°F above the 1991-2020 average, and 3°F warmer than any previous October through March period. It is the 9th driest start to a water year, 2.16" below average for precipitation statewide.

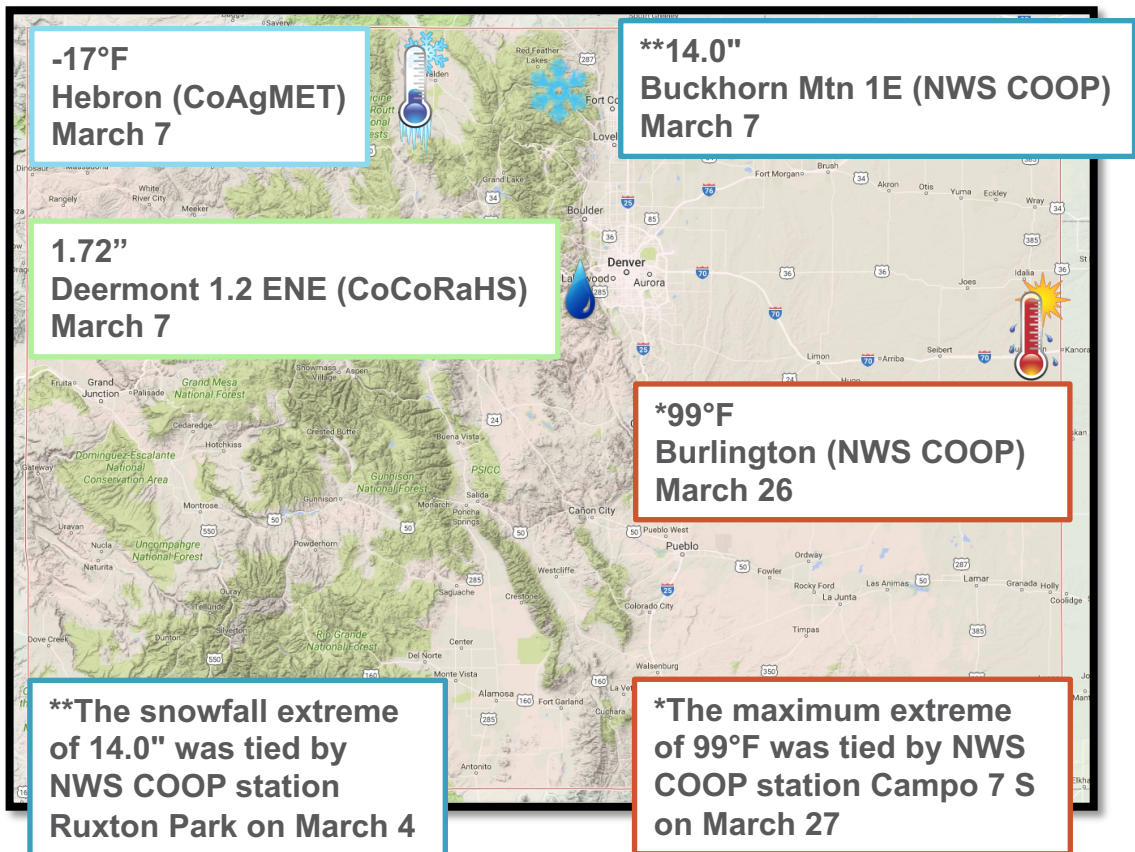
[view all quadrant charts](#)



	High Max	Low Max	High Min	Low Min	Precip	Snow
Daily	120/1064	4/22	108/1072	5/15	7/18	2/12
Monthly	53/227	0/0	33/146	0/1	0/0	0/0
All-time	0/0	0/0	0/0	0/0	0/0	0/0

Tied/Broken, from NOAA National Centers for Environmental Information

state extremes



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 <small>03-24-2026</small>	8.97	91.03	74.28	59.99	23.97	5.87
3 Months Ago <small>12-30-2025</small>	29.36	70.64	37.59	15.21	2.69	0.53
Start of Calendar Year <small>01-01-2026</small>	25.96	74.04	46.22	15.77	4.35	0.67
Start of Water Year <small>09-30-2025</small>	45.82	54.18	45.19	35.88	14.34	0.00
One Year Ago <small>04-01-2025</small>	44.61	55.39	31.39	12.60	0.66	0.00

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>

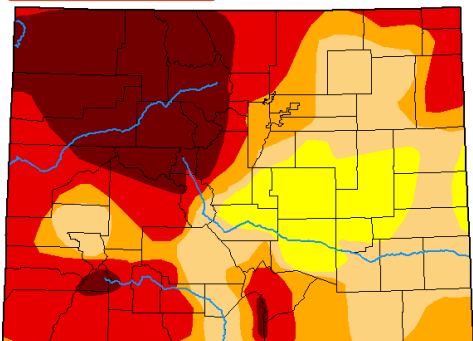
Author:

David Simeral
Western Regional Climate Center

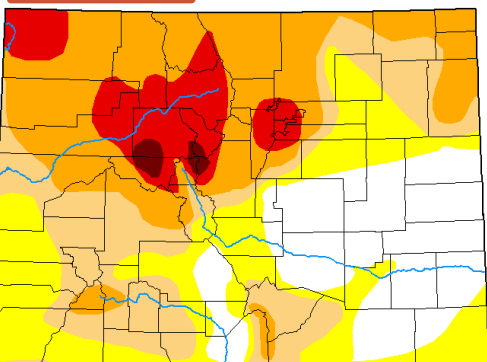


droughtmonitor.unl.edu

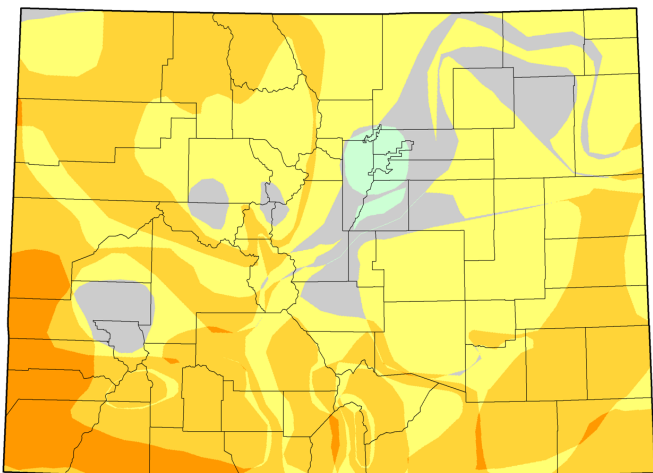
March 31



March 3



U.S. Drought Monitor Class Change - Colorado
4 Week



- 5 Class Degradation
- 4 Class Degradation
- 3 Class Degradation
- 2 Class Degradation
- 1 Class Degradation
- No Change
- 1 Class Improvement
- 2 Class Improvement
- 3 Class Improvement
- 4 Class Improvement
- 5 Class Improvement

March 31, 2026
compared to
March 3, 2026

droughtmonitor.unl.edu

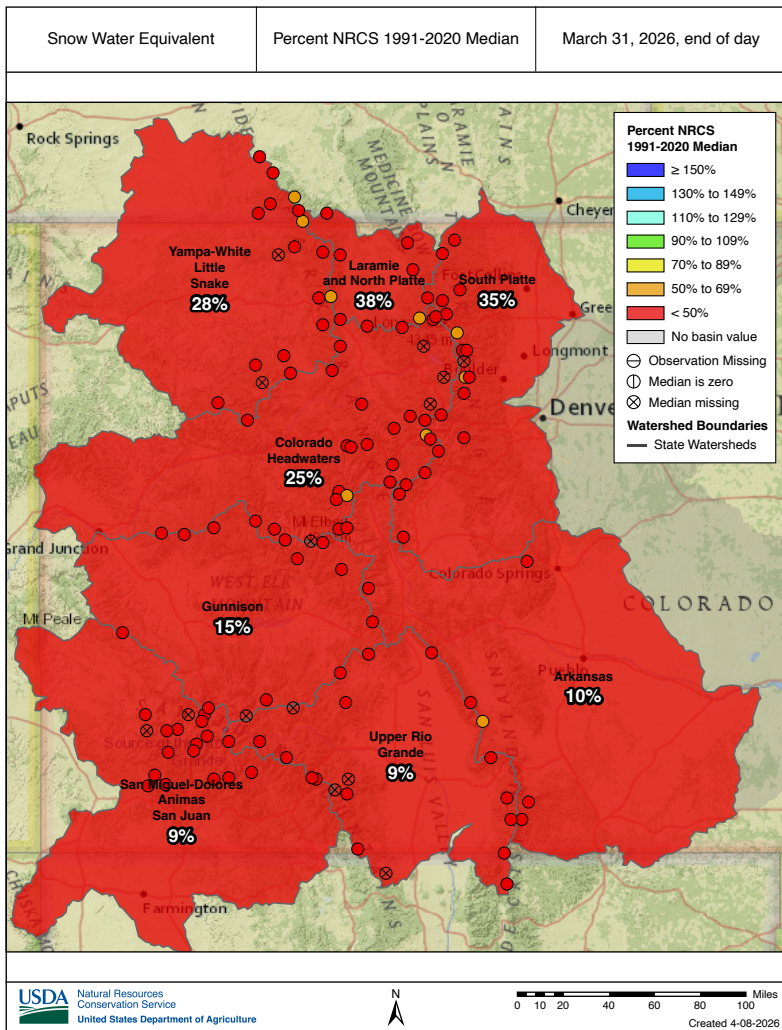
Prolonged warm, dry weather led to quickly-intensifying drought conditions over the past month. Nearly the whole state saw worsening drought, including two- to three categories in some locations.

All of Colorado is now at least "abnormally dry", and ~89% of the state is experiencing at least moderate drought (up from ~57% at the beginning of March). The most severe drought areas expanded substantially, with ~48% of the state now classified under at least extreme drought conditions. Most locations west of the Continental Divide are currently experiencing extreme or exceptional drought.

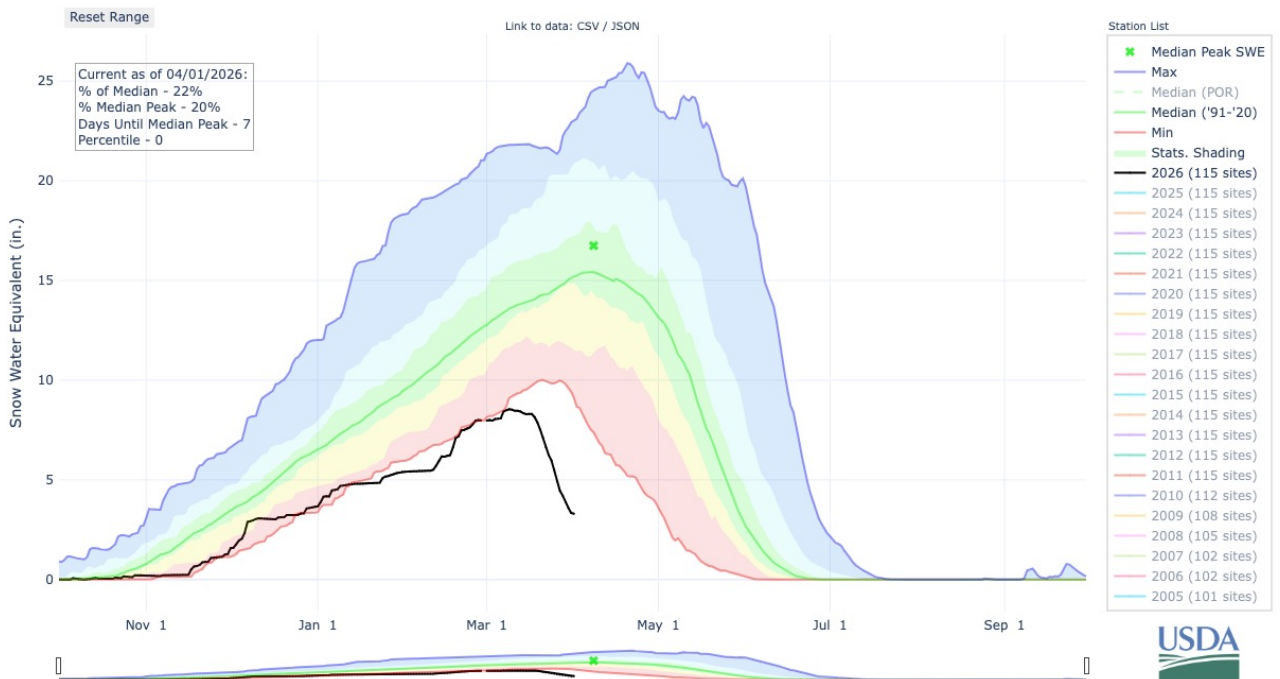


snowpack

Colorado's snowpack officially fell to its lowest on record according to historical data back to the 1930s. Conditions have been poor throughout winter, but March's record heat took the situation from bad to worse as the snowpack melted quickly and way ahead of schedule. Compared to the 1991-2020 median, all of Colorado's major basins were below 50% of median by the end of March, with the southern basins recording snowpack percentages in the single digits. Nearly every SNOTEL and snow course monitoring site in the state reported record low values. On April 1, Colorado's statewide snowpack was 22% of median.

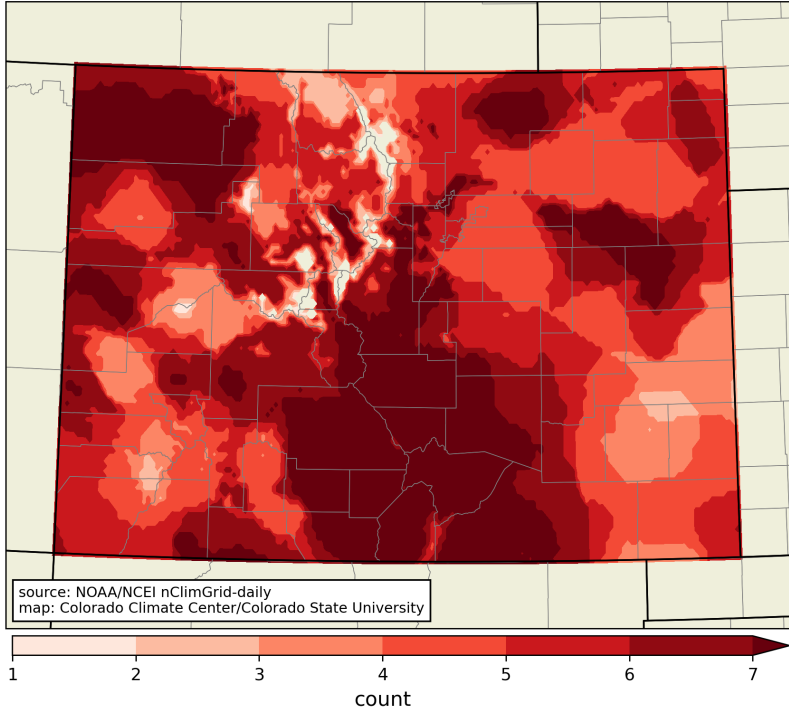


SNOW WATER EQUIVALENT IN STATE OF COLORADO



significant events

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



Number of March 2026 days with a high temperature warmer than any March high temperature during 1951-2025. Data source: NOAA nClimGrid-daily.

The heat wave in the second half of March rewrote the record books for early spring warmth in Colorado. An unprecedented-for-March ridge of high pressure set in across the western US, creating a “heat dome” that was more typical of something we’d see in summer.

Essentially the entire state set new records for March warmth, and in many cases by large margins. The statewide March record was broken with highs of 99°F at Burlington and Campo. Some locations, like Alamosa and Fort Collins, observed high temperatures that even broke their previous record for April.

What made the heat stand out even more was how long it lasted. It wasn’t just a day or two of record-breaking warmth, but in much of the state, more than a week’s worth of days had temperatures higher than any March day in the last 75+ years (see map above, which shows the number of days this March that were warmer than any March day during 1951-2025).

The table at right shows just a sampling of the records broken at long-term stations; hundreds of monthly records were broken at stations across Colorado (see the extremes page earlier in the summary.)

For even more details on the heat wave, check out our blog posts [here](#) and [here](#).

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



CCC in the news

- ❑ **March 3, 2026:** [What Colorado's record warm winter means for our summer water supply](#)
 - Featuring Russ Schumacher in KOAA 5 Southern Colorado
- ❑ **March 4, 2026:** [With time running out, snow drought and warm weather raise wildfire risk in the West](#)
 - Featuring Russ Schumacher in NBC News
- ❑ **March 8, 2026:** ["Forever Water" - What Happens in L.A., Stays in L.A.](#)
 - Featuring Peter Goble in H2O Radio
- ❑ **March 9, 2026:** [Why do mountaintops stay snowy?](#)
 - Featuring Allie Mazurek in The Conversation
- ❑ **March 11, 2026:** [Colorado's historic winter warmth shatters previous temperature records](#)
 - Featuring the Colorado Climate Center monthly report in Colorado Newsline
- ❑ **March 13, 2026:** [Colorado snowpack reaches 40-year low](#)
 - Featuring Allie Mazurek in Western Slope Now
- ❑ **March 16, 2026:** [Heat dome to bring record-breaking temperatures across the West](#)
 - Featuring Russ Schumacher in Aspen Public Radio
- ❑ **March 17, 2026:** [Heat wave to hit much of Colorado heading into first day of spring](#)
 - Featuring Peter Goble in CPR News
- ❑ **March 17, 2026:** [After 'winter of defeat,' Colorado hopes for wetter summer](#)
 - Featuring Peter Goble in the Denver Gazette



CCC in the news - continued

- ❑ **March 17, 2026: [Gov. Jared Polis activates Drought Task Force after months of snow drought](#)**
 - Featuring Peter Goble in CPR News
- ❑ **March 17, 2026: [Colorado activates drought task force as hope for snowpack recovery dwindles](#)**
 - Featuring Peter Goble in The Aspen Times
- ❑ **March 17, 2026: [Extraordinary, climate change-fueled heat wave envelops the West with mounting consequences](#)**
 - Featuring Russ Schumacher in CNN
- ❑ **March 19, 2026: [Fort Collins sets record for hottest day ever in March](#)**
 - Featuring Peter Goble and Noah Newman in the Coloradoan
- ❑ **March 20, 2026: [Colorado's early snowmelt is a preview of a hotter future](#)**
 - Featuring Peter Goble in CPR News
- ❑ **March 21, 2026: [Colorado's 'unprecedented' March heat wave shows climate change in action, experts say](#)**
 - Featuring Peter Goble in Sky-Hi News
- ❑ **March 25, 2026: [Colorado faces limited water supply after record-low snowpack](#)**
 - Featuring a guest column by Russ Schumacher in CSU Source
- ❑ **March 26, 2026: [Climate scientists, farmers share growing concern about water levels amid low snow](#)**
 - Featuring Russ Schumacher in KDVR Fox 31 Denver



CCC in the news - continued

- ❑ **March 26, 2026:** [Colorado farmers sound the alarm as the state faces its lowest snowpack levels on record](#)
 - Featuring Peter Goble in Denver ABC 7 News
- ❑ **March 27, 2026:** [Impact of drought on rivers in Colorado.](#)
 - Featuring Peter Goble in NBC News
- ❑ **March 27, 2026:** [Colorado residents face earliest water restrictions ever – a harbinger for worse to come](#)
 - Featuring Peter Goble in NBC News
- ❑ **March 27, 2026:** [Impact of drought on rivers and Western Colorado](#)
 - Featuring Peter Goble in KCCO FOX GJT
- ❑ **March 28, 2026:** [Early April could bring precipitation to parts of Rockies, Plains](#)
 - Featuring Peter Goble in the Fence Post
- ❑ **March 30, 2026:** [Colorado’s snowpack takes ‘massive nosedive’ amid a ‘record-smashing’ heatwave](#)
 - Featuring Allie Mazurek in the Aspen Times

See more news from this month here:

https://climate.colostate.edu/ccc_news.html

Subscribe to our blog here: <https://climate.colostate.edu/blog/>

