



Natural  
Resources  
Conservation  
Service

# Arizona

## Basin Outlook Report

### March 15, 2012



**Issued by**

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## **Basin Outlook Reports And Federal – State – Private Cooperative Snow Surveys**

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### ***How forecasts are made***

Most of the annual streamflow in Arizona originates as snowfall that has accumulated in the mountains during the winter and early spring. As the snowpack accumulates, hydrologists estimate the runoff that will occur when it melts. Measurements of snow water equivalent at selected manual snow courses and automated Snow Telemetry (SNOTEL) sites, along with precipitation and streamflow values, are used in statistical and simulation models to prepare runoff forecasts. These forecasts are coordinated between hydrologists in the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) the National Weather Service, and the Salt River Project.

Forecasts of any kind are not perfect. Streamflow forecast uncertainty arises from three primary sources: (1) uncertainty of future weather conditions, (2) uncertainty in the forecasting procedure, and (3) errors in the data. The forecast, therefore, must be interpreted not as a single value but rather as a range of values with specific probabilities of occurrence. The middle of the range is expressed by the 50% exceedance probability forecast, for which there is a 50% chance that the actual flow will be above, and a 50% chance that the actual flow will be below, this value. To describe the expected range around this 50% value, four other forecasts are provided, two smaller values (90% and 70% exceedance probability) and two larger values (30%, and 10% exceedance probability). For example, there is a 90% chance that the actual flow will be more than the 90% exceedance probability forecast.

The wider the spread among these values, the more uncertain the forecast. As the season progresses, forecasts become more accurate, primarily because a greater portion of the future weather conditions become known. This is reflected by a narrowing of the range around the 50% exceedance probability forecast. Users should take this uncertainty into consideration when making operational decisions by selecting forecasts corresponding to the level of risk they are willing to assume about the amount of water to be expected. If users anticipate receiving a lesser supply of water, or are concerned about having an adequate water supply, they may want to base their decisions on the 90% or 70% exceedance probability forecasts. On the other hand, if users anticipate receiving too much water, or are concerned about the threat of flooding, they may want to base their decisions on the 30% or 10% exceedance probability forecasts. Regardless of the forecast value users choose, they should be prepared to deal with either more or less water.



### ***For more water supply and resource management information, contact:***

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# ARIZONA Basin Outlook Report as of March 15, 2012

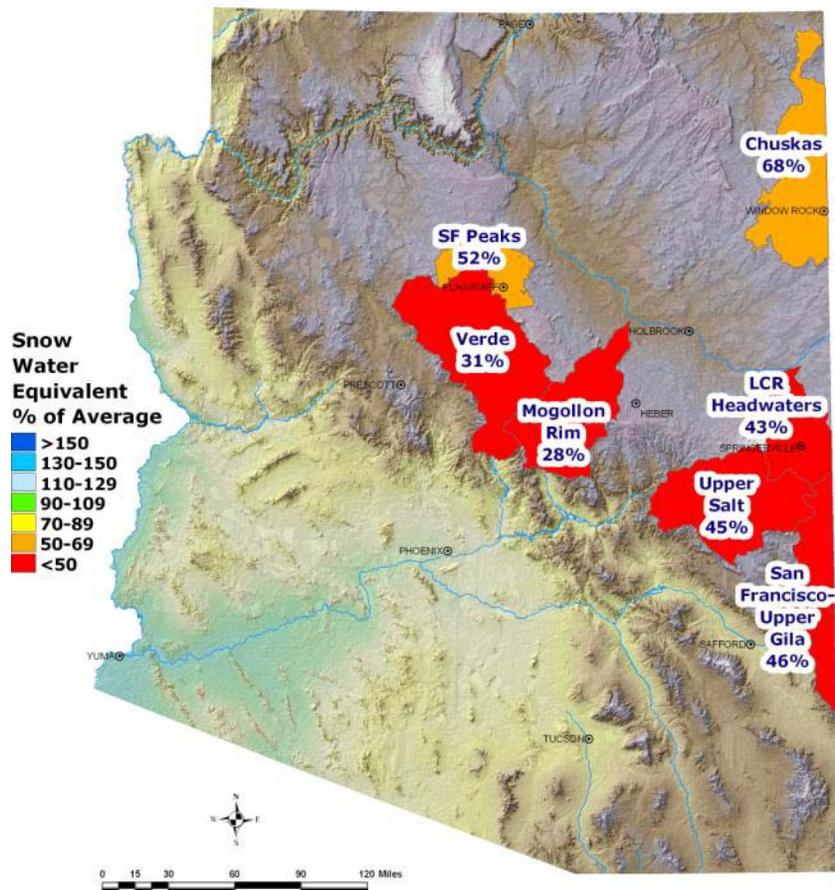
## SUMMARY

As of March 15, snowpack levels are well below normal in all of the basins. Precipitation for the first half of March was well below normal throughout the basins. The Salt and Verde River reservoir system stands at 66 percent of capacity, while San Carlos Reservoir is at 3 percent of capacity. The mid-month forecast continues to call for well below normal runoff in all of the basins for the remainder of the spring runoff period.

## SNOWPACK

Snow water equivalent levels are well below normal in the major river basins, ranging from a low of 31 percent of average in the Verde River Basin to a high of 46 percent of average in the San Francisco-Upper Gila River Basin. The statewide snowpack is also well below normal at 40 percent of the long-term average.

**Arizona  
Snow Water Equivalent  
as of March 15, 2012**

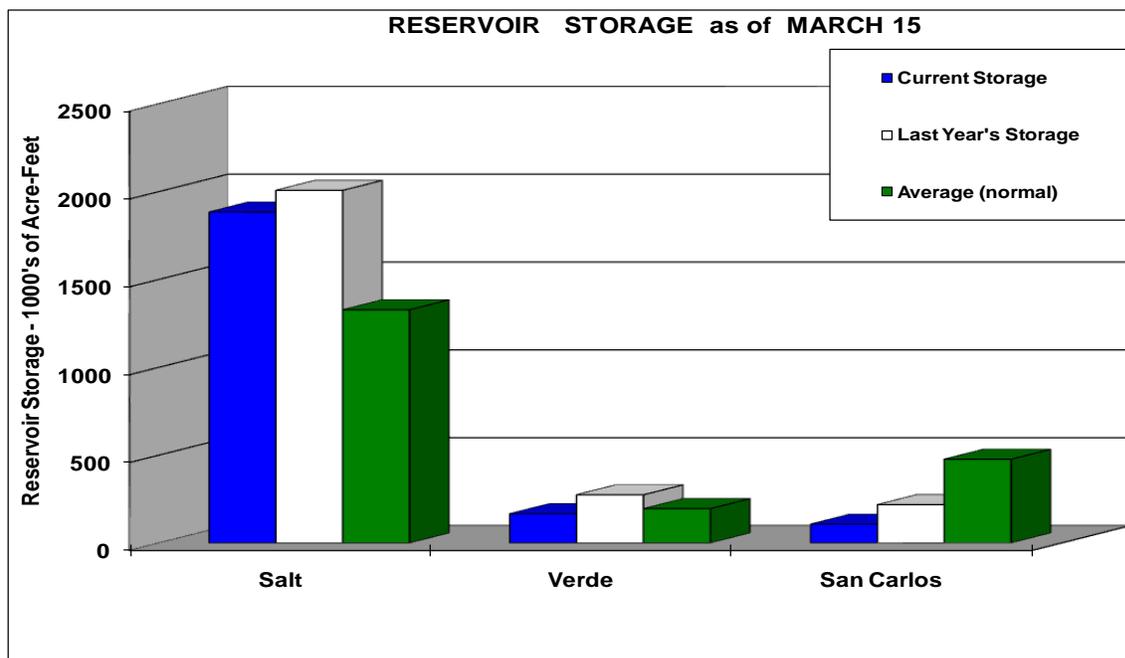


## PRECIPITATION

Mountain data from NRCS SNOTEL sites and Cooperator precipitation gages show that precipitation for the first half of March was well below normal, ranging from only seven percent of average in the Verde River Basin to 12 percent of average in the San Francisco-Upper Gila River Basin. Cumulative precipitation since October 1 is below normal in all basins. Please refer to the precipitation bar graphs found in this report for more information on precipitation levels in the basins.

## RESERVOIR STORAGE

As of March 15, the Salt and Verde River reservoir system stands at 66 percent of capacity. San Carlos Reservoir, however, remains well below normal at only 3 percent of capacity.



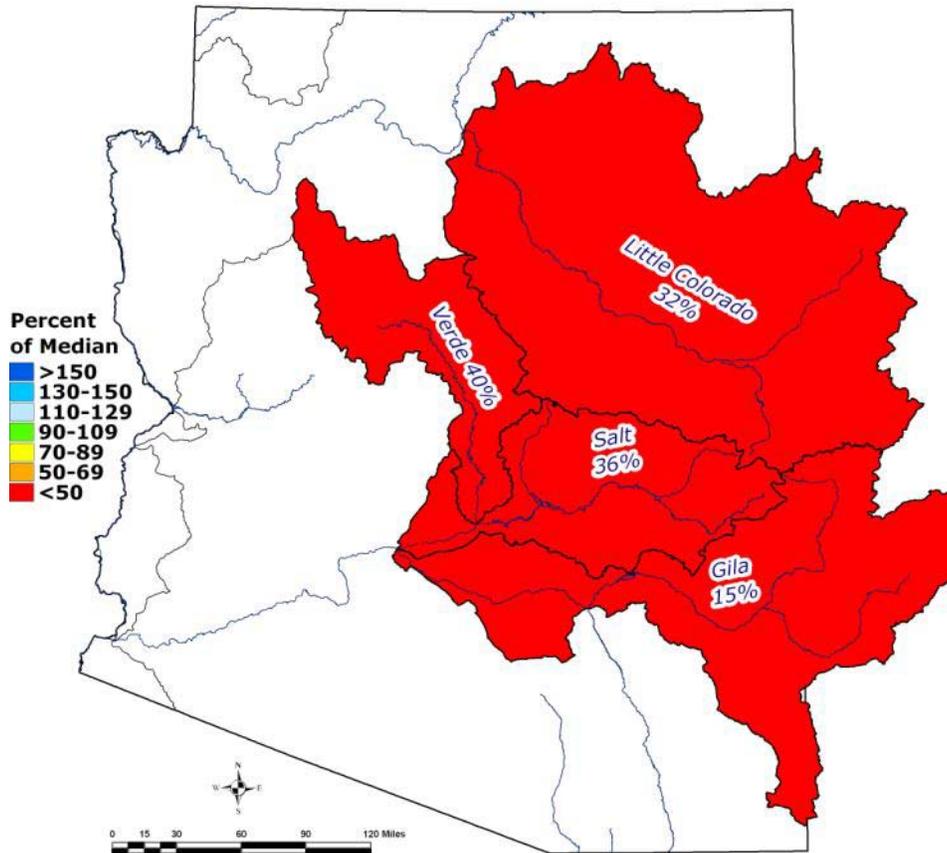
Key storage volumes displayed in thousands of acre-feet (x1000):

<u>Reservoir</u>	<u>Current Storage</u>	<u>Last Year Storage</u>	<u>30-Year Average</u>	<u>Storage Capacity</u>
Salt River System	1450.0	1883.6	1327.4	2025.8
Verde River System	68.4	166.4	195.7	287.4
San Carlos Reservoir	24.3	107.1	476.9	875.0
Lyman Lake	9.6	17.8	17.2	30.0
Lake Havasu	553.9	565.8	562.3	619.0
Lake Mohave	1672.2	1678.2	1680.4	1810.0
Lake Mead	14763.0	11142.0	21999.0	26159.0
Lake Powell	15410.0	13026.0	18326.0	24322.0

## STREAMFLOW

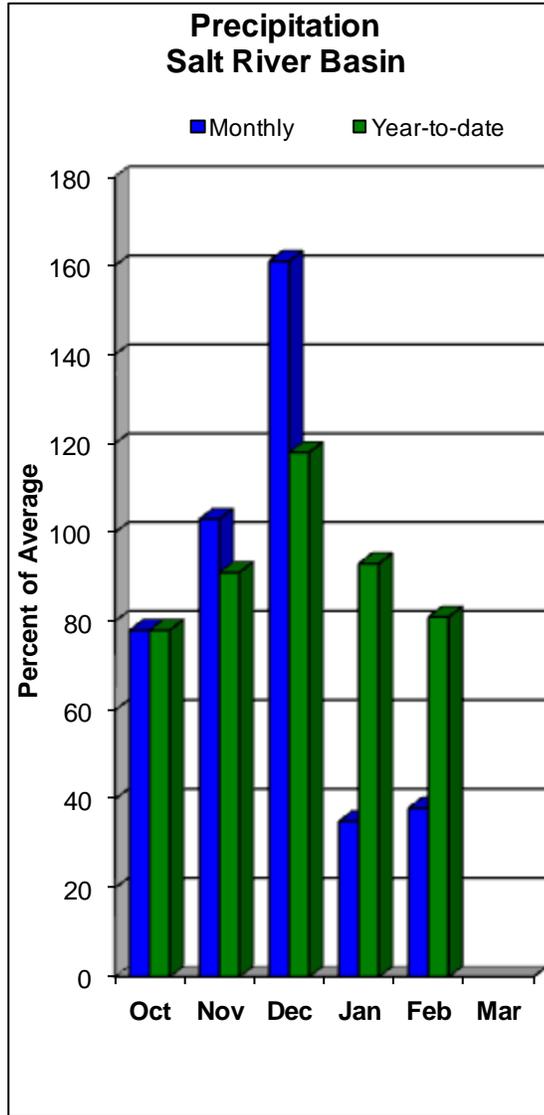
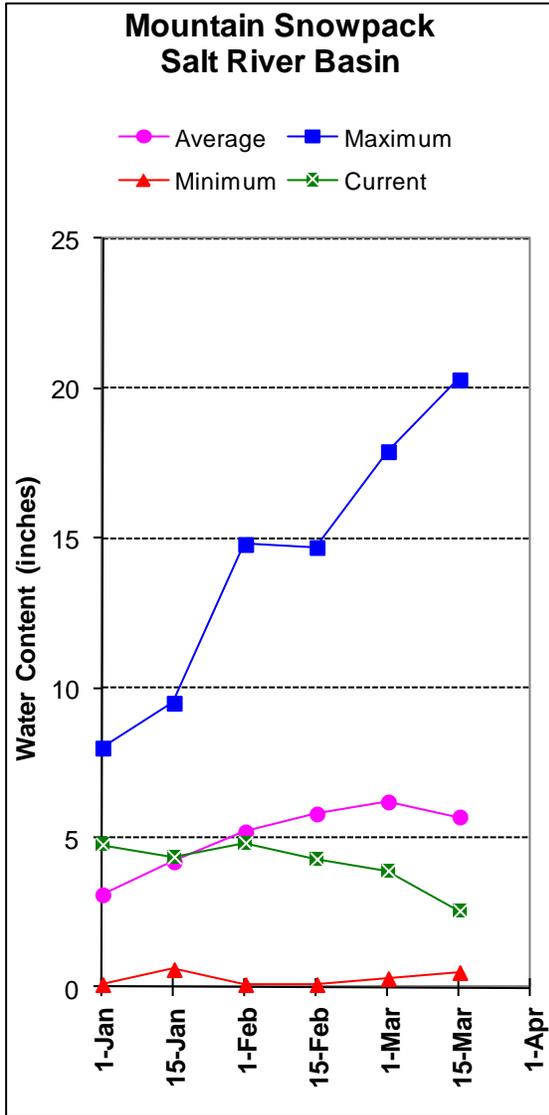
As of March 15, the forecast continues to call for well below normal streamflow for the remainder of the spring runoff period, ranging from only 15 percent of median in the Gila River at San Carlos Reservoir Inflow to 40 percent of median in the Verde River above Horseshoe Dam. The mid-month forecasts continue to reflect well below normal precipitation and an expectation for dry conditions to persist. Please refer to the basin forecast tables found in this report for more information regarding water supply forecasts.

### Arizona Spring Streamflow Forecasts as of March 15, 2012



## SALT RIVER BASIN as of March 15, 2012

Well below normal streamflow levels are forecast for the basin. In the Salt River, near Roosevelt, and on Tonto Creek, the forecast calls for 36% of median streamflow through May. Snow survey measurements show the Salt snowpack to be at 45% of average.



SALT RIVER BASIN as of March 15, 2012

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=====
                        SALT RIVER BASIN
                        Streamflow Forecasts - March 15, 2012
=====
Forecast Pt | <=== Drier === Future Conditions === Wetter ===> |
Forecast | ===== Chance of Exceeding * ===== |
Period | (1000AF) (1000AF) | (1000AF) (% MED.) | (1000AF) (1000AF) | (1000AF)
=====
Salt R nr Roosevelt (3)
M15-MAY      27      54      80      36      114      178      225
MARCH              33      25              131

Tonto Ck ab Gun Ck nr Roosevelt (3)
M15-MAY      0.4      2.6      6.0      36      11.5      24      16.6
MARCH              2.4      14              16.9
=====

```

\* 90%, 70%, 50%, 30%, and 10% chances of exceeding are the probabilities that the actual volume will exceed the volumes in the table.  
The average and median are computed for the 1971-2000 base period.  
(1) - The values listed under the 10% and 90% Chance of Exceeding are actually 5% and 95% exceedance levels.  
(2) - The value is natural volume - actual volume may be affected by upstream water management.  
(3) - Median value used in place of average.

```

=====
                        SALT RIVER BASIN
                        Reservoir Storage (1000AF) Mid-March
=====
Reservoir | Usable Capacity | ***** Usable Storage ***** |
| | This Year | Last Year | Average |
=====
SALT RIVER RES SYSTEM | 2025.8 | 1450.0 | 1883.6 | 1327.4
=====

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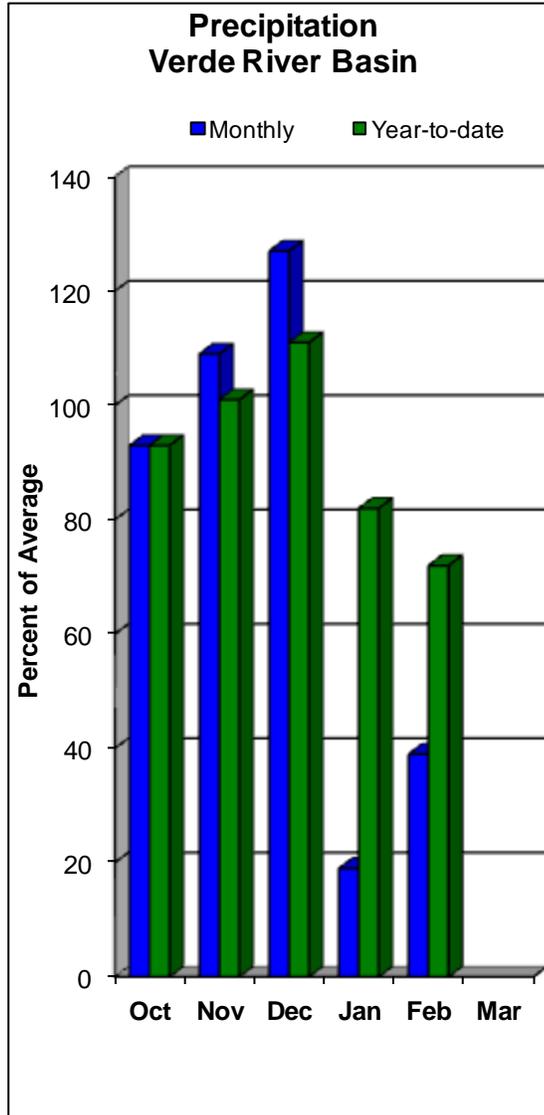
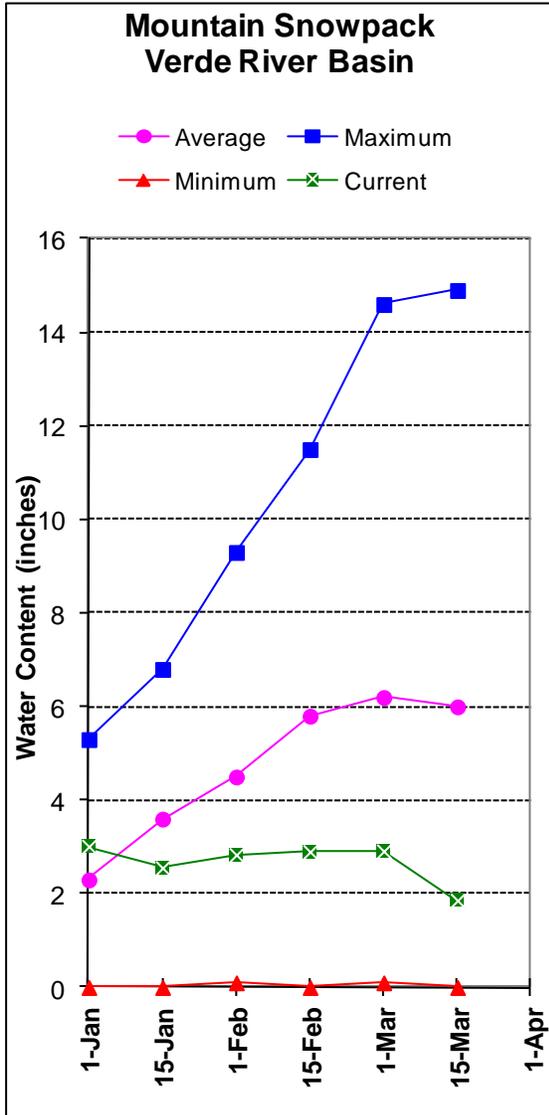
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=====
                        SALT RIVER BASIN
                        Watershed Snowpack Analysis - March 15, 2012
=====
Watershed | Number of Data Sites | This Year as Percent of Last Year | Average |
=====
SALT RIVER BASIN | 10 | 146 | 45
=====

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## VERDE RIVER BASIN as of March 15, 2012

Well below normal streamflow levels are forecast for the basin. In the Verde River, at Horseshoe Dam, the forecast calls for 40% of median streamflow through May. Snow survey measurements show the Verde snowpack to be at 31% of average.



VERDE RIVER BASIN as of March 15, 2012

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=====
                                VERDE RIVER BASIN
                                Streamflow Forecasts - March 15, 2012
=====
Forecast Pt | <=== Drier === Future Conditions === Wetter ===> |
-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
Forecast | ===== Chance of Exceeding * ===== |
Period | 90% 70% | 50% | 30% 10% | 30 Yr Med
| (1000AF) (1000AF) | (1000AF) (% MED.) | (1000AF) (1000AF) | (1000AF)
=====
Verde R bl Tangle Ck ab Horseshoe Dam (3
M15-MAY 9.0 24 40 40 62 108 100
MARCH 17.0 34 50

```

```

=====
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the actual volume will exceed the volumes in the table.
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(1) - The values listed under the 10% and 90% Chance of Exceeding are
actually 5% and 95% exceedance levels.
(2) - The value is natural volume - actual volume may be affected by upstream
water management.
(3) - Median value used in place of average.
=====

```

```

=====
                                VERDE RIVER BASIN
                                Reservoir Storage (1000AF) Mid-March
=====
Reservoir | Usable Capacity | ***** Usable Storage *****
| | This Year | Last Year | Average
=====|=====|=====|=====|=====
VERDE RIVER RES SYSTEM | 287.4 | 68.4 | 166.4 | 195.7
=====

```

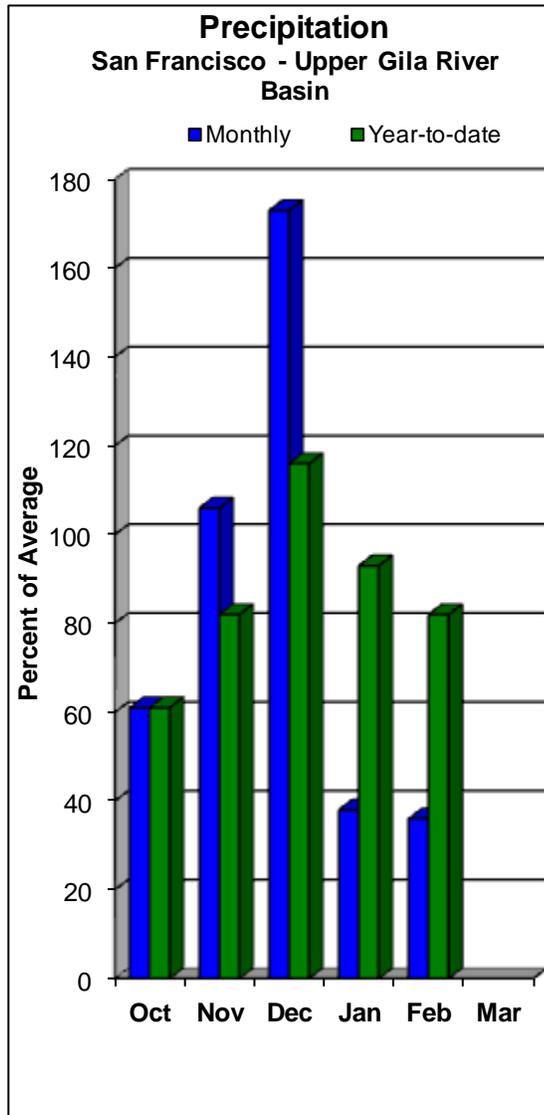
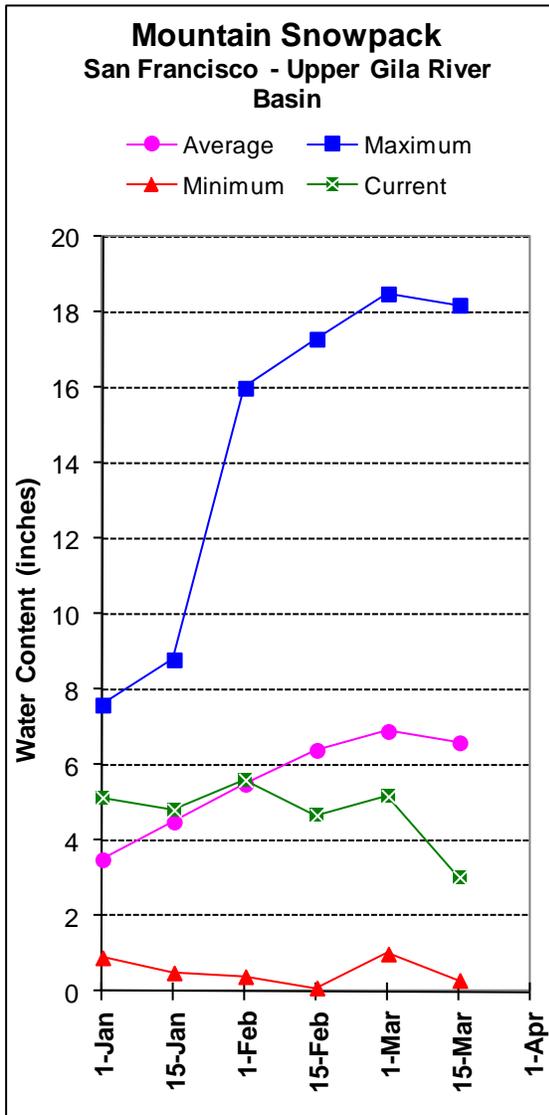
```

=====
                                VERDE RIVER BASIN
                                Watershed Snowpack Analysis - March 15, 2012
=====
Watershed | Number of Data Sites | This Year as Percent of Last Year | Average
=====|=====|=====|=====
VERDE RIVER BASIN | 11 | 45 | 31
SAN FRANCISCO PEAKS | 3 | 53 | 52
=====

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## SAN FRANCISCO-UPPER GILA RIVER BASIN as of March 15, 2012

Well below normal streamflow levels are forecast for the basin. In the San Francisco River, at Clifton, the forecast calls for 39% of median streamflow levels through May. In the Gila River, near Solomon, the forecast calls for 34% of median streamflow levels through May. At San Carlos Reservoir, inflow to the lake is forecast at 15% of median through May. Snow survey measurements show the snowpack for this basin to be at 46% of average.



SAN FRANCISCO - UPPER GILA RIVER BASIN as of March 15, 2012

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=====
                        SAN FRANCISCO - UPPER GILA RIVER BASIN
                        Streamflow Forecasts - March 15, 2012
=====
Forecast Pt | <=== Drier === Future Conditions === Wetter ===> |
Forecast | ===== Chance of Exceeding * ===== |
Period | (1000AF) (1000AF) | (1000AF) (% MED.) | (1000AF) (1000AF) | (1000AF)
=====
Gila R at Gila (3)
M15-MAY      8.0    11.3    14.0    56    17.1    22    25

Gila R bl Blue Ck nr Virden (3)
M15-MAY      5.6     8.0    14.0    44     25    41    32

San Francisco R at Glenwood (3)
M15-MAY      2.4     2.7     4.0    33     5.6    8.8    12.3

San Francisco R at Clifton (3)
M15-MAY      4.7     7.0    11.8    39     23    41    30

Gila R nr Solomon (3)
M15-MAY     10.0    15.0     25    34     53    95    73
MARCH              14.7    28

San Carlos Reservoir Inflow (2,3)
M15-MAY      2.0     4.0     7.1    15     25    50    48
    
```

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=====
* 90%, 70%, 50%, 30%, and 10% chances of exceeding are the probabilities that
  the actual volume will exceed the volumes in the table.
The average and median are computed for the 1971-2000 base period.
(1) - The values listed under the 10% and 90% Chance of Exceeding are
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(2) - The value is natural volume - actual volume may be affected by upstream
      water management.
(3) - Median value used in place of average.
    
```

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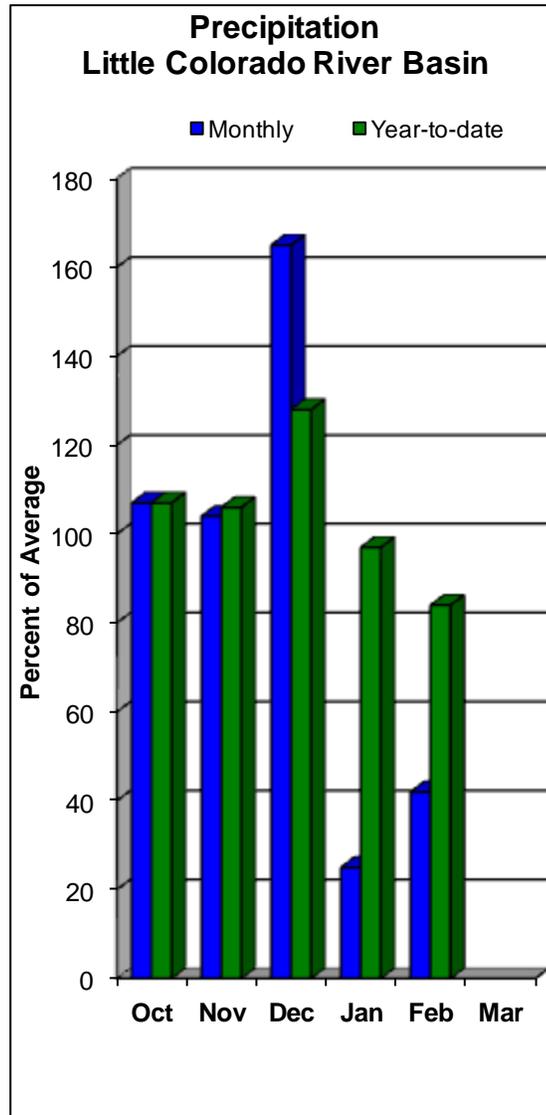
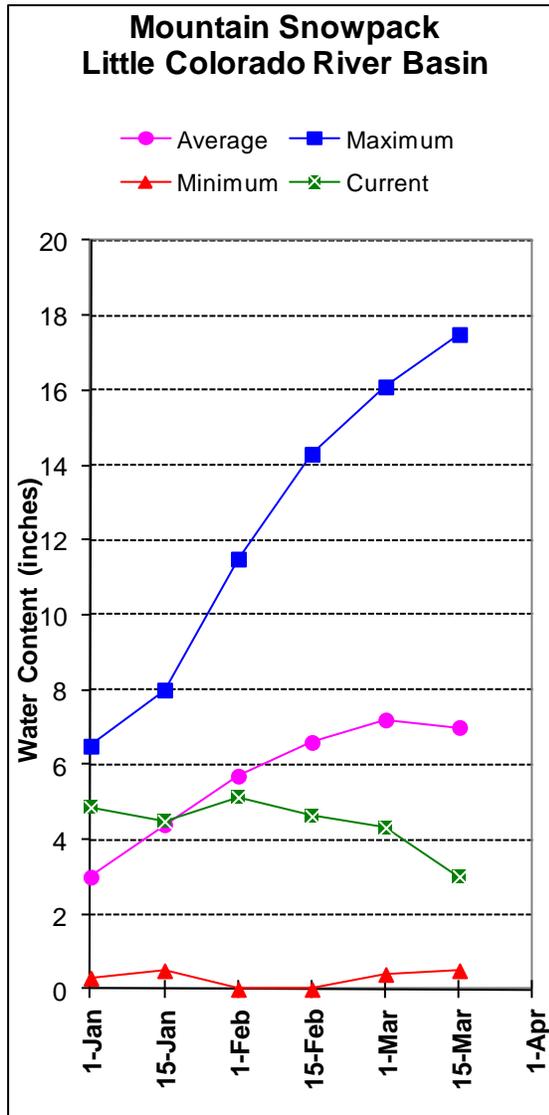
=====
                        SAN FRANCISCO - UPPER GILA RIVER BASIN
                        Reservoir Storage (1000AF) Mid-March
=====
Reservoir | Usable Capacity | ***** Usable Storage ***** |
          |                 | This Year Last Year Average |
=====
SAN CARLOS | 875.0 | 24.3 107.1 476.9 |
    
```

```

=====
                        SAN FRANCISCO - UPPER GILA RIVER BASIN
                        Watershed Snowpack Analysis - March 15, 2012
=====
Watershed | Number of Data Sites | This Year as Percent of Last Year | Average |
=====
SAN FRANCISCO - UPPER GILA R | 9 | 186 | 46 |
    
```

## LITTLE COLORADO RIVER BASIN as of March 15, 2012

Well below normal streamflow levels are forecast for the basin. In the Little Colorado River, at Lyman Lake, the forecast calls for 32% of median streamflow through June. At Blue Ridge (C.C. Cragin) Reservoir, inflow to the lake is forecast at 27% of median through May. Snowpacks along the southern headwaters of the Little Colorado River, and along the central Mogollon Rim, were measured at 43% and 28% of average, respectively.



LITTLE COLORADO RIVER BASIN as of March 15, 2012

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=====
                        LITTLE COLORADO RIVER BASIN
                        Streamflow Forecasts - March 15, 2012
=====
Forecast Pt | <=== Drier === Future Conditions === Wetter ===> |
Forecast | ===== Chance of Exceeding * ===== |
Period | (1000AF) (1000AF) | (1000AF) (% MED.) | (1000AF) (1000AF) | (1000AF)
=====
Little Colorado R ab Lyman Lake (3)
MAR-JUN      0.53      1.25      2.00      32      3.00      5.00      6.30

Blue Ridge Reservoir Inflow (3)
MAR-MAY      1.1       2.4       3.5       27      4.8       7.2      12.8

Lake Mary Reservoir Inflow (3)
MAR-MAY      0.25      0.62      1.00      24      1.52      2.60      4.10
    
```

```

=====
* 90%, 70%, 50%, 30%, and 10% chances of exceeding are the probabilities that
the actual volume will exceed the volumes in the table.
The average and median are computed for the 1971-2000 base period.
(1) - The values listed under the 10% and 90% Chance of Exceeding are
      actually 5% and 95% exceedance levels.
(2) - The value is natural volume - actual volume may be affected by upstream
      water management.
(3) - Median value used in place of average.
=====
    
```

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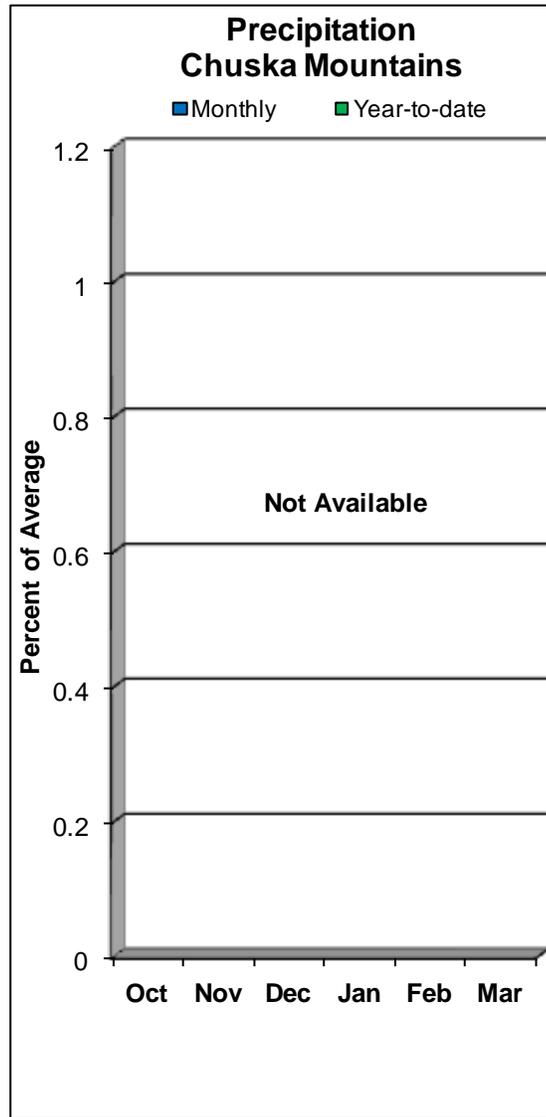
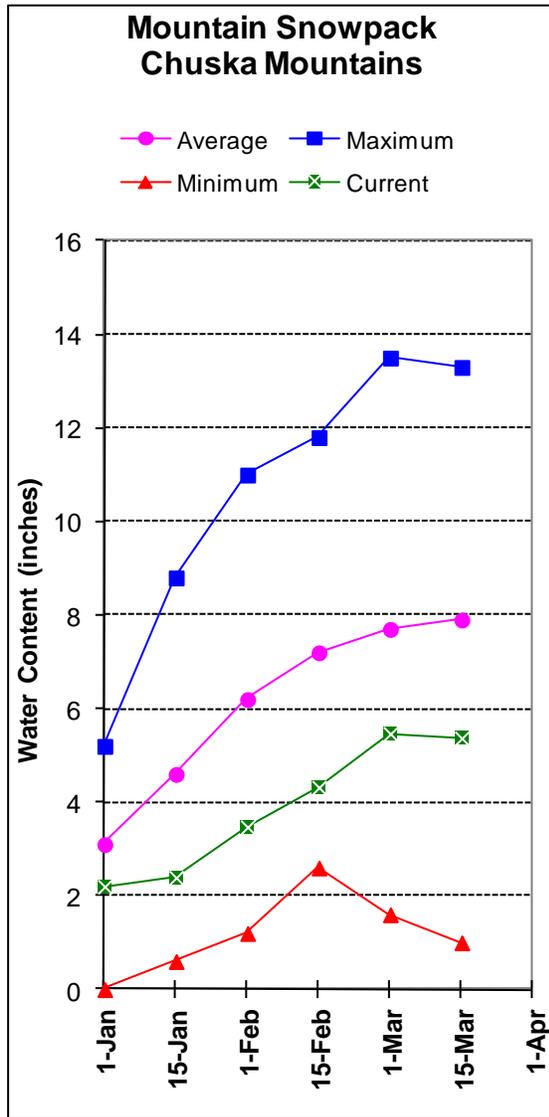
=====
                        LITTLE COLORADO RIVER BASIN
                        Reservoir Storage (1000AF) Mid-March
=====
Reservoir | Usable Capacity | ***** Usable Storage ***** |
           |                 | This Year Last Year Average |
=====
LYMAN RESERVOIR | 30.0 | 9.6 17.8 | 17.2
=====
    
```

```

=====
                        LITTLE COLORADO RIVER BASIN
                        Watershed Snowpack Analysis - March 15, 2012
=====
Watershed | Number of Data Sites | This Year as Percent of Last Year | Average |
=====
LITTLE COLORADO - SOUTHERN H | 10 | 90 | 43
CENTRAL MOGOLLON RIM | 4 | 69 | 28
=====
    
```

## CHUSKA MOUNTAINS as of March 15, 2012

Snow survey measurements conducted by staff of the Navajo Water Management Branch show the Chuska snowpack to be at 68% of average. Well below normal runoff is forecast for Captain Tom Wash, Wheatfields Creek, Bowl Canyon Creek and Kinlichee Creek.



CHUSKA MOUNTAINS as of March 15, 2012

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=====
                        CHUSKA MOUNTAINS
                    Streamflow Forecasts - March 15, 2012
=====
Forecast Pt | <=== Drier === Future Conditions === Wetter ===> |
Forecast    | ===== Chance of Exceeding * ===== |
Period      | 90%    70%    | 50%    | 30%    10%    | 30 Yr Avg
              |(1000AF) (1000AF)|(1000AF) (% AVG.)|(1000AF) (1000AF)| (1000AF)
=====
Captain Tom Wash nr Two Gray Hills
MAR-MAY      0.15    0.72    1.50    53    2.70    5.50    2.83

Wheatfields Ck nr Wheatfields
MAR-MAY      0.93    1.25    1.50    52    1.79    2.30    2.90

Bowl Canyon Ck ab Asaayi Lake
MAR-MAY      0.29    0.46    0.60    60    0.77    1.08    1.00

Kinlichee Ck
MAR-MAY      0.27    0.52    0.75    44    1.04    1.59    1.70
=====

```

\* 90%, 70%, 50%, 30%, and 10% chances of exceeding are the probabilities that the actual volume will exceed the volumes in the table.

The average is computed for the 1971-2000 base period.

- (1) - The values listed under the 10% and 90% Chance of Exceeding are actually 5% and 95% exceedance levels.
- (2) - The value is natural volume - actual volume may be affected by upstream water management.
- (3) - Median value used in place of average.

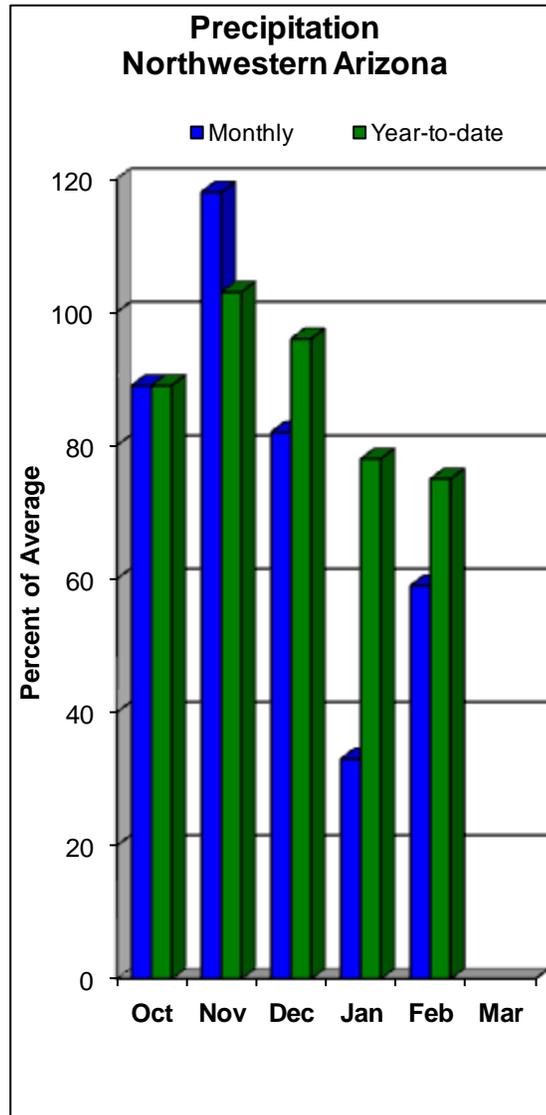
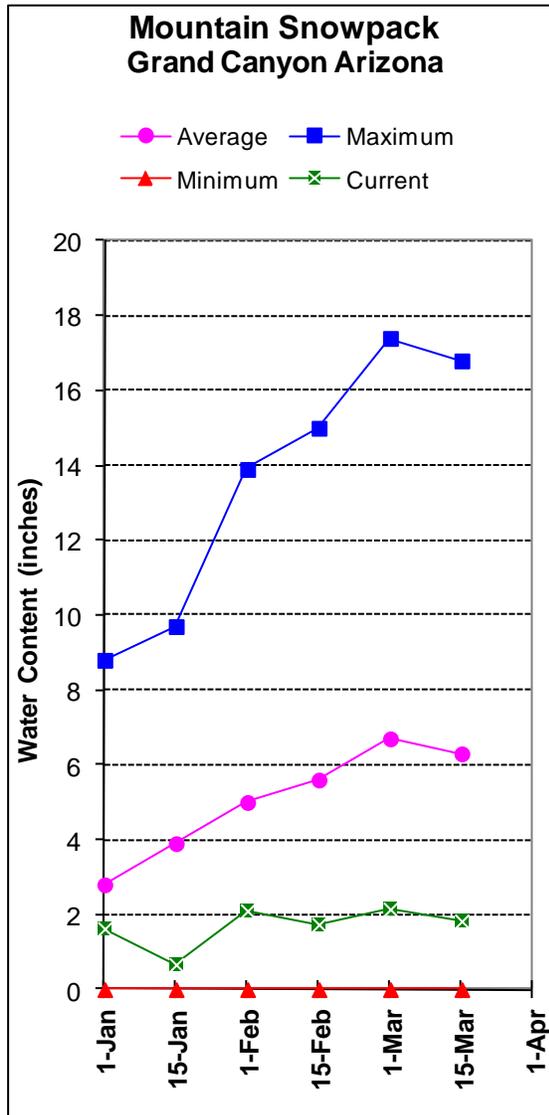
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=====
                        CHUSKA MOUNTAINS
                    Watershed Snowpack Analysis - March 15, 2012
=====
Watershed          Number of          This Year as Percent of
                   Data Sites          Last Year          Average
=====
CHUSKA MOUNTAINS          7          86          68
DEFIANCE PLATEAU          2          20          2
=====

```

## NORTHWESTERN ARIZONA as of March 15, 2012

On the Colorado River, well below normal inflow to Lake Powell is forecast at 61% of the 30-year average for the forecast period April-July. At the Grand Canyon, measurements conducted by park rangers show the snowpack to be at 29% of average.



NORTHWESTERN ARIZONA as of March 15, 2012

NORTHWESTERN ARIZONA  
Streamflow Forecasts - March 15, 2012

Forecast Pt Forecast Period	<=== Drier === Future Conditions === Wetter ===>					30 Yr Avg (1000AF)	
	Chance of Exceeding * 90% 70% 50% 30% 10% (1000AF) (1000AF) (1000AF) (% AVG.) (1000AF) (1000AF)						
Lake Powell Inflow (2) APR-JUL	1840	3600	4800	61	6000	7760	7930

- \* 90%, 70%, 50%, 30%, and 10% chances of exceeding are the probabilities that the actual volume will exceed the volumes in the table.  
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- (1) - The values listed under the 10% and 90% Chance of Exceeding are actually 5% and 95% exceedance levels.
  - (2) - The value is natural volume - actual volume may be affected by upstream water management.
  - (3) - Median value used in place of average.

NORTHWESTERN ARIZONA  
Reservoir Storage (1000AF) Mid-March

Reservoir	Usable Capacity	***** This Year	***** Usable Storage Last Year	***** Average
LAKE HAVASU	619.0	553.9	565.8	562.3
LAKE MOHAVE	1810.0	1672.2	1678.2	1680.4
LAKE MEAD	26159.0	14763.0	11142.0	21999.0
LAKE POWELL	24322.0	15410.0	13026.0	18326.0

NORTHWESTERN ARIZONA  
Watershed Snowpack Analysis - March 15, 2012

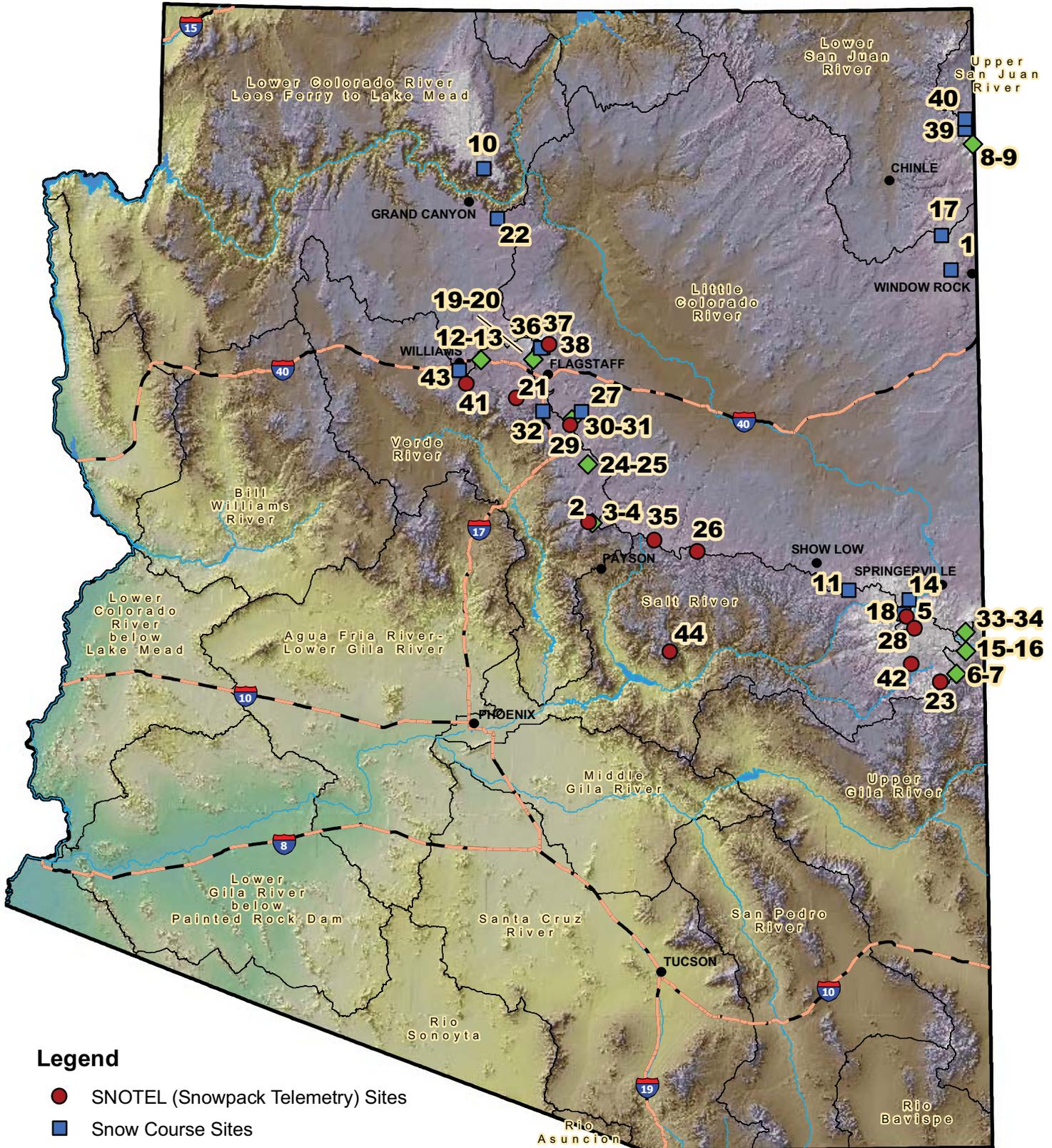
Watershed	Number of Data Sites	This Year as Percent of Last Year	Average
GRAND CANYON	2	54	29

S N O W   S U R V E Y   D A T A

MARCH 15, 2012

MAP NUM.	SNOW COURSE	ELEV.	DATE	SNOW DEPTH	WATER CONTENT	LAST YEAR	AVERAGE 71-00
1.	ARBABS FOREST (AK)	7680	3/13	0	.0	.0	1.3
2.	BAKER BUTTE SNOTEL	7330	3/15	0	.0	.0	5.6
3.	BAKER BUTTE #2	7700	3/14	19	6.6	10.3	13.7
4.	BAKER BUTTE SMT SNTL	7700	3/15	27	9.3	12.9	-
5.	BALDY SNOTEL	9220	3/15	7	3.9	1.3	8.1
6.	BEAVER HEAD	8000	3/14	0	.0	.0	2.1
7.	BEAVER HEAD SNOTEL	7990	3/15	0	.0	.0	2.6
8.	BEAVER SPRING	9220	3/14	22	6.6	-	9.9
9.	BEAVER SPRING SNOTEL	9200	3/15	12	6.1	6.2	-
10.	BRIGHT ANGEL	8400	3/16	12	3.7	6.9	11.3
11.	BUCK SPRING	7400	3/14	0	.0	.0	3.1
12.	CHALENDER	7100	3/13	0	.0	1.6	2.8
13.	CHALENDER SNOTEL	7100	3/15	0	.0	2.8	-
14.	CHEESE SPRINGS	8600	3/14	20	5.5	3.6	5.8
15.	CORONADO TRL SNOTEL	8400	3/15	0	.0	.0	2.2
16.	CORONADO TRAIL	8400	3/14	0	.0	.0	2.3
17.	FLUTED ROCK	7800	3/13	0	.1	.5	2.8
18.	FORT APACHE	9160	3/14	25	7.6	5.6	8.1
19.	FORT VALLEY	7350	3/14	0	.0	2.2	1.9
20.	FORT VALLEY SNOTEL	7350	3/15	0	.0	.0	-
21.	FRY SNOTEL	7220	3/15	3	1.6	6.3	5.5
22.	GRAND CANYON	7500	3/12	0	.0	.0	1.3
23.	HANNAGAN MDWS SNOTEL	9020	3/15	23	8.9	5.4	12.3
24.	HAPPY JACK	7630	3/14	0	.0	3.8	4.4
25.	HAPPY JACK SNOTEL	7630	3/15	10	3.7	8.7	6.3
26.	HEBER SNOTEL	7640	3/15	0	.4	.0	4.1
27.	LAKE MARY	6970	3/14	0	.0	1.3	1.4
28.	MAVERICK FORK SNOTEL	9200	3/15	10	3.9	4.8	9.5
29.	MORMON MTN SNOTEL	7500	3/15	0	.1	2.8	6.4
30.	MORMON MT. SUMMIT #2	8470	3/14	19	6.2	12.6	15.3
31.	MORMON MTN SUMMIT SN	8500	3/15	22	5.9	10.2	-
32.	NEWMAN PARK	6750	3/14	0	.0	.0	1.2
33.	NUTRIOSO	8500	3/14	0	.0	.0	1.2
34.	NUTRIOSO SNOTEL	8500	3/15	0	.2	.0	-
35.	PROMONTORY SNOTEL	7900	3/15	5	3.1	4.9	12.9
36.	SNOW BOWL #1 ALT.	10260	3/14	22	7.0	14.2	16.1
37.	SNOW BOWL #2	11000	3/14	26	8.0	16.6	20.5
38.	SNOWSLIDE CYN SNTL	9750	3/15	38	10.9	17.9	13.5
39.	TSAILE CANYON #1	8160	3/15	11	3.4	6.7	6.2
40.	TSAILE CANYON #3	8920	3/14	22	7.5	9.3	9.5
41.	WHITE HORSE SNOTEL	7180	3/15	0	.0	.4	4.6
42.	WILDCAT SNOTEL	7850	3/15	0	.0	.0	3.7
43.	WILLIAMS SKI RUN	7720	3/13	16	4.2	12.2	9.9
44.	WORKMAN CREEK SNOTEL	6900	3/15	0	.4	.0	4.2

# Arizona Snow Survey Data Sites



## Legend

- SNOTEL (Snowpack Telemetry) Sites
- Snow Course Sites
- ◆ SNOTEL and Snow Course Sites
- Basin Boundaries

February 2010  
 Data Sources: NRCS / ALRIS  
 Projection: UTM Zone 12 Datum: NAD83  
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