

DROUGHT CONCERNS

Below average snowfall this season has prompted many discussions about drought throughout much of Colorado including the Roaring Fork Valley. According to the most recent data from the United States Drought Monitor (4/3/18), the Colorado River basin ranges from Abnormally Dry in the upper reaches of the river to Moderate/Severe Drought throughout the rest of the basin. Updated data can be found at: <http://droughtmonitor.unl.edu/CurrentMap/StateDroughtMonitor.aspx?CO>. The Roaring Fork Valley ranges from Moderate Drought in western portion of Pitkin County to Severe Drought in the remainder of the Valley. Many factors influence drought and drought severity including:

- Snowpack
- Rainfall
- Temperature
- Relative Humidity

Drought can impact several things in a community or region. Some common impacts include:

- Decreased Water Availability (streamflow and groundwater)
- Increased Wildfire Danger
- Increased Water Consumption (less natural moisture=increased outdoor watering)

CARBONDALE SPECIFICS

Water is an essential need for any community. In Carbondale, we are well positioned when it comes to providing water for domestic uses. The Town has senior water rights for much of our demand and also has access to water in Ruedi Reservoir to augment these rights. The Town operates three water treatment plants from three geographically unique sources (Nettle Creek, Crystal River Wells and Roaring Fork River Wells). These plants are fully operational and have the capacity to provide domestic water to our customers.

At this time, we are not contemplating irrigation restrictions but the Town Code (Sec. 13-6-60) does lay out a framework for irrigation restrictions that could be implemented if necessary. The measures could include time of day restrictions and odd/even restrictions. One of the triggers for implementing restrictions is a reduction in our storage capacity (water tanks being drawn down). Storage capacity is directly related to our ability to provide adequate flows in the case of a fire. The Town's ability to maintain storage capacity has been impacted in the past by high water usage during times of drought. The Town encourages users to consider reasonable conservation measures whether or not we are experiencing drought conditions.

The Town ditch system may be impacted by the below normal snowpack if the region experiences below average precipitation throughout the remainder of the year. As the ditch system is supplied by the Crystal River, flows in the Crystal River directly impact our use of the ditches.

Of all the common impacts of drought, increased wildfire danger has the potential to have the biggest impact on our community. Not only do wildfires have the potential to damage property in the community, the lack of vegetation in areas affected by fires can impact water quality for many years. The Town encourages everyone to be particularly aware of increased wildfire danger associated with a drought and to take measures to prevent them.