

West's water supply outlook good

WASHINGTON, D.C. — Water supplies should be good to excellent for much of the West this summer, the U.S. Department of Agriculture and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Ad-

ministration reported last week.

Norman A. Berg, chief of the USDA's Soil Conservation Service, said melting snow should provide enough runoff this coming spring and summer to

meet the region's need. About 75 percent of the West's water supply comes from snowmelt.

Of all the West's water, some 83 percent is used for agriculture.

Heavy February rains and warm temperatures

melted some of the Pacific Northwest's snowpack. Some local flooding resulted, but damage was not severe.

Reservoir storage is near normal for all states. Most reservoirs in the Columbia basin

are expected to fill.

Berg gave this outlook by state:

Alaska: Snowpack is poor in the Brooks range and south central areas, but near normal elsewhere.

Arizona: Heavier

than normal February storms improved runoff forecasts in many areas. The Salt River now is 150 percent of normal, but the San Francisco River is only 42 percent of normal.

California: Snowpack

is below normal in the north and normal to above normal in the south. Water supplies should be adequate.

Colorado: Snowpack conditions remain above normal and water supplies should be adequate.

Idaho: The panhandle received good February moisture. Streamflow should be near normal in the north and above normal in the south.

Montana: Streamflow is forecast to be near normal in nearly all areas except the Judith-Musselshell, Big Horn and Tongue drainage areas which are below normal.

Nevada: A mid-February storm added snow at higher elevations, but lower elevations received less than expected. Prospects remain good for adequate water supplies.

New Mexico: Precipitation during February ranged from normal to nearly four times normal. Streamflow will be as much as 120 percent of normal. Reservoir storage is excellent.

Oregon: Streamflow forecasts range from above normal to much above normal. Most reservoirs are expected to fill during the spring.

Utah: Water supplies are forecast to be good to excellent. Streamflow will be normal to above normal.

Washington: Streamflow will be normal to above normal for much of the state. Snowpack ranges from 95 to 115 percent of normal. Reservoirs are expected to fill by early summer.

Wyoming: Runoff is forecast to be normal to above normal for most of the state. Below normal runoff is forecast for the north end of the Big Horn.

Only about 15-20 percent of the season remains for snowpack accumulation. This outlook is based on the assumption that spring weather will be near normal.

The Soil Conservation Service surveys snowpack and monitors snowmelt at 1,600 sites and forecasts streamflow at nearly 500 locations throughout the West each month from January through May. USDA specialists, in cooperation with the National Weather Service of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, U.S. Department of Commerce, analyze the data and issue monthly forecasts of runoff and water supplies.

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