



Colorado
State
University



COLORADO
CLIMATE
CENTER

Perspective on Precipitation

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Paonia Reservoir
August 2012

**WSWC Workshop on Hydroclimate Monitoring
Systems and Measurement Needs**

Presented 24 June 2014

San Diego, CA

**With help from Wendy Ryan
and Zach Schwalbe**

Topics we will cover today

- **Some background**
- **Examples of commonly used products relying on precipitation data**
- **The example – Colorado Floods of September 2013**
- **The issue of “Data Quality”**
- **What our “users” think they need (results of NIDIS UCRB NIDIS interviews)**

A short background

- In 1973 the federal government abolished the “State Climatologist” program nationwide leaving Colorado without
- Later that same year, Colorado re-established the State Climate program with support through the Colorado Agricultural Experiment Station at Colorado State University.



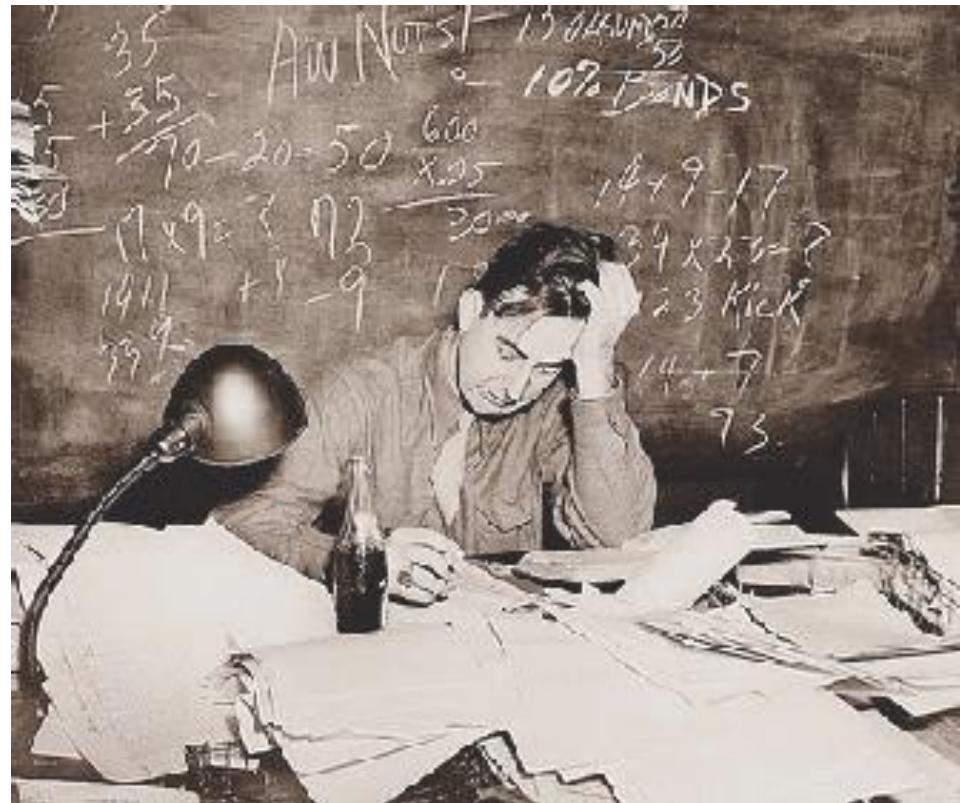
Our Mission

- The Colorado Climate Center at CSU provides valuable climate expertise to the residents of the state through its threefold program of:
 - 1) ***Climate Monitoring*** (data acquisition, analysis, and archiving),
 - 2) ***Climate Research***
 - 3) ***Climate Services***.(providing data, analysis, climate education and outreach)

Basically, we keep track of numbers -- climate numbers -- lots and lots of numbers

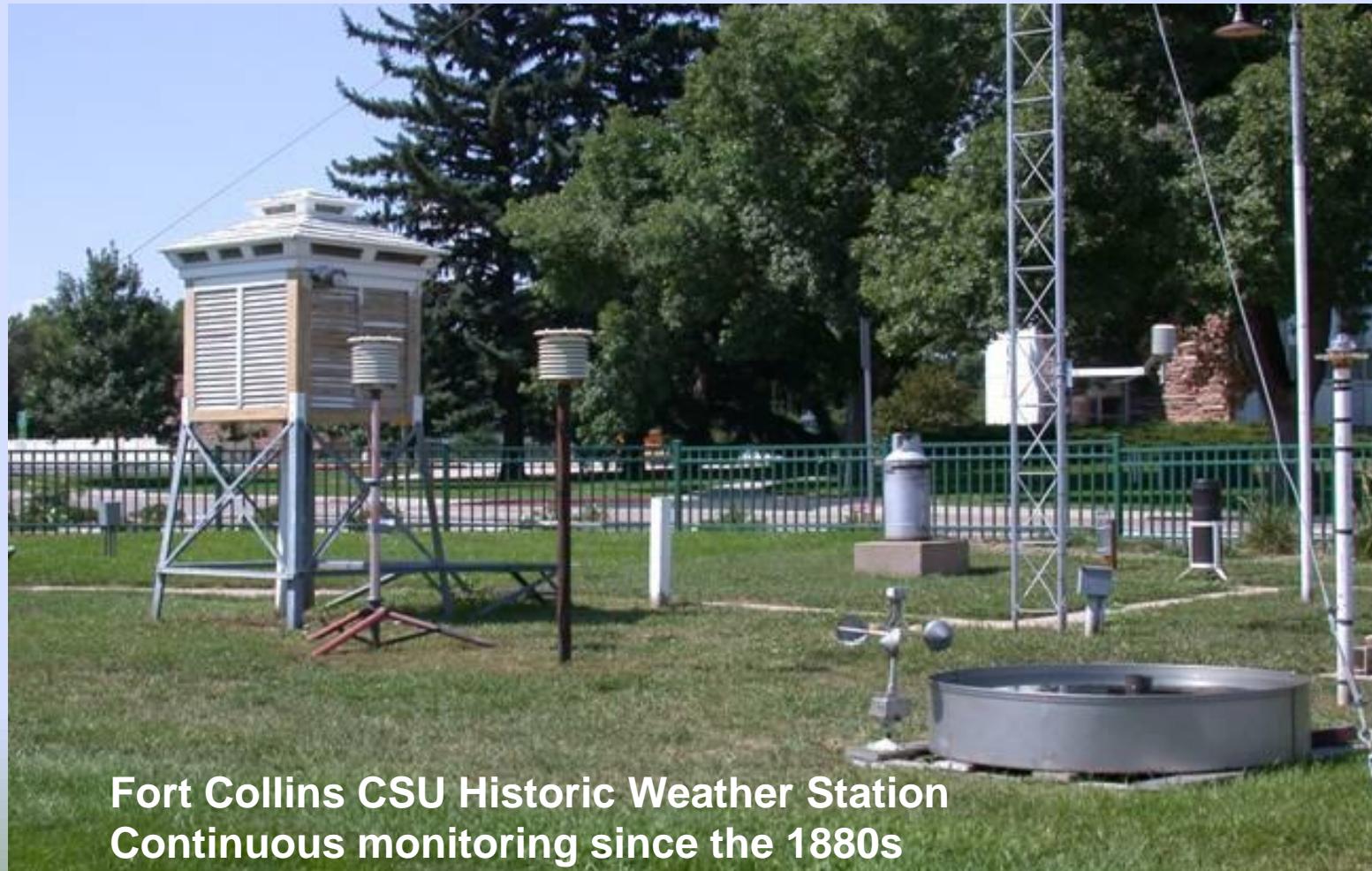
We are “Climate Accountants”

and we LOVE IT!



Monitoring our Climate

- Elements: temperature, ***precipitation***, snow, wind, solar, evaporation, soil temperatures, humidity, clouds, etc.



In 2012, Colorado held a
“Year for Water Celebration”

Ever since, I’ve been promoting
“Hug your Water Manager”
“Thank your Water Measurers”

Information users need to know where
climate and water data come from
and that **good data are valuable** but
challenging to obtain

Systematic weather data collection began in Colorado in the 1870s and 1880s

(Form 4.)

WAR DEPARTMENT.
SIGNAL SERVICE, U. S. ARMY.
DIVISION OF TELEGRAMS AND REPORTS FOR THE BENEFIT OF COMMERCE.

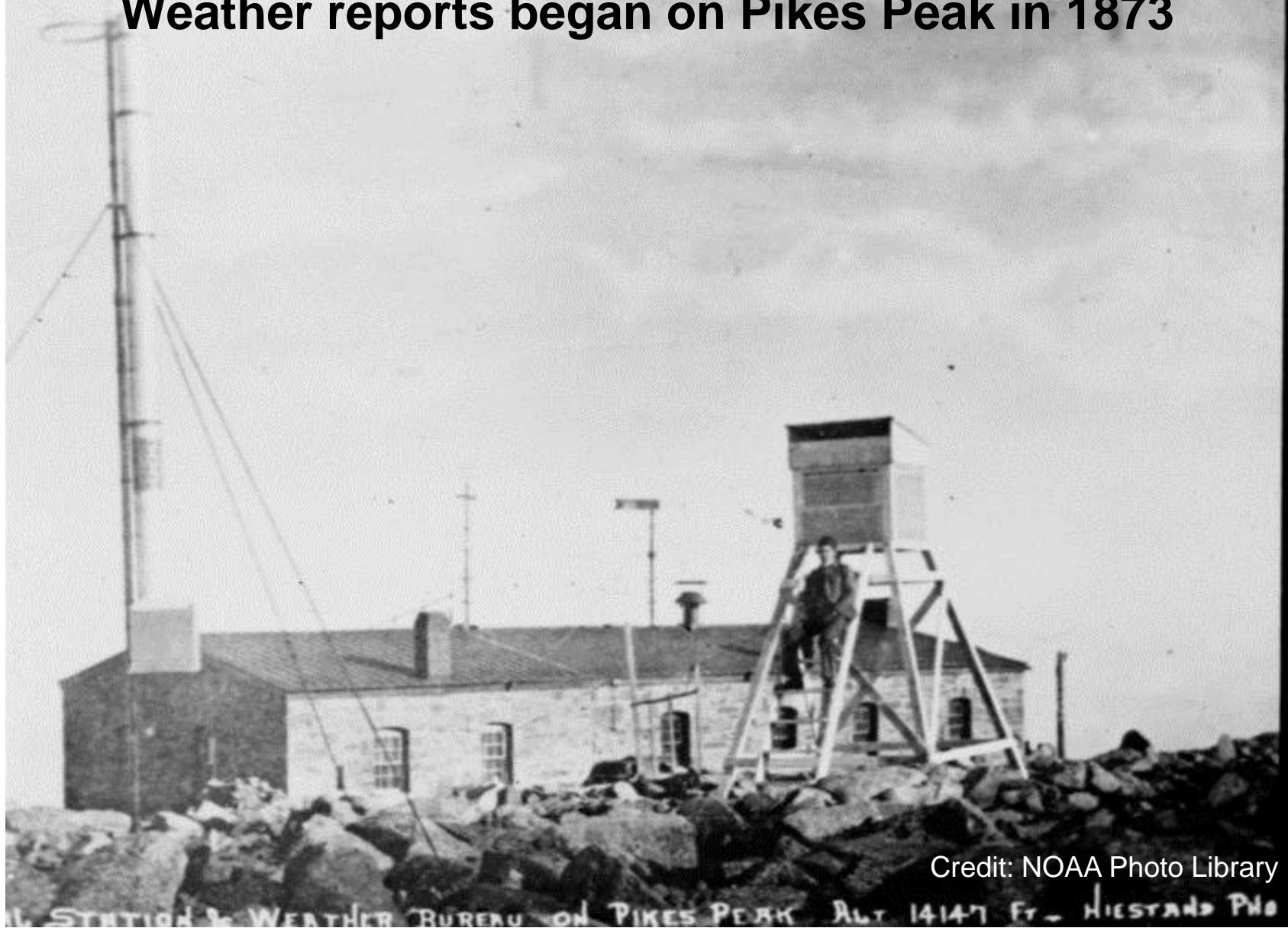
METEOROLOGICAL RECORD for the *Week* ending *Nov. 25th 1871 at Denver Col. Ter.*

Date of Observation.	Time of Observation.	Height of Barometer.	Height of attached Thermometers.	Reduced Barometer.	THERMOMETER. <i>(Open air)</i>	Direction of wind.	Velocity of wind in miles per hour.	Pressure of wind. Pounds per square foot.	Amount of cloud.	Direction in which upper clouds move.	Rain (or snow) commenced. (Time.)	Rain (or snow ended. (Time.)	Amount of rain or melted snow.	Self Registering Rain Gauge	REMARKS.
1871					Dry Bulb. <i>Atmos. Temp.</i>	Wet Bulb. <i>Humid. & Dew</i>									
Sunday Nov. 19	5.43 a.m. 25.00 2.43 P.M. 25.09	51 22 63 34	30.07 24.97	25.00 24.97	22 21 16 36 30 46	S S	0 2	0 .02	0 .02		8 a.m.	8 a.m.	Blank		First Snow fall
Monday Nov. 20	5.43 a.m. 25.00 2.43 P.M. 25.09 5.43 a.m. 24.99 2.43 P.M. 24.88	51 22 63 36 50 21 56 43	30.07 24.97 30.01 29.67	25.00 24.97 24.99 24.88	22 21 16 36 30 46 21 19.5 18 43 34 20	N.W. S N N.W.	0 2 13 10	0 .02 .04 .02	0 0 0 1.62		8 a.m.	8 a.m.	Blank		Clear Light Snow Clear Clear
Tuesday Nov. 21	5.43 a.m. 24.70 2.43 P.M. 24.57	55 31 62 33	29.59 29.30	24.70 24.57	31 29 79 33 32 70	S.W. W	4 2	.08 .02	4/4 4/4	24 97	10.3	3.4.3			Stratus Stratus Stratus
Wednesday Nov. 22	5.43 P.M. 24.71 2.43 a.m. 24.54	61 31 55 25	29.59 29.47	24.71 24.54	31 30 89 25 24 87	S S	10 6	.50 .18	4/4 4/4	32.3 90	3.0. m	11 P.M.	.26		Light Snow Stratus Light Snow
Thursday Nov. 23	5.43 P.M. 24.20 2.43 a.m. 24.36	60 31 56 32	28.97 29.17	24.20 24.36	31 30 89 32 32 100	S.W. S.W.	9 4	.40 .08	3/4 4/4	32.3 10.1					" Cloudy Cirrus & Cirrus Fog
Friday Nov. 24	5.43 P.M. 24.37 2.43 P.M. 24.38	70 42 65 27	29.04 29.23	24.37 24.38	42 37 39 27 27 100	E N.W.	2 2	.02 .02	4/4 4/4	32.3 33.7					Stratus Cirrus & Stratus Light scud fr
Saturday Nov. 25	5.43 a.m. 24.37 2.43 P.M. 24.42	58 32 70 49	29.17 29.03	24.37 24.42	32 28 64 49 39 31	SW S.E.	7 2	.24 .02	4/4 4/4	98 32.7					
	5.43 P.M. 24.60	68 17	29.60	24.60	17 15.5 75	N.E.	18	1.62	3/4						

2381

Denver November 19-25, 1871, Observer

Weather reports began on Pikes Peak in 1873



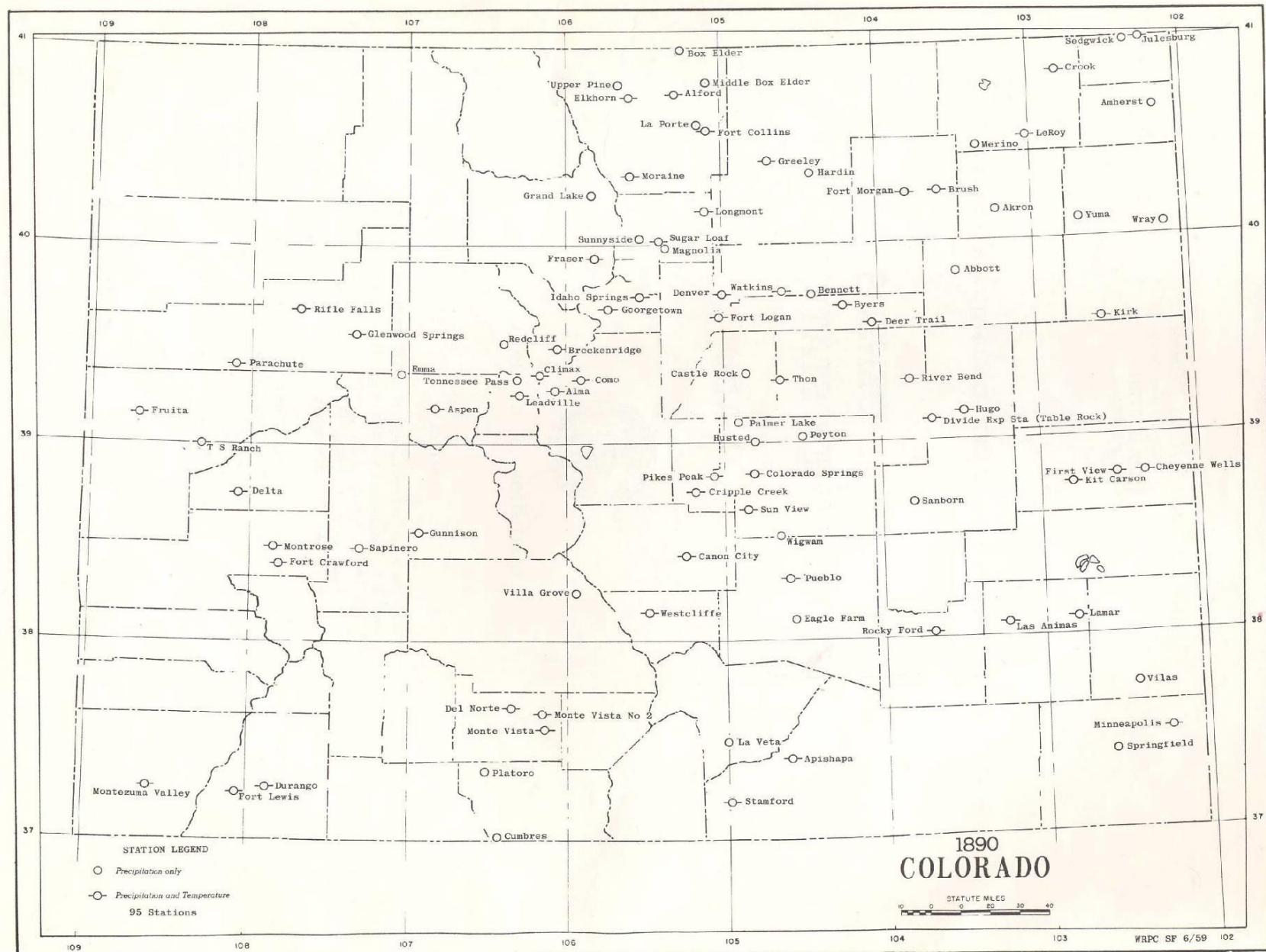
Credit: NOAA Photo Library

STATION OF WEATHER BUREAU ON PIKES PEAK ALT. 14147 FT. - HIESTAND PHO

Reports were sent by telegraph every few hours

Stories abounded in the national media of the rigors of Colorado Climate

By 1890 a robust statewide weather reporting network was in place





The National Weather Service still faithfully maintains a “taken for granted” network of weather stations in Colorado and across the country – the Cooperative Observer Network



Each passing year reveals more about our climate and its impacts –

Daily weather

Spatial patterns,
seasonal cycles,

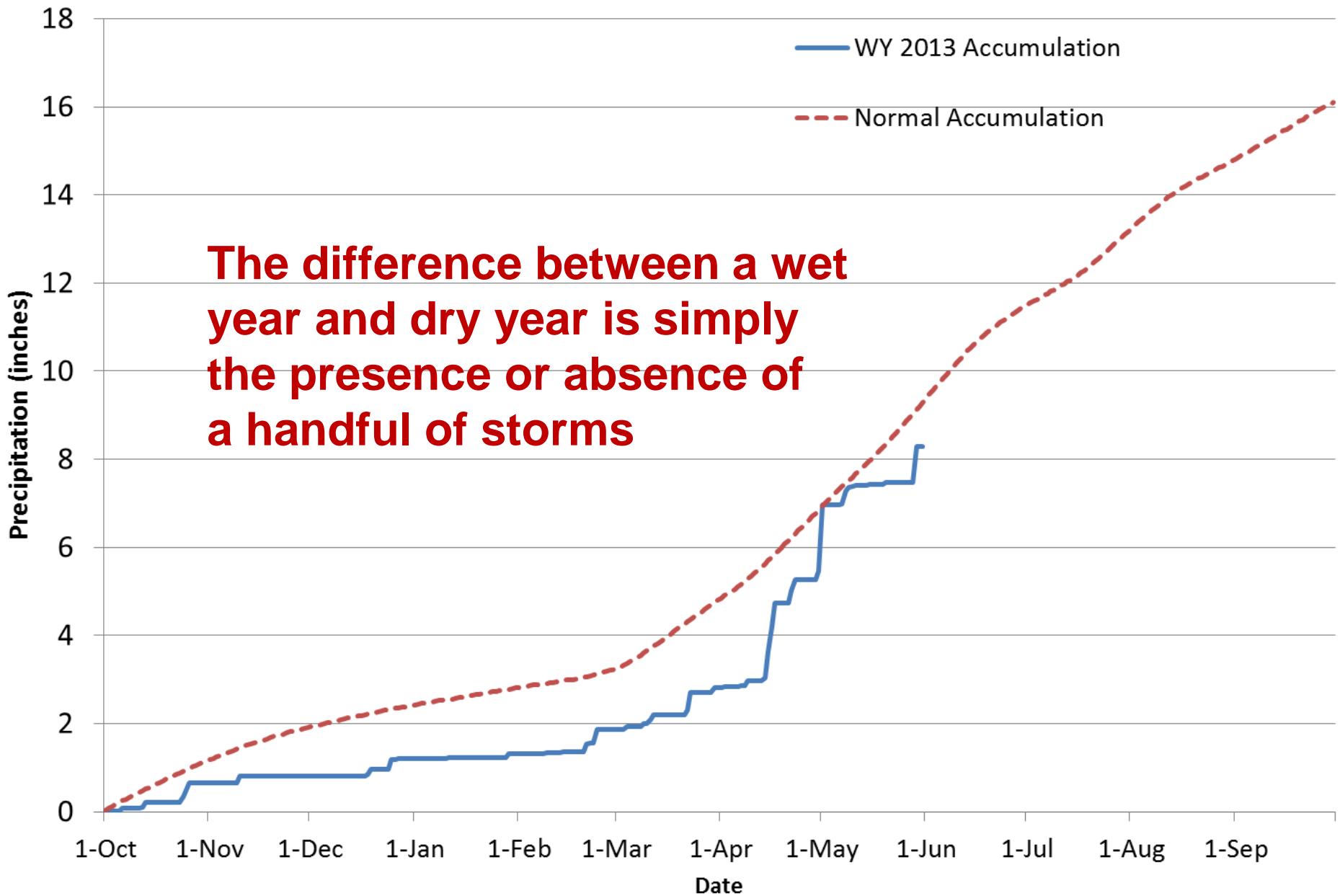
year to year variations
occasional wild extremes

Snow, Snow, Snow

Long-term changes – what comes next

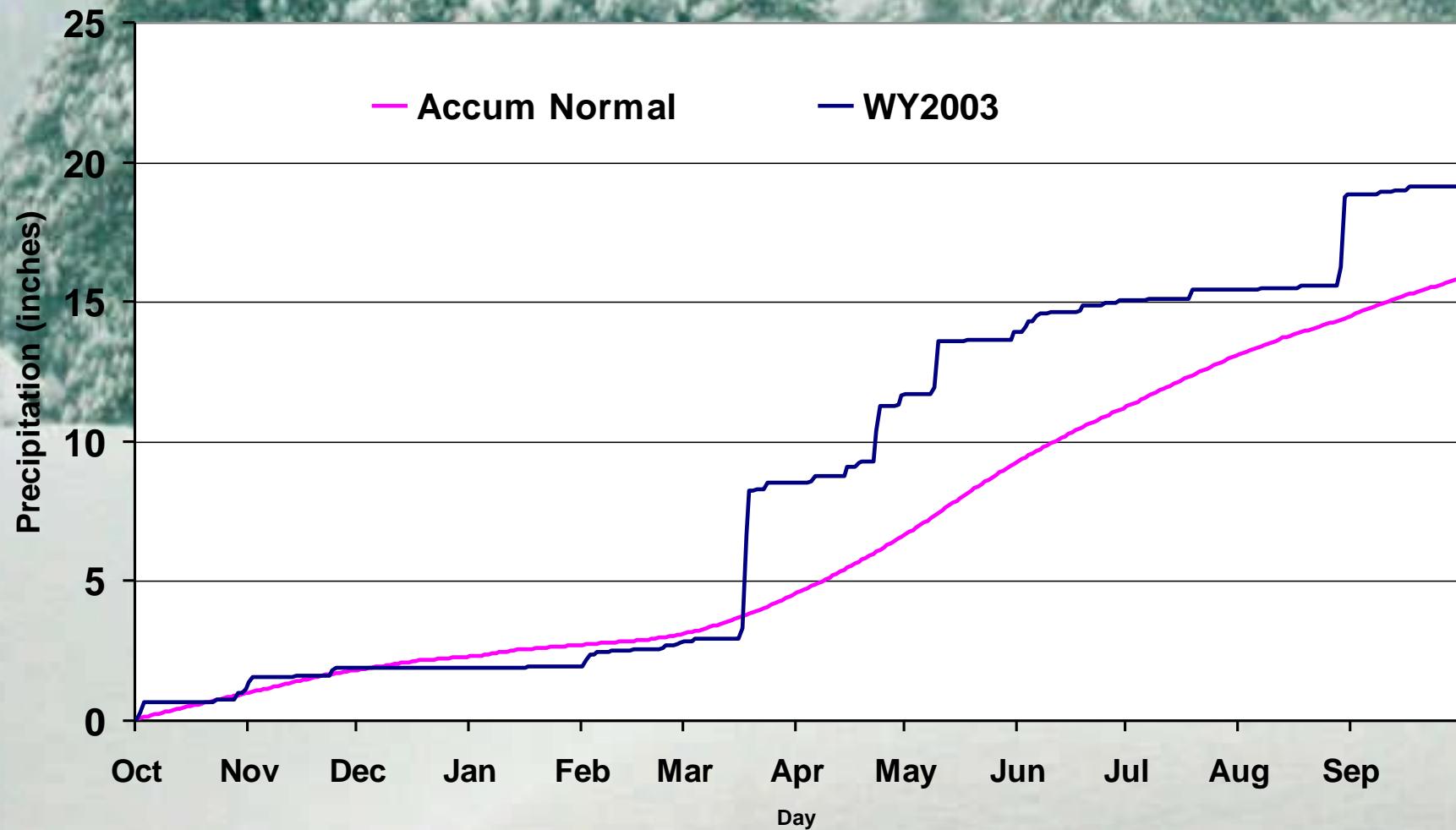
We've started with Point Data, and expanded from there

Fort Collins Water Year Daily Precipitation Accumulation



A few storms contribute a large fraction of the annual precipitation in many years

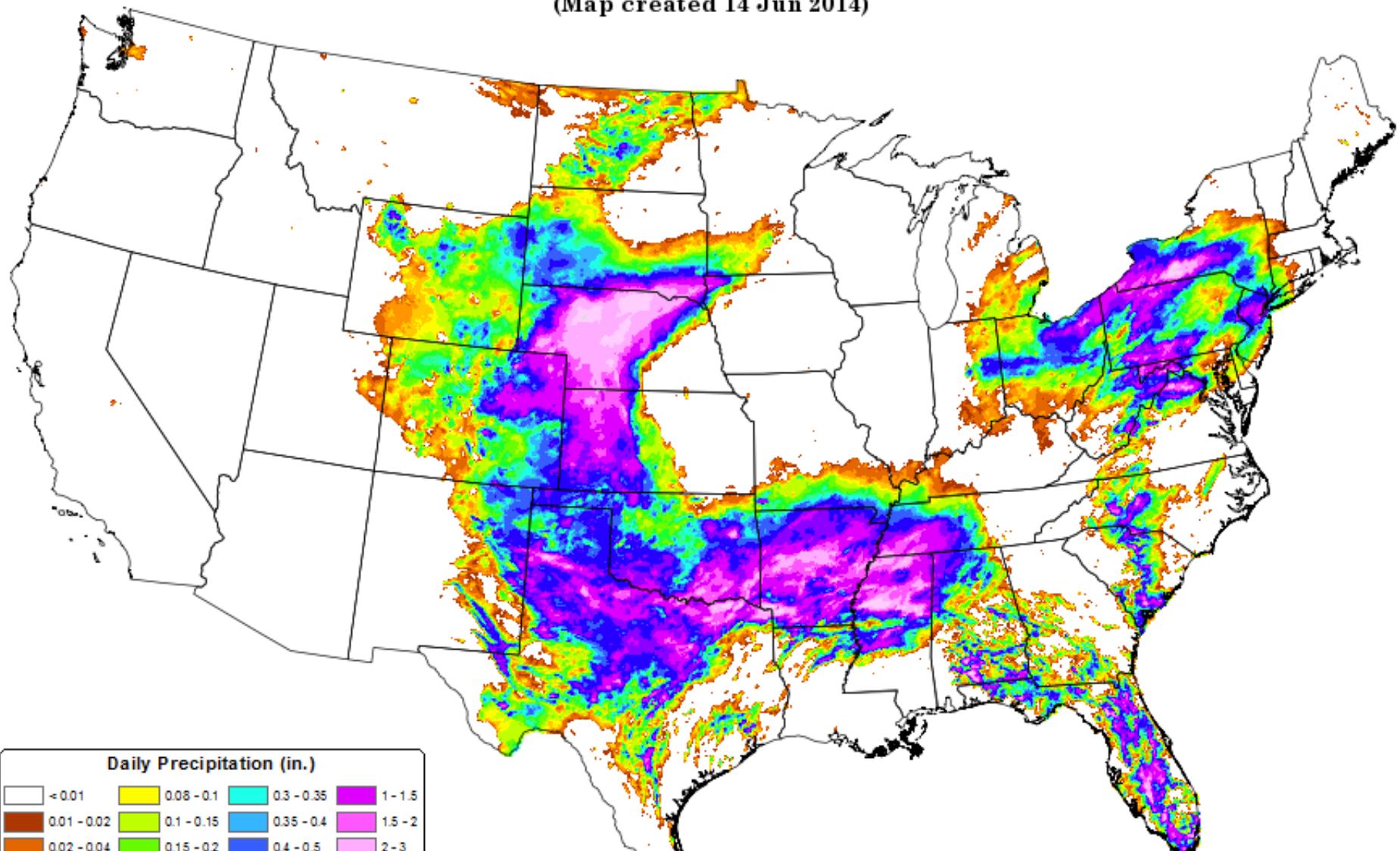
Fort Collins Daily Accumulated Precipitation



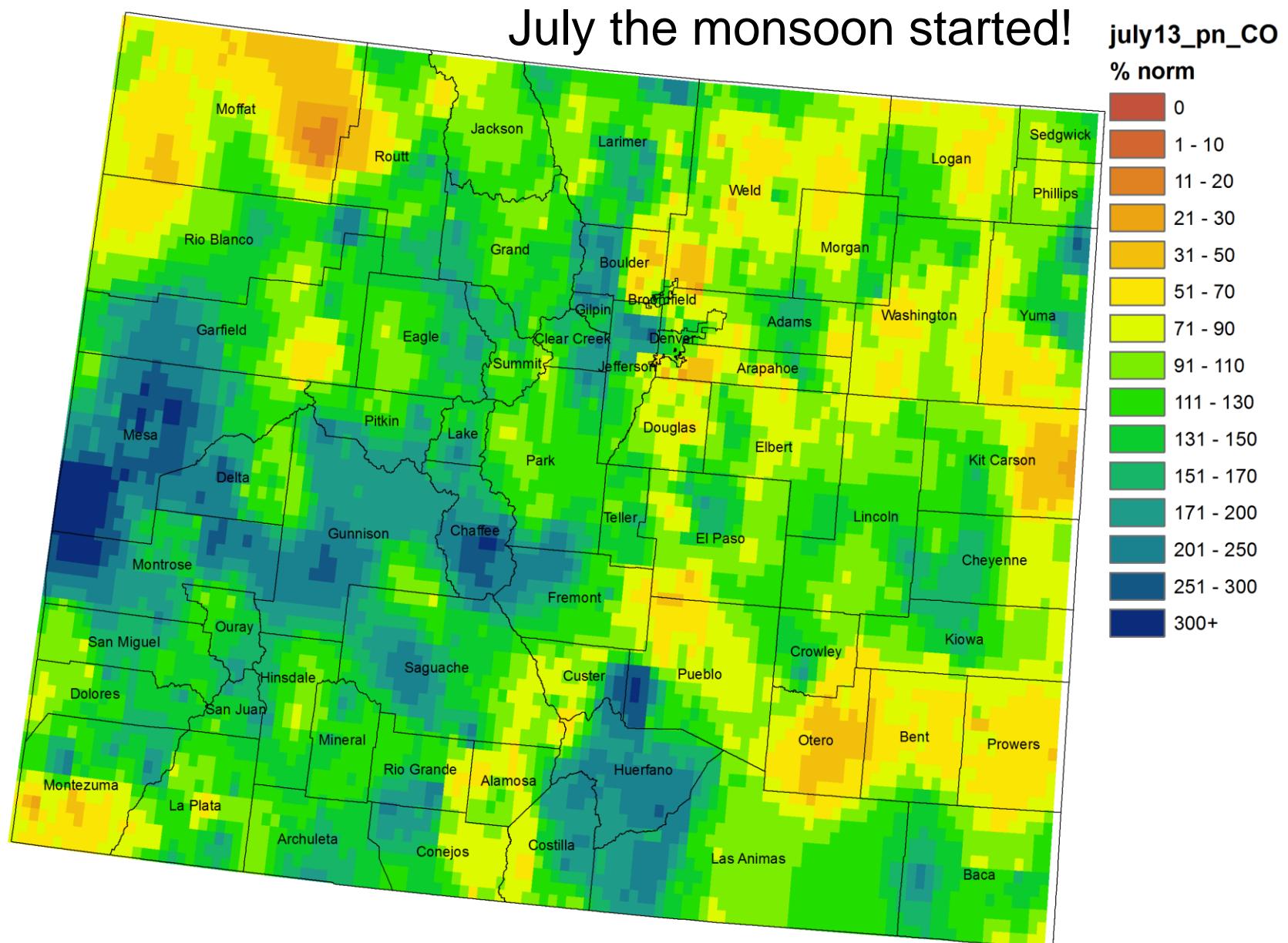
Total Precipitation: 09 June 2014

Period ending 7 AM EST 09 Jun 2014

(Map created 14 Jun 2014)



Colorado July 2013 Precipitation as a Percentage of Normal



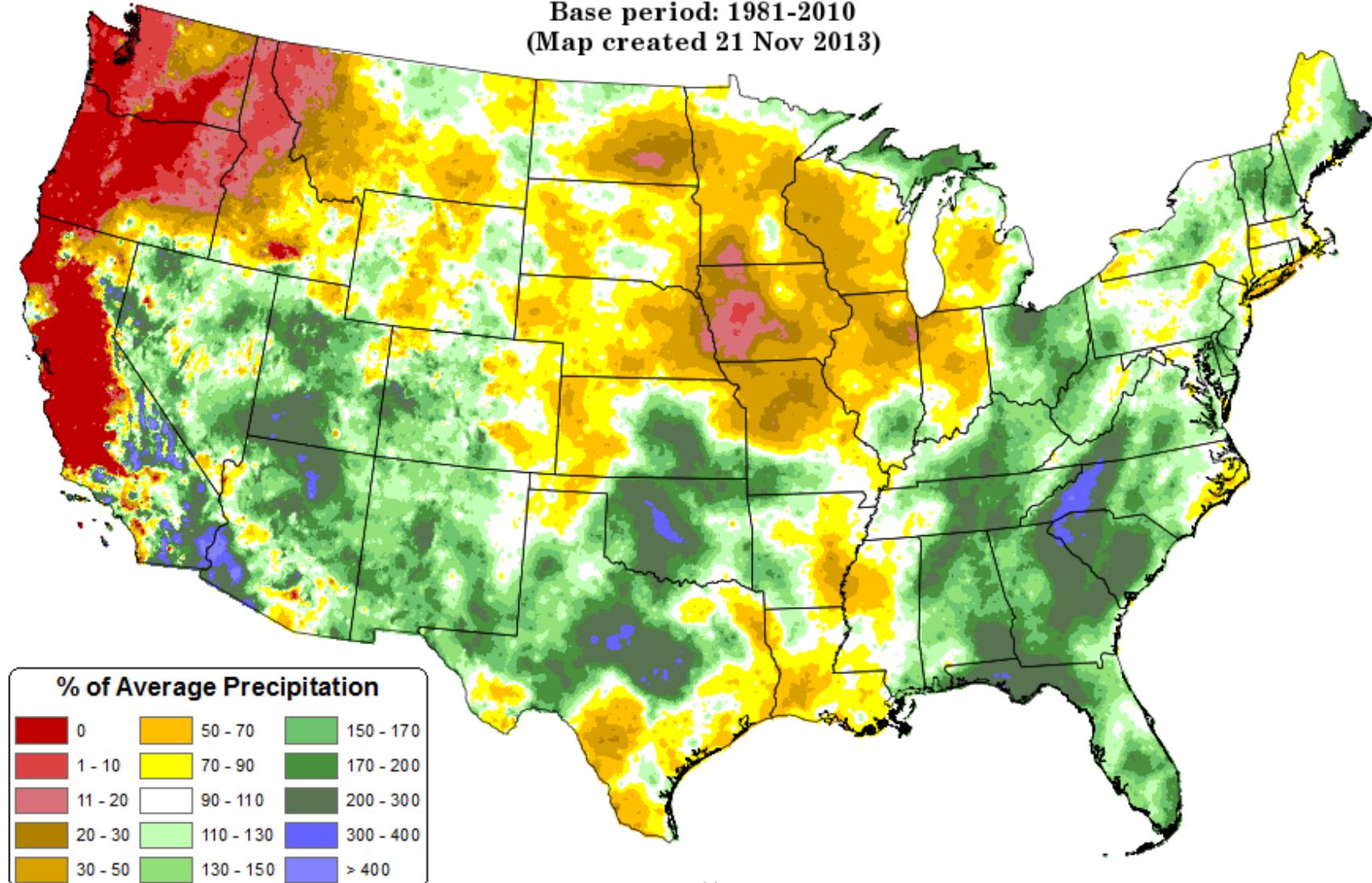
Jul 2013 Percent of Normal

Total Precipitation Anomaly: July 2013

Period ending 31 Jul 2013

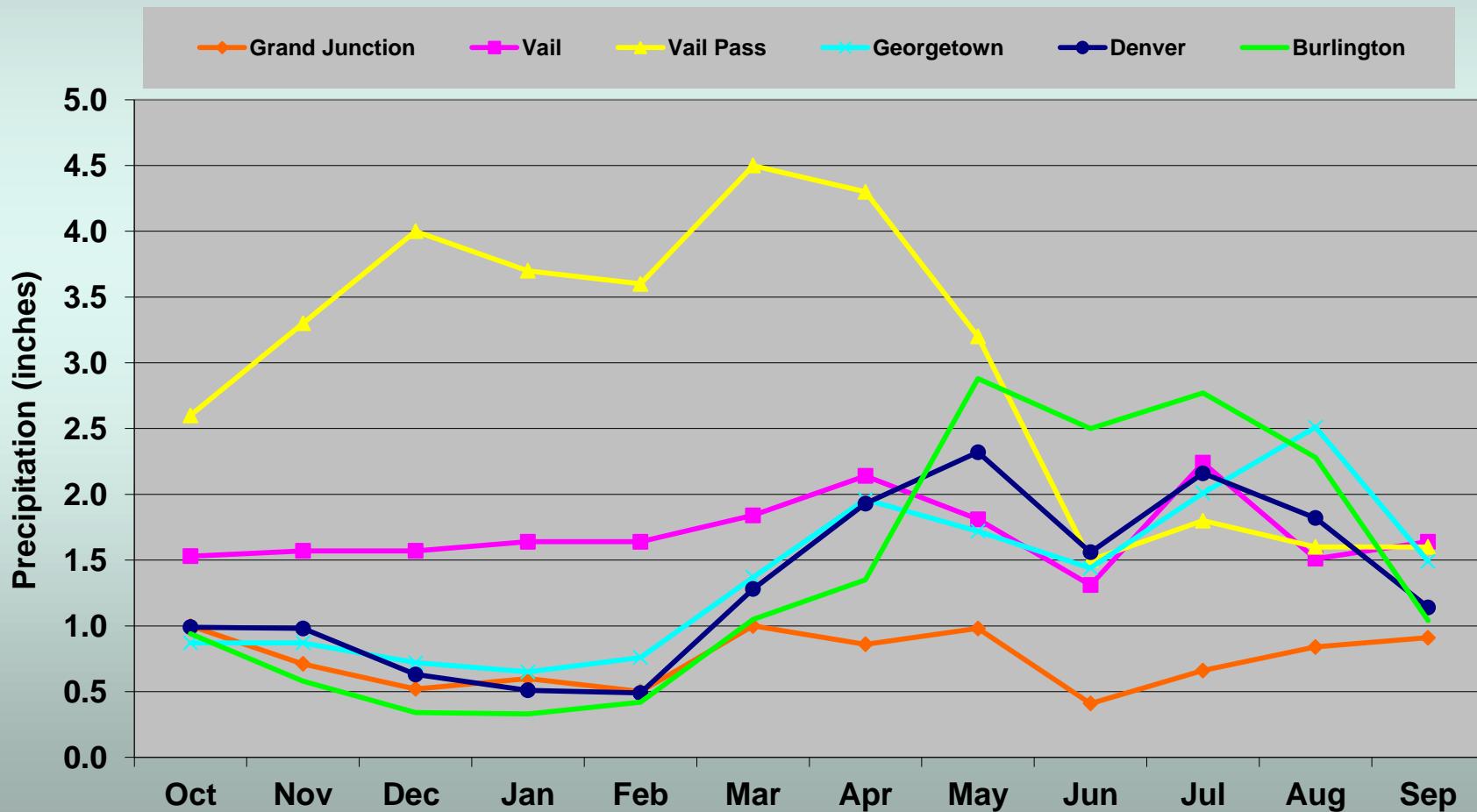
Base period: 1981-2010

(Map created 21 Nov 2013)

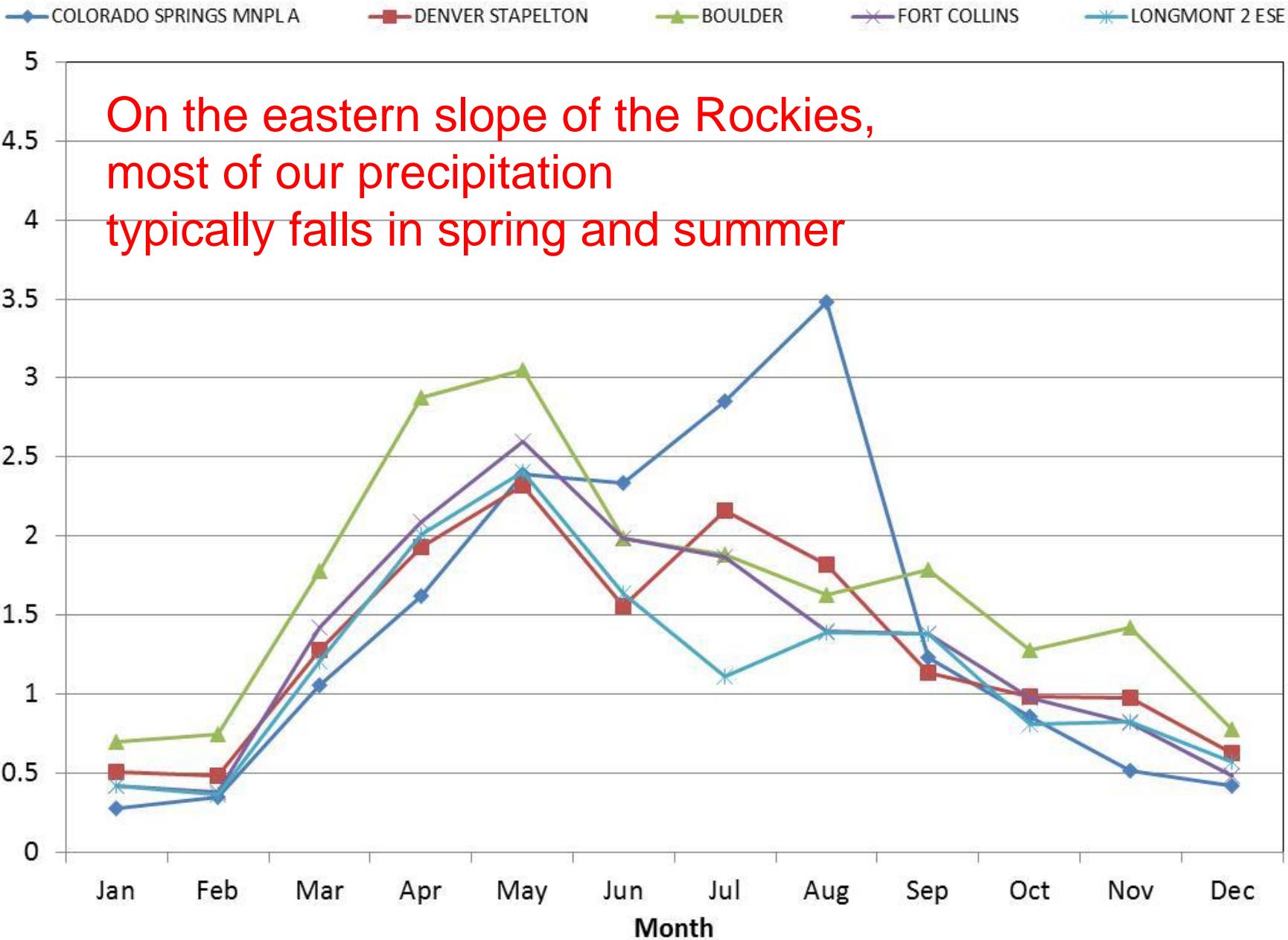


Precipitation in Colorado varies greatly from place to place with changing seasons

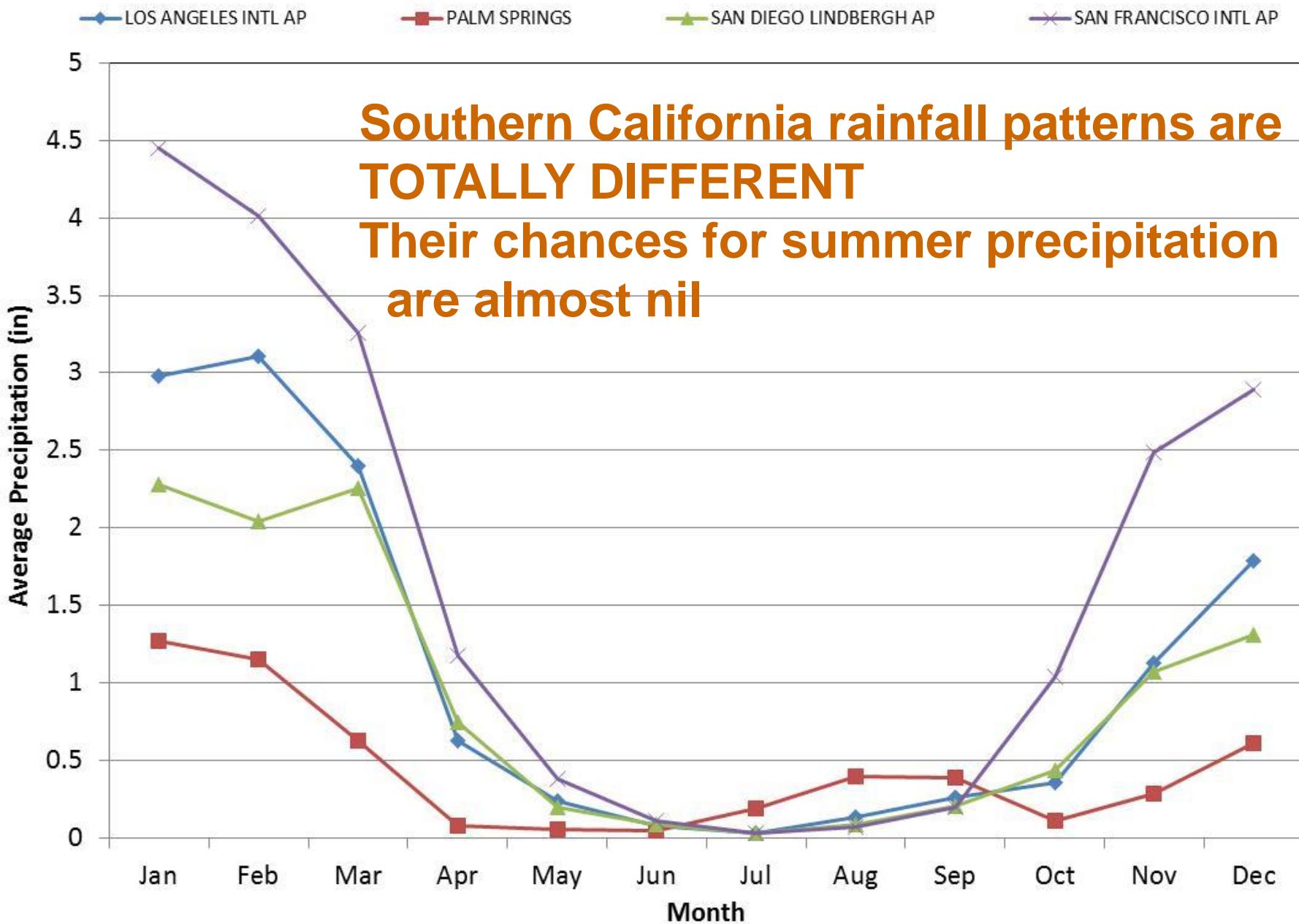
Water Year Average Precipitation for Selected Stations



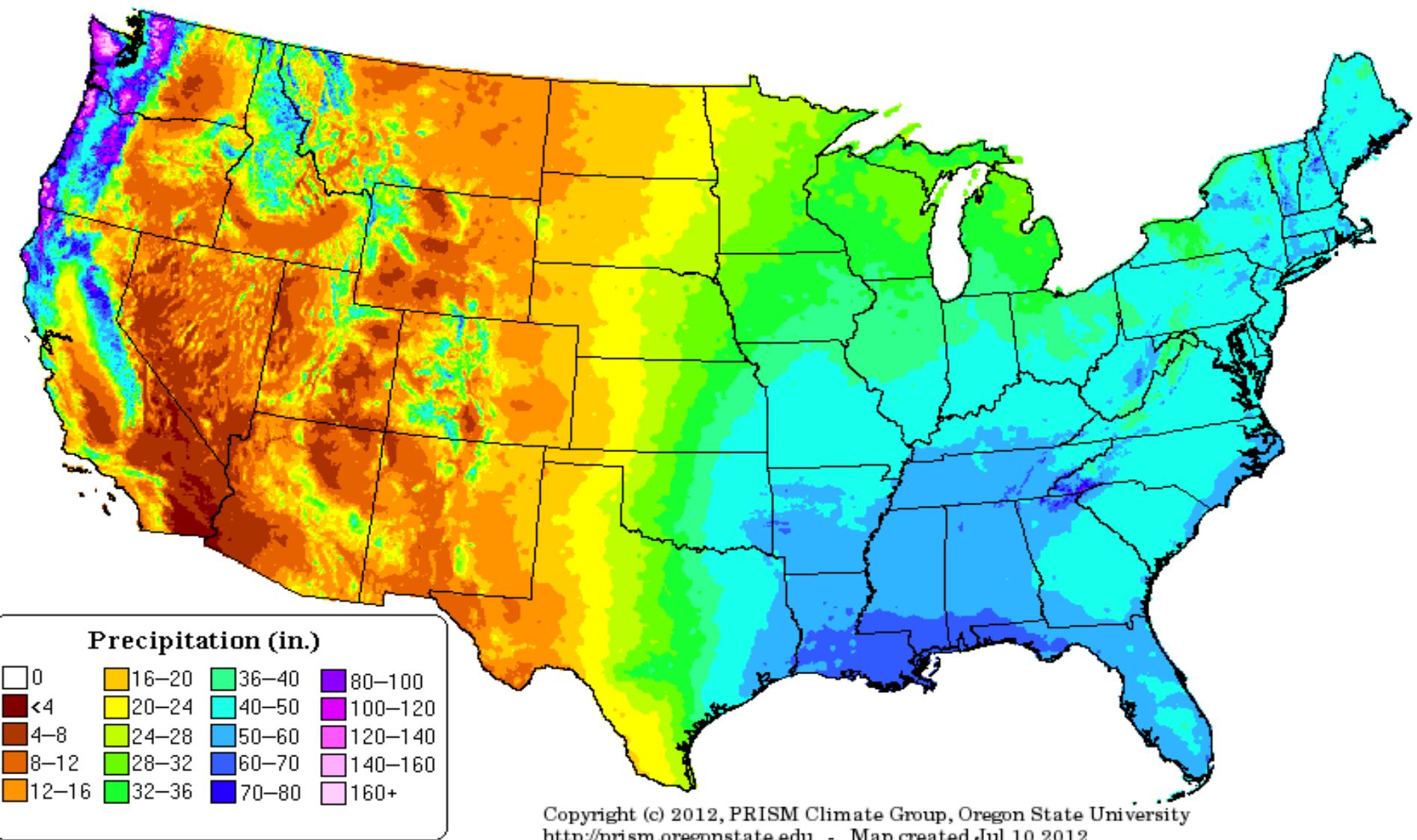
Average Monthly Precipitation (in) for selected Colorado Stations



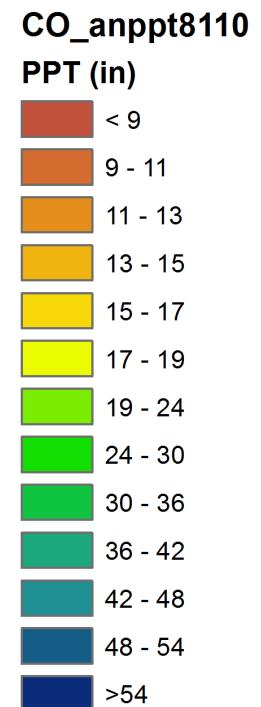
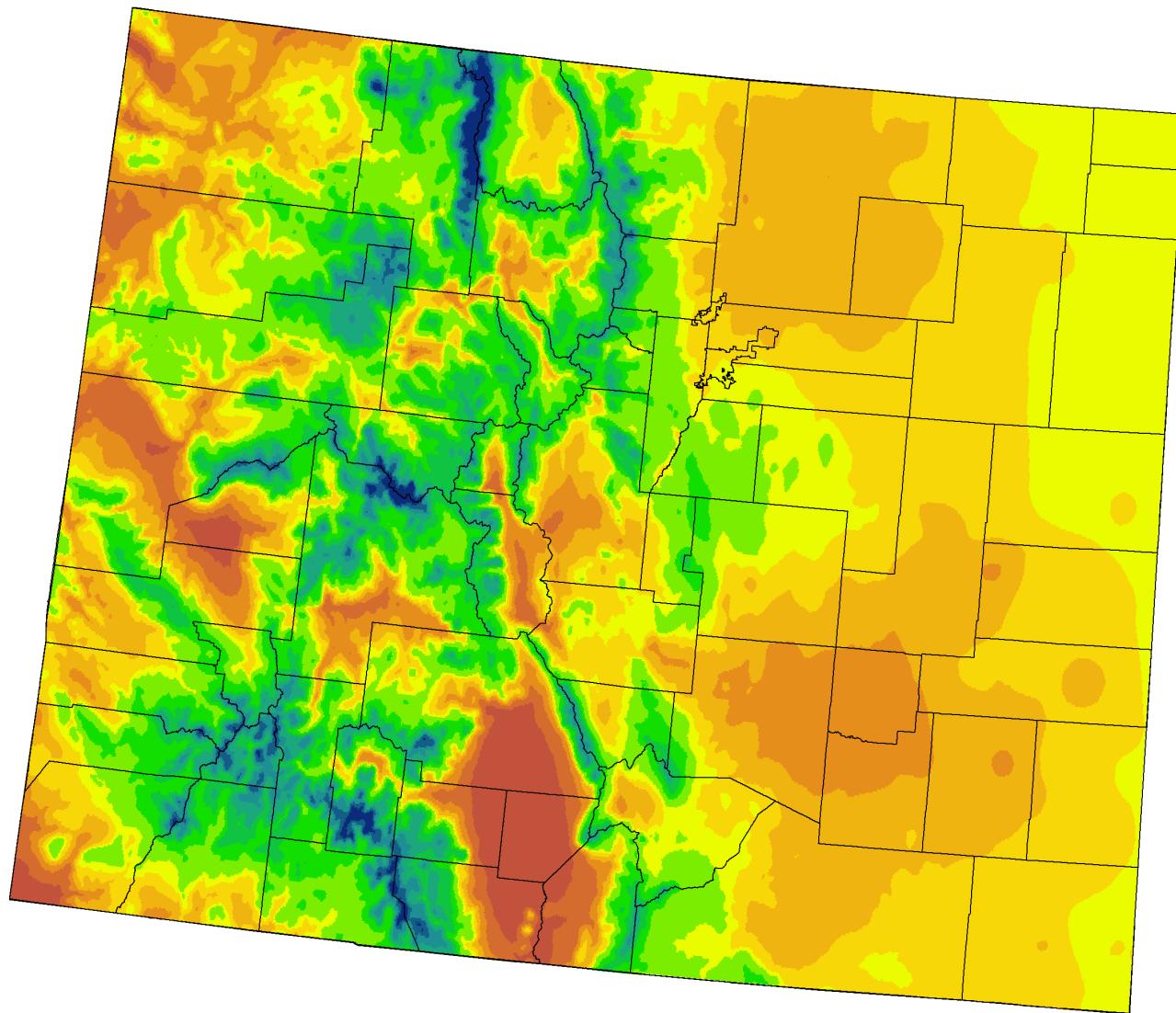
Average Monthly Precipitation (in) for selected California Stations



Precipitation: Annual Climatology (1981-2010)



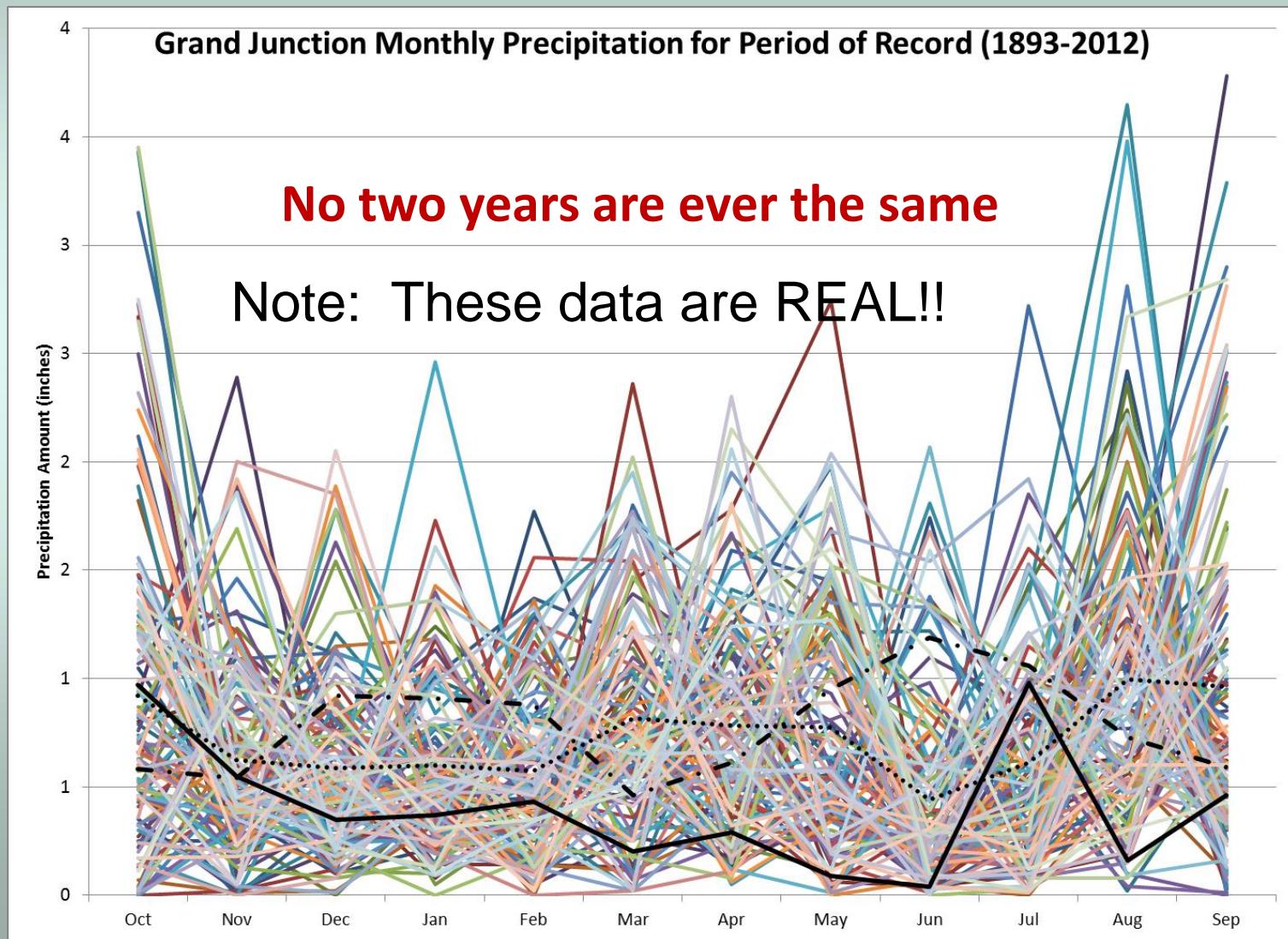
Colorado Annual Average Precipitation (in) 1981-2010



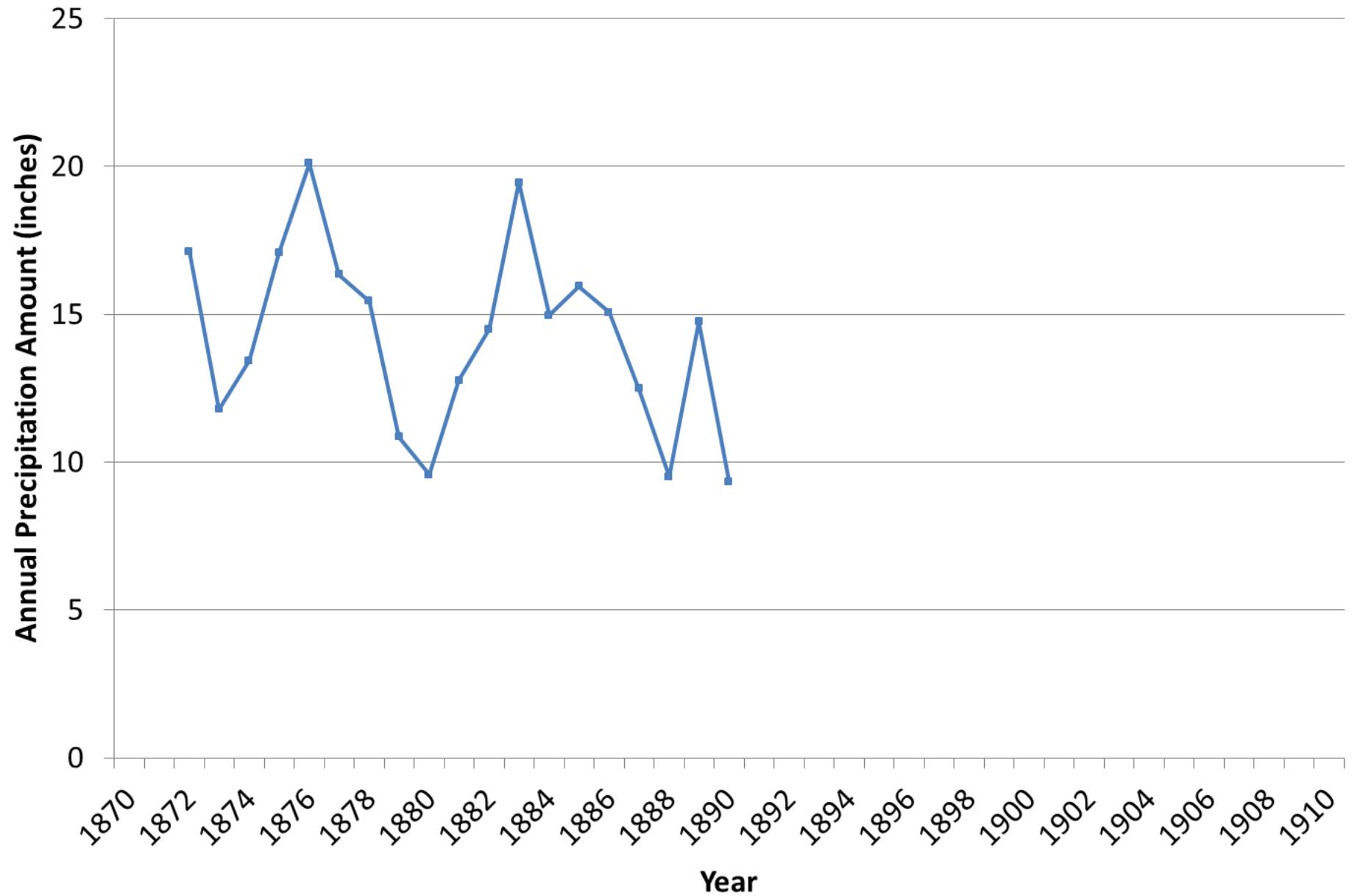
How this compares to our first color contour average precip map from the 1920s



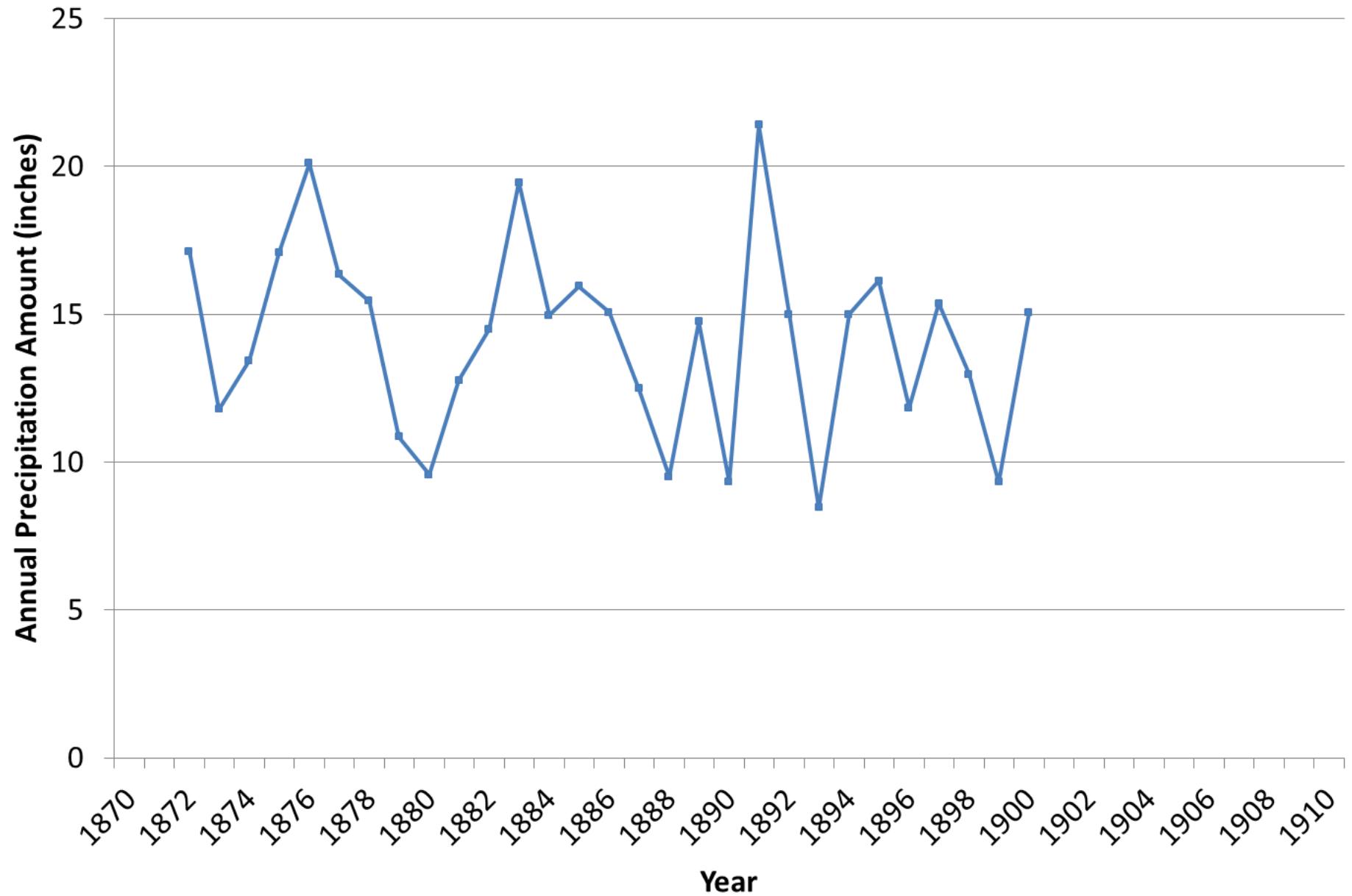
Averages are Useful, But this is what really happens



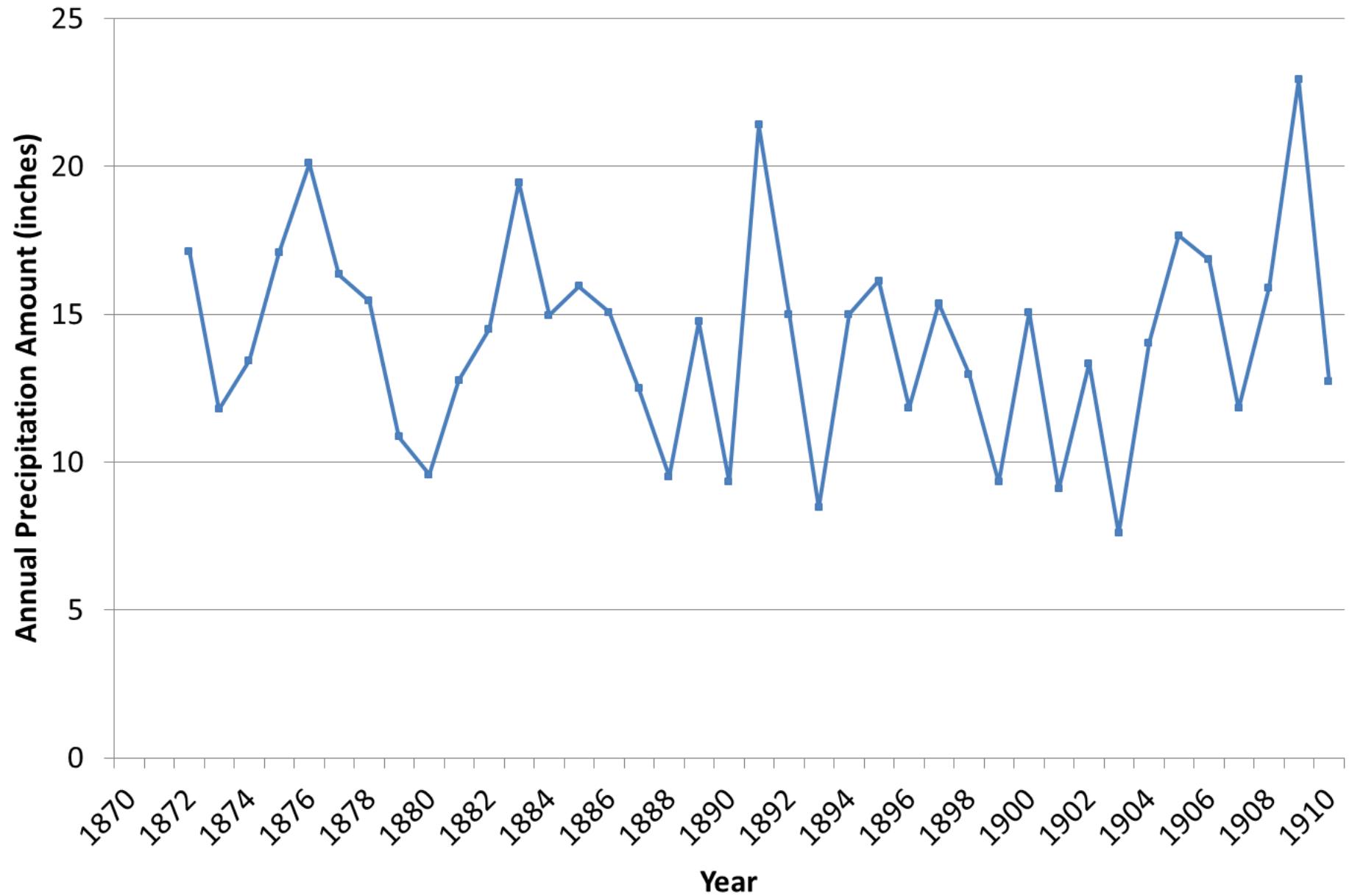
Denver Annual Precipitation (1872-1890)



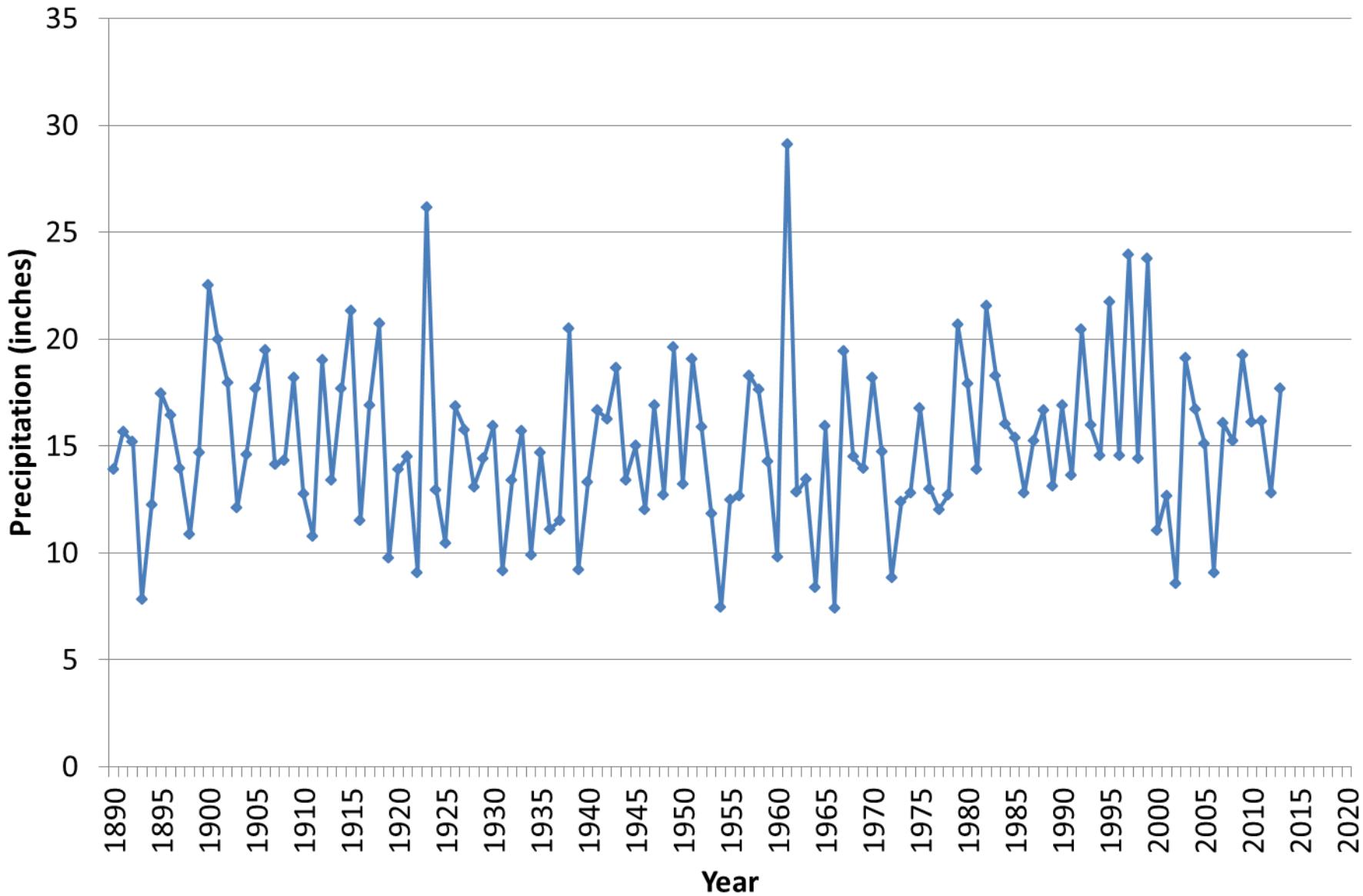
Denver Annual Precipitation (1872-1900)



Denver Annual Precipitation (1872-1910)



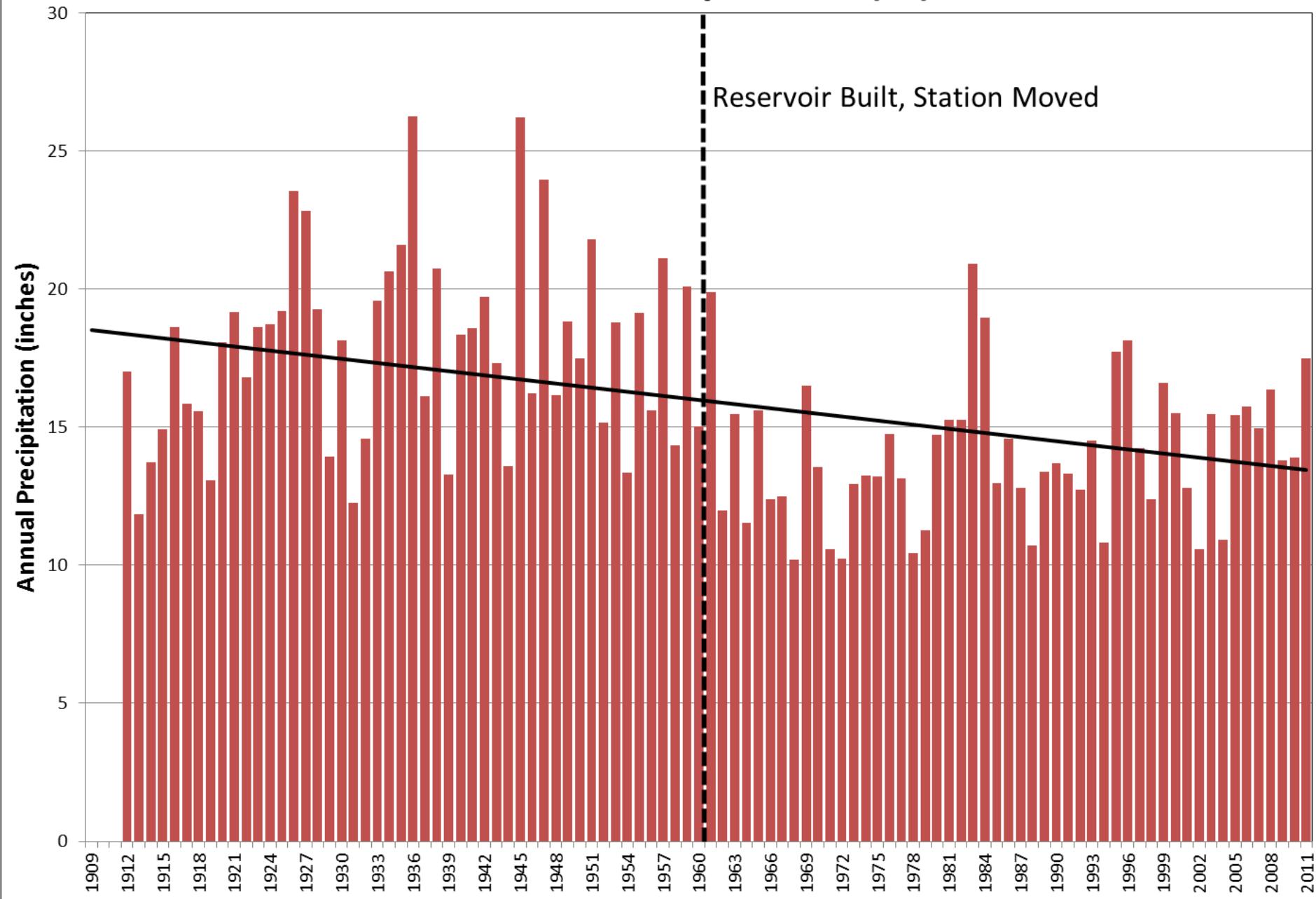
Fort Collins, CO Water Year Precipitation



Time series are not
always as they appear

Always need to dig
deeper

Dillon Annual Precipitation (in) 1912 - 2011



Reality -- Most Surface Water Supplies in the West Come From Mountain Snowmelt



Snow surveys began in the 1930s



Credit: NOAA Photo Library



And Continue today -- reluctantly

USDA, Natural Resources Conservation Service --

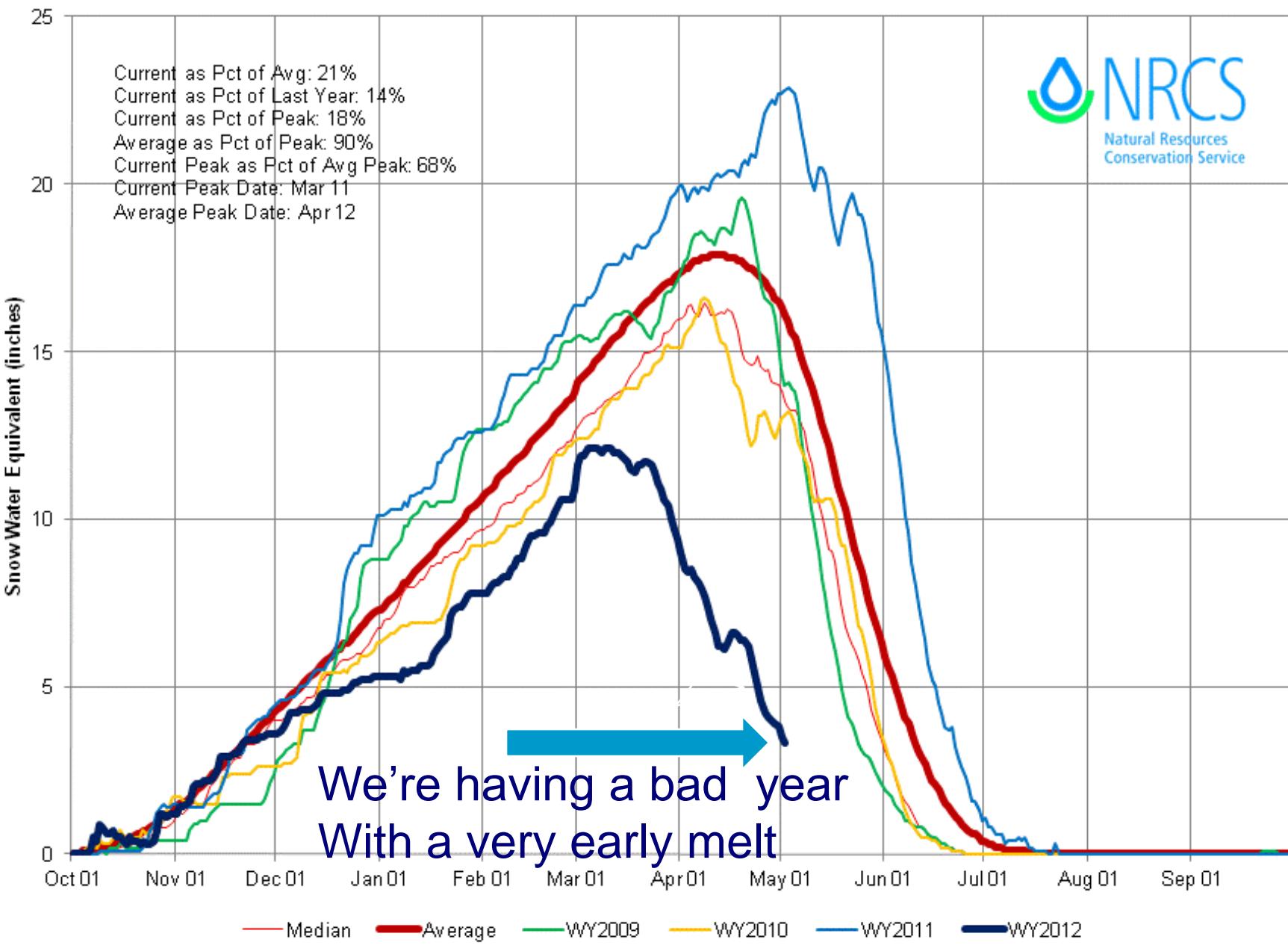
“SNOTEL Rules” but is it sufficient?



NRCS Snotel Sites for Colorado

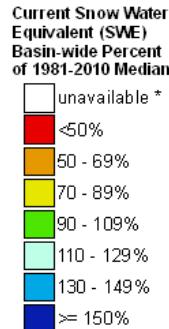


Colorado Statewide Time Series Snowpack Summary
Based on Provisional SNOTEL data as of May 02, 2012

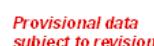


Westwide SNOTEL Current Snow Water Equivalent (SWE) % of Normal

Mar 06, 2014

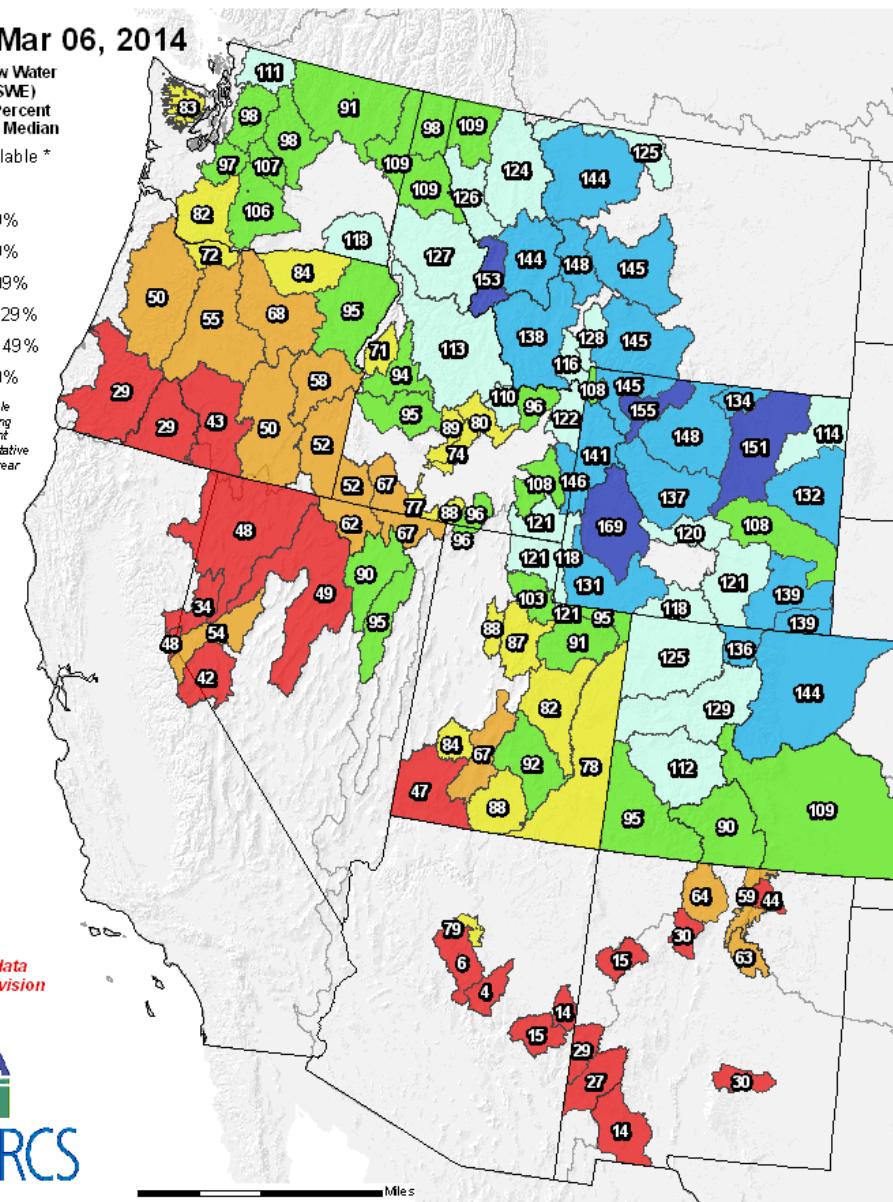


* Data unavailable at time of posting or measurement is not representative at this time of year



Mile

The snow water equivalent percent of normal represents the current snowwater equivalent found at selected SNOTEL sites in or near the basin compared to the average value for those sites on this day. Data based on the first reading of the day (typically 00:00).



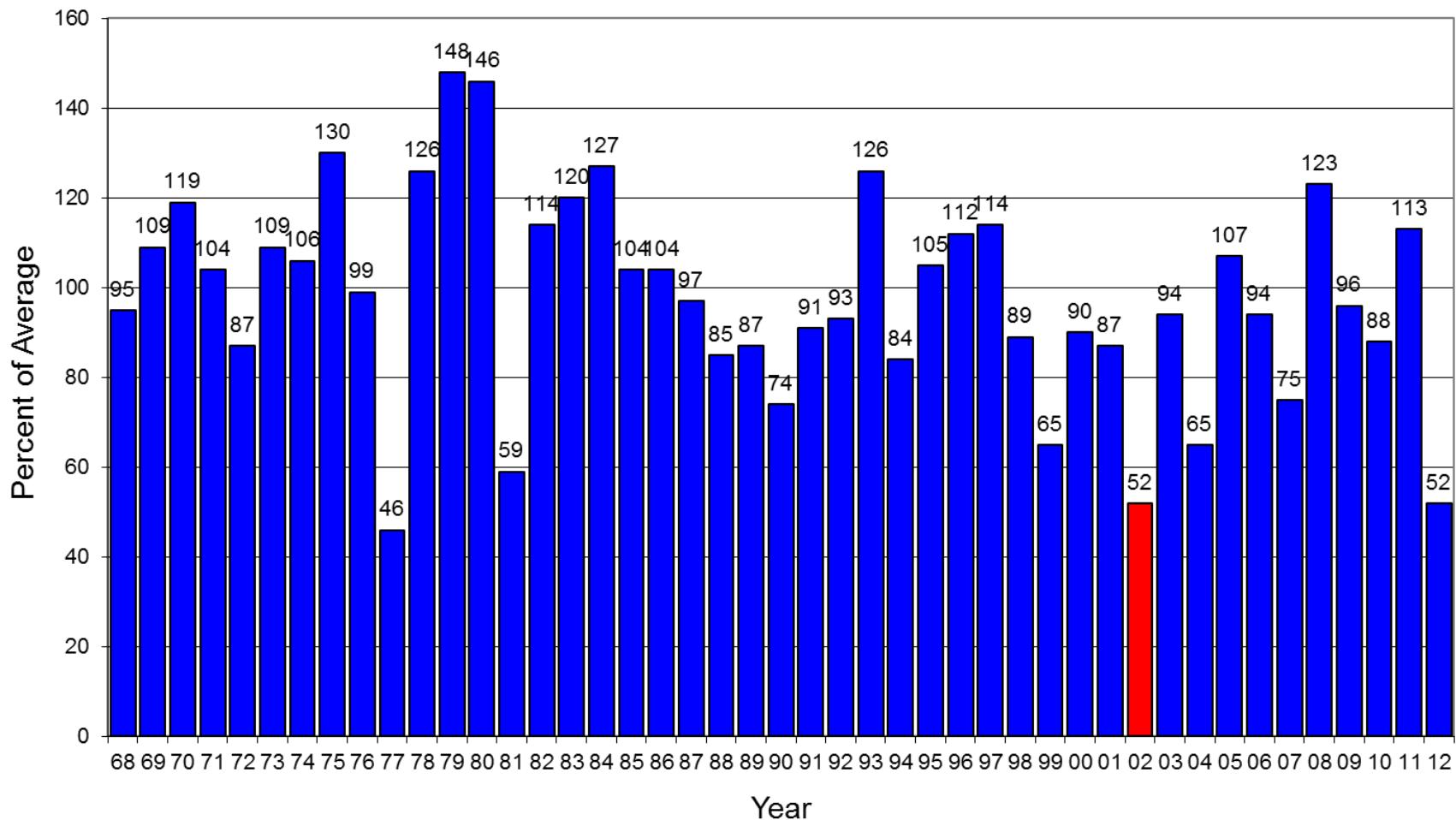
Prepared by the USDA NRCS National Water and Climate Center
Portland, Oregon <http://www.wcc.nrcs.usda.gov/gis/>
Based on data from <http://www.vwc.nrcs.usda.gov/reports/>
Science contact: Jim Marron <jpmarron@por.usda.gov> 503 414 3047

- Snow Surveys were initiated and are maintained to help forecast water supplies
- Now they are being used to track changes in the climate
- Are they up to this task?

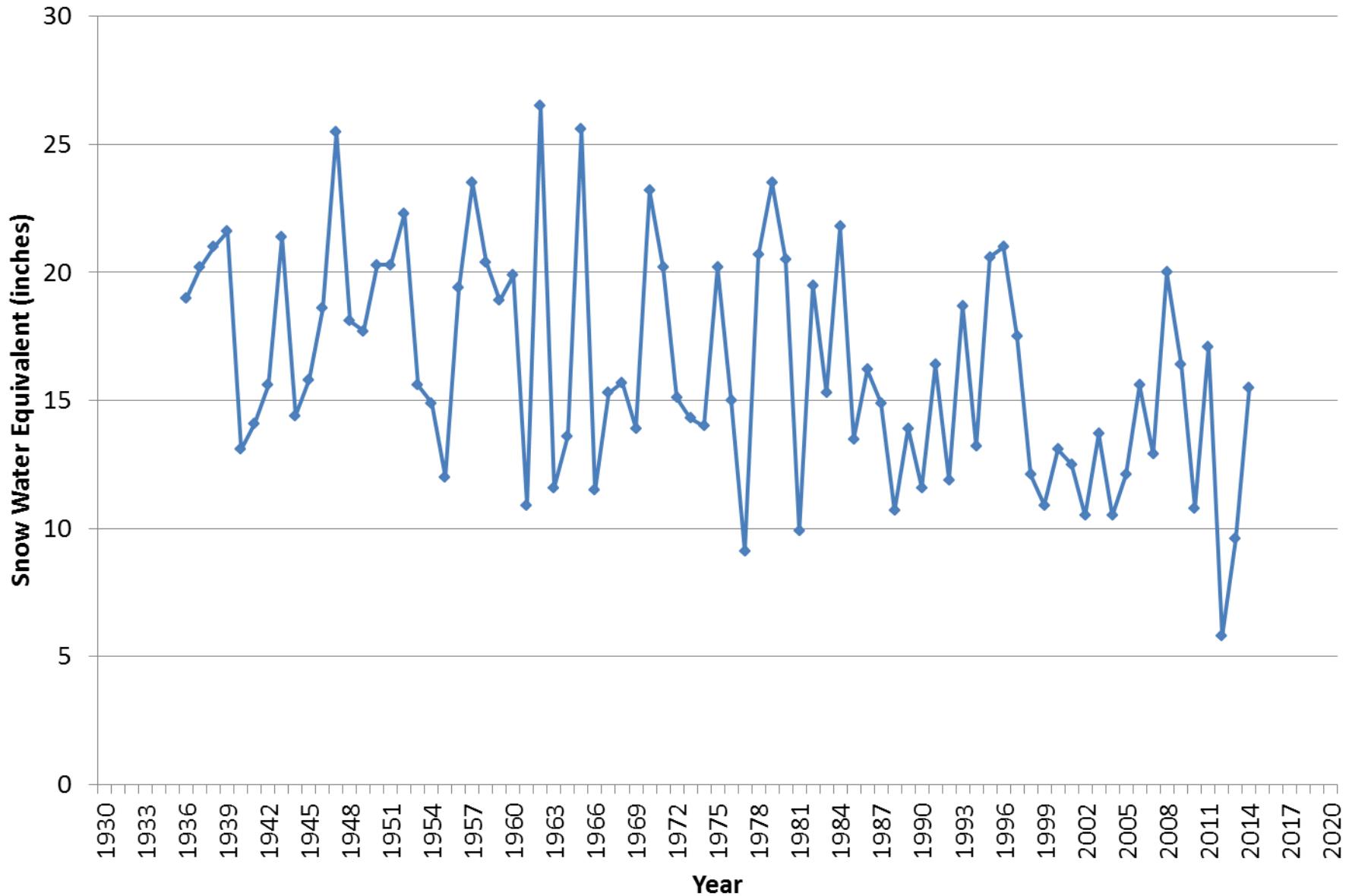
Colorado Statewide April 1 Snowpack

Time Series of April 1 Snowpack – Tracking Variability and Trends

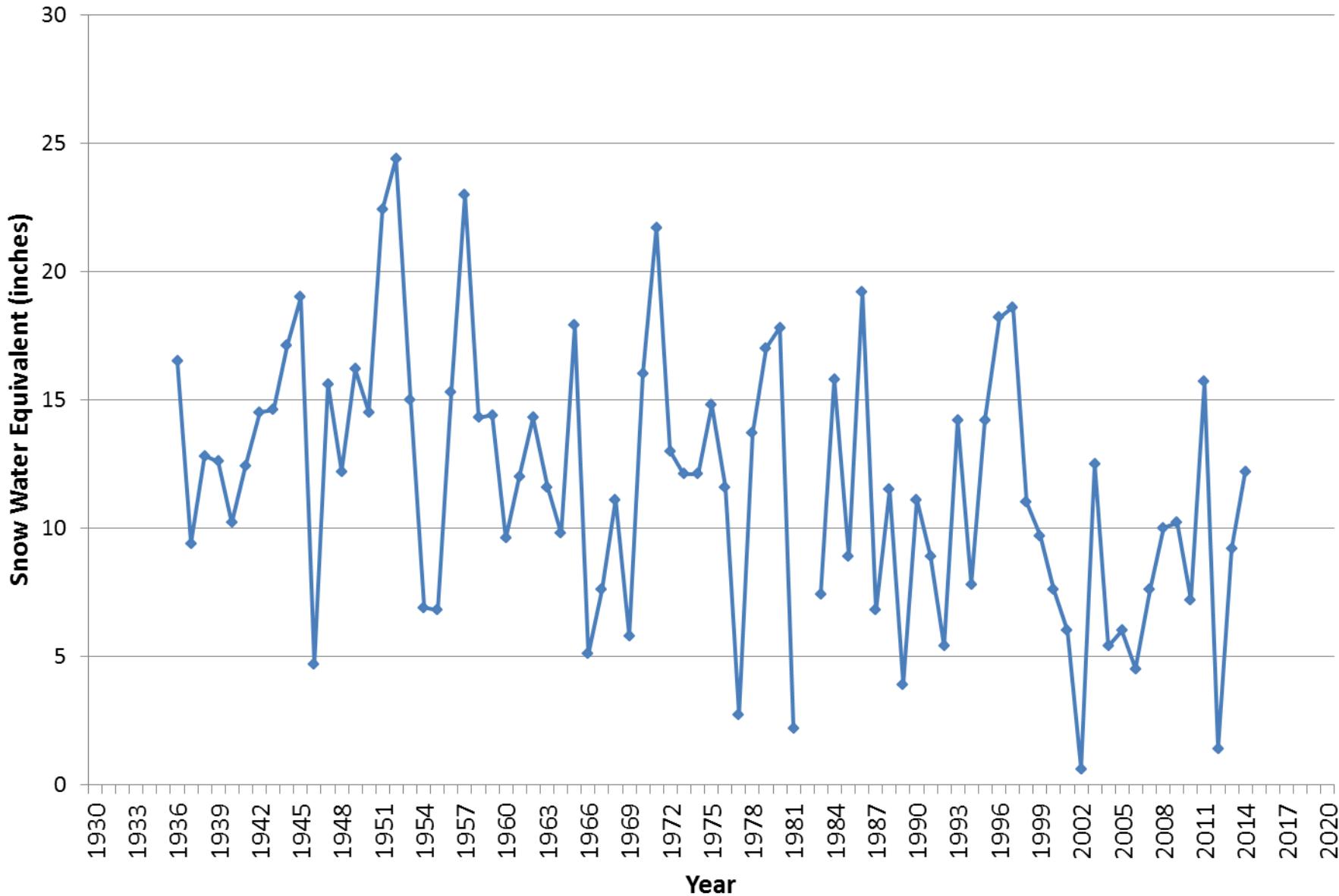
APRIL 1 SNOWPACK
COLORADO STATEWIDE



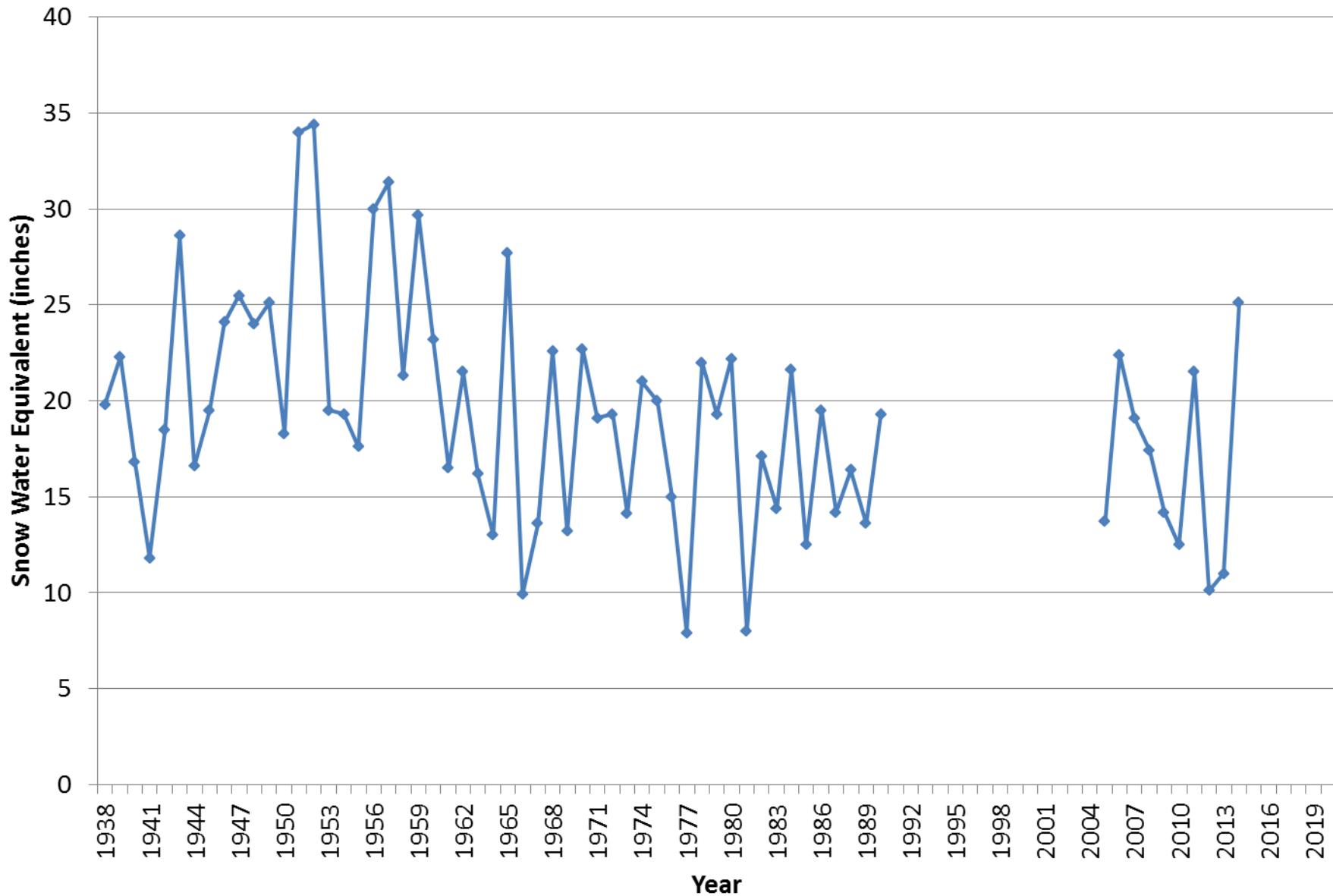
Independence Pass CO April 1 Snow Water Equivalent



Wild Basin Snow Course May 1 Snow Water Equivalent



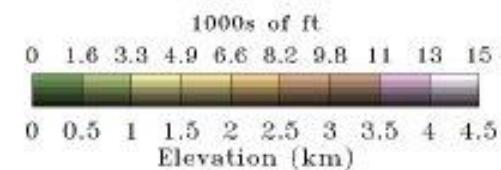
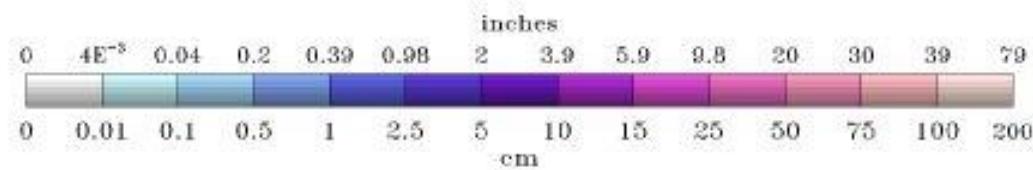
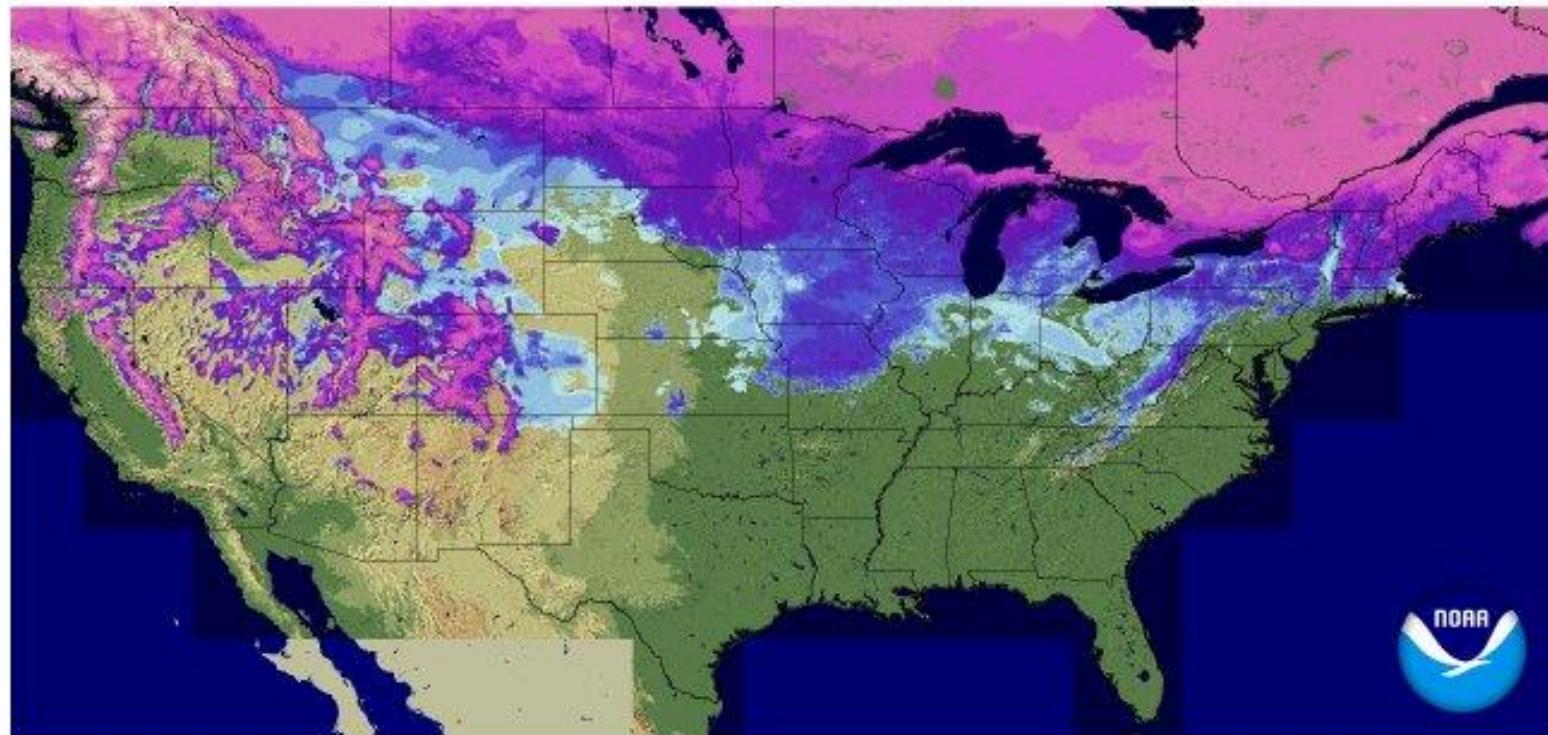
University Camp CO Snow Course Snow Water Equivalent



Taking Point data a step further

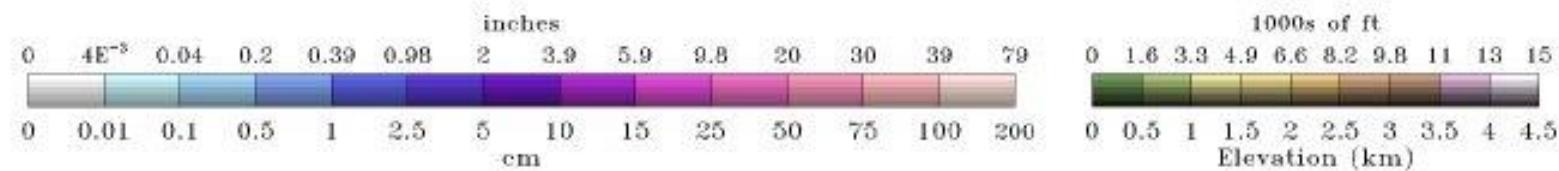
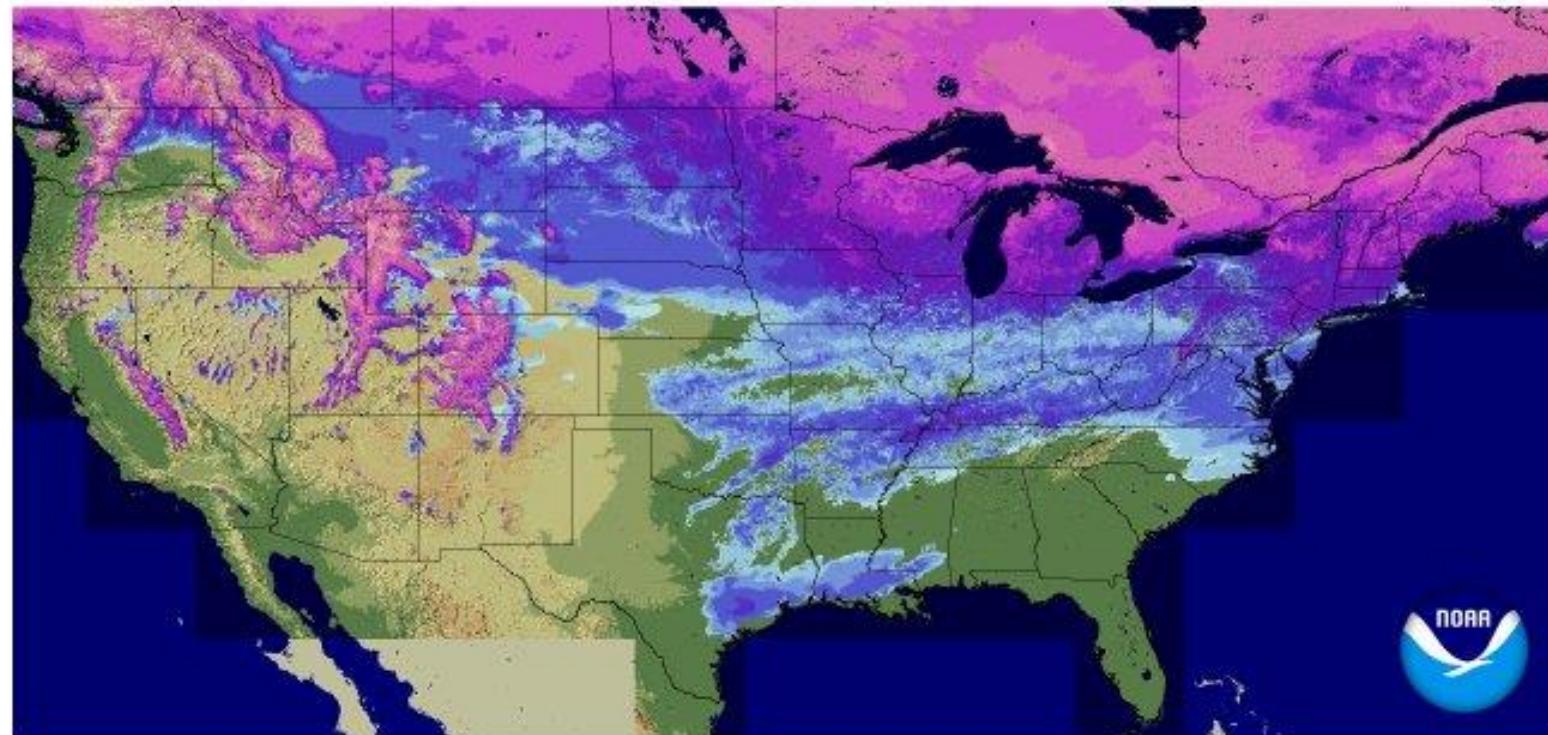
Snow Water Equivalent

2013-03-05 06



Snow Water Equivalent

2014-03-05 06 UTC

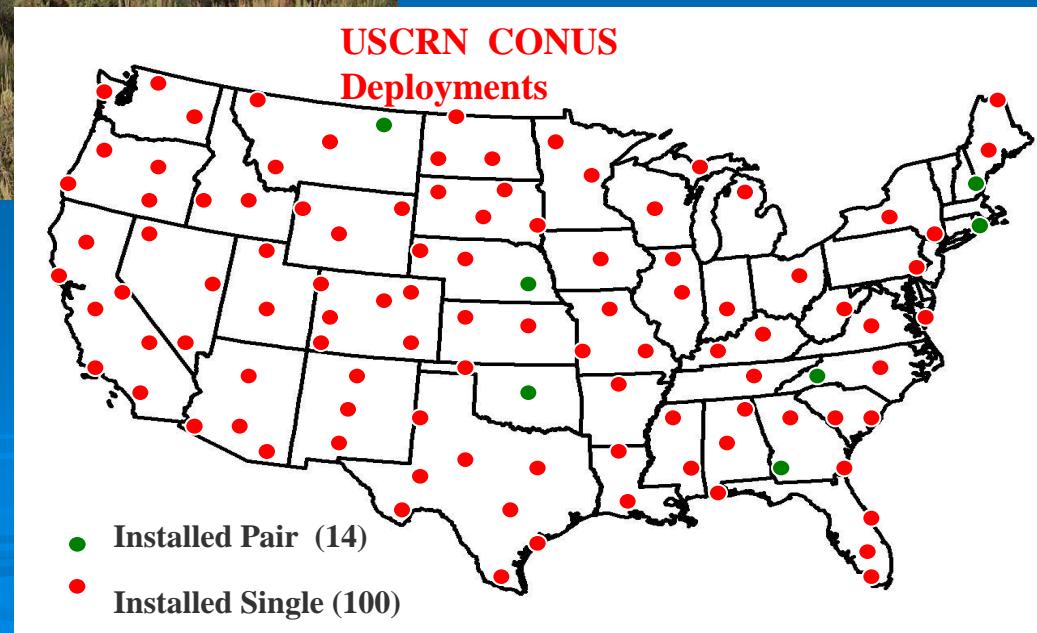


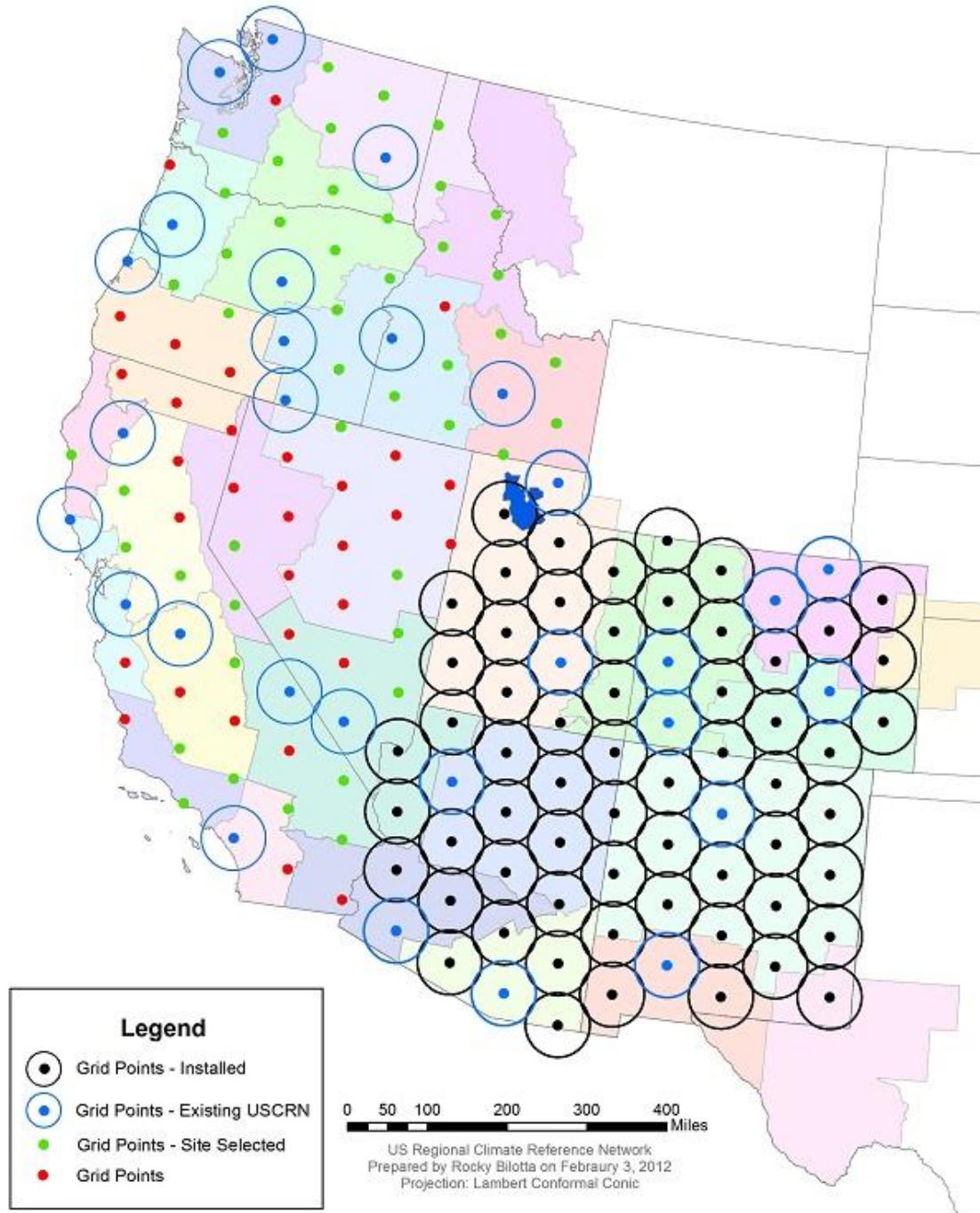
U.S. Climate Reference Network (CRN)

- Since the early 2000s, special observing networks have been added specifically to help track national climate trends



But CRN does not
Specifically measure
Snow! ☹





Did you know we (NOAA - NWS) also had another similar network?

The “Regional Climate Reference Network”

It was closed effective 1 June 2014

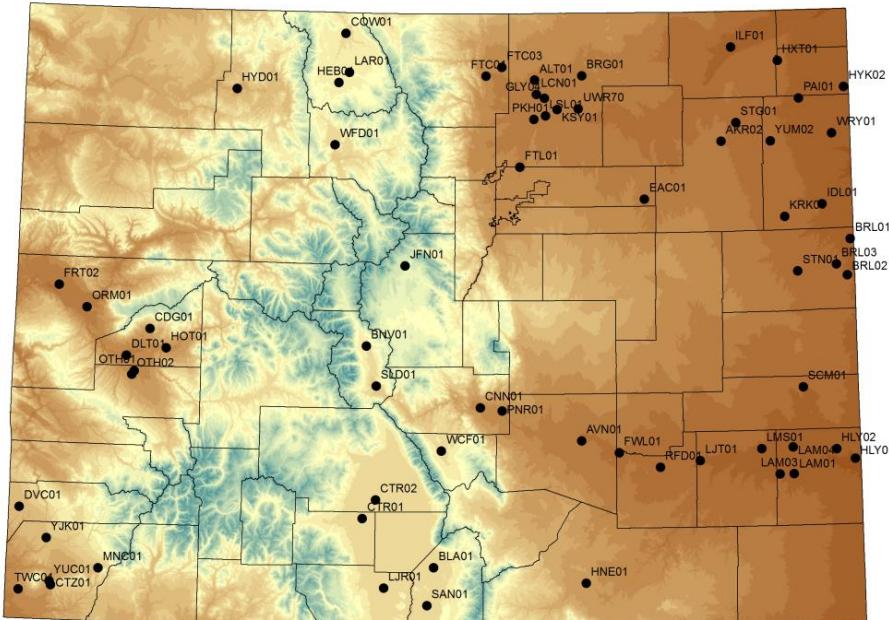
SW states are scrambling to take it over

Many states, like Colorado, have not only taken over many federal streamgauges, but also other basic weather and climate observations – not because we necessarily want to but because we need the information badly.

Many other sources of weather data have been added since the 1970s

CSU's Colorado Agricultural Meteorological Network
“CoAgMet”

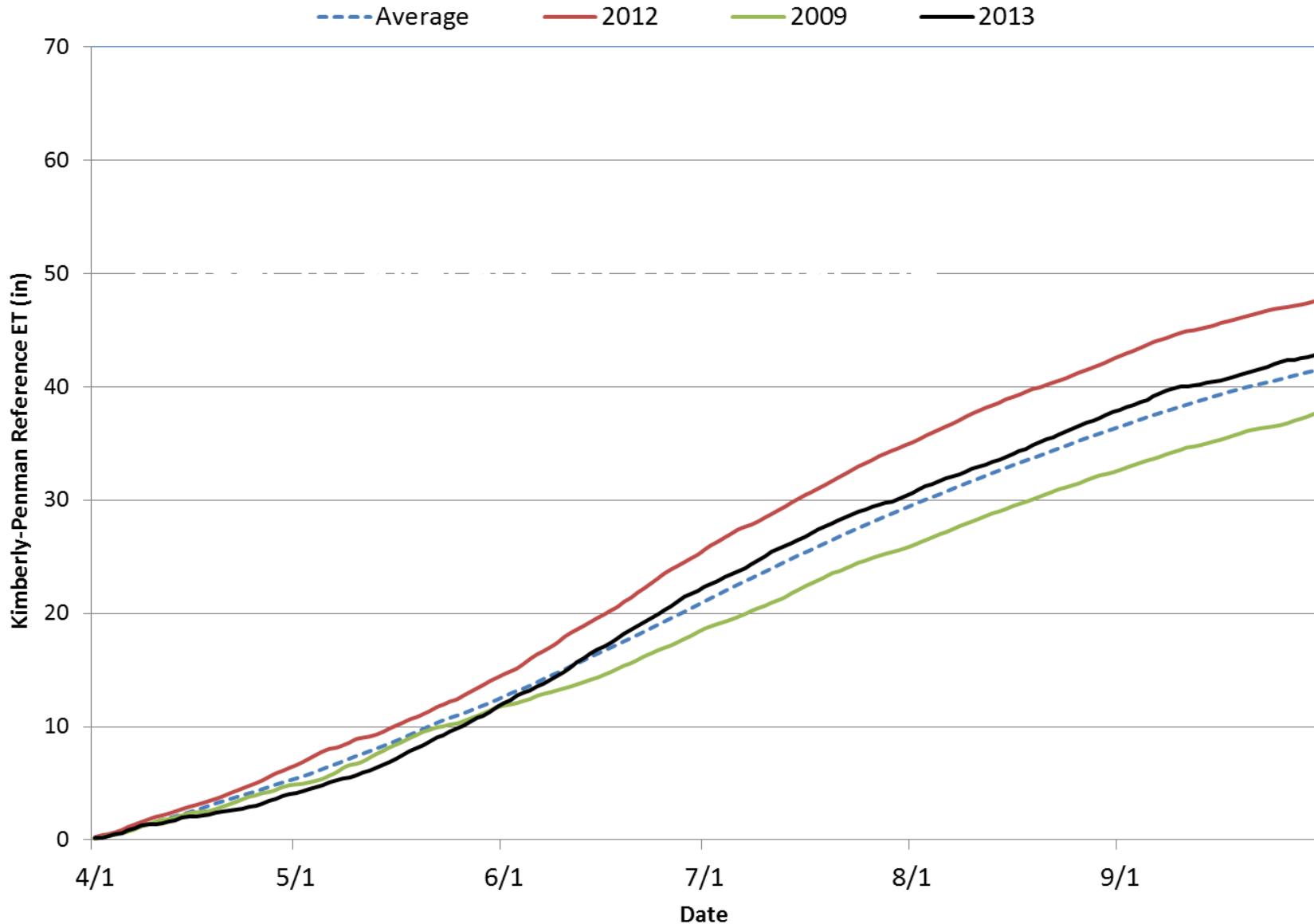
Current CoAgMet Station Locations - July 2012



**THANKS!! to those of
You who help support
CoAgMet**

Lucerne Reference ET

Lucerne Kimberly-Penman Reference ET (1992 - 2013)



And all the others collecting weather and climate data



Recent Extreme Drought in SE Colorado

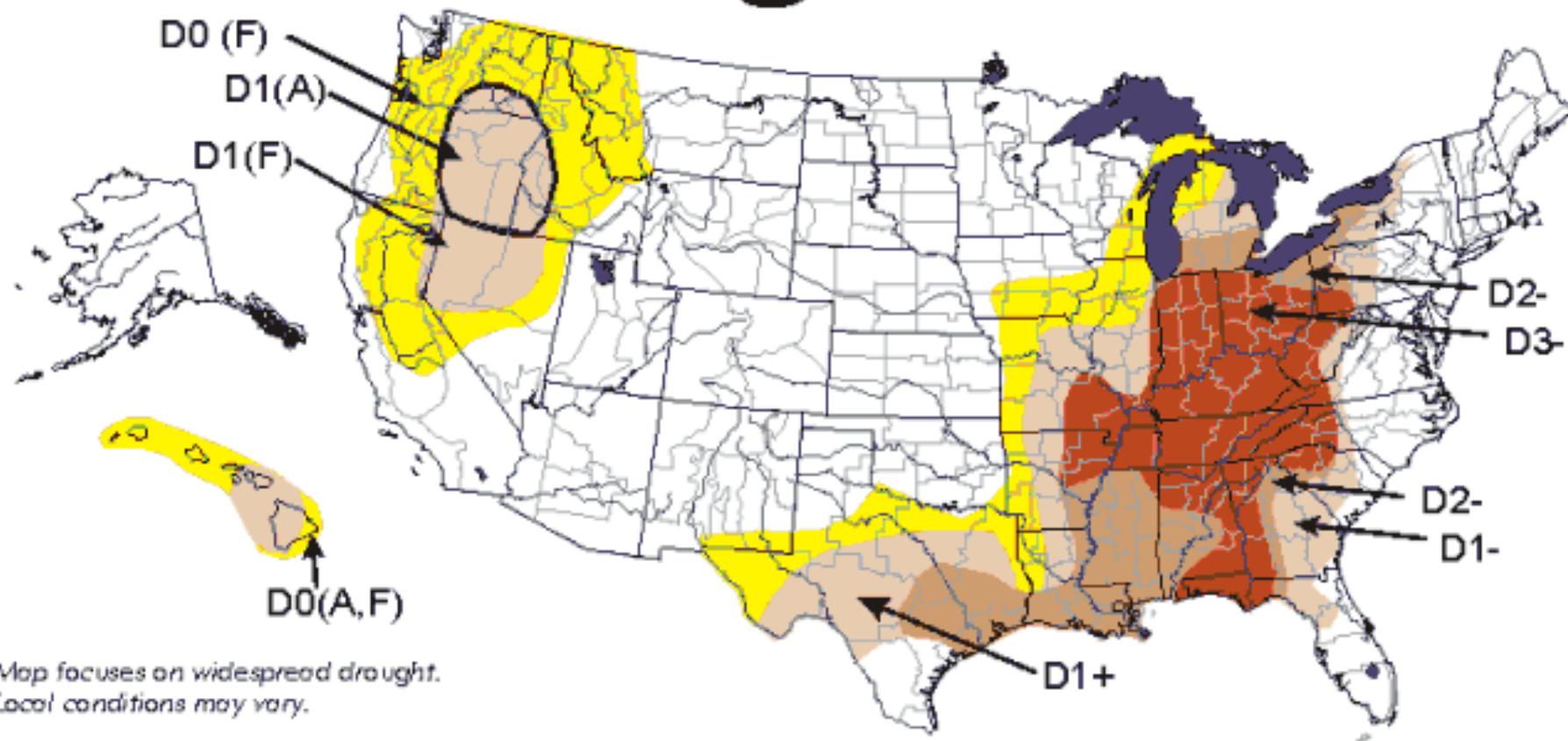


**Measuring what “didn’t fall” is
just as important as measuring
what did**

Photo by Lyric Lucero
2013 Manzanola, CO

September 28, 1999

U.S. Drought Monitor



Map focuses on widespread drought.
Local conditions may vary.

[Yellow square]	D0 Watch
[Light Brown square]	D1 Drought
[Reddish-Brown square]	D2 Drought-Severe
[Dark Red square]	D3 Drought-Extreme
[Maroon square]	D4 Drought-Exceptional
[Pencil icon]	Delineates Overlapping Areas

Drought type: used only
when impacts differ
A = Agriculture
W = Water
F = Forest fire danger

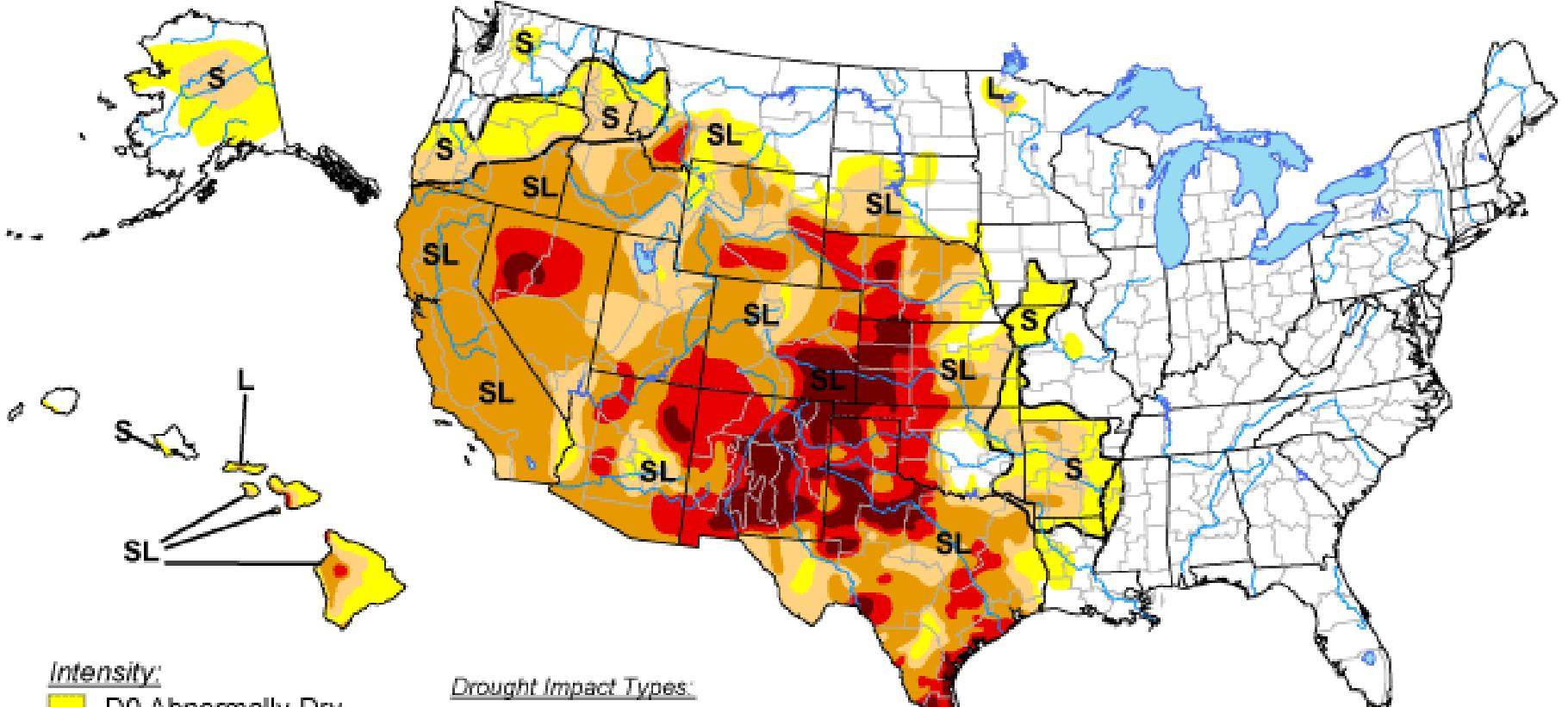
Plus (+) = Forecast to intensify next two weeks
Minus (-) = Forecast to diminish next two weeks
No sign = No change in drought classification forecast



• Released Thursday, Sep 30, 1999 •

U.S. Drought Monitor

July 16, 2013
Valid 7 a.m. EDT



Intensity:

- D0 Abnormally Dry
- D1 Drought - Moderate
- D2 Drought - Severe
- D3 Drought - Extreme
- D4 Drought - Exceptional

Drought Impact Types:

- ~ Delineates dominant impacts
- S = Short-Term, typically <6 months (e.g. agriculture, grasslands)
- L = Long-Term, typically >6 months (e.g. hydrology, ecology)

The Drought Monitor focuses on broad-scale conditions.
Local conditions may vary. See accompanying text summary
for forecast statements.

<http://droughtmonitor.unl.edu/>

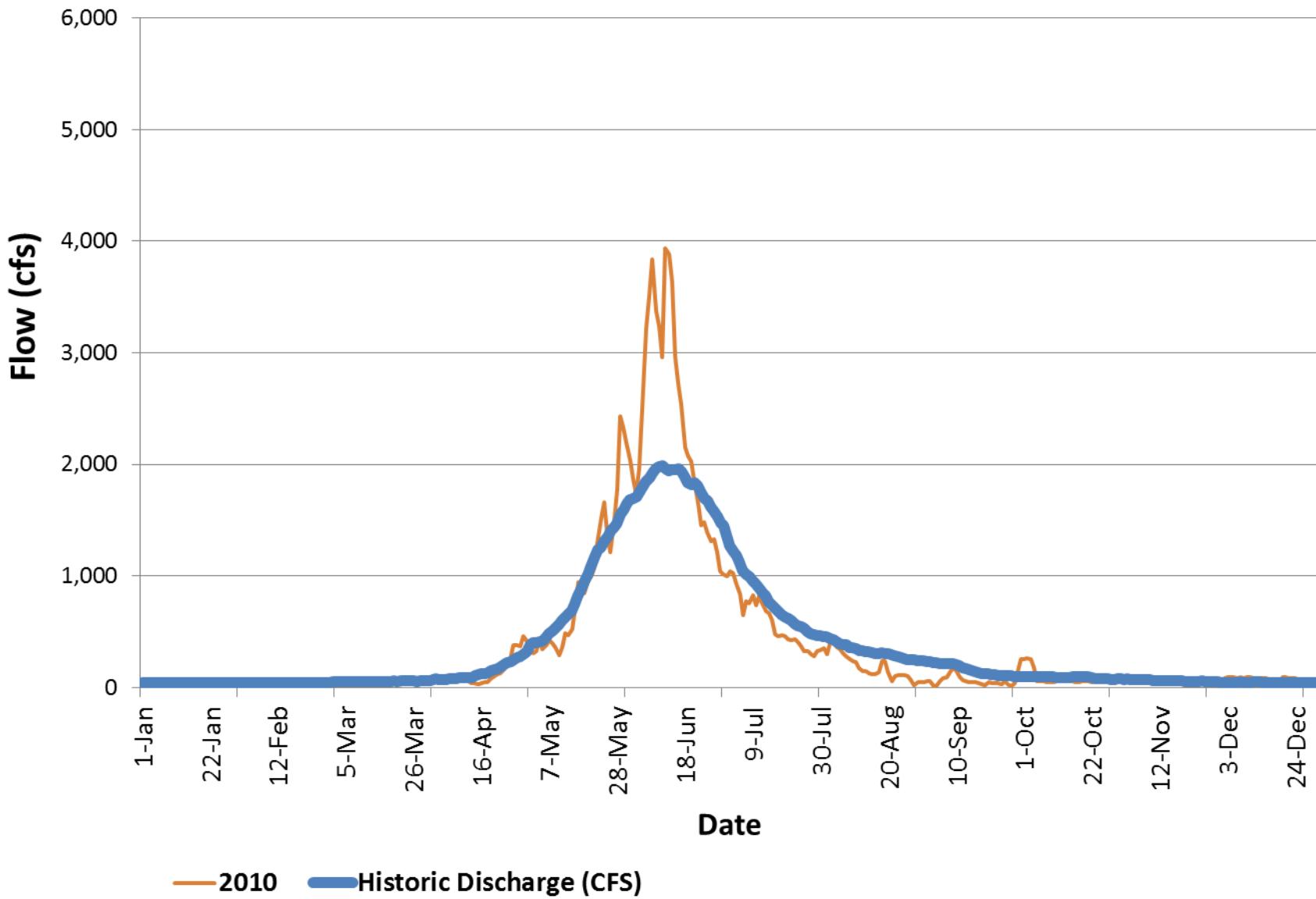


Released Thursday, July 18, 2013
Author: Richard Heim, NOAA/NESDIS/NCDC

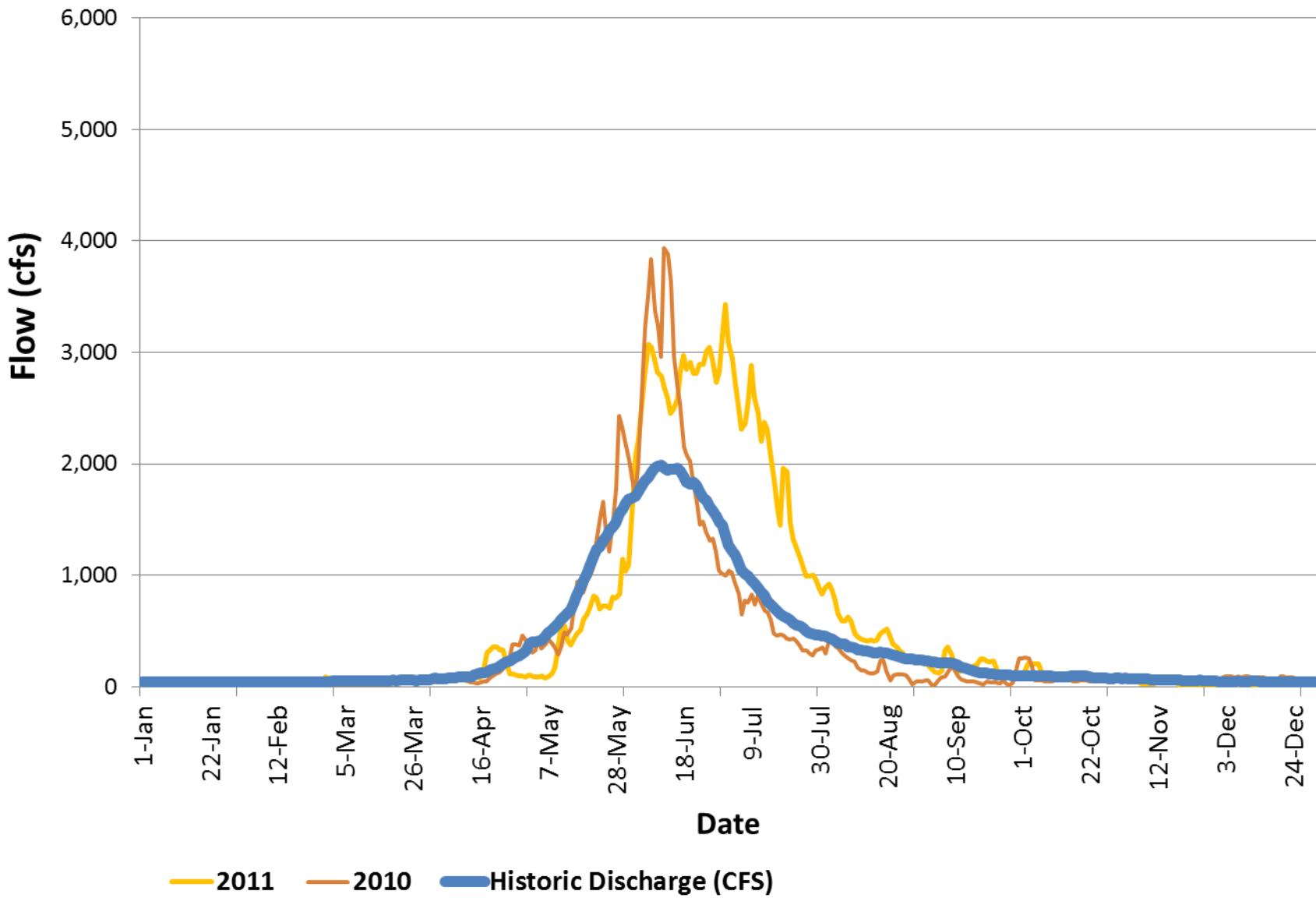
A photograph of a forest stream flowing over mossy rocks. The water is clear and flows rapidly. The banks of the stream are covered in green moss and small plants. In the background, there is a dense forest of tall evergreen trees. The foreground is dominated by the bark of two large pine trees on either side of the stream.

Streamflow– the Great Climate Integrator

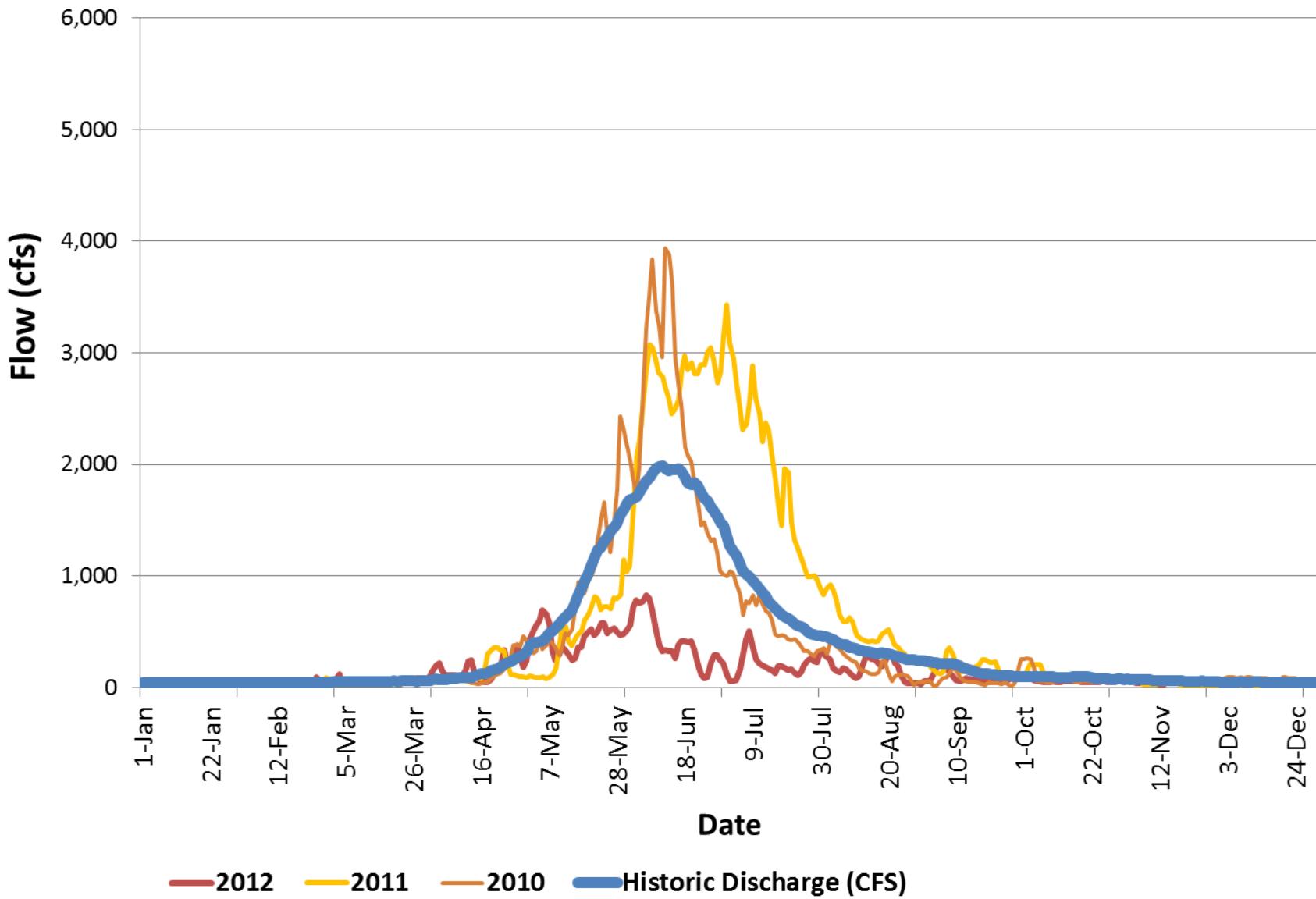
Poudre River at Mouth of the Canyon Gage (CLAFTCCO) Daily Average Flows



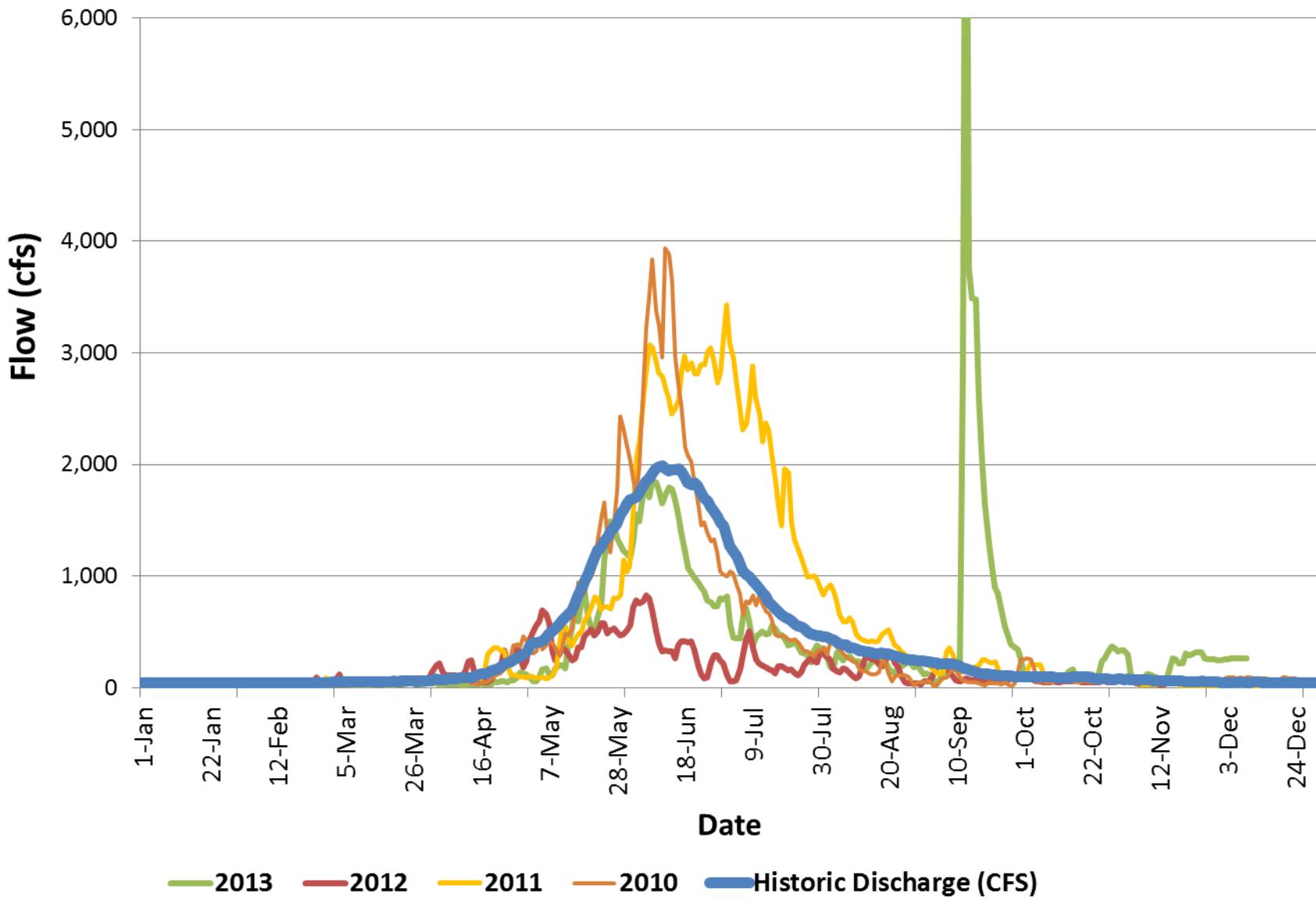
Poudre River at Mouth of the Canyon Gage (CLAFTCCO) Daily Average Flows



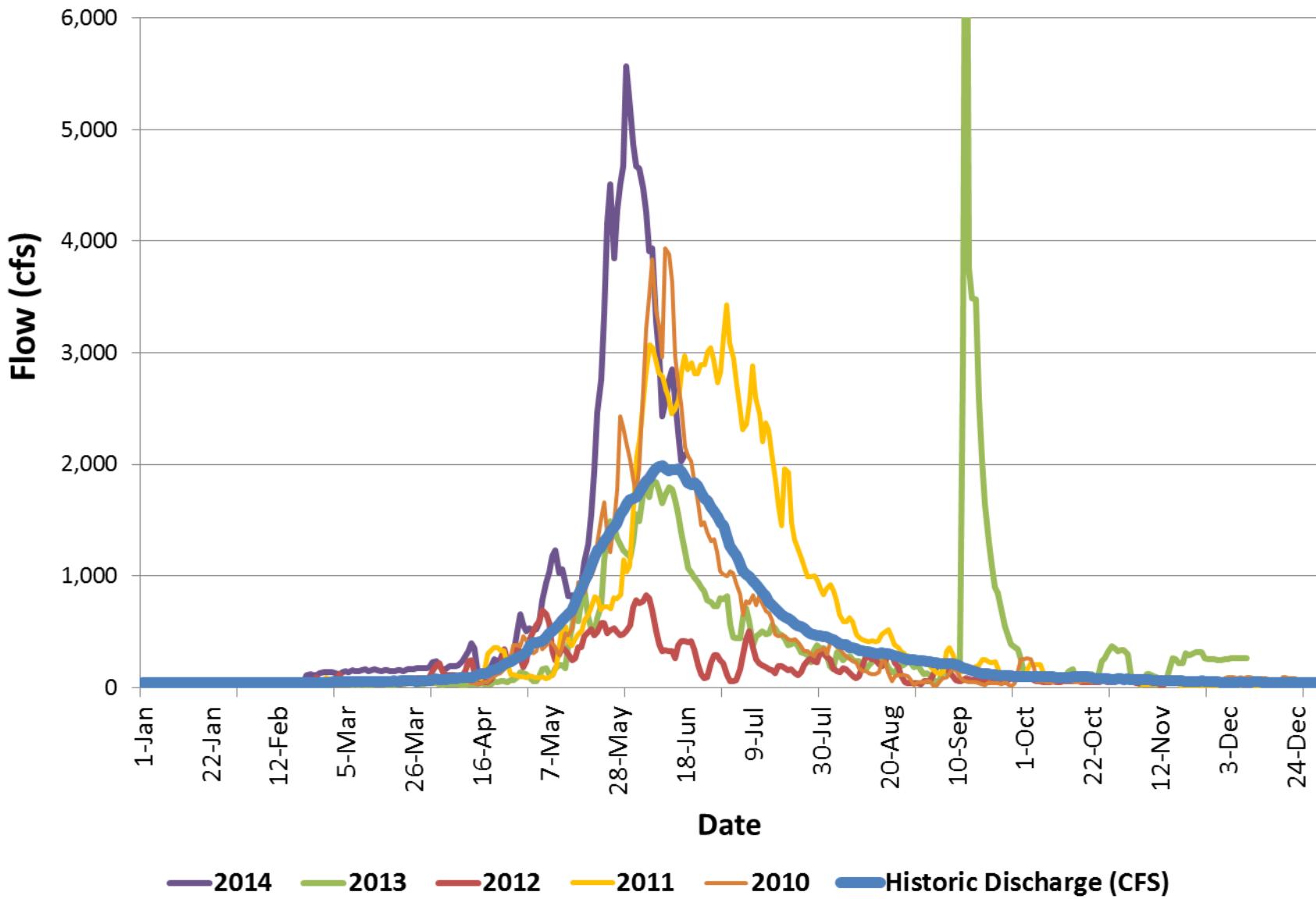
Poudre River at Mouth of the Canyon Gage (CLAFTCCO) Daily Average Flows



Poudre River at Mouth of the Canyon Gage (CLAFTCCO) Daily Average Flows



Poudre River at Mouth of the Canyon Gage (CLAFTCCO) Daily Average Flows



A photograph of a street completely submerged under floodwater. The water covers the entire width of the road, with only the tops of trees and utility poles visible above the surface. In the background, there are houses and more trees. Several road signs are partially submerged or standing in the water. A yellow double line is visible on the left side of the frame.

And then----- The 2013 Colorado Floods

A successful example of
integrated monitoring



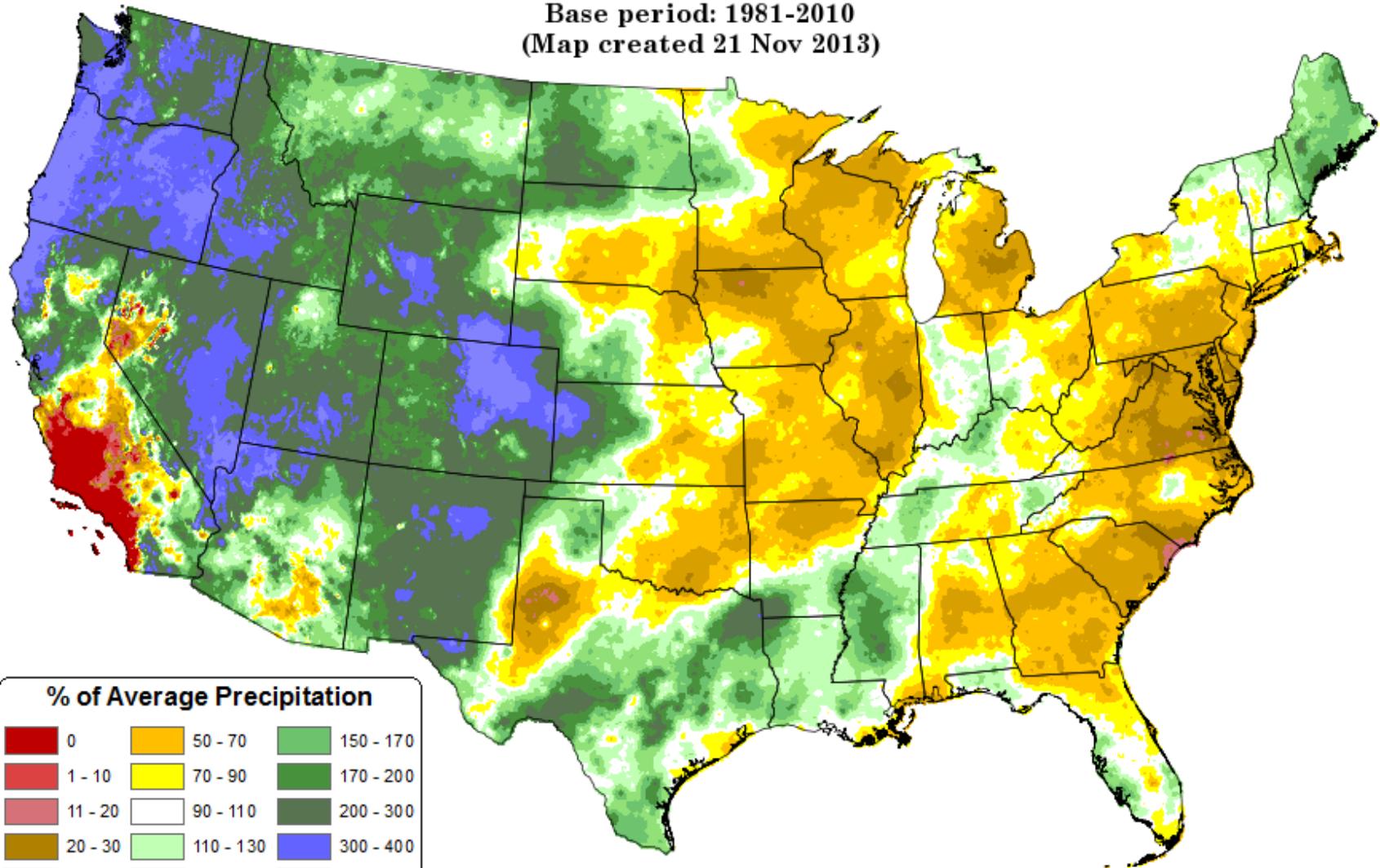
Sep 2013 Percent of Normal

Total Precipitation Anomaly: September 2013

Period ending 30 Sep 2013

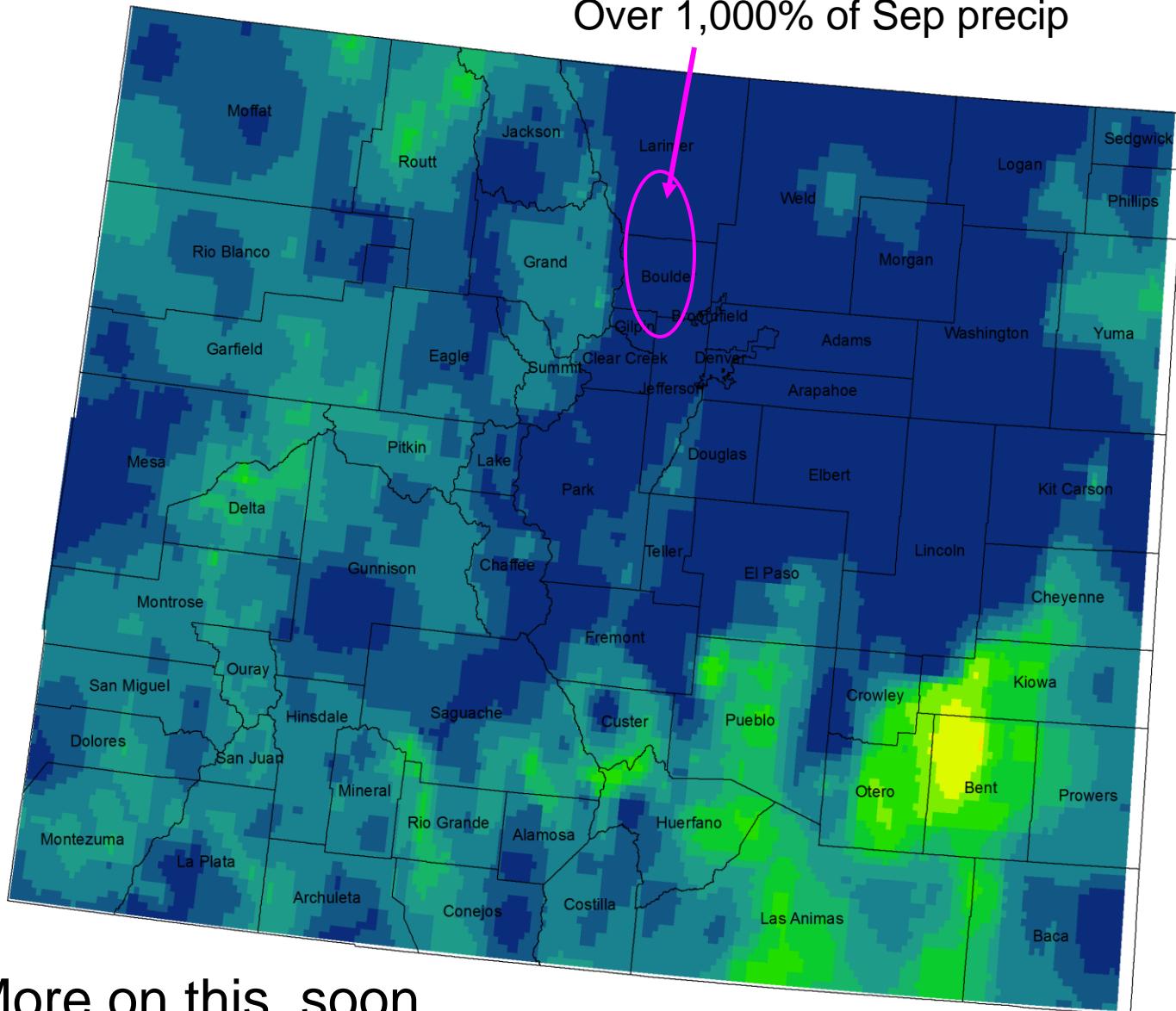
Base period: 1981-2010

(Map created 21 Nov 2013)



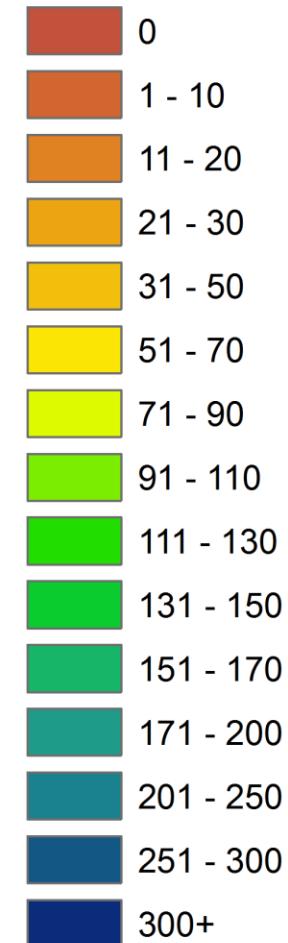
Colorado September 2013 Precipitation as Percentage of Normal

Over 1,000% of Sep precip



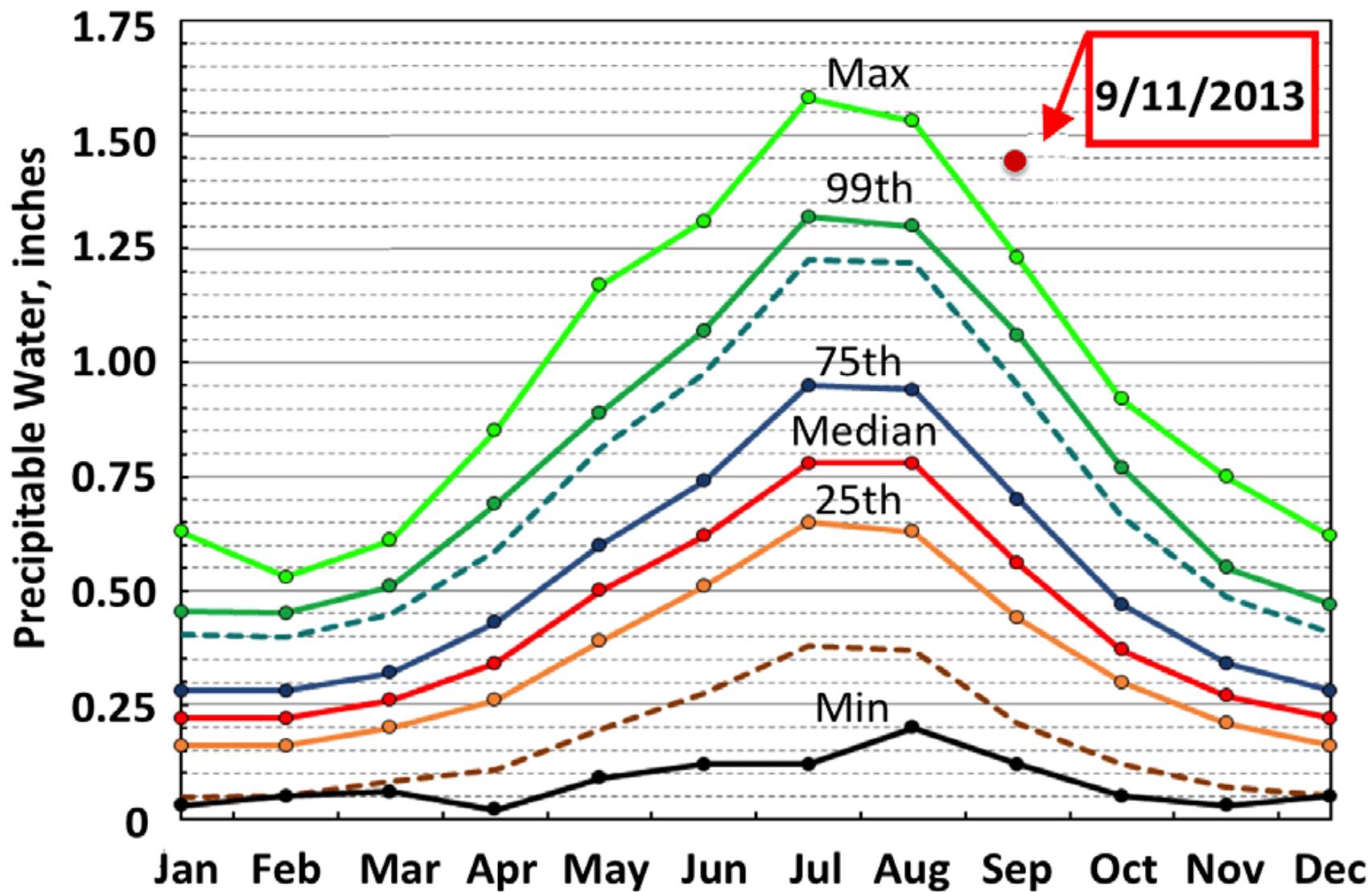
September 13

% of Normal

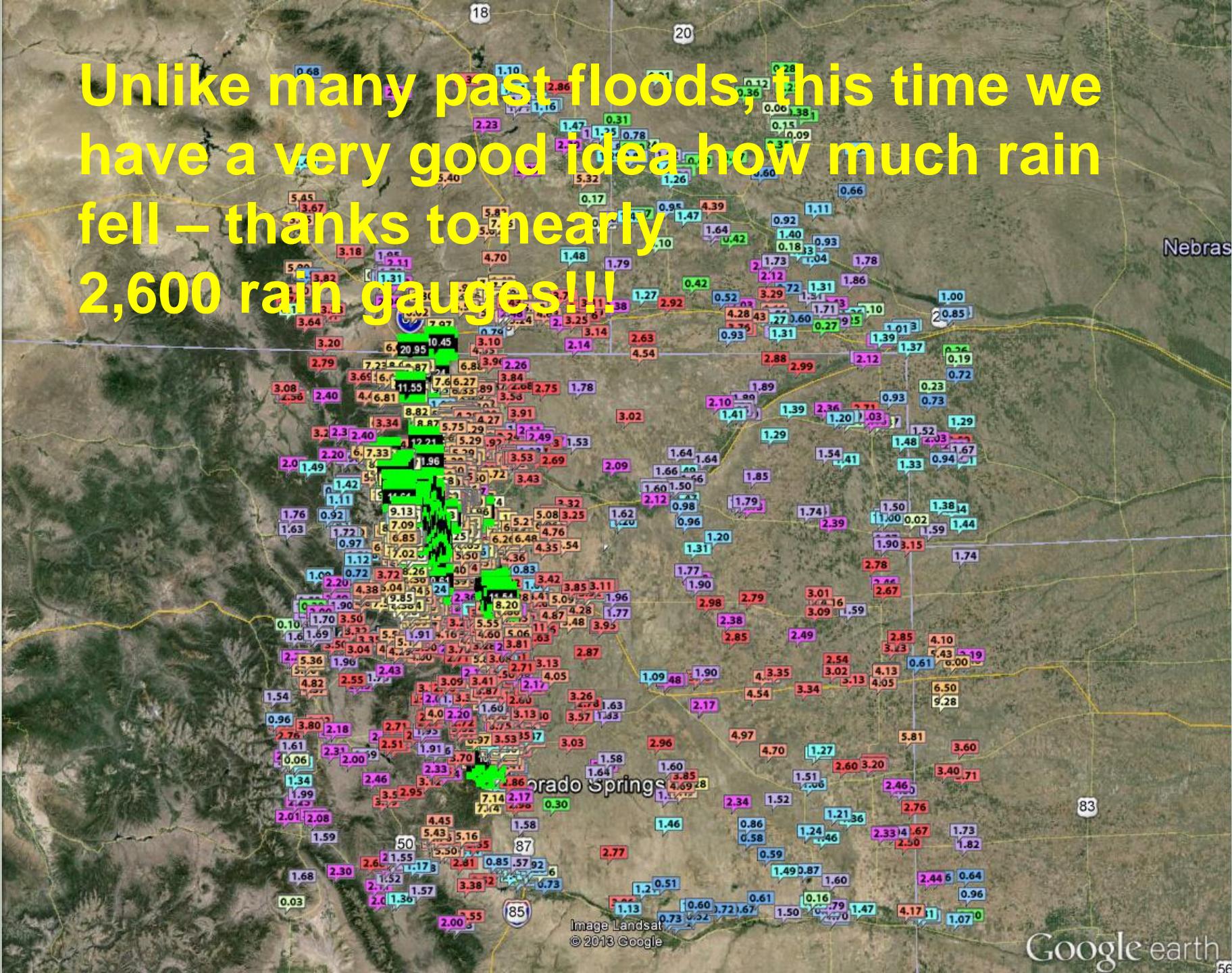


More on this, soon

Total Atmospheric Precipitable water over Denver from 1948 - 2012

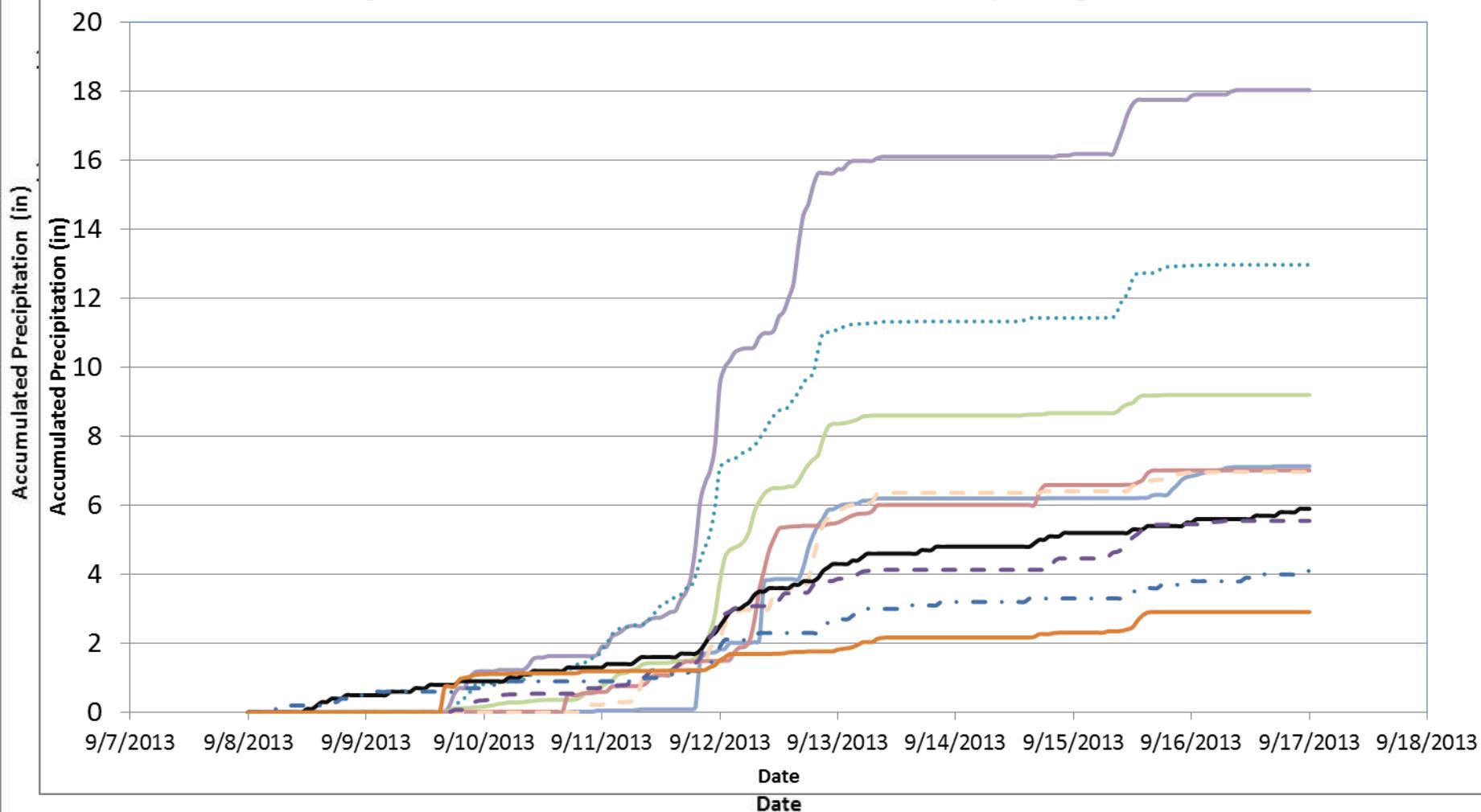


Unlike many past floods, this time we have a very good idea how much rain fell – thanks to nearly 2,600 rain gauges!!!

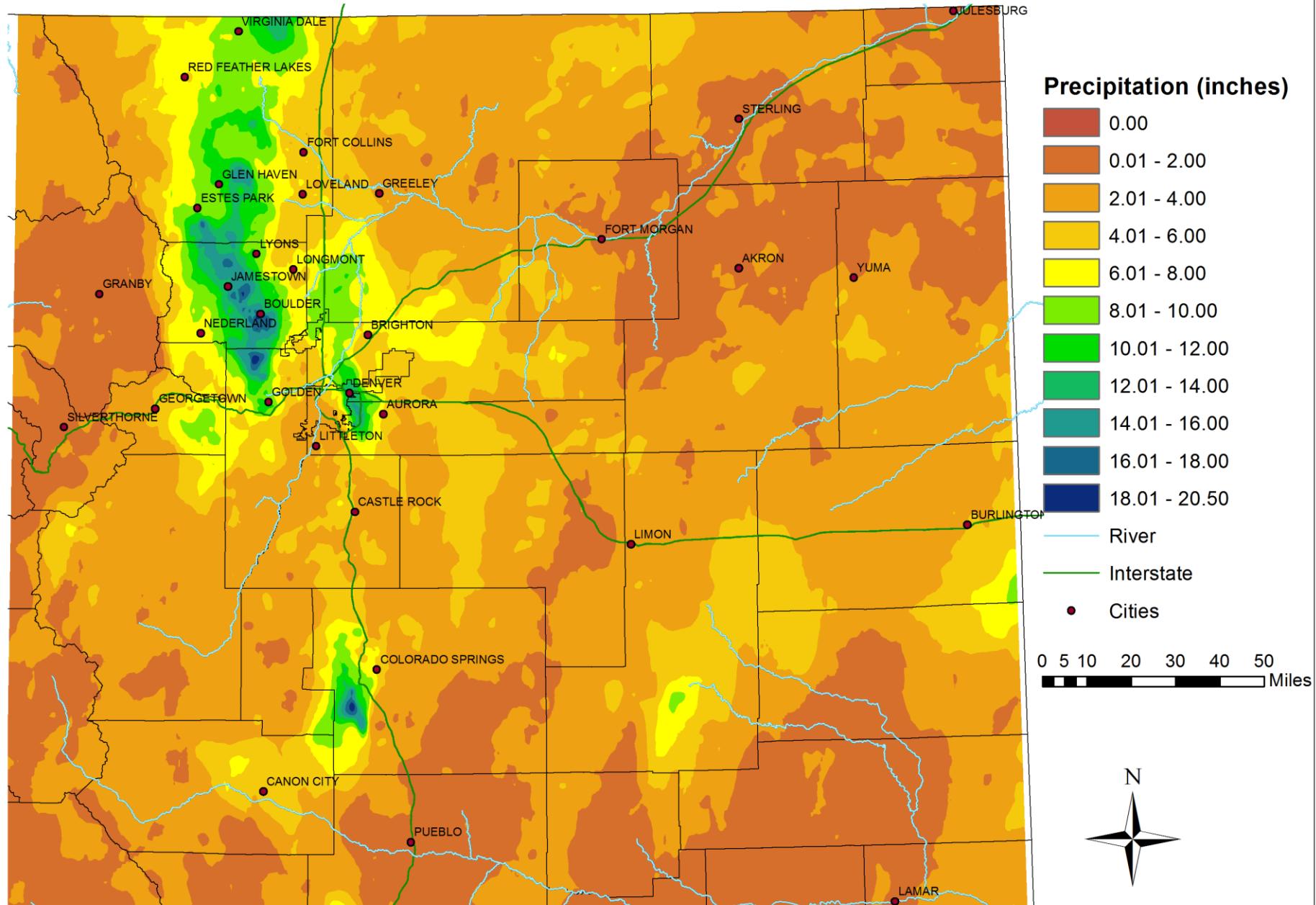


Hourly Accumulated Precipitation 9/8/13-9/17/13

- SBC @ South Boulder Road 5350'
- Estes Park RAWS 7,820'
- Denver City Park 5307'
- Deadman Hill 10,220'
- Joe Wright Snotel 10,120'
- Sugarloaf (Boulder) RAWS 6,733'
- Fort Carson RAWS 6,700'
- Rampart Range (W. El Paso) RAWS 9,207'
- Fort Collins West CoAgMet (in) 5,120'
- Greeley04 CoAgMet 4,683'



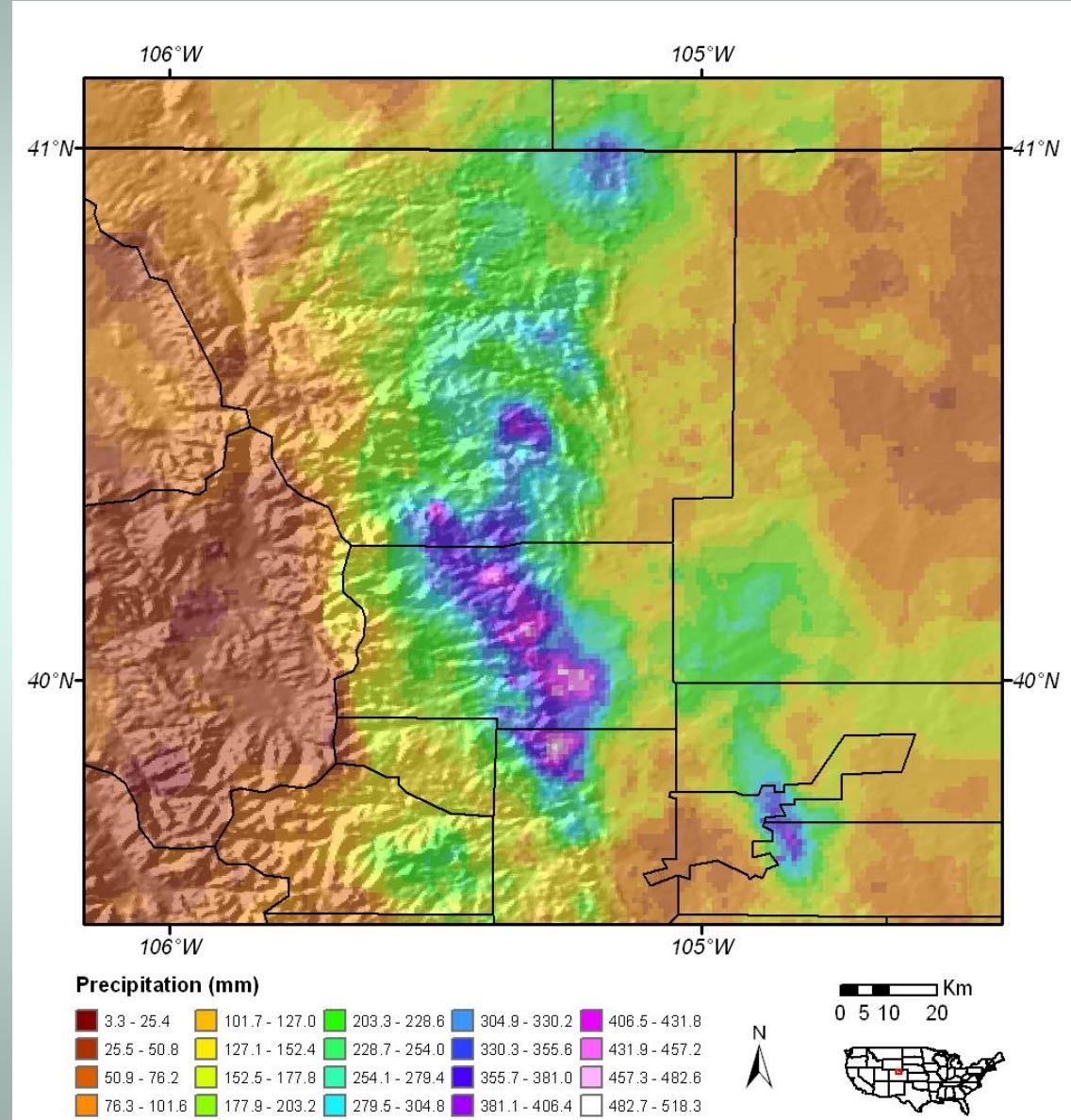
Precipitation beginning September 8, 2013 ending 7:00 AM MST September 17, 2013



Map created with the Storm Precipitation Analysis System (SPAS) through a collaborative effort by Applied Weather Associates, LLC, MetStat, Inc. and the Colorado Climate Center. Radar data supplied by Weather Decision Technologies, Inc.

Storm-total Rainfall, north central Colorado, Sep 8-17, 2013

This storm is likely one of the 3-5 largest rain/flood events in Colorado's measured history back to the late 1890s



Top Total By County		
Stations Exceeding 10" of Rain		
Sep-13		
CO-BO-30	Boulder 1.9 SE	19.18
CO-LR-225	Drake 3.0 NNE	16.65
CO-AD-127	Aurora 4.2 NNW	16.63
CO-AR-270	Aurora 0.7 WSW	16.39
CO-DN-183	Denver 5.1 ENE	13.49
CO-EP-175	Manitou Springs 1.2 ESE	12.84
CO-JF-365	Golden 2.1 SW	12.64
CO-WE-203	Longmont 8.2 ESE	11.57
CO-CC-7	Idaho Springs 4.7 SSE	10.34

These day are preliminary – use only for general assessment

New Colorado one-day rainfall record set 12 Sep 2013

- Fort Carson Rod and Gun observing station (a USGS gauge)
 - 11.85" calendar day total
 - 12.46" for 24-hour period ending 9 AM Sep 13, 2013

The issue of data quality

- It's not something most information users ever think about
- They simply assume the data provided are accurate and top quality

NIDIS (National Integrated Drought Information System)

Upper Colorado River Basin
Drought Early Warning
System information needs
assessment results

Some key findings

- Preserve all long-term stations in as many geographic locations as possible
- Collect precip and snow accumulation so relationships of what falls as rain, what falls as snow, and what stays on the ground as snow, can be tracked accurately

- More SNOTEL desired at varieties of elevation, not just peak SWE areas (willing to share costs of hardware, but not O&M)
- Critical to preserve snow courses (for data continuity/representativeness)
- Need better information on elevational distribution of snow
- Snow sublimation
- Soil moisture beneath snowpack in historic perspective

- Additional stream gauging sites needed (no cuts, particularly any and all long-term stations)
- Document extreme events quickly and provide frequency estimates
- Need “native flow” information in real time.
- Remote sensing (preference for local point data but may change mind if results show improvements in water supply forecasts)

Reservoir information

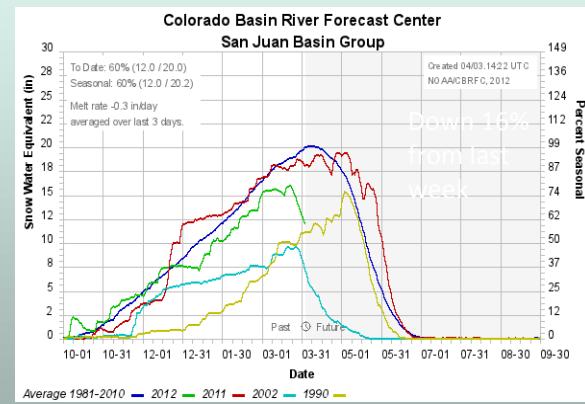
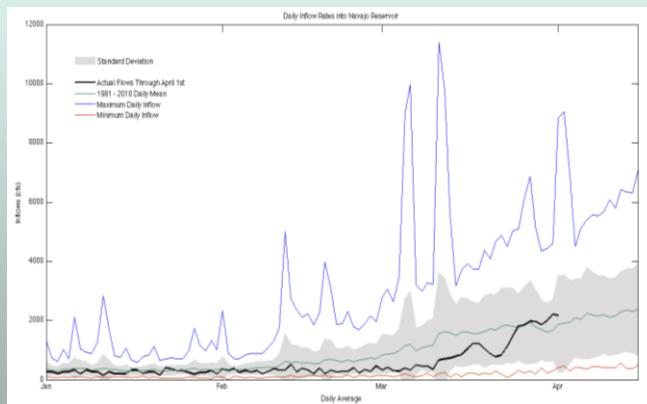
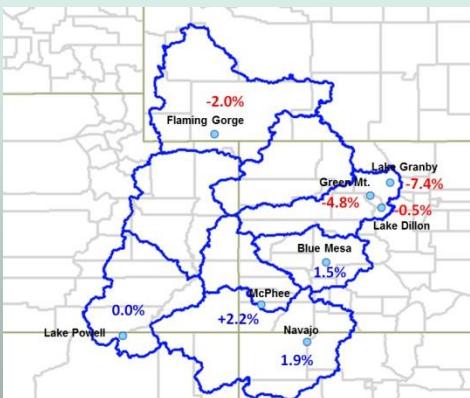
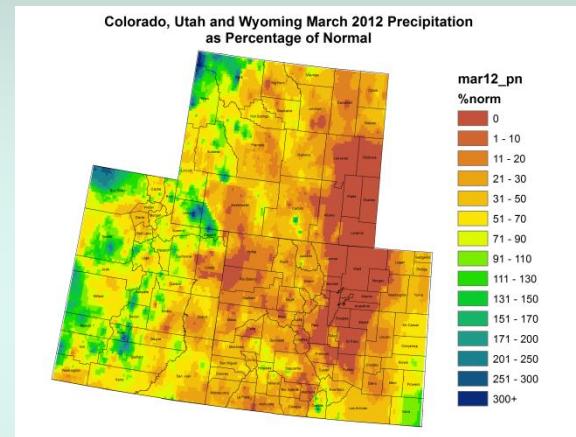
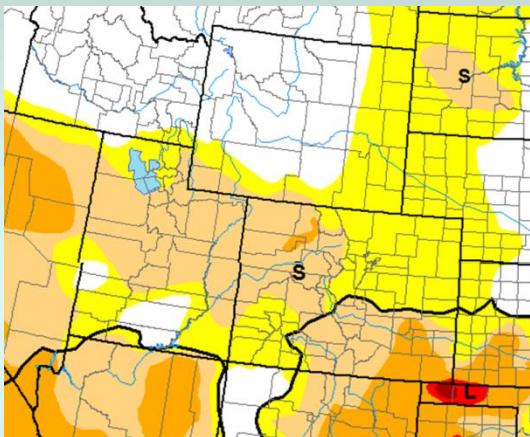
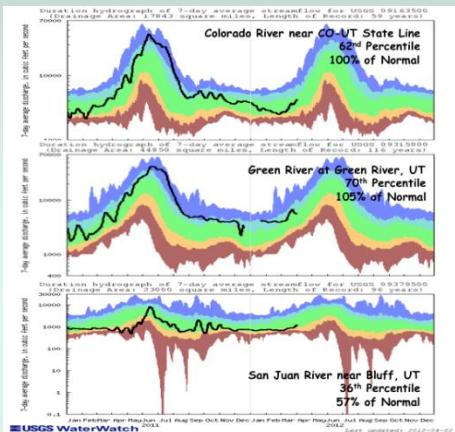
- Interest in better climatological perspective on reservoirs – daily rate of change, seasonal cycles, year to year variations -- basically better visualization.

Finally, HUGE INTEREST in anything that will provide and improve current year water supply forecasts and “year two” forecasts as well as longer term projections

As such, improved ocean monitoring including TAO a high priority

Weekly Climate Updates

Available Upper Colorado Regional Drought Early Warning



**Whatever comes next
is sure to be “very interesting”**



So . . . My question is
“Do you have a rain
gauge?”



A large, rounded snowdrift occupies the background of the slide. The word "COCORAH'S" is written across its surface in dark, slightly indented letters. The letters are somewhat blurred and lack sharp edges due to the texture of the snow.

I) If you are interested in weather and the variations in precipitation, please join the Community Collaborative Rain, Hail and Snow Network

<http://www.cocorahs.org>

or see me today

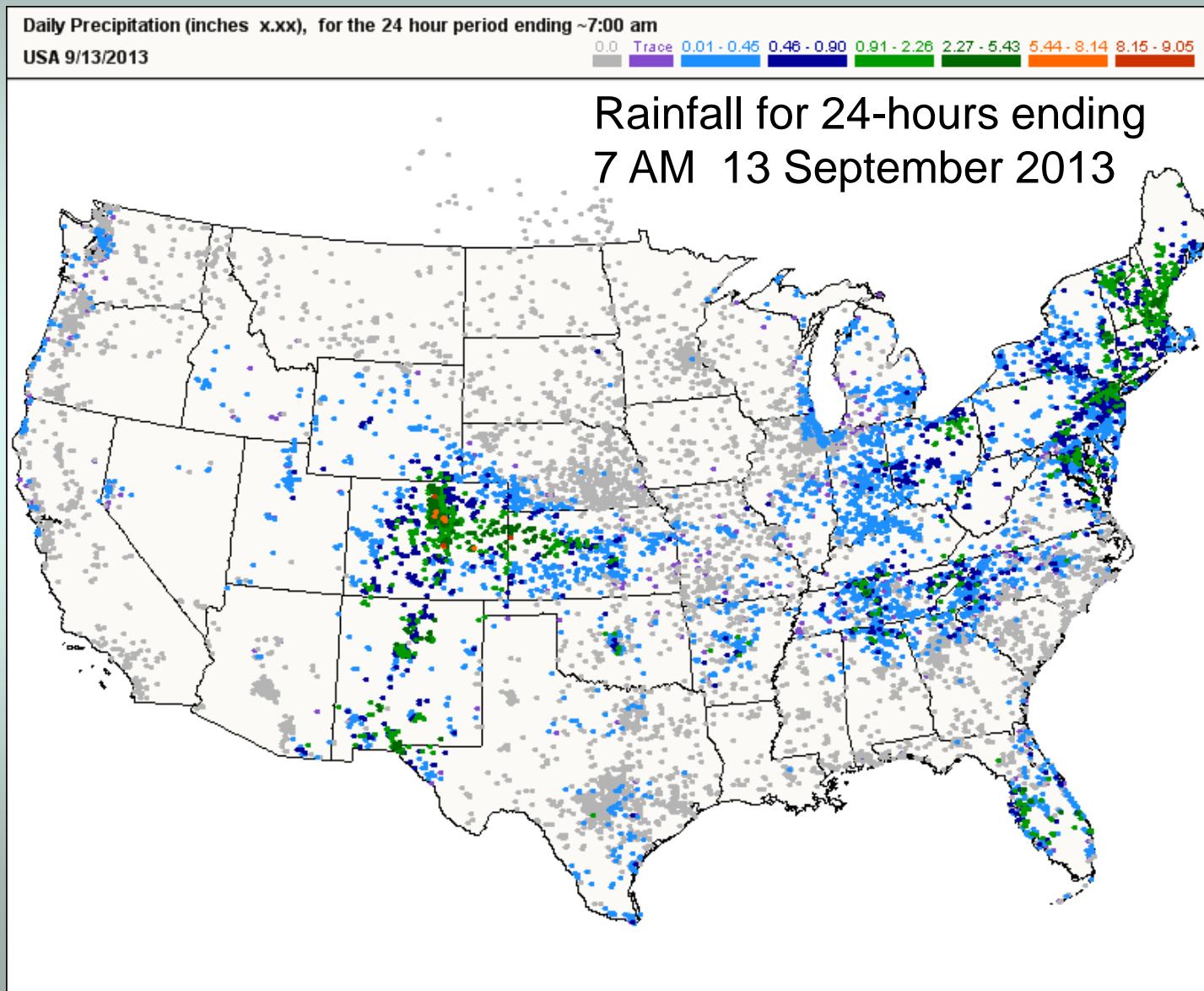


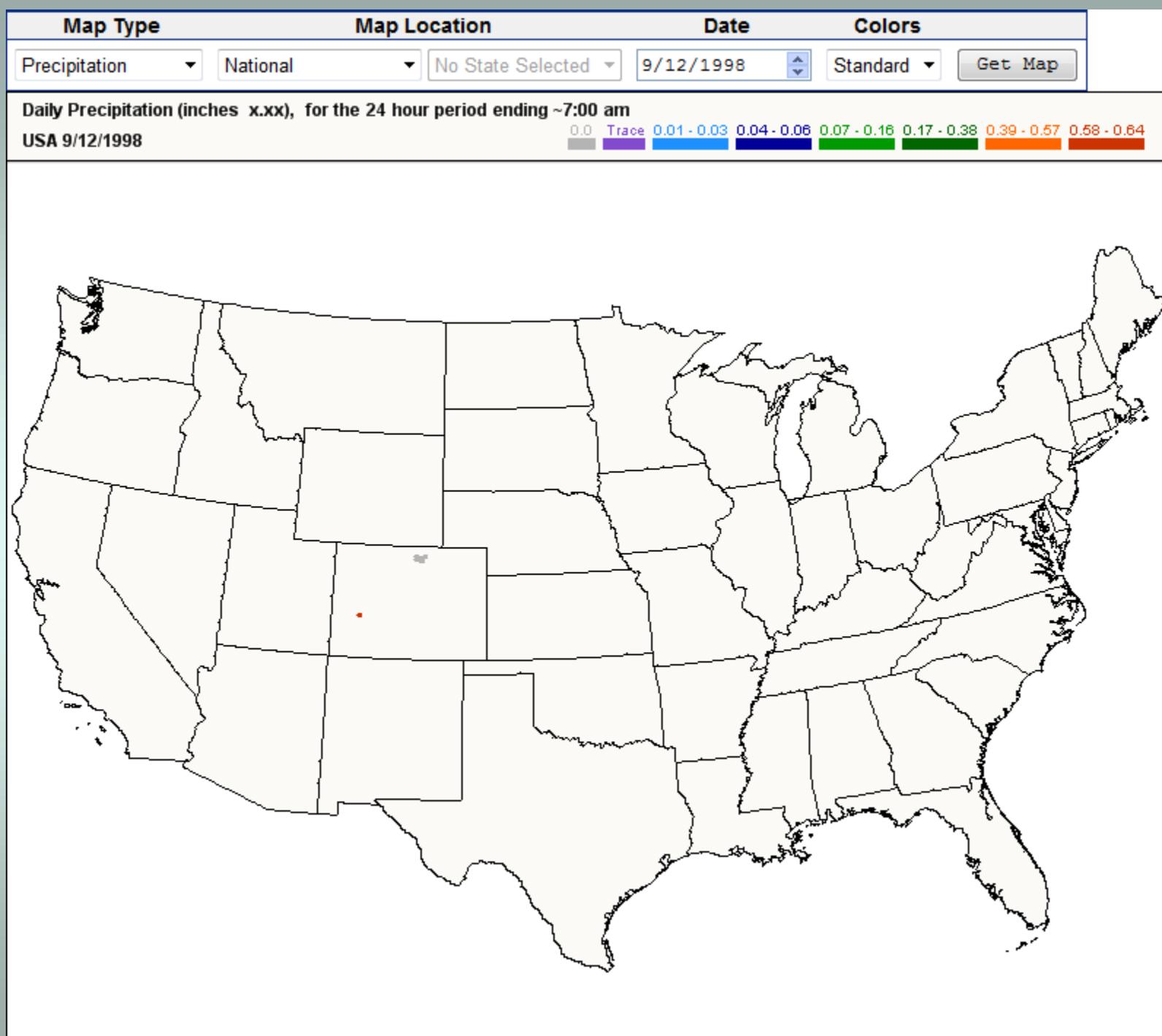
CoCoRaHS (Community Collaborative Rain, Hail and Snow) – A simple but effective way to help scientists track our climate

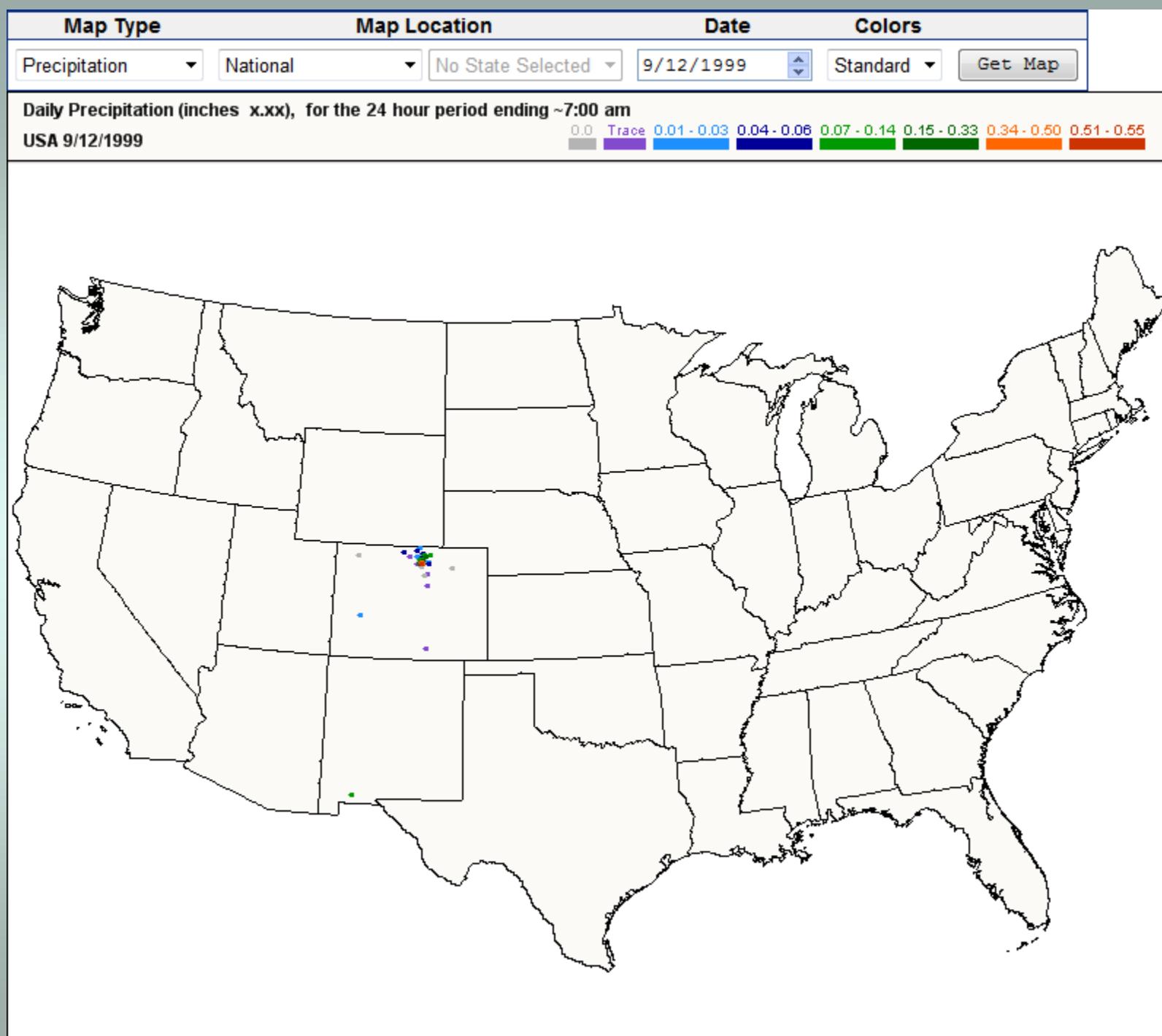


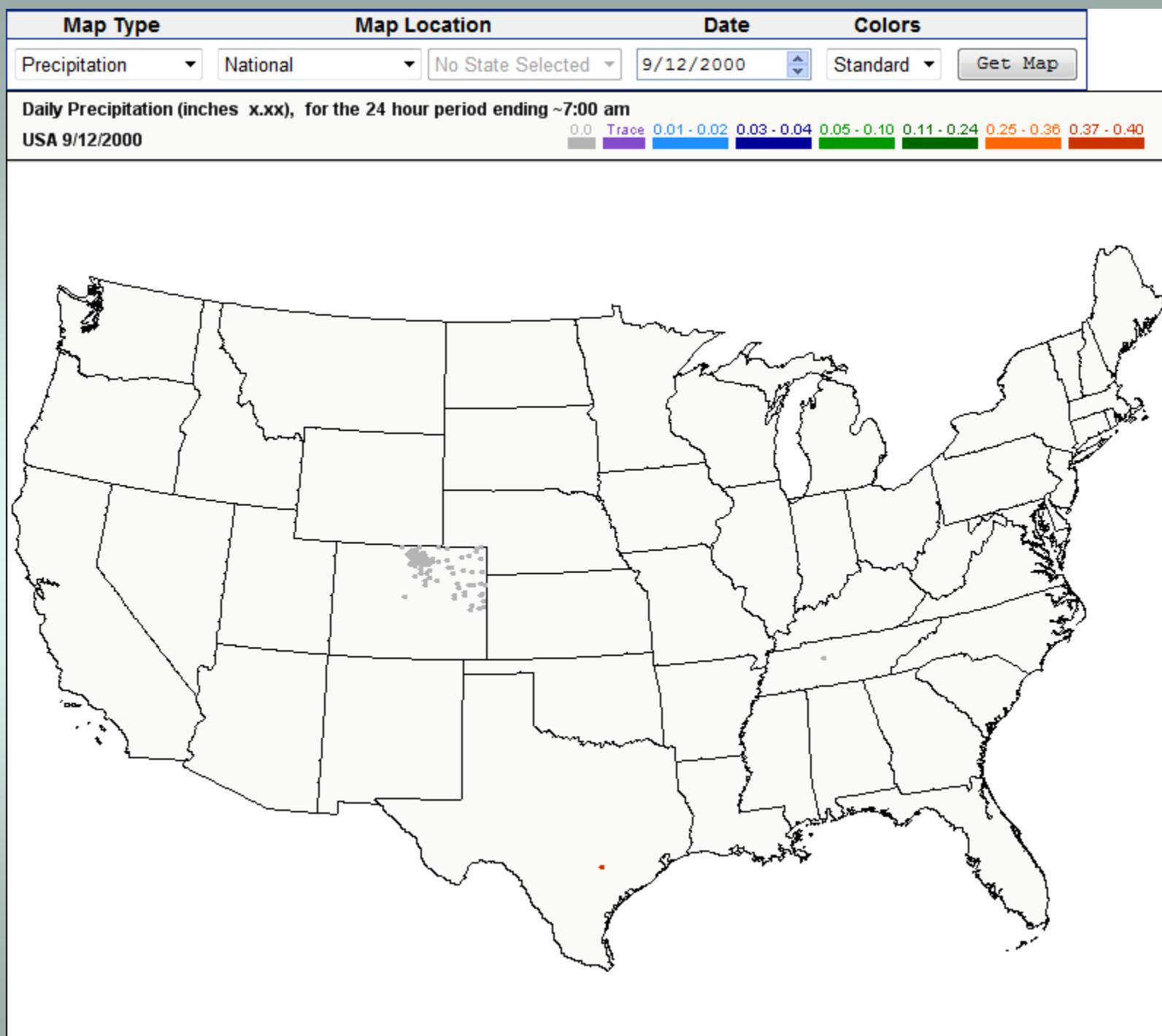
<http://www.cocorahs.org>

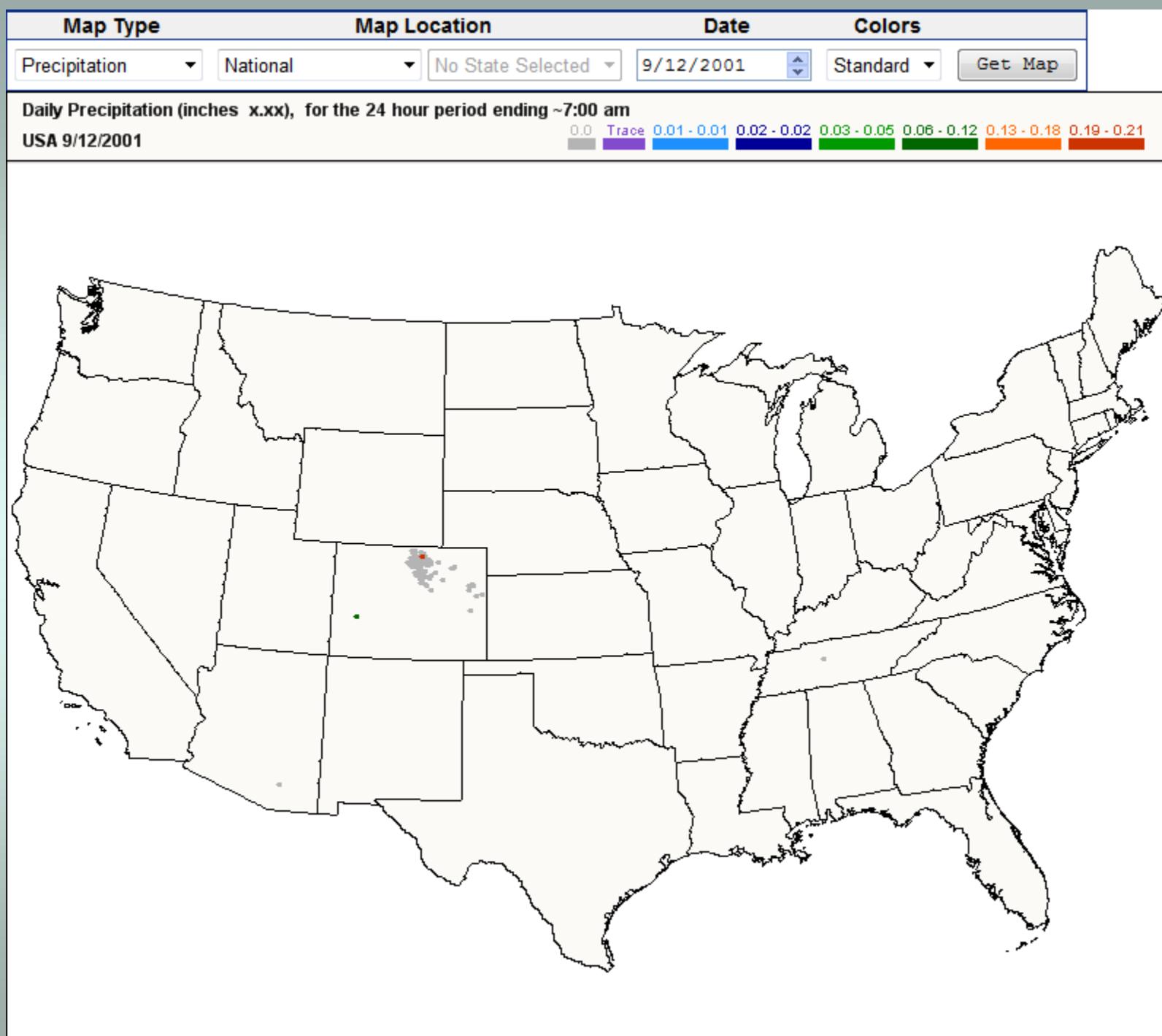
Mapping our water as it lands: -The Value of Gauged Volunteers -

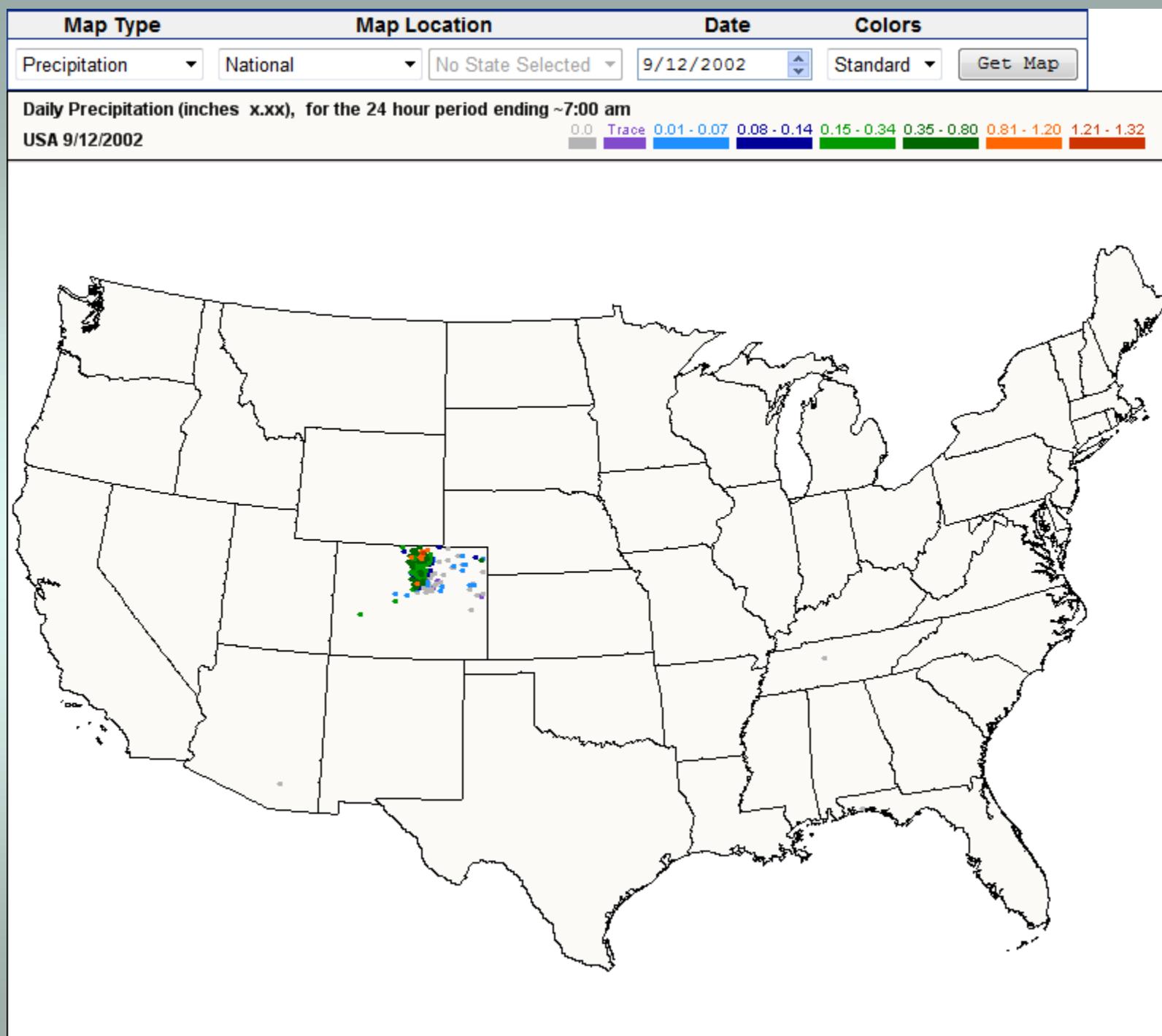


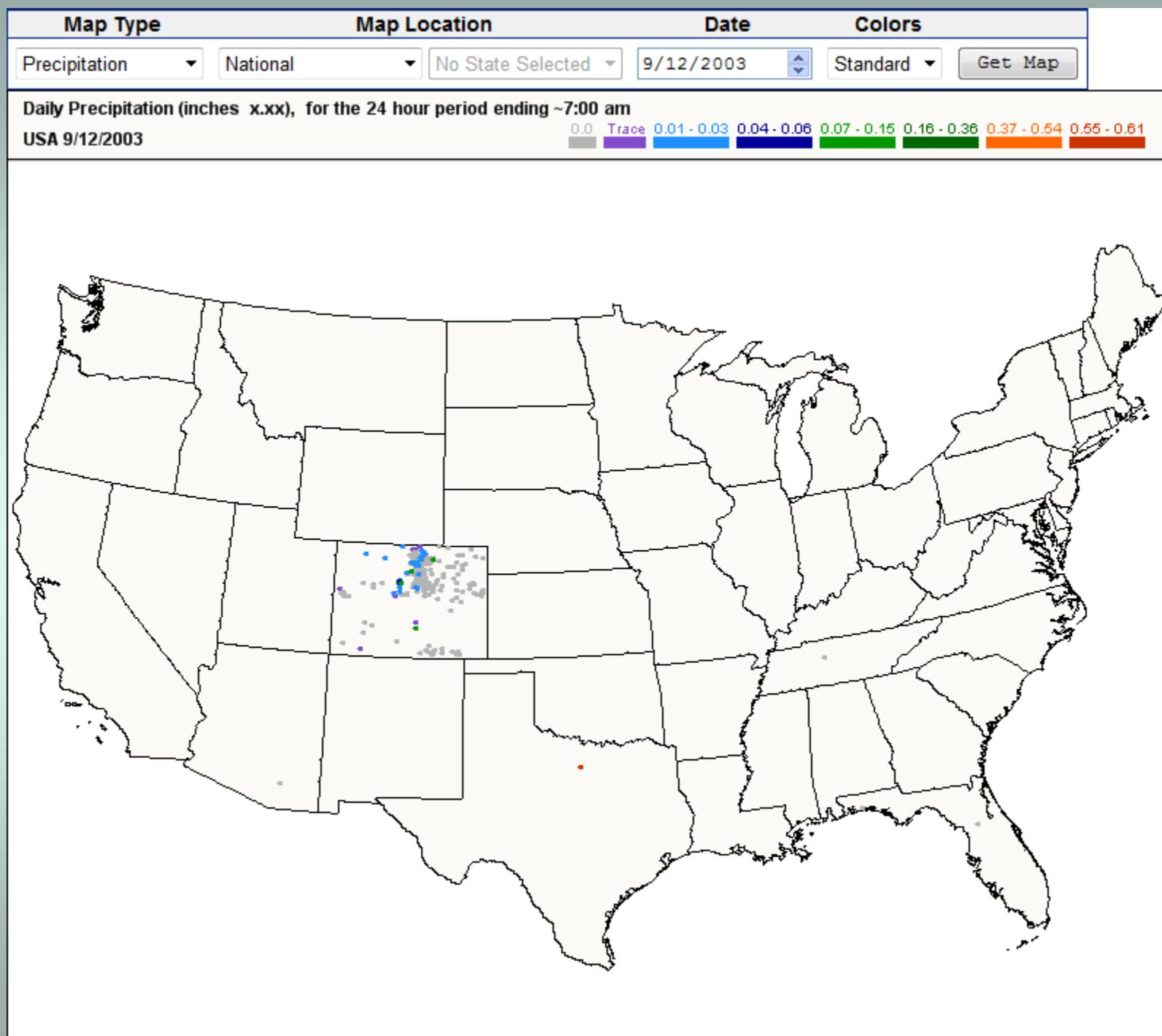


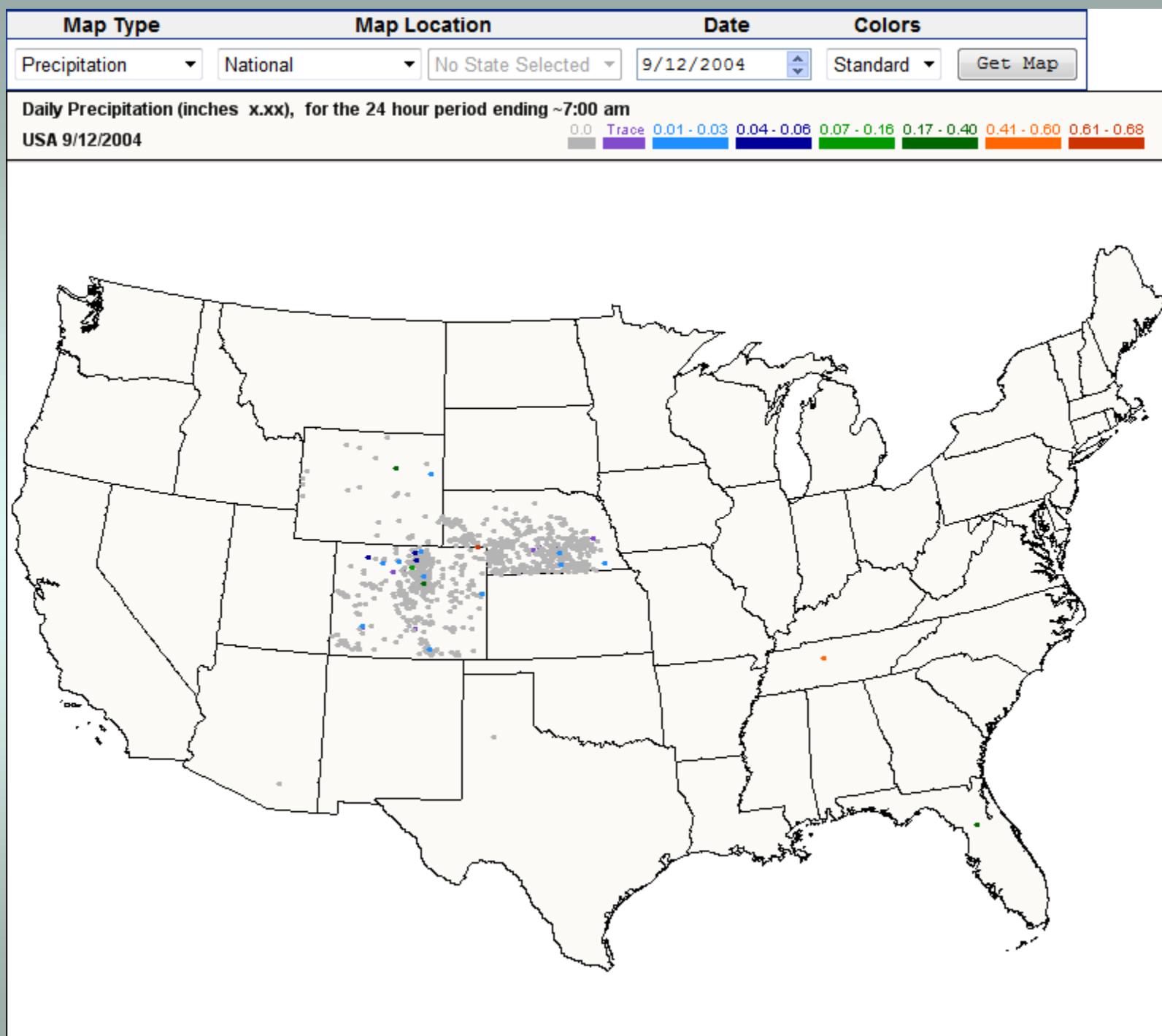


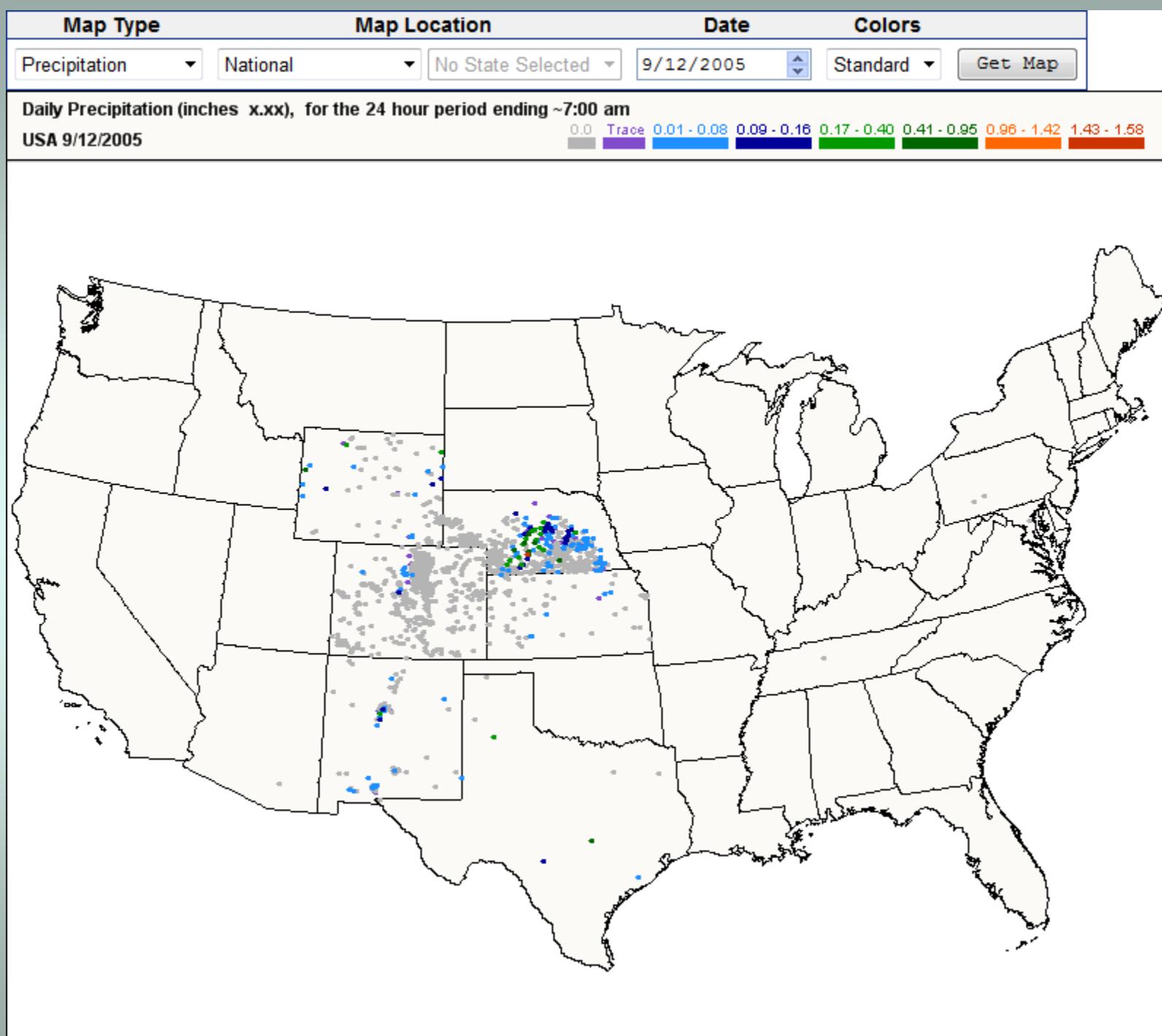


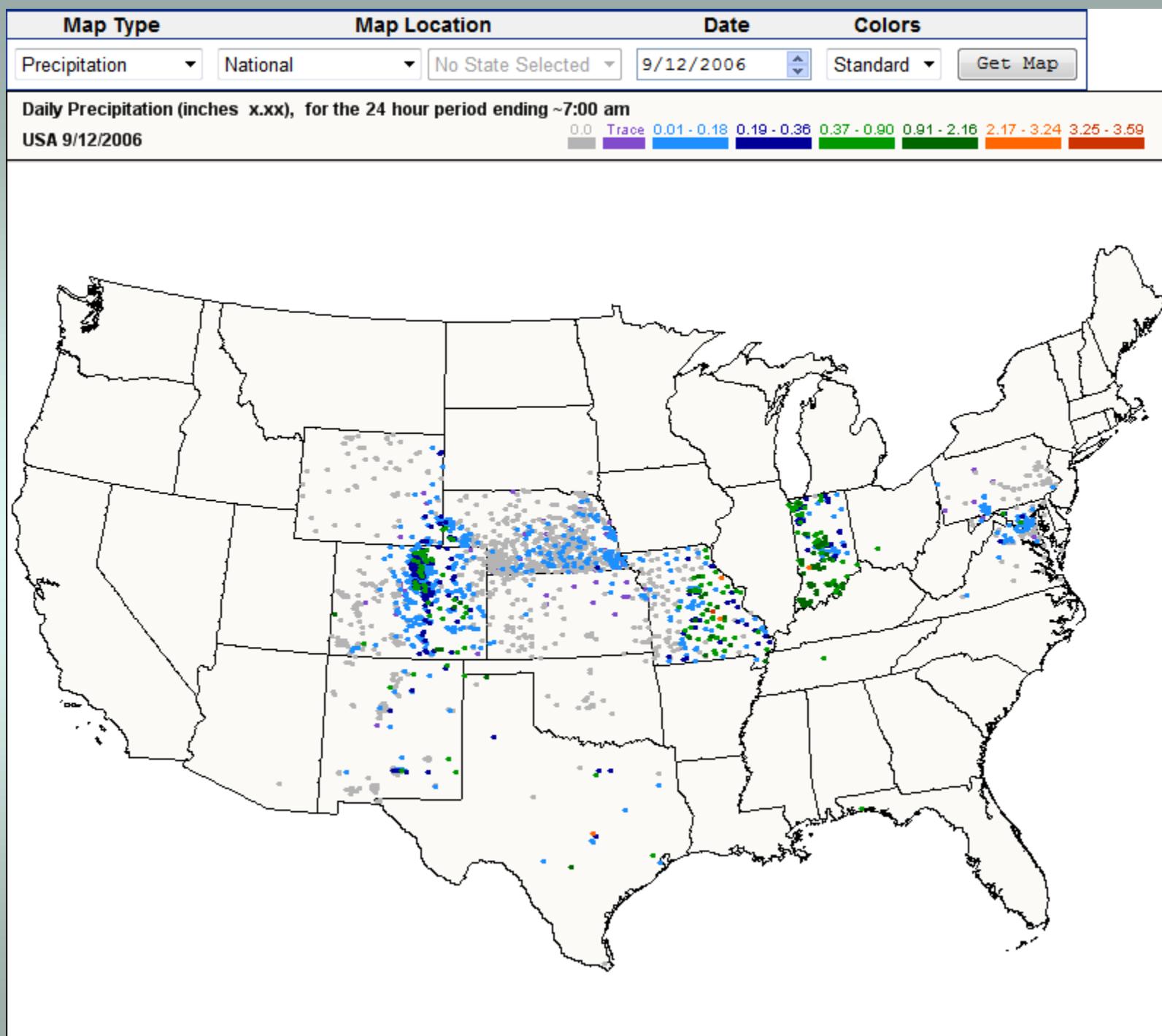


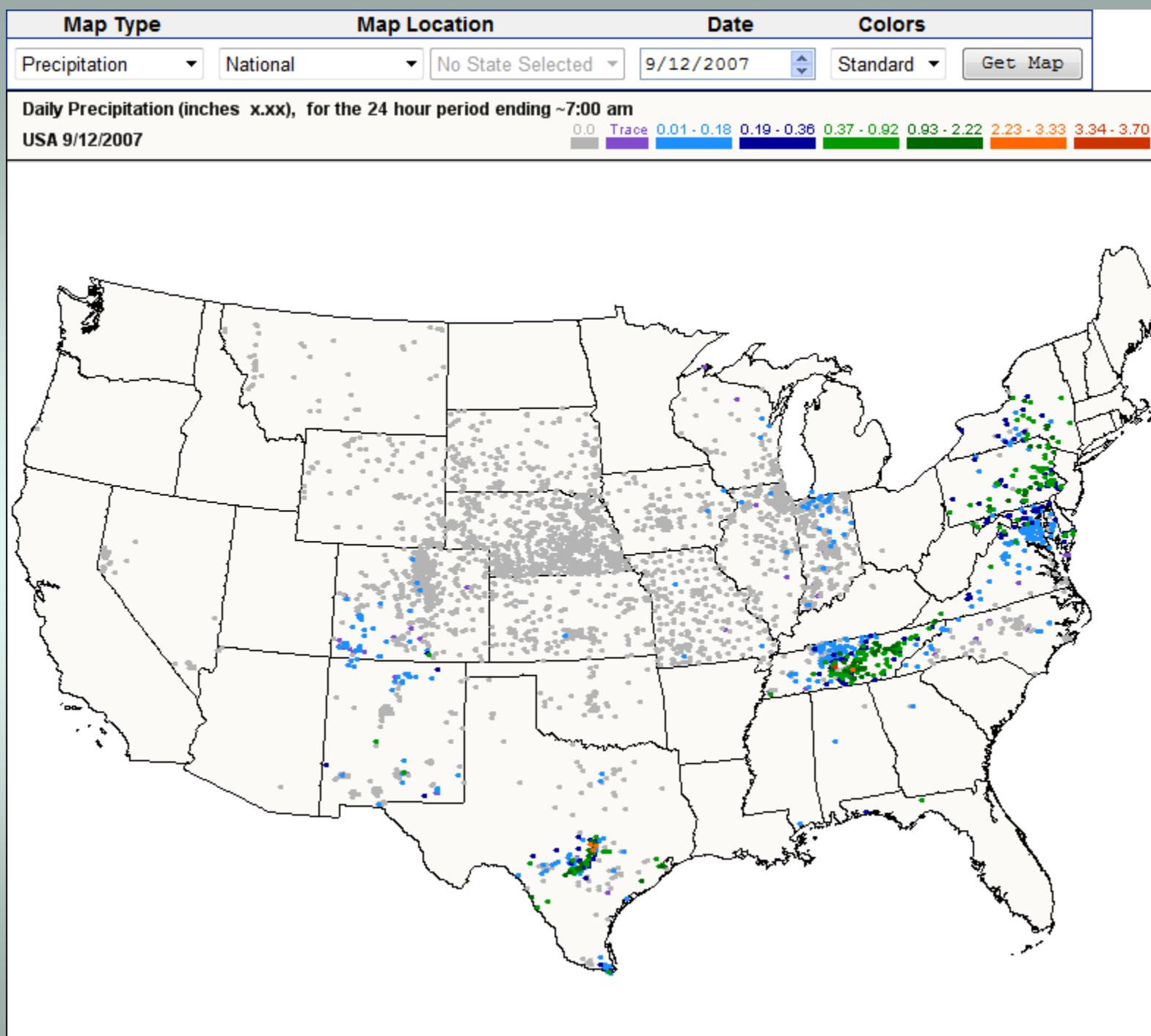


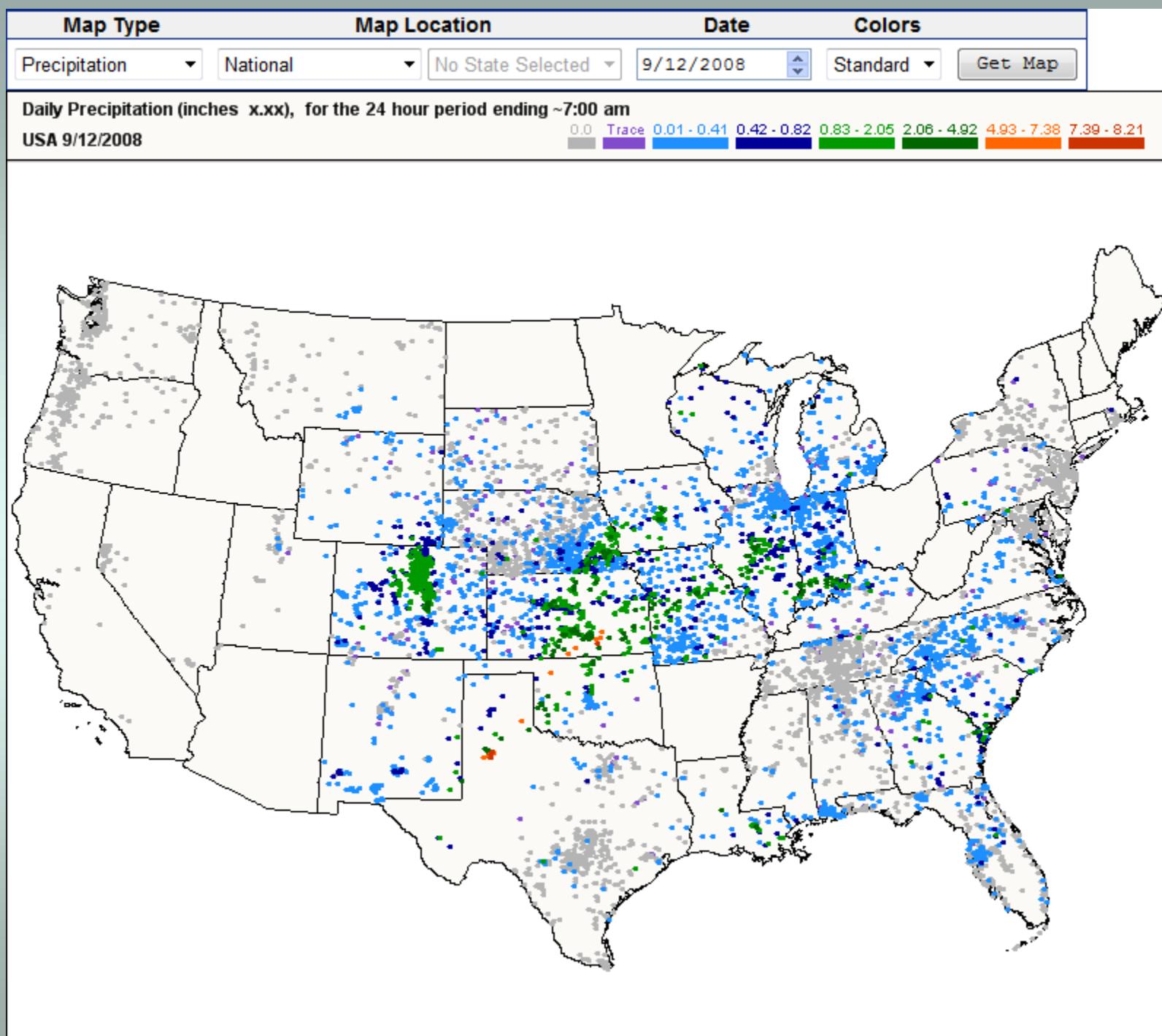


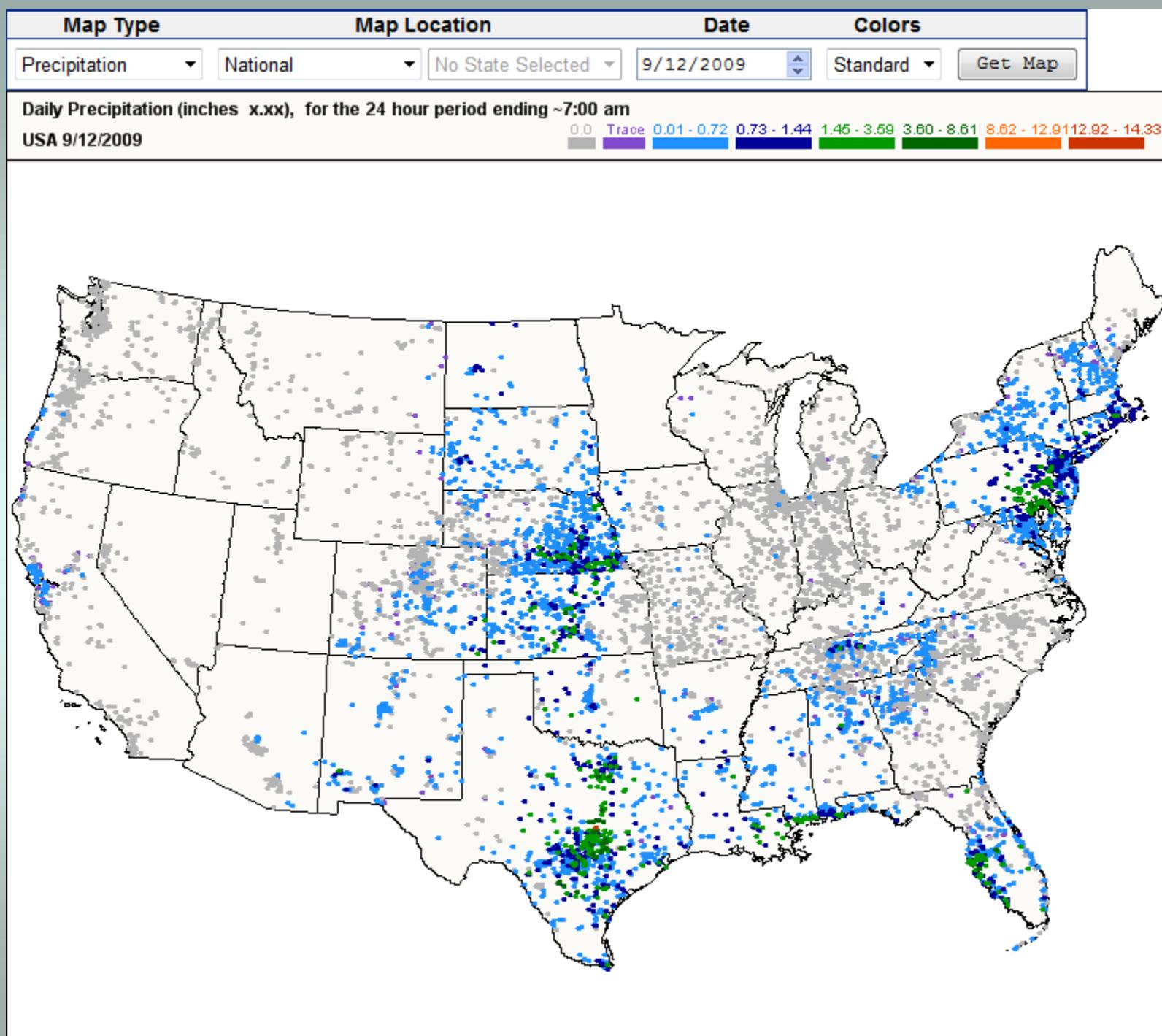


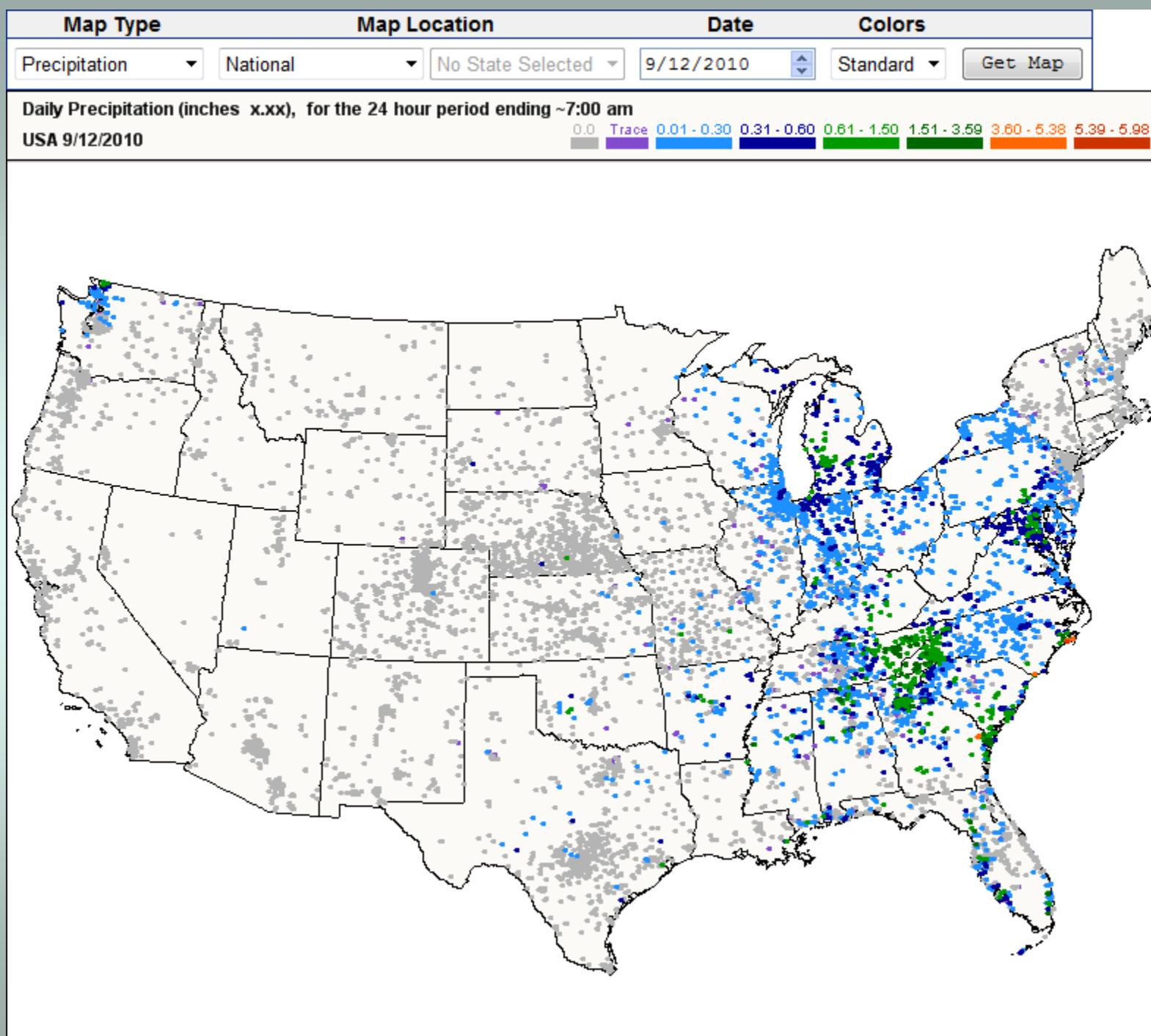


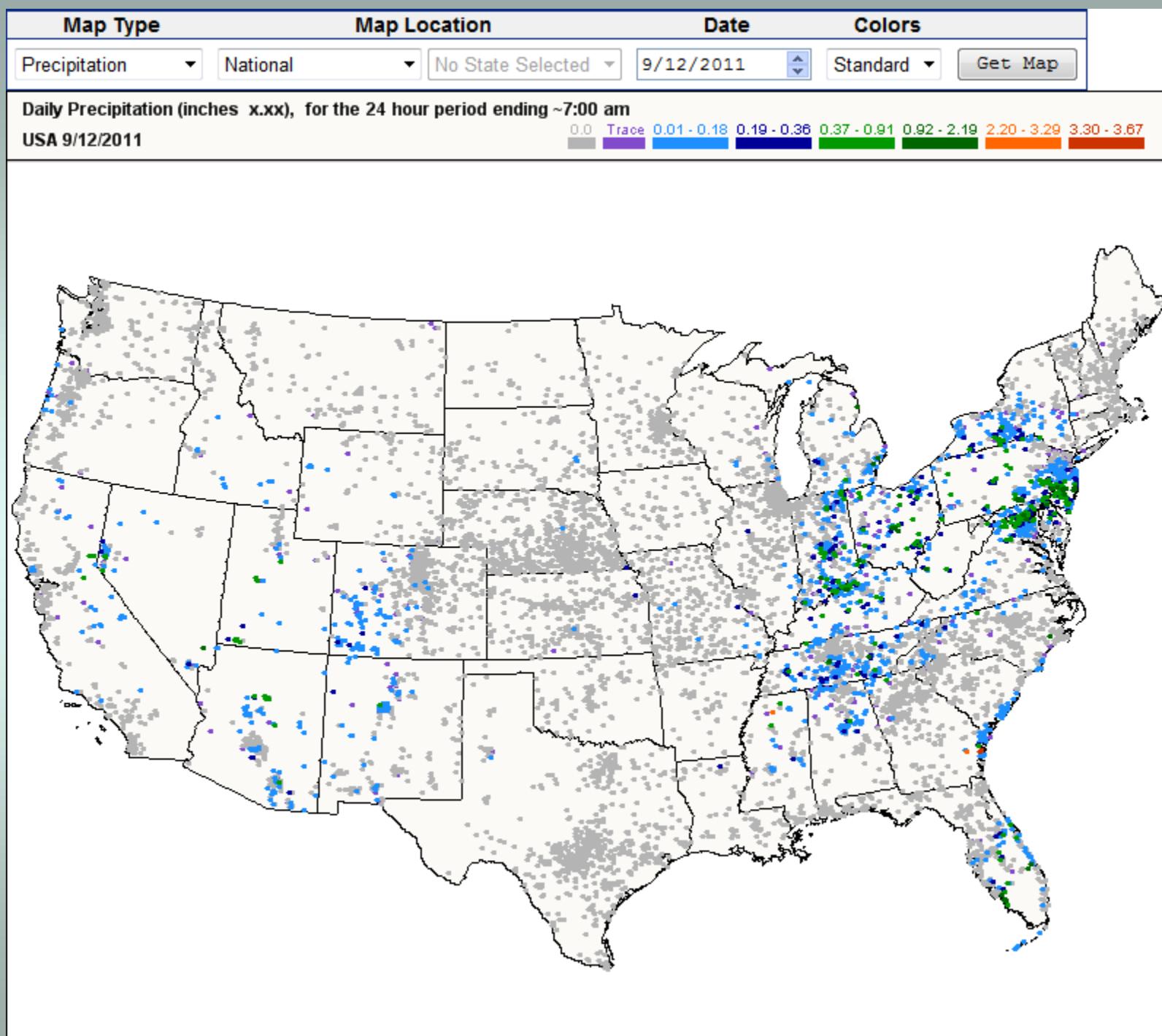


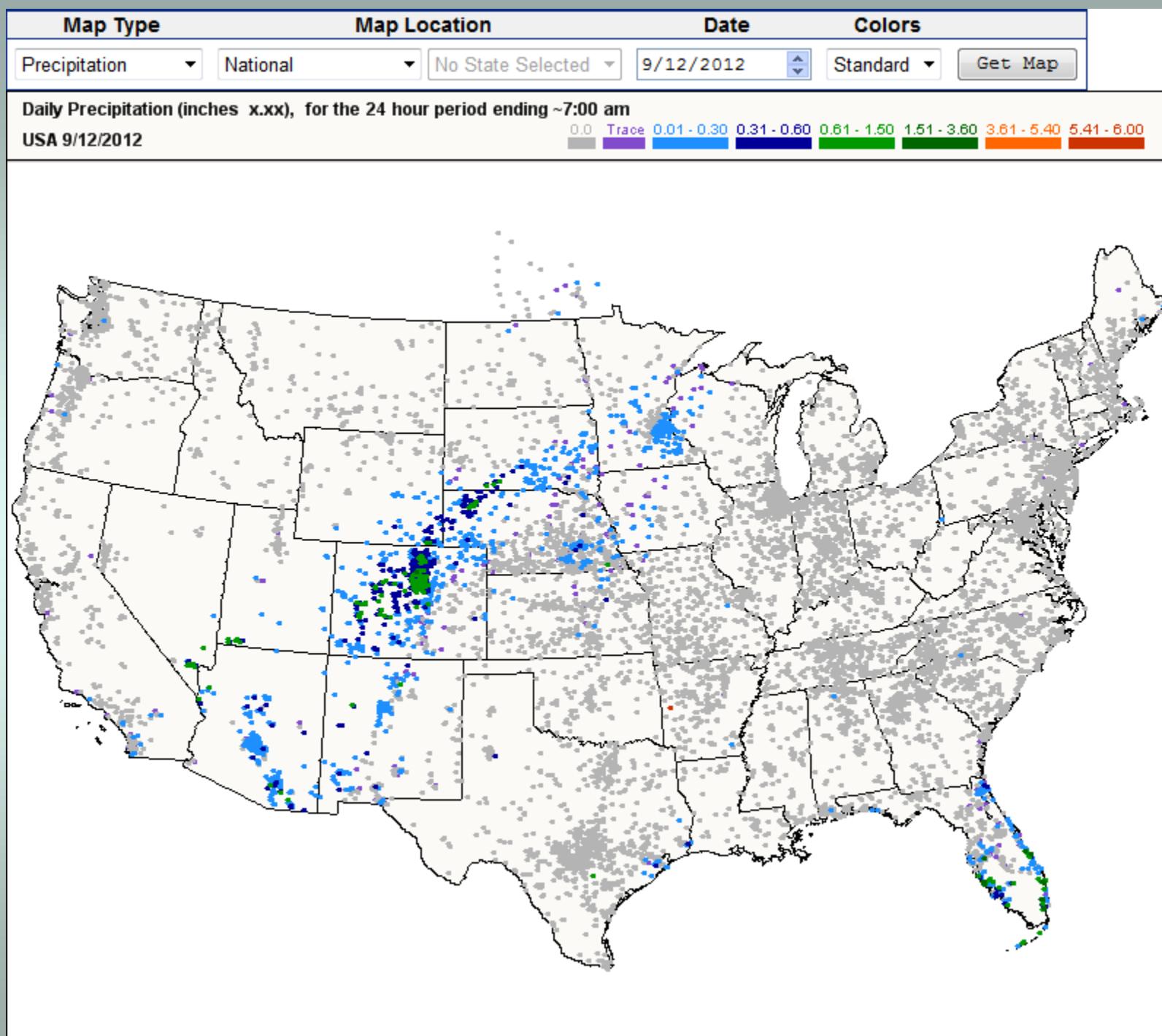


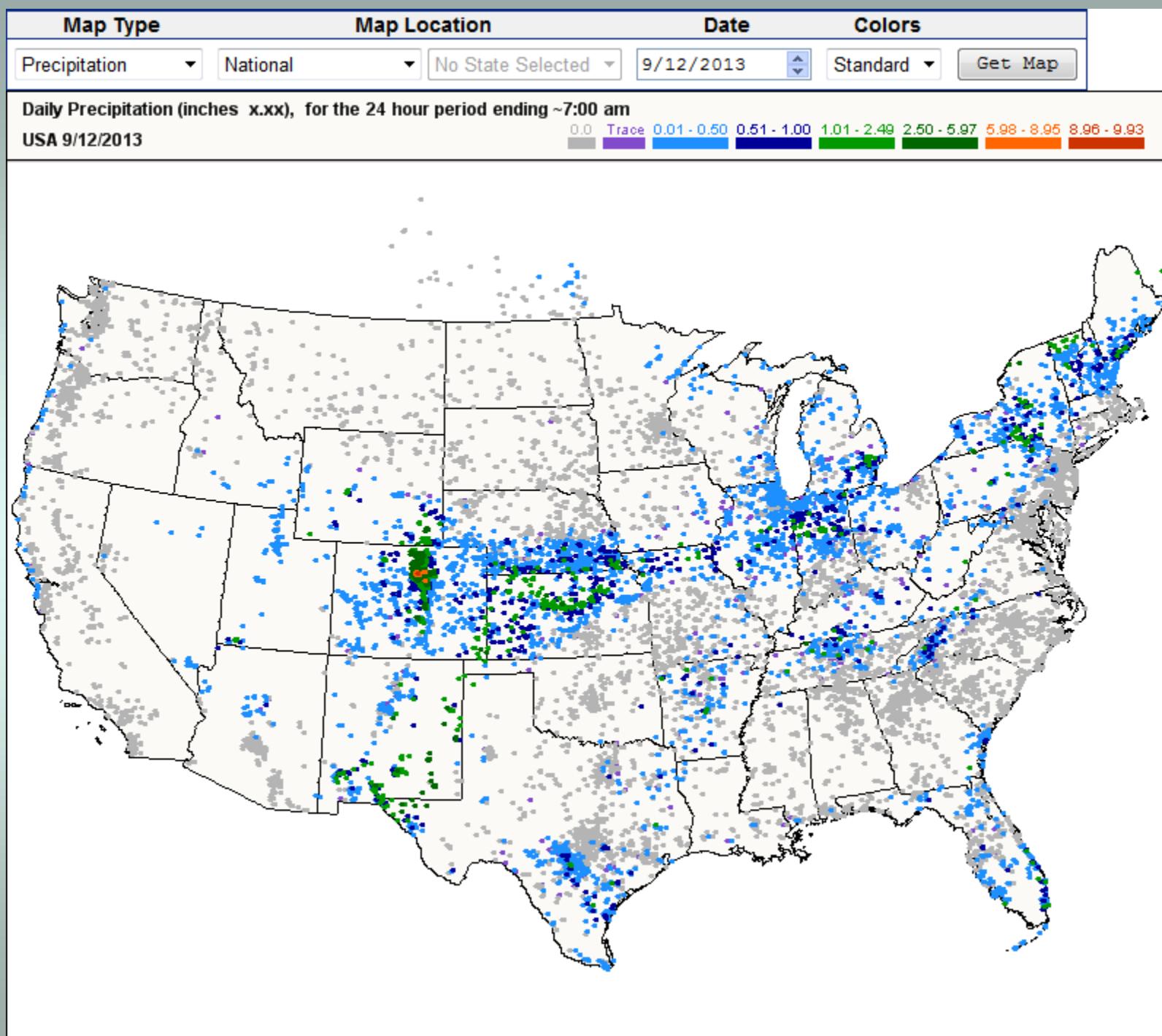














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We need rural observers
<http://www.cocorahs.org>



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For information and to volunteer, visit the CoCoRaHS Web Site



<http://www.cocorahs.org>



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Colorado Climate Center

Data and Power Point Presentations
available for downloading

<http://ccc.atmos.colostate.edu>

- Click on “Presentations”

