

Wyoming Basin & Water Supply Outlook Report

April 1, 2021



Photo courtesy of NRCS Snow Survey

Basin Outlook Reports

And

Federal - State - Private Cooperative Snow Surveys

For more Wyoming water supply information, contact:

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How forecasts are made

Most of the annual streamflow in the western United States 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 SNOTEL sites, along with precipitation, antecedent streamflow, and indices of the El Niño / Southern Oscillation are used in computerized statistical and simulation models to prepare runoff forecasts. Unless otherwise specified, all forecasts are for flows that would occur naturally without any upstream influences.

Forecasts of any kind, of course, are not perfect. Streamflow forecast uncertainty arises from three primary sources: (1) uncertain knowledge 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 others can be interpreted similarly.

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 if they wish to increase their chances of having an adequate supply of water for their operations, they may want to base their decisions on the 90% or 70% exceedance probability forecasts, or something in between. On the other hand, if users are concerned about receiving too much water (for example, threat of flooding), they may want to base their decisions on the 30% or 10% exceedance probability forecasts, or something in between. Regardless of the forecast value users choose for operations, they should be prepared to deal with either more or less water. (Users should remember that even if the 90% exceedance probability forecast is used, there is still a 10% chance of receiving less than this amount.) By using the exceedance probability information, users can easily determine the chances of receiving more or less water.

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Hydrologic Discussion

Several basins east of the continental divide had **15** to **40** percent increases in snow water equivalents (SWEs) during the month of March. Notably, the Lower North Platte, Powder, and Laramie Watersheds increased snowpack/SWE numbers to **above** median by the last half of the month. However, SWE numbers across watersheds in western and southwestern Wyoming decreased by an average of **10** percent during the past month. The Upper Green and Upper Bear Drainages had end of month SWE averages that were **80** to **85** percent of median. Also, there was also a lack of significant low elevation snow (6500-8000 feet) across many basins in western through southwestern Wyoming.

Several basins east of the continental divide had **120** to near **220** percent of average precipitation totals for March. However, current water year precipitation totals are still **below** average for majority of basins in Wyoming—especially basins in northeastern and western Wyoming.

Reservoirs across Wyoming continue to average near **75%** of capacity. Last year at this time Wyoming reservoir were 80% of capacity. Reservoir storages have remained around **110%** of average during the winter season.

Severe to **extreme** drought conditions continue for several basins in central through southern Wyoming. Water Year 2021 started out with dry to very dry antecedent soil moisture and precipitation conditions throughout most of Wyoming. There was also below normal baseflows for several streams in central through southern Wyoming in early Water Year 2021. The latest spring outlook continues to advertise a warmer than average as well as a drier than average spring—especially during late spring and into early summer. As a result of current hydrological and expected climate conditions, there is very good chance that there will be an earlier than normal runoff with general **below** average streamflows. Runoff volumes are expected to be **below** average for many drainages in central through western Wyoming; while the Powder and Tongue Basins are forecasted to have snowmelt runoff volumes near normal to just **above** average.

Wyoming snowpack and basin hydrological conditions—especially for a majority of basins east of the continental divide—are very similar to what occurred in Water Years 2012 and 2013. Spring runoff volumes during those water years were the lowest in the past decade.

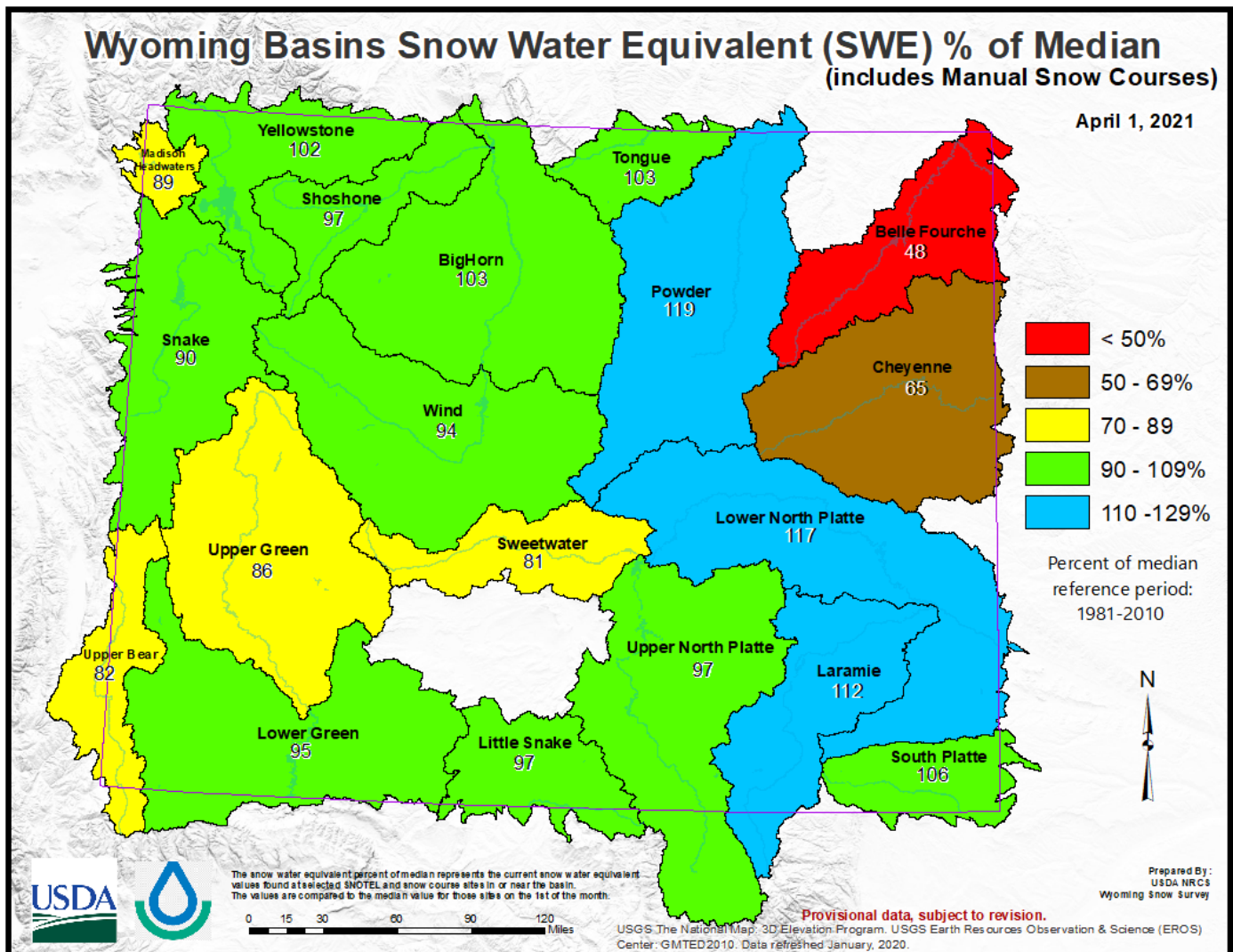
There is still uncertainty in the final snowmelt runoff volume forecasts mainly due to the uncertainty of the timing and the amount of the upcoming spring precipitation. The amount of spring runoff across basins along the eastern half of Wyoming is highly dependent on the amount and timing of precipitation from April through early June. Expect much higher flows and drastic increases in runoff volumes during a rapid warmup followed by a rain on a melting snowpack. Water planners need to keep abreast of the latest spring runoff forecasts and the latest weather trends for the rest of the spring.

Summary

- Wyoming continued to see **below** percent of median (near **95%**) of snowpack and/or snow water equivalents (SWEs) through late March.
- Precipitation totals across Wyoming for March were **above** (about **105%**) average. Water year precipitation continues to be **below** (near **90%**) average.
- Reservoirs across Wyoming were averaging near **74%** of capacity—down from **80%** reported last year. Overall reservoir storages for late March continue to be **above average**.
- State-wide stream flow snowmelt volumes are forecasted to be generally **below** average at **80** to **85%**.

Snowpack/SWEs

Snow water equivalents (SWEs) across Wyoming for April 1st were near **95%** of median. SWEs along the Lower North Platte and Powder River Basins were the highest at **115** to **120%** of median, while SWEs along the Belle Fourche River Basin were the lowest at near **50%** of median. Last year, SWEs across the state were near **110%** of median. (For complete tabular data, see Appendix)

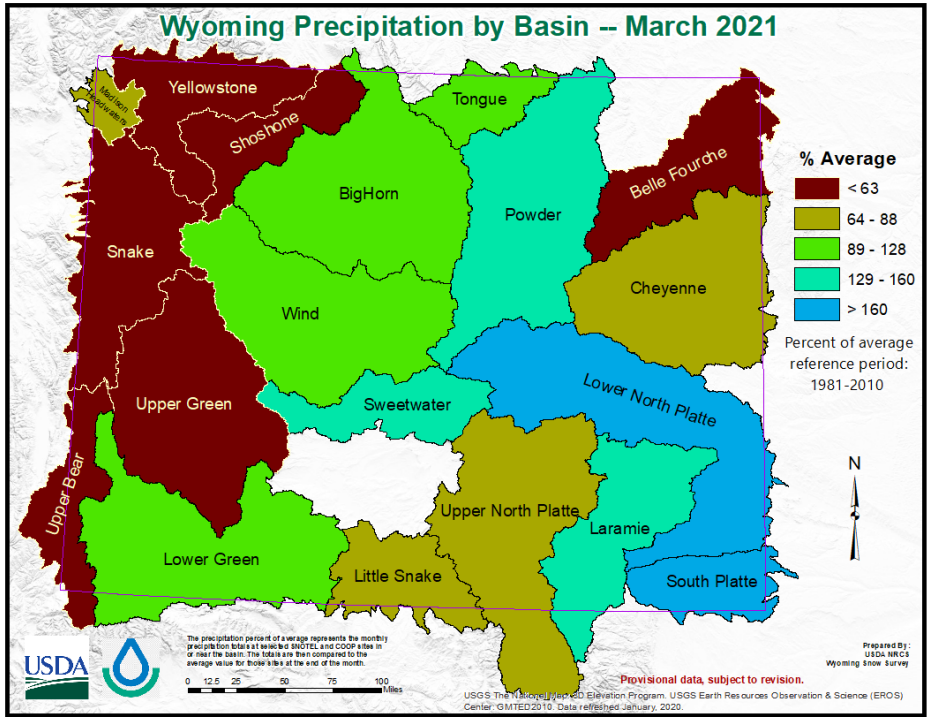


Map 1. Wyoming SWEs—April 1, 2021.

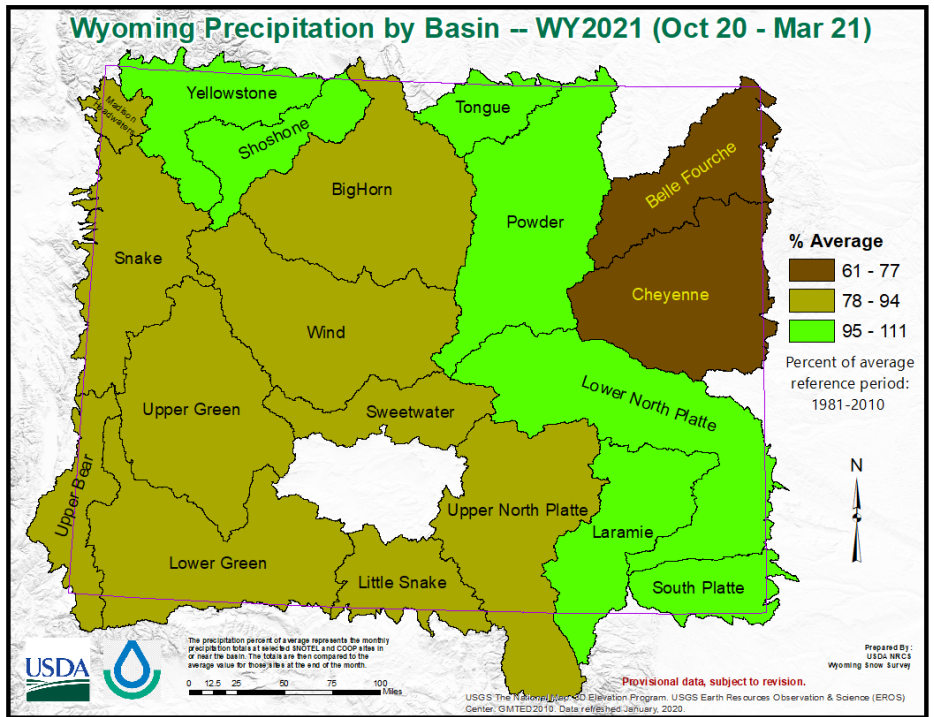
Precipitation

Basin precipitation across Wyoming was near **105%** of average during March. The Lower North Platte River Basin had the highest precipitation totals for the month at near **220%** of average. The Upper Green River Basin had the lowest precipitation amount at near **40%** of average. Water year precipitation (October - March) is currently about **90%** of average.

(See Appendix for complete tabular data.)



Map 2. Current monthly precipitation by basin.



Map 3. Water year to date precipitation by basin.

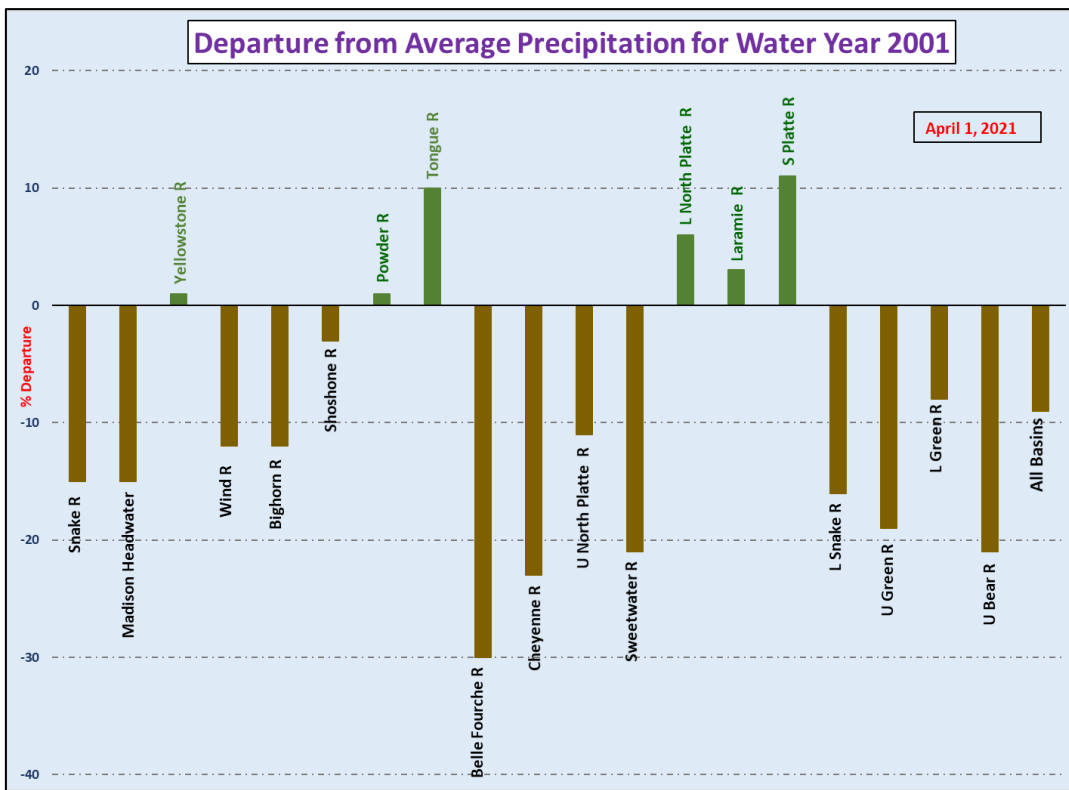


Chart 1. Departure from average precipitation (water year).

Reservoirs

Reservoirs across Wyoming were averaging near **74%** of capacity—down from **80%** of capacity last year. Overall reservoir storages for late March continued to be **above** average at **112%** (**121%** last year). The **highest** average reservoir storage was across the Tongue River Basin at near **165%**. The Little Snake River Basin had the **lowest** average reservoir storage at **70-75%**.

(See Appendix for complete tabular data.)

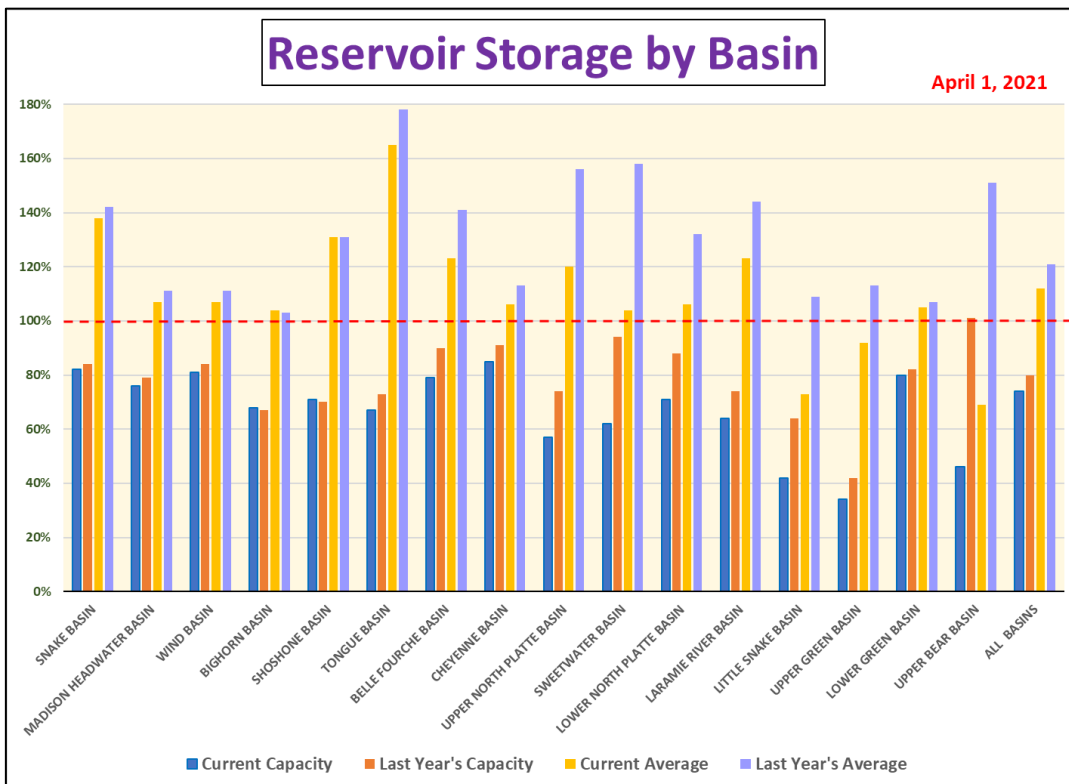
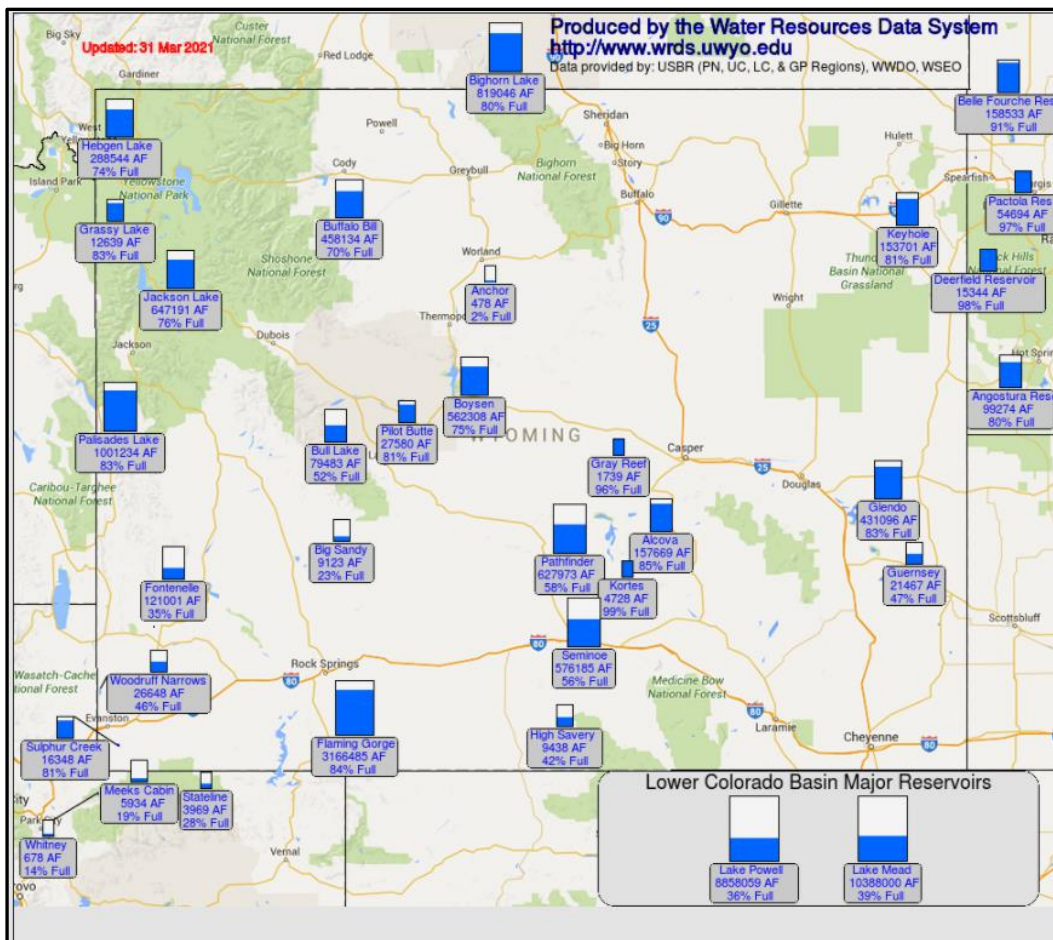


Chart 2. Reservoir storage by basin.



Map 4. Teacup storage diagrams of Wyoming reservoirs. (provided by WRDS)

Stream Flows

Snowmelt runoff stream flow volumes across the state are expected to be **below average** at **80 to 85%**. The highest forecasted stream flows due to snowmelt are across the Powder and Laramie Basins at near **110%** of normal. The lowest snowmelt runoff volumes are expected across the Sweetwater and Upper Bear Drainages at near **55%** of average.

(See Appendix for complete tabular listing of stream flow forecasts.)

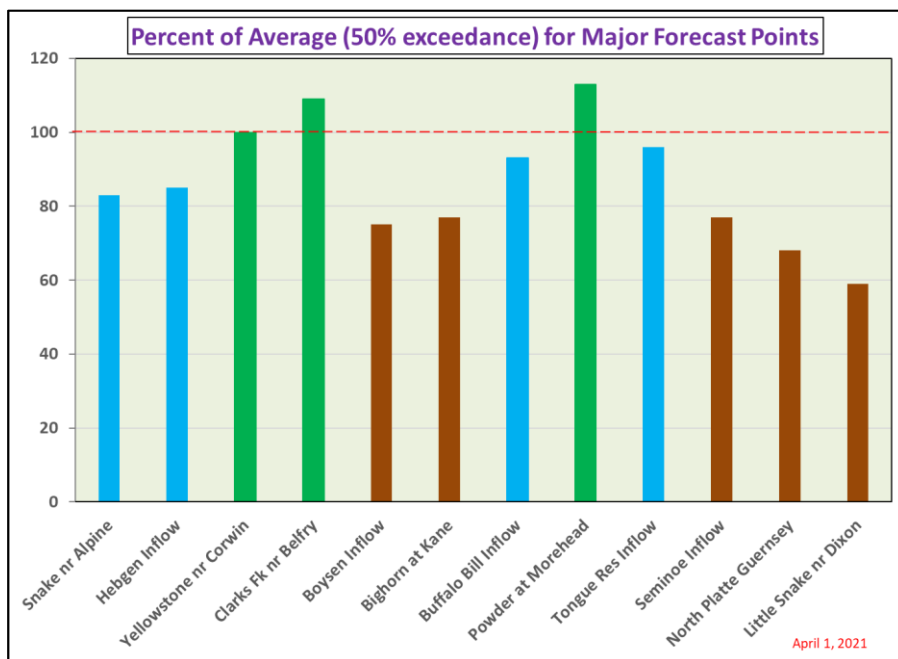
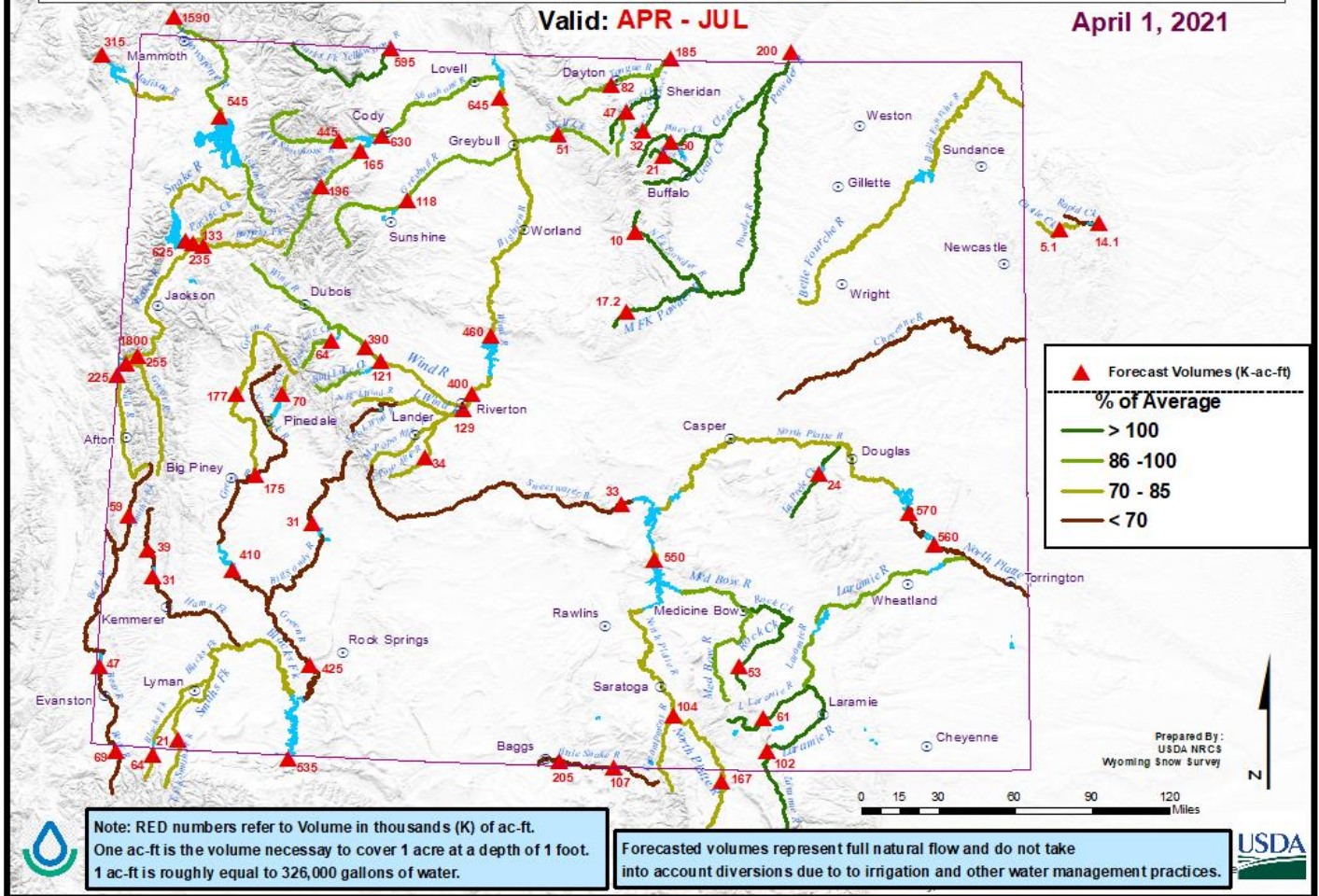


Chart 3. 50% exceedance for major forecast points.

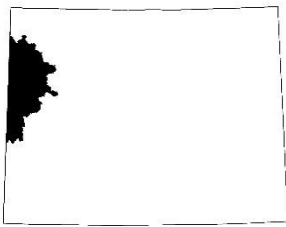
Wyoming Water Supply Outlook

Valid: APR - JUL

April 1, 2021

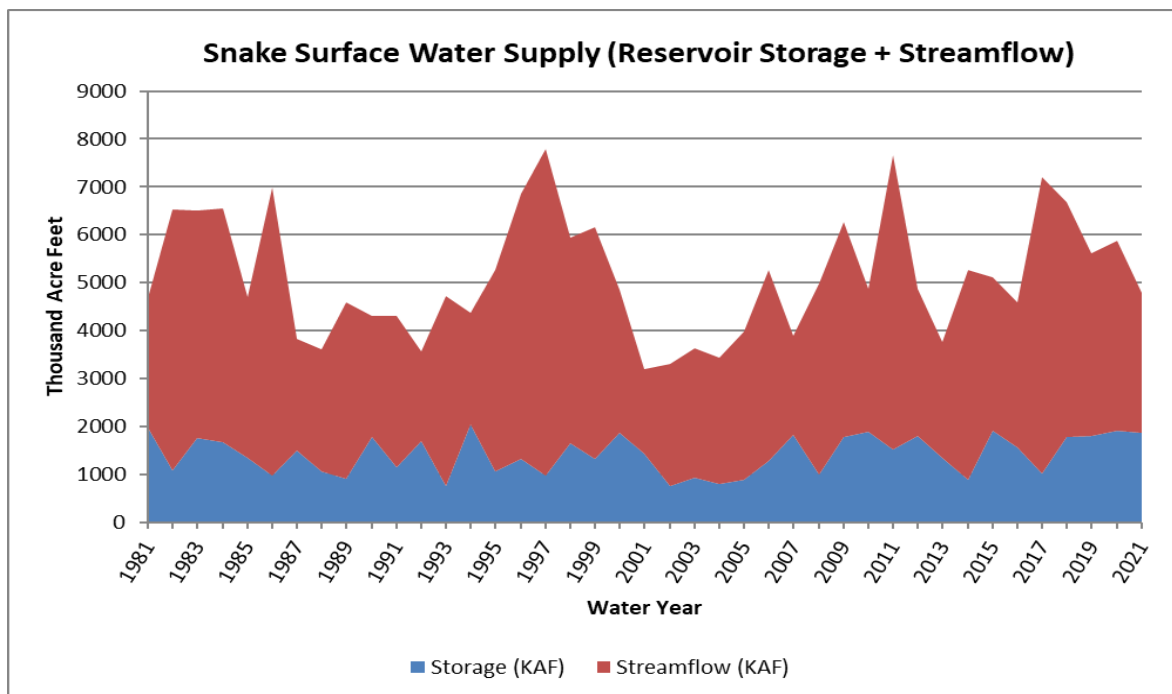
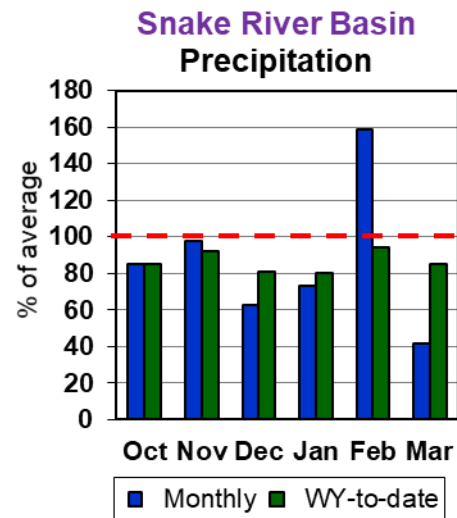
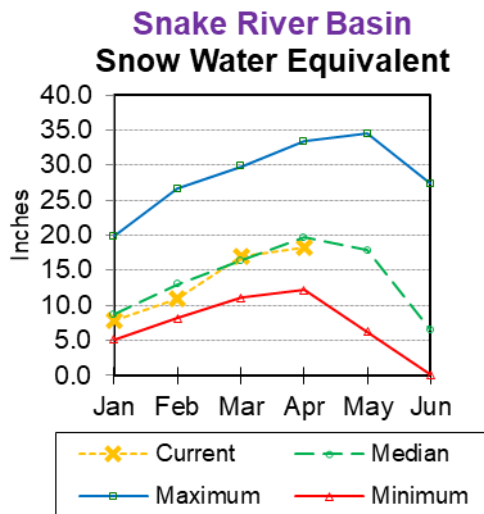


Map 4. Wyoming water supply outlook—April 1, 2021.

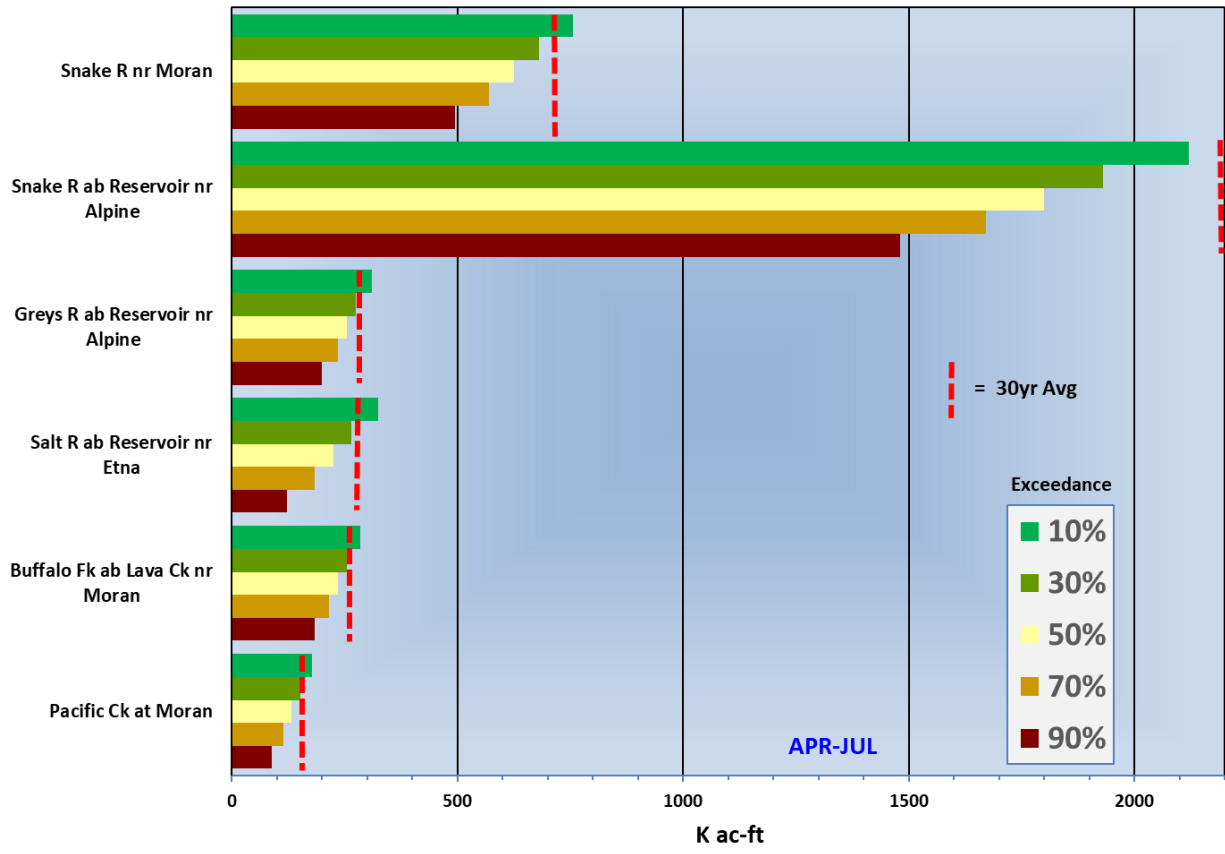


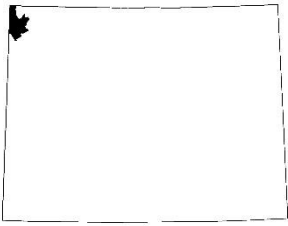
Snake River Basin

- The overall Snake River Basin SWE is near **90%** of median.
- Last month's precipitation for the Snake River Basin was near **40%** of average. Water-year-to-date precipitation is near **85%** of average.
- Current reservoir storage is near **140%** of average for the three main reservoirs in the basin.
- The streamflow forecasts for April through July are **below** average (**82%**) for this basin.



Snake River Basin Streamflow Forecasts -- April 1, 2021

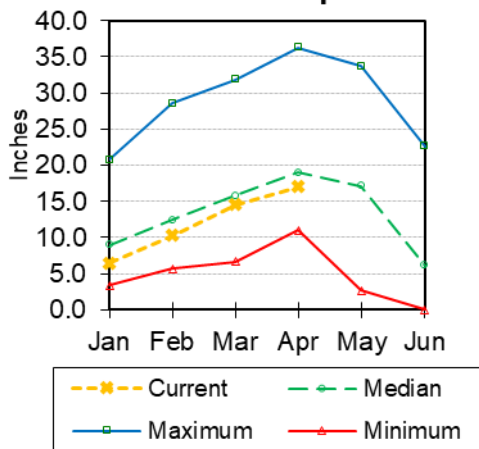




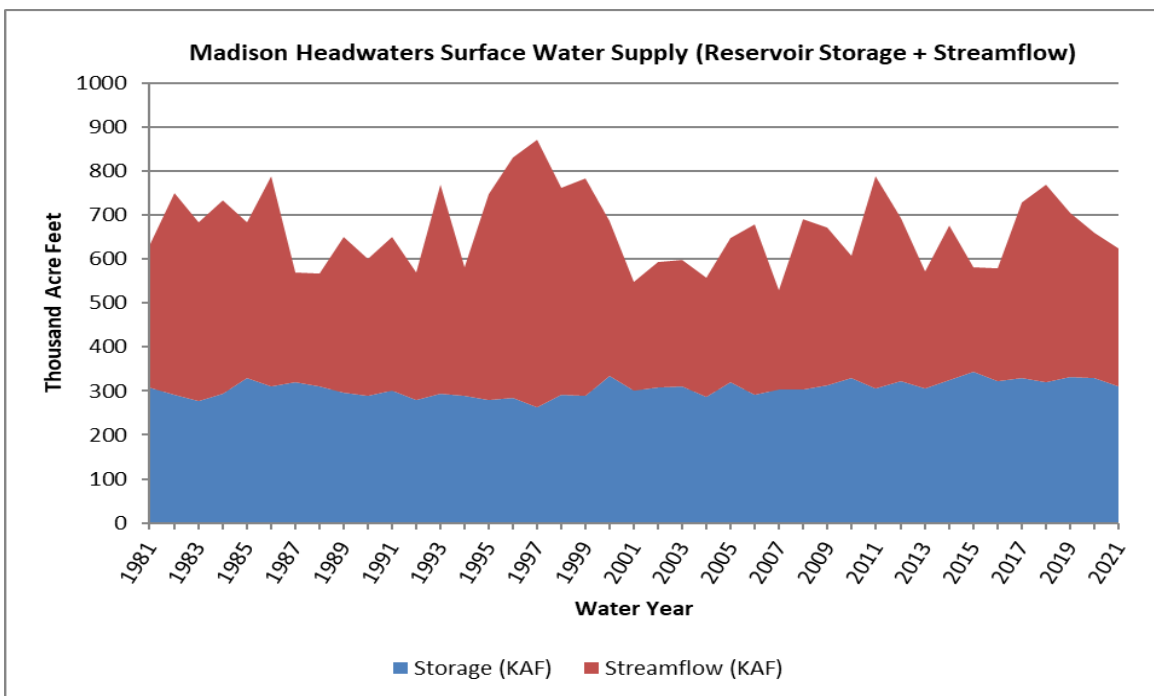
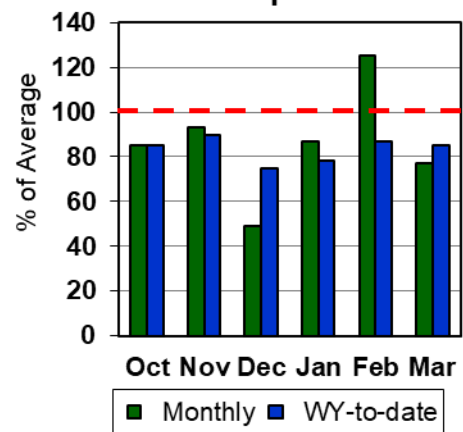
Madison Headwaters Basin

- The overall Madison Headwaters Basin SWE is around **90%** of median.
- Last month's precipitation for the Madison Headwaters River Basin was near **75%** of average. Water-year-to-date precipitation is around **85%** of average.
- Current reservoir storage is near **105%** of average for one main reservoir in the basin.
- Hebgen Reservoir inflows (April-July) are forecasted to be **below** average at **85%**.

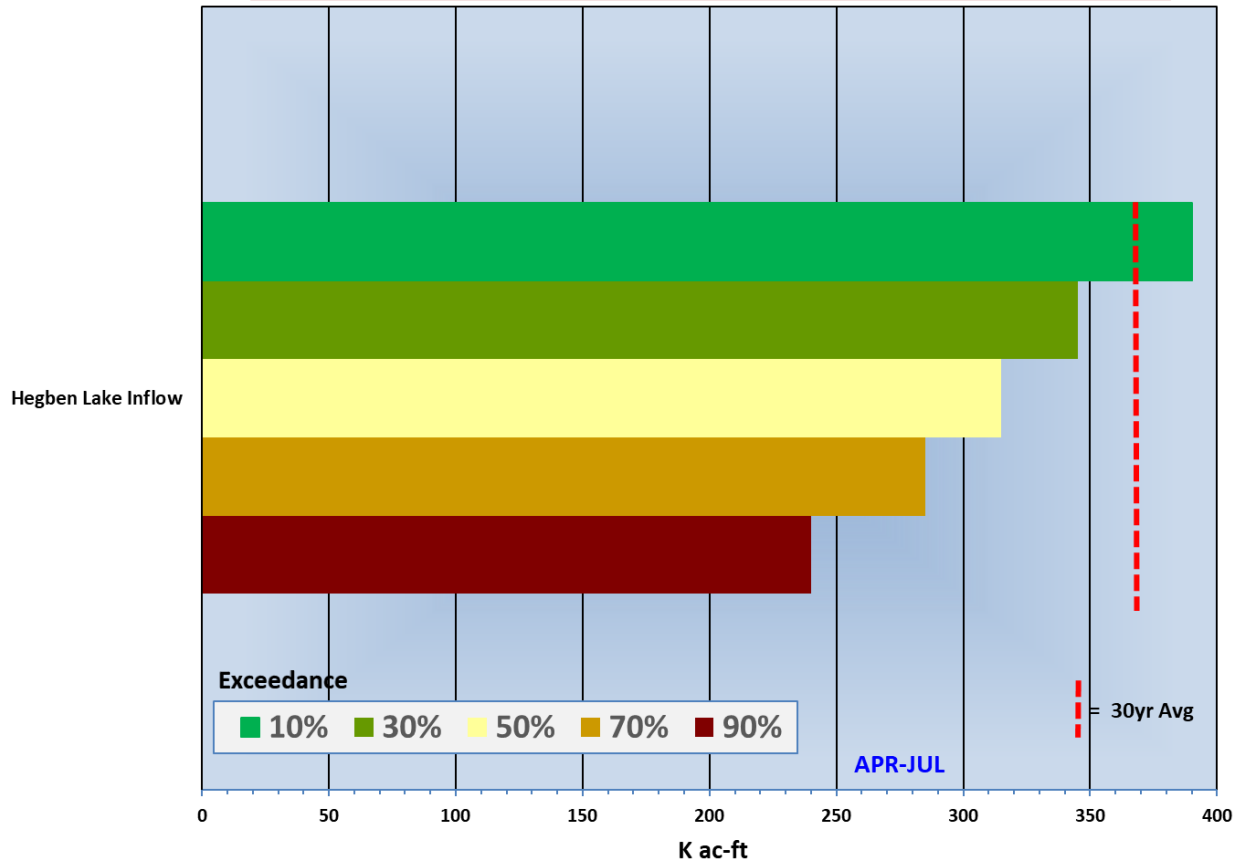
**Madison Headwaters
Snow Water Equivalent**

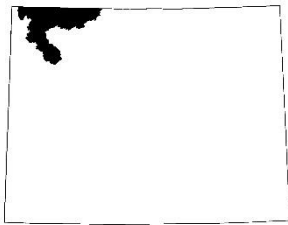


**Madison Headwaters
Precipitation**



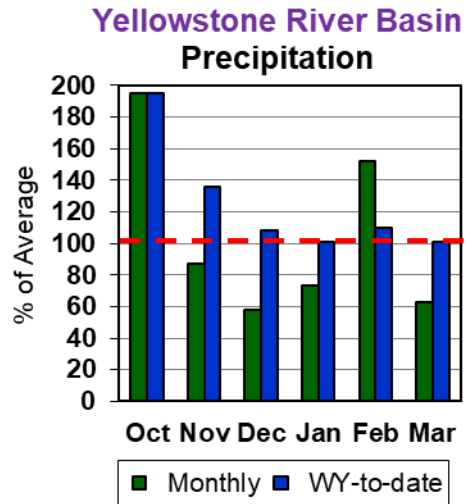
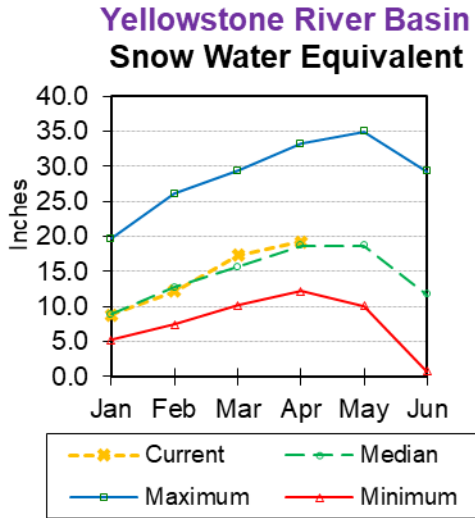
Madison Headwaters Streamflow Forecast -- April 1, 2021



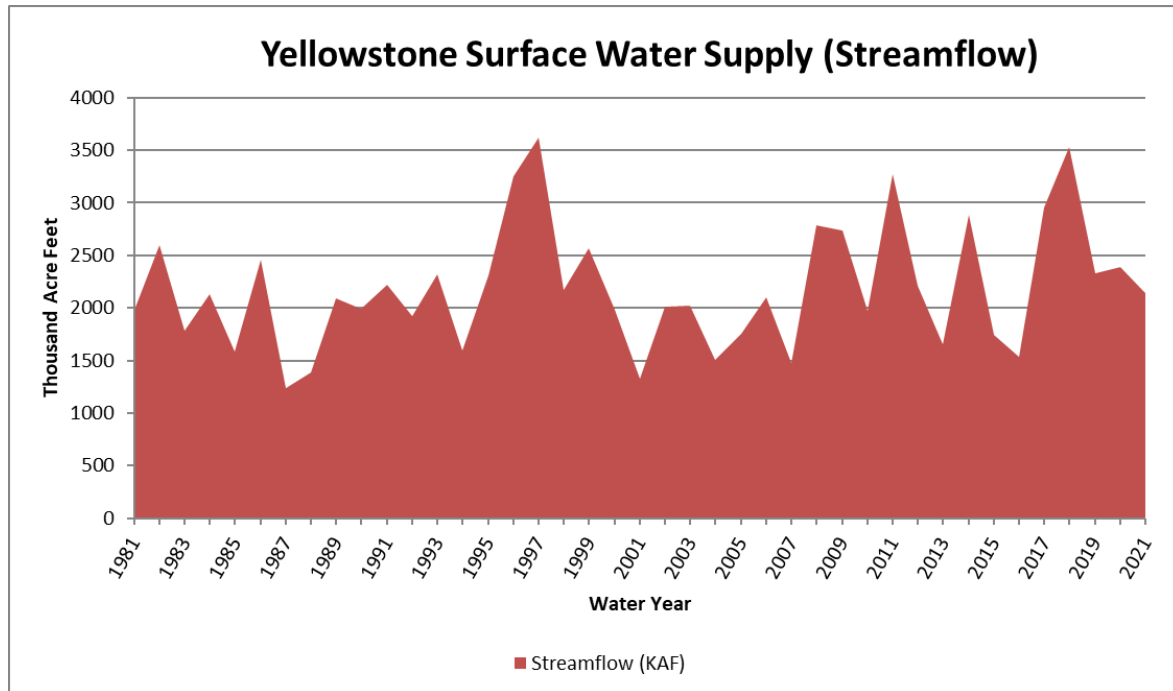


Yellowstone River Basin

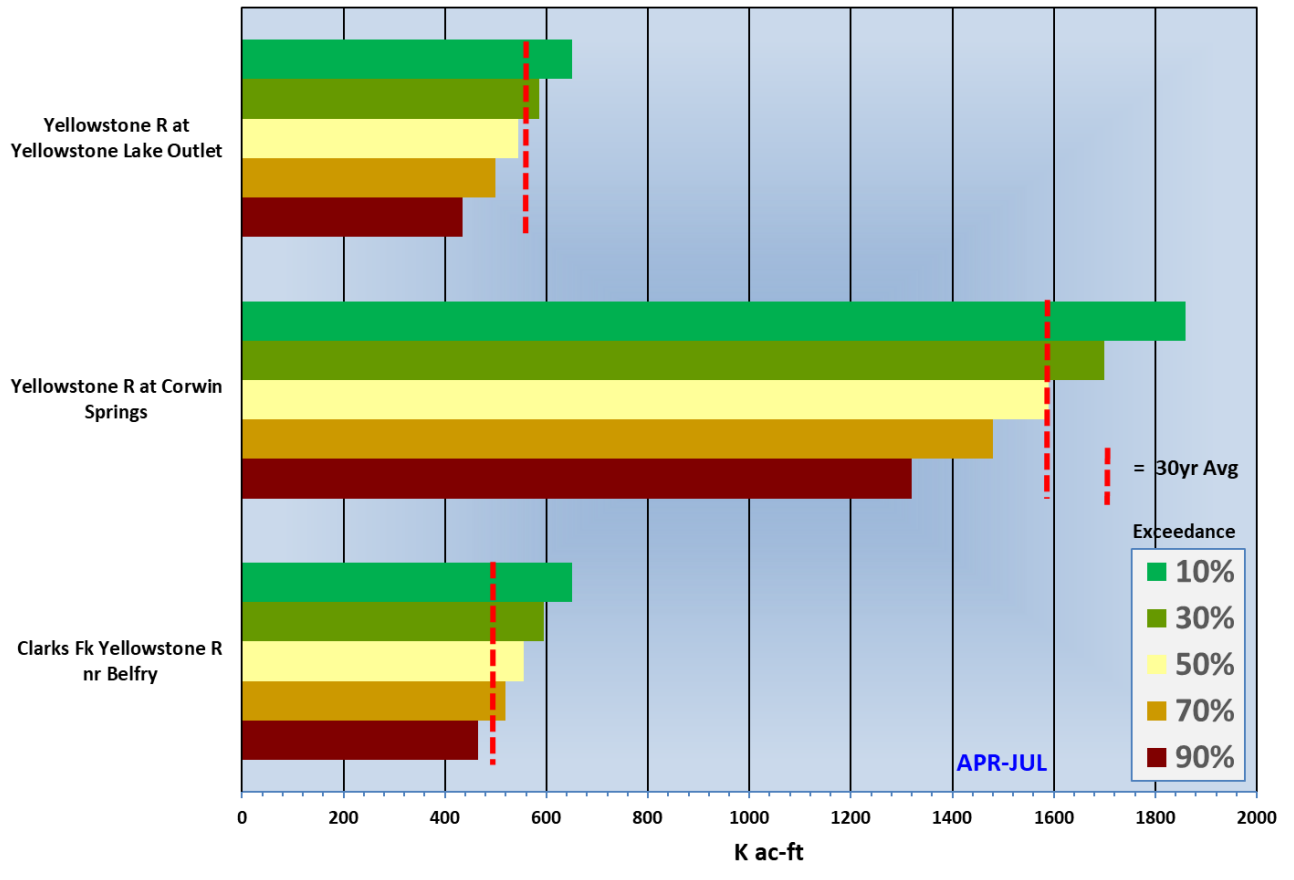
- The overall Yellowstone River Basin SWE is near **100%** of median.
- Last month's precipitation for the Yellowstone River Basin was near **65%** of average. Water-year-to-date precipitation is near **100%** of average.
- The 50% exceedance forecasts for April through July are **above** average (**101%**) for this basin. Clarks Fork near Belfry is forecasted to have flows at **109%** of average.

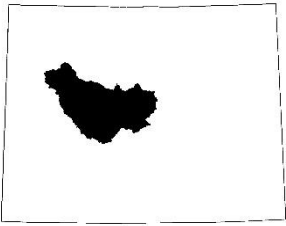


No reservoir data for the basin.



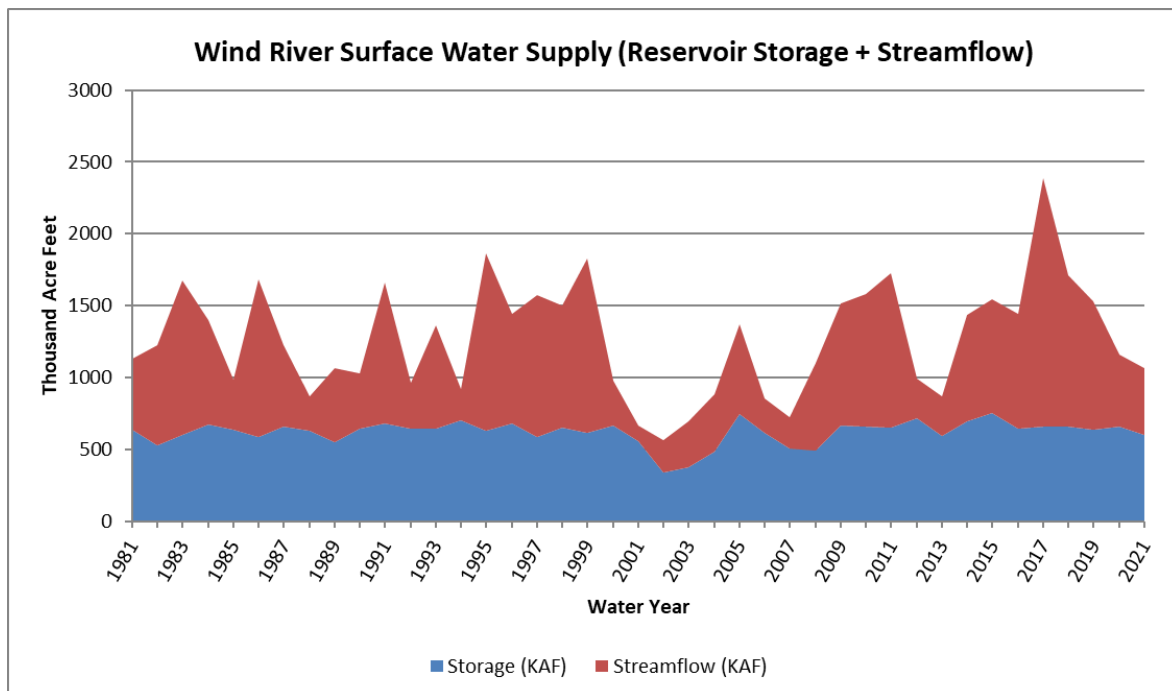
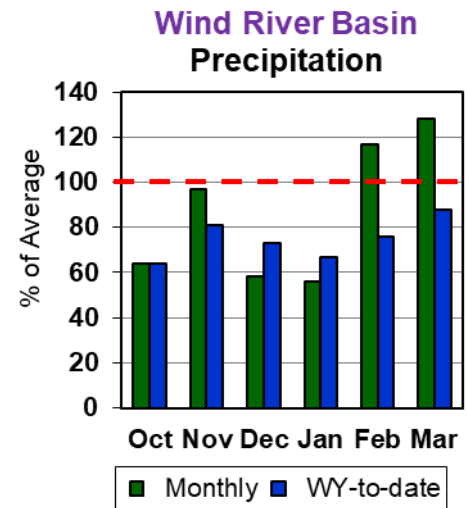
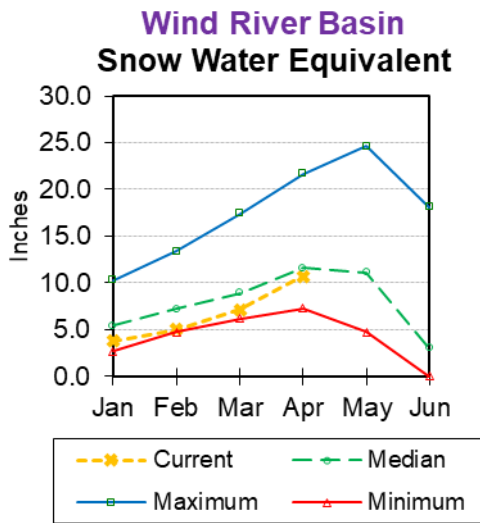
Yellowstone River Basin Streamflow Forecasts -- April 1, 2021



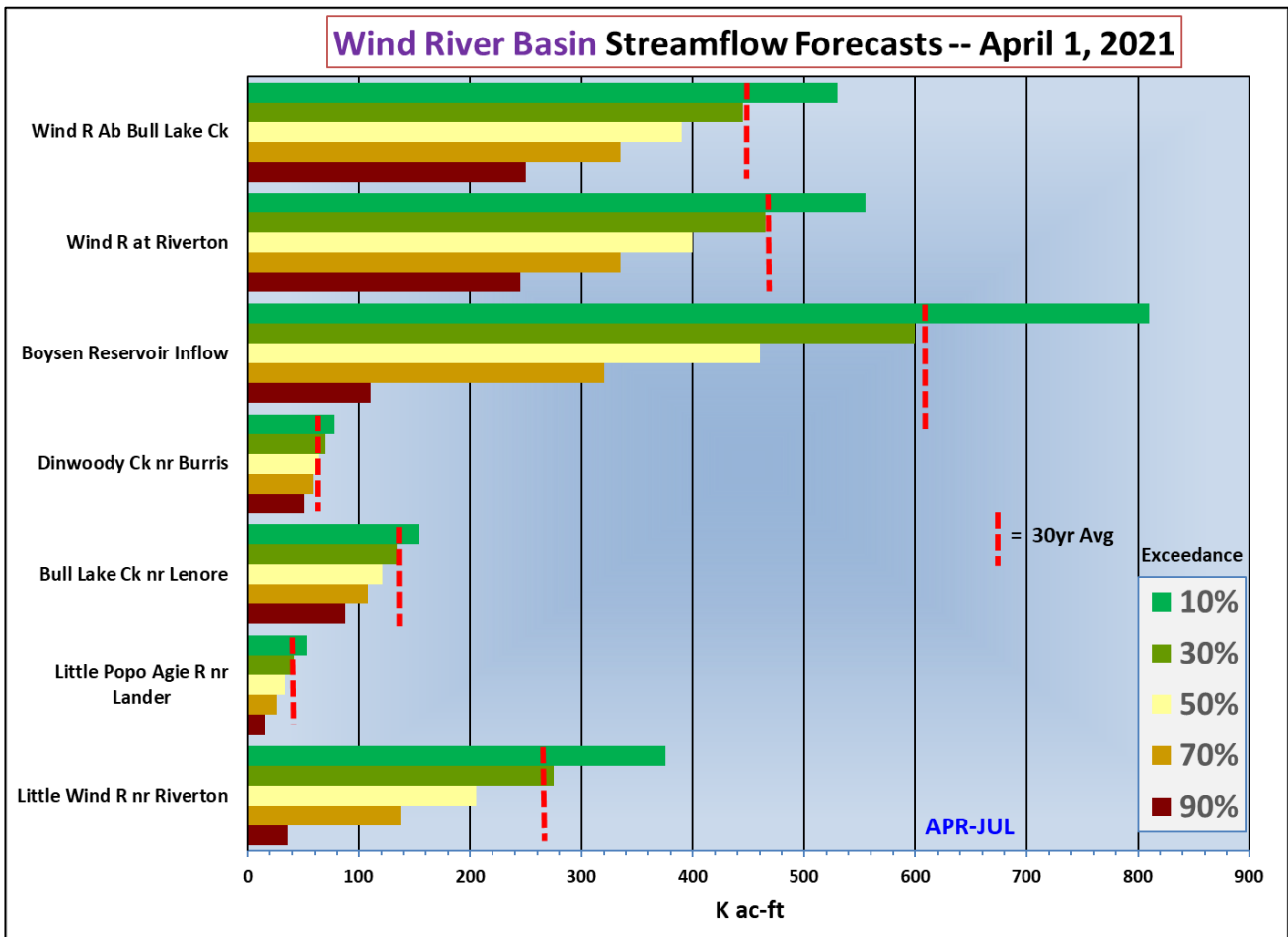


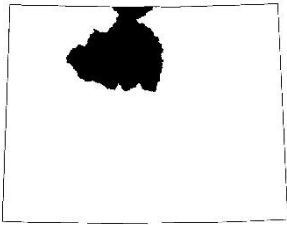
Wind River Basin

- The overall Wind River Basin SWE is near **95%** of median.
- Last month's precipitation for the Wind River Basin was near **130%** of average. Water-year-to-date precipitation is around **90%** of average.
- Current reservoir storage is near **105%** of average for the three main reservoirs in the basin.
- The streamflow forecasts for April through July are **below** average (**84%**) for this basin. Dinwoody Creek near Burris is expected to have flows at **97%** of average.



Wind River Basin Streamflow Forecasts -- April 1, 2021

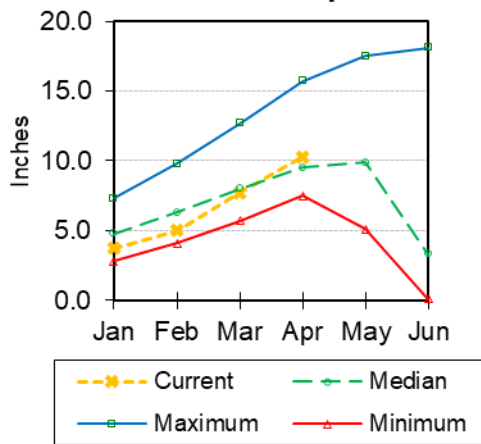




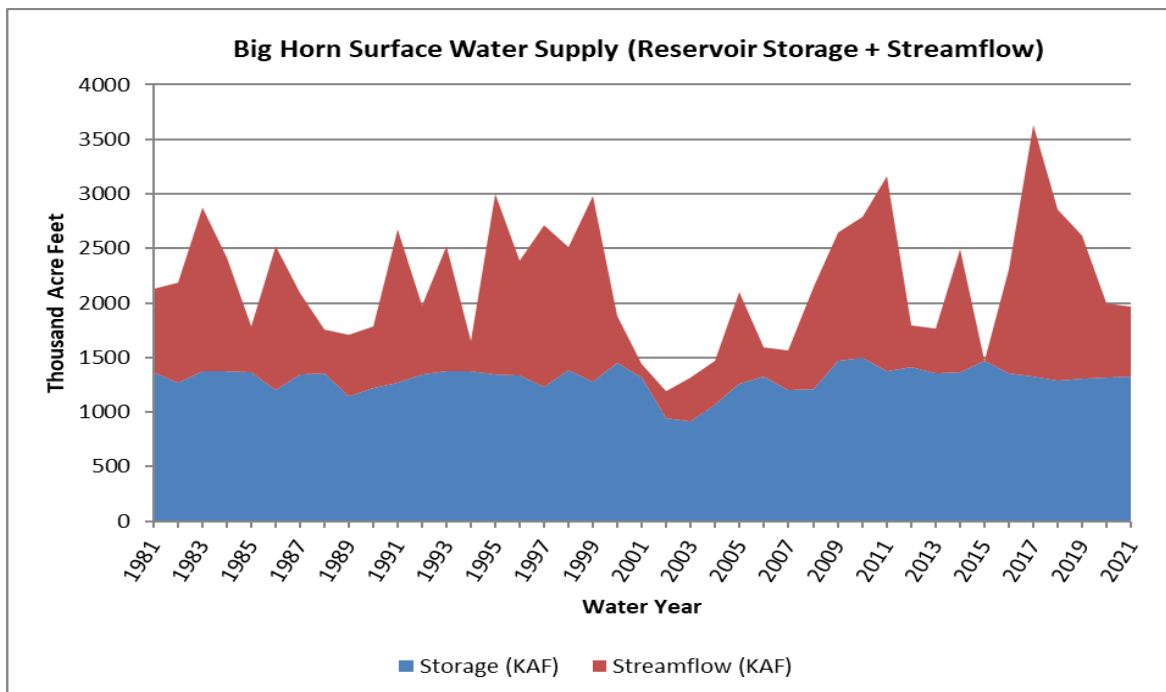
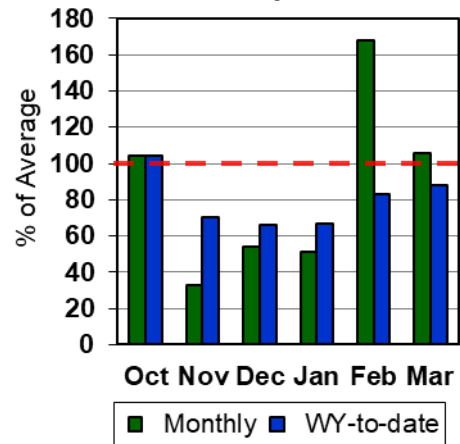
Bighorn River Basin

- The overall Bighorn River Basin SWE is near **105%** of median.
- Last month's precipitation for the Bighorn River Basin was near **105%** of average. Water-year-to-date precipitation is **85 to 90%** of average.
- Current reservoir storage is near **105%** of average for the two main reservoirs in the basin.
- The 50% exceedance forecasts for April through July are **below** average (**87%**) for this basin. Shell Creek near Shell is forecasted to have flows at **93%** of average.

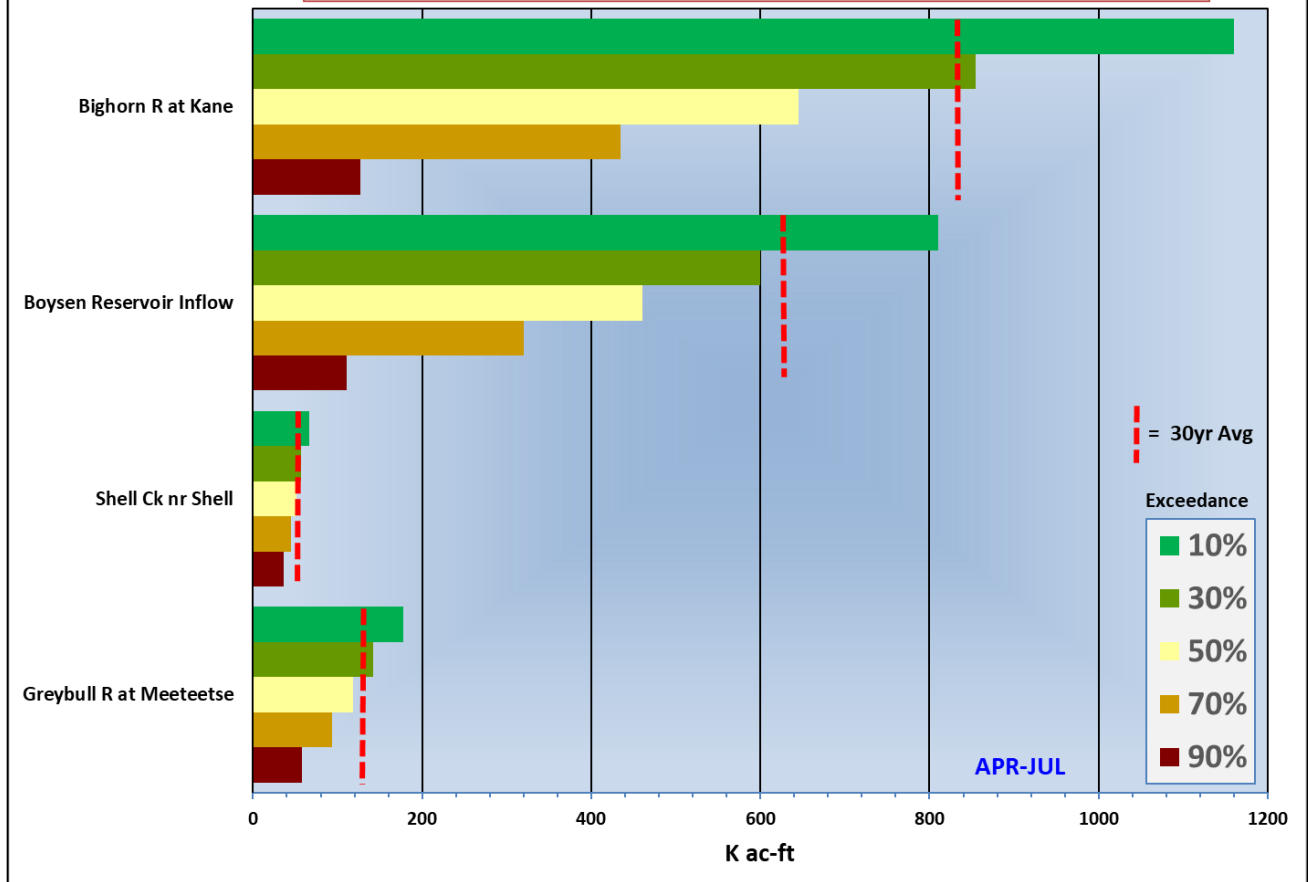
**Bighorn River Basin
Snow Water Equivalent**

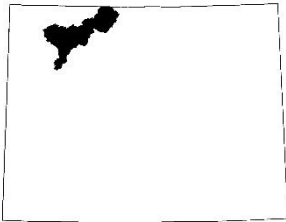


**Bighorn River Basin
Precipitation**



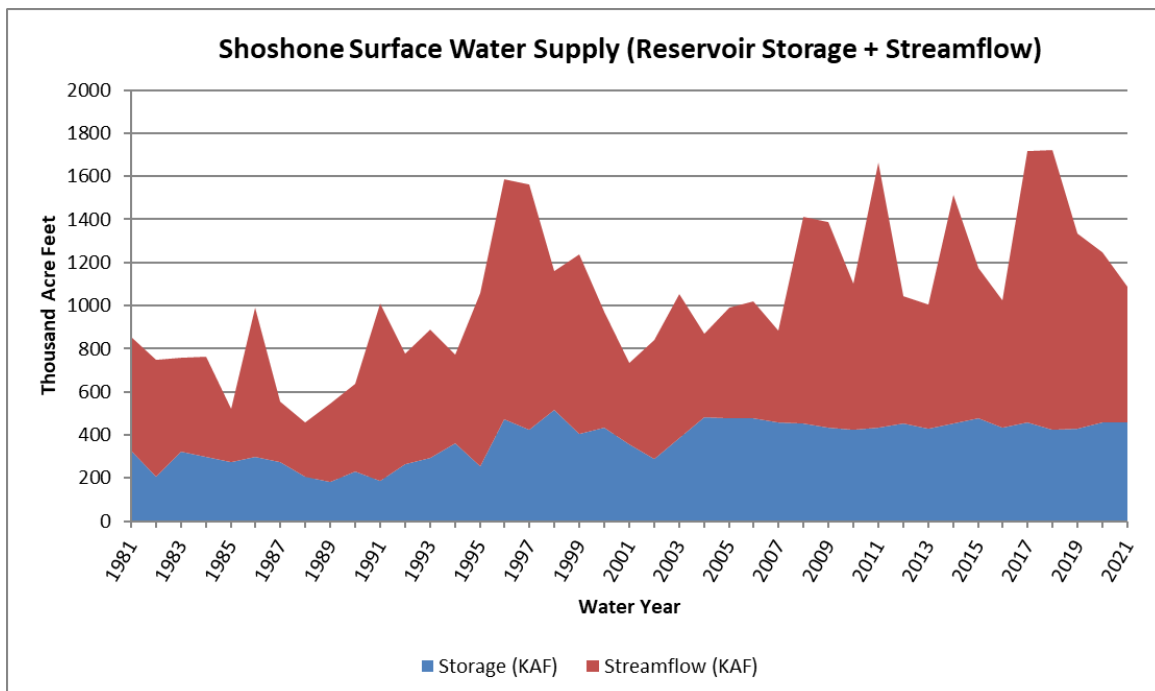
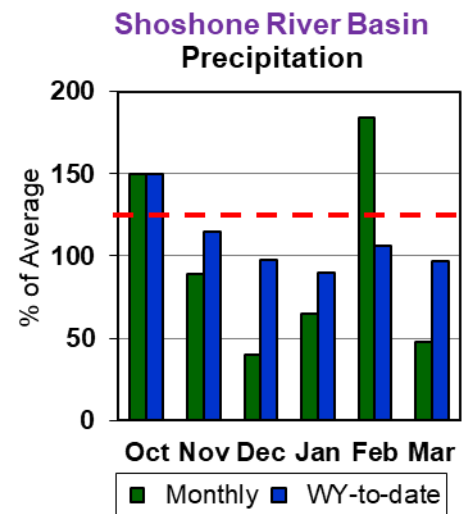
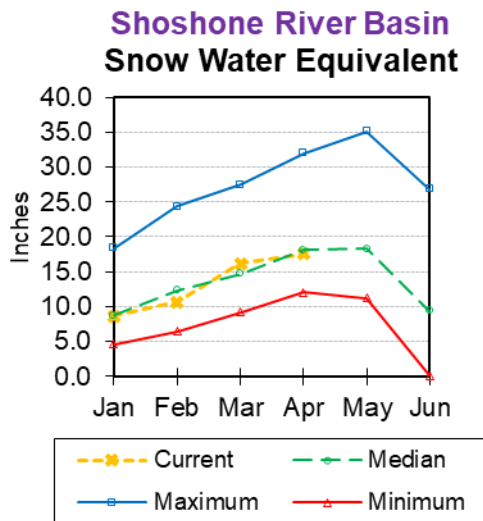
Bighorn River Basin Streamflow Forecasts -- April 1, 2021



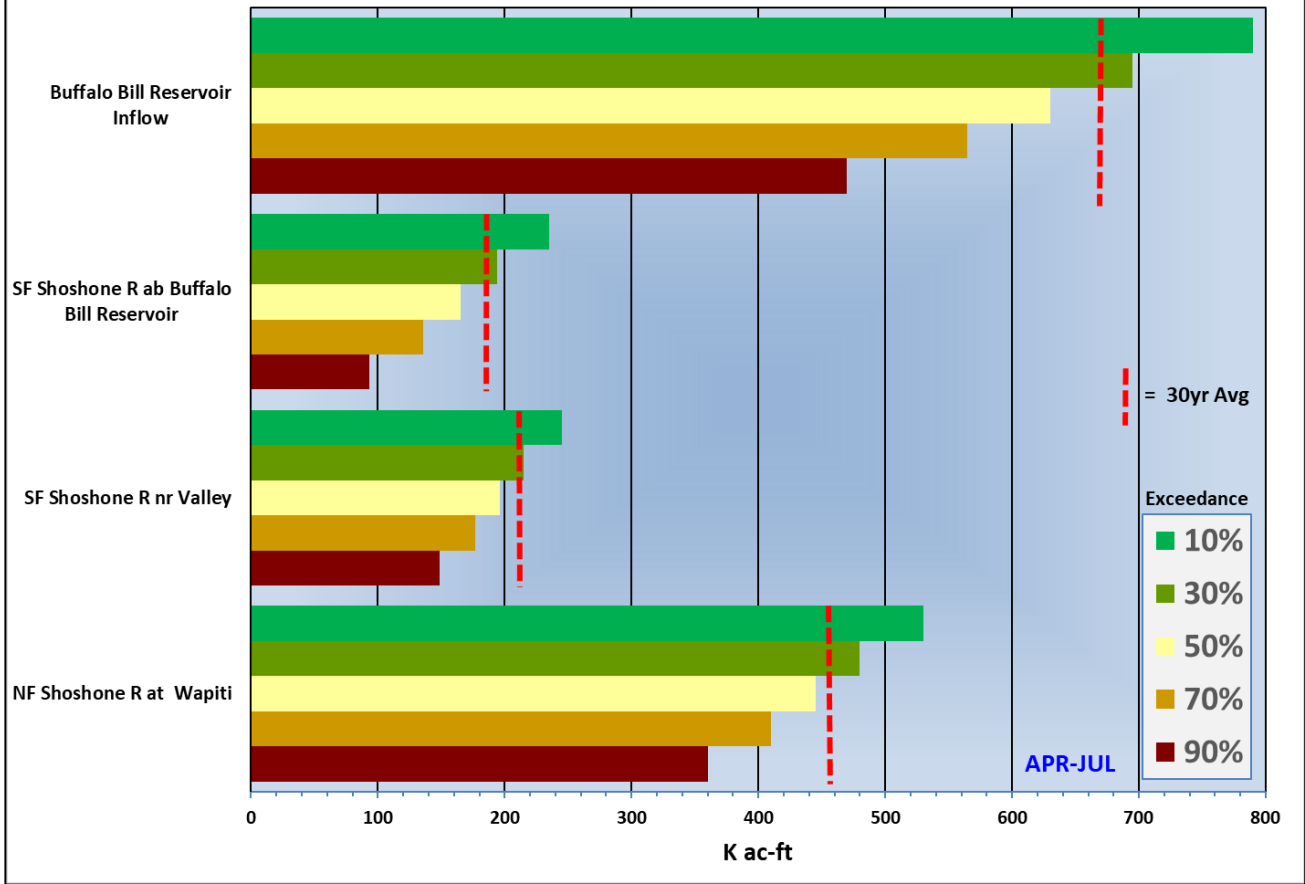


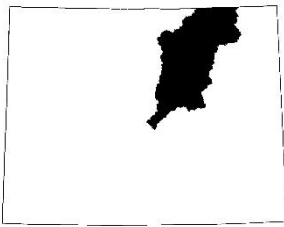
Shoshone River Basin

- The overall Shoshone River Basin SWE is 95 to **100%** of median.
- Last month's precipitation for the Shoshone River Basin was near **50%** of average. Water-year-to-date precipitation is around **95** to **100%** of average.
- Current reservoir storage is near **130%** of average for one main reservoir in the basin.
- Streamflow forecasts for April through July are **below** average (**93%**) for this basin. North Fork Shoshone River at Wapiti is expected to have flows at **97%** of average.



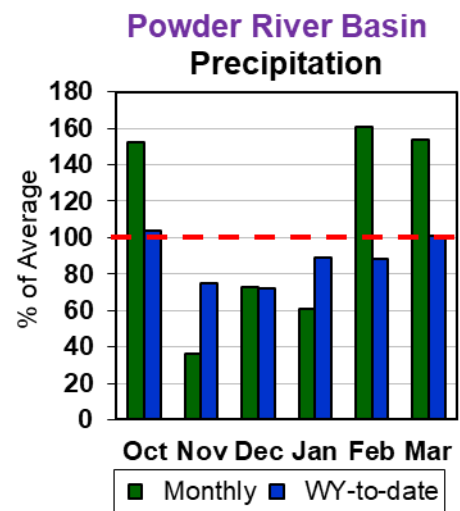
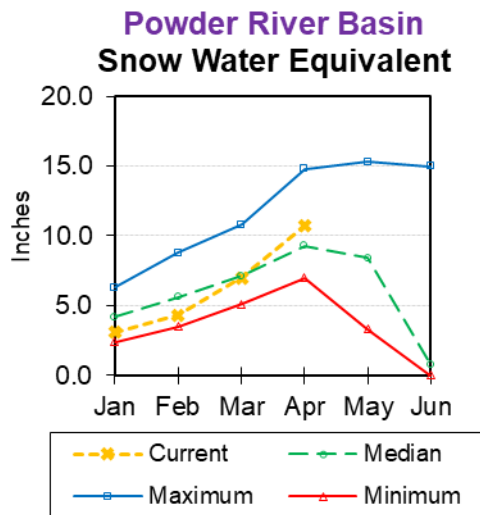
Shoshone River Basin Streamflow Forecasts -- April 1, 2021



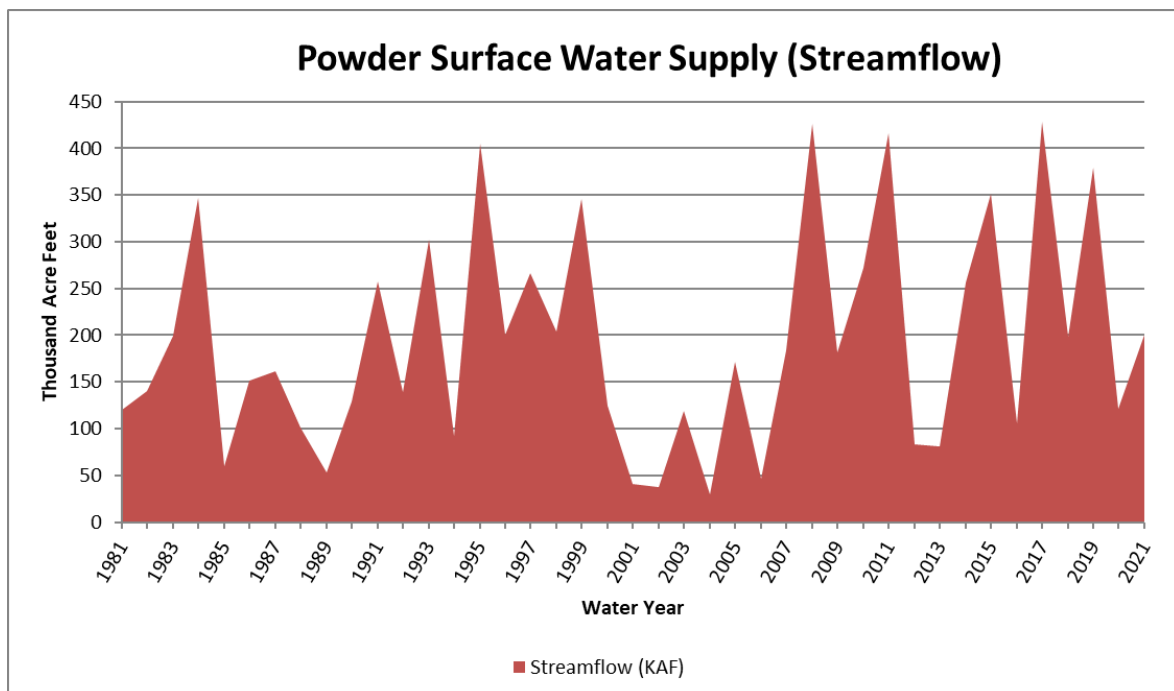


Powder River Basin

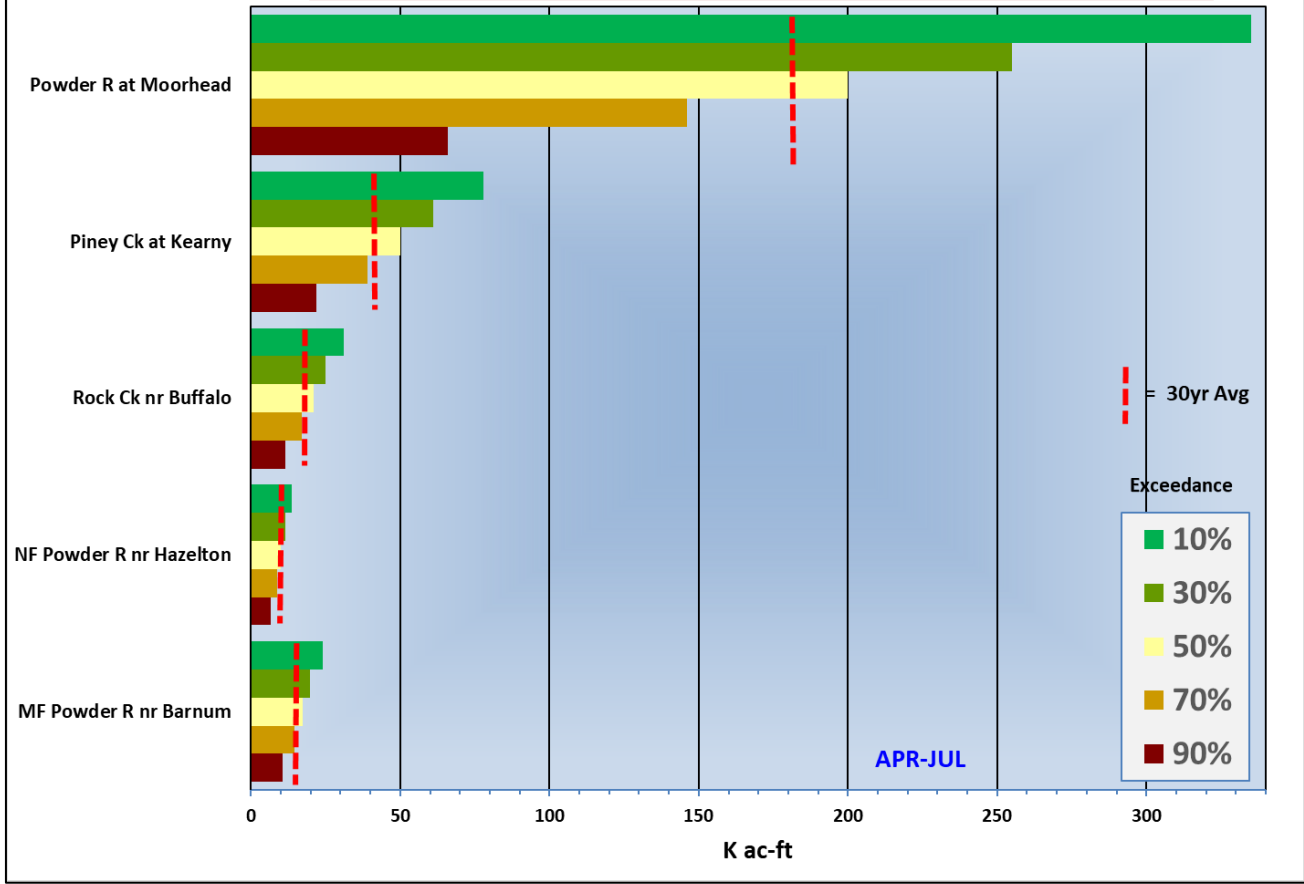
- The overall Powder River Basin SWE is near **120%** of median.
- Last month's precipitation for the Powder River Basin was near **155%** of average. Water-year-to-date precipitation is near **100%** of average.
- The 50% exceedance forecasts for April through July are **above** average (**111%**) for this basin. Piney Creek at Kearney is expected to have flows at **114%** of average.

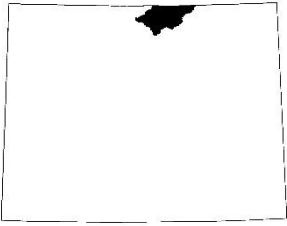


No reservoir data for the basin.



Powder River Basin Streamflow Forecasts -- April 1, 2021

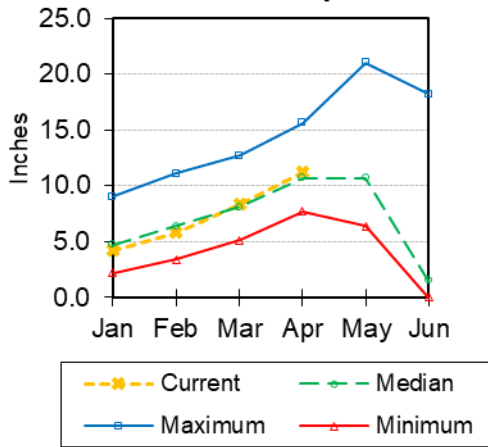




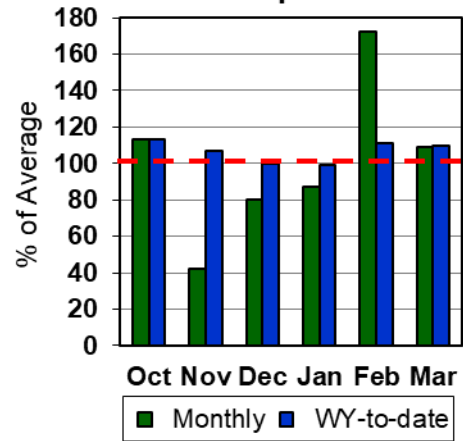
Tongue River Basin

- The overall Tongue River Basin SWE is near **105%** of median.
- Last month's precipitation for the Tongue River Basin was near **110%** of average. Water-year-to-date precipitation is near **110%** of average.
- Current reservoir storage is near **165%** of average for one main reservoir in the basin.
- The 50% exceedance forecasts for April through July are near average (**99%**) for this basin. Little Goose Creek near Big Horn is forecasted to have flows at **103%** of average.

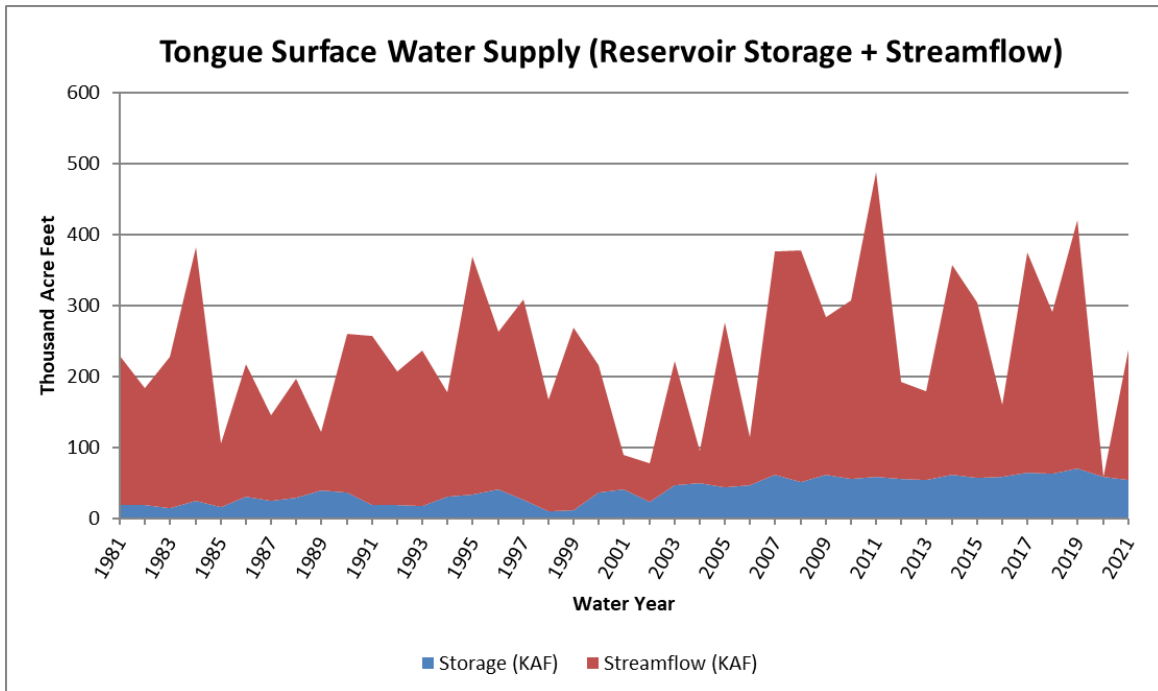
**Tongue River Basin
Snow Water Equivalent**



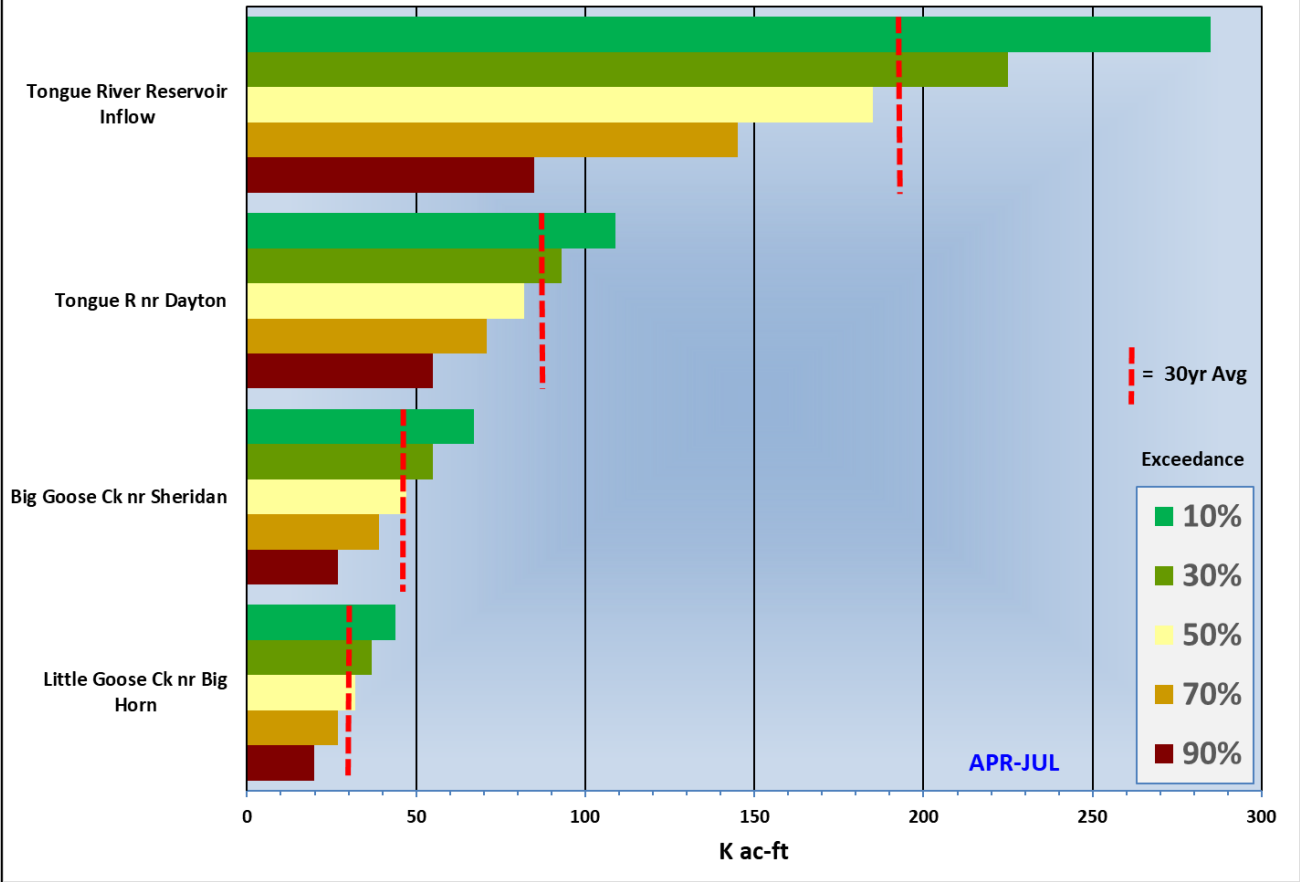
**Tongue River Basin
Precipitation**

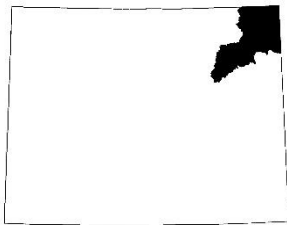


Tongue Surface Water Supply (Reservoir Storage + Streamflow)



Tongue River Basin Streamflow Forecasts -- April 1, 2021

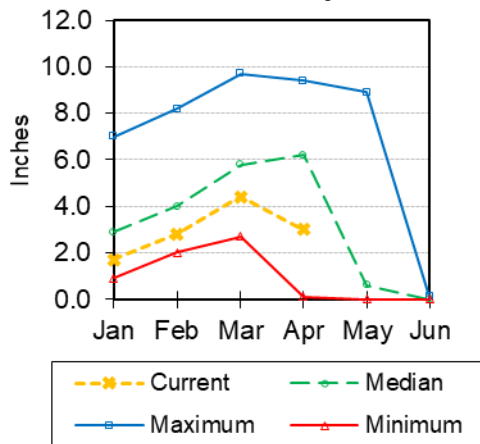




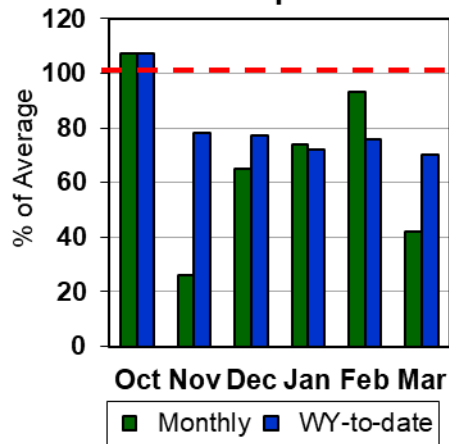
Belle Fourche River Basin

- The overall Belle Fourche River Basin SWE is around **50%** of median.
- Last month's precipitation for the Belle Fourche River Basin was near **40%** of average. Water-year-to-date precipitation is around **70%** of average.
- Current reservoir storage is near **125%** of average for three main reservoirs in the basin.

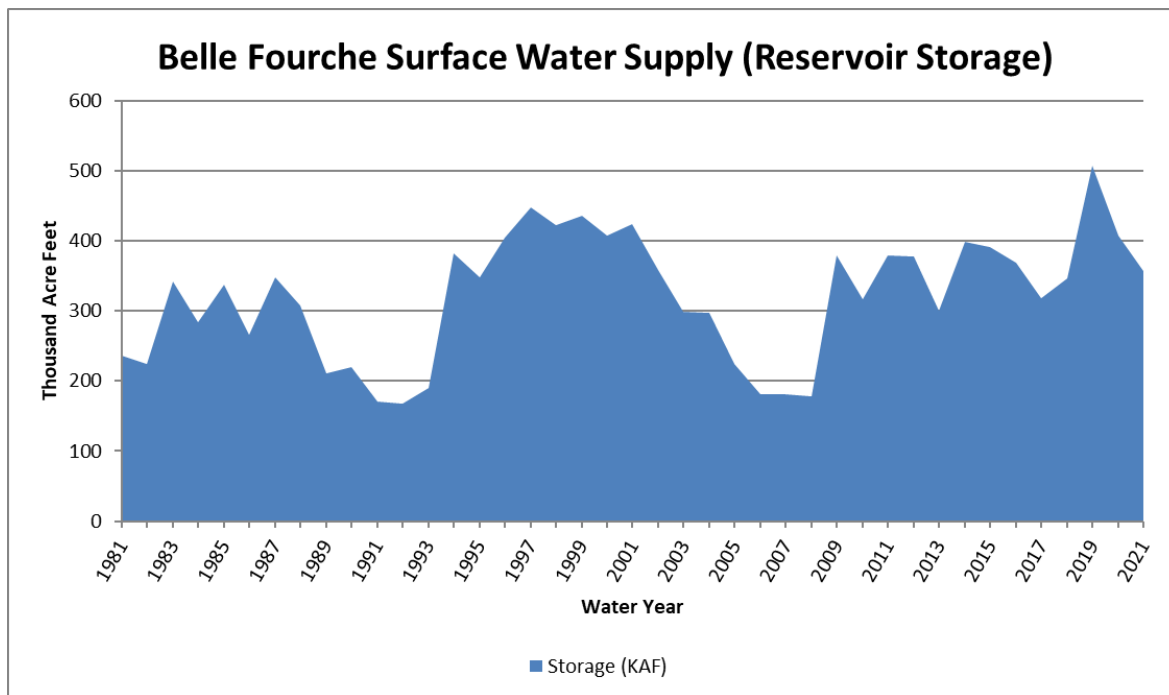
**Belle Fourche River Basin
Snow Water Equivalent**



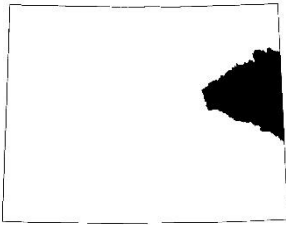
**Belle Fourche River Basin
Precipitation**



Belle Fourche Surface Water Supply (Reservoir Storage)



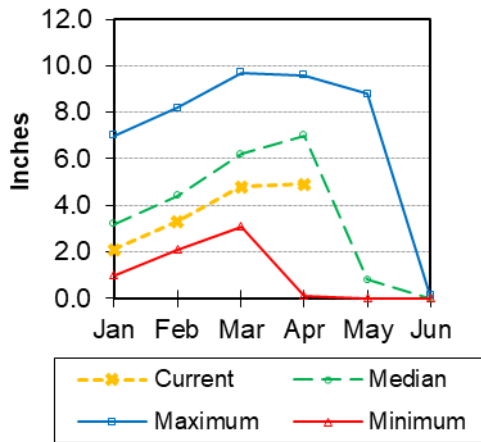
There are no streamflow forecast points for the basin.



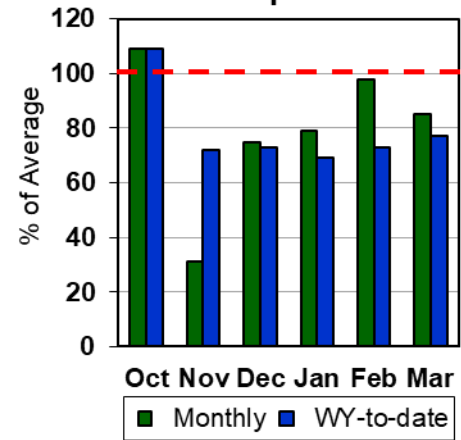
Cheyenne River Basin

- The overall Cheyenne River Basin SWE is near **65%** of median.
- Last month's precipitation for the Cheyenne River Basin was near **85%** of average. Water-year-to-date precipitation is around **75%** of average.
- Current reservoir storage is near **105%** of average for three main reservoirs in the basin.
- The 50% exceedance forecasts for April through July are **below** average (**65%**) for this basin. Deerfield Reservoir inflows are forecasted to be **73%** of average.

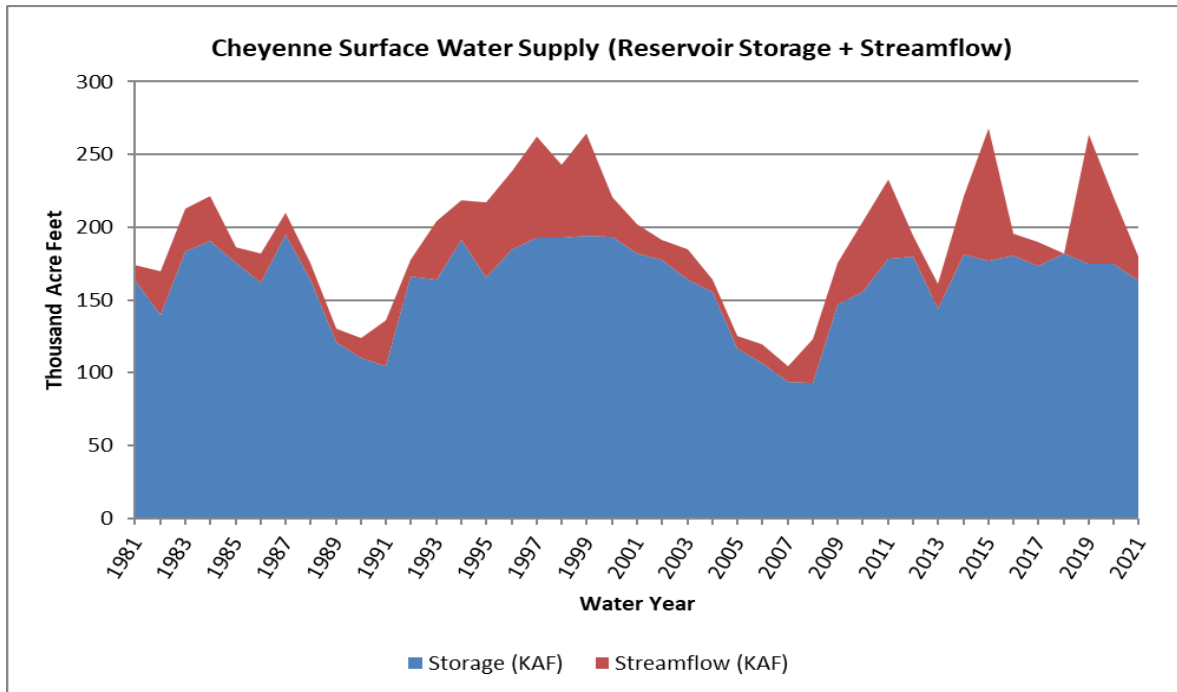
**Cheyenne River Basin
Snow Water Equivalent**



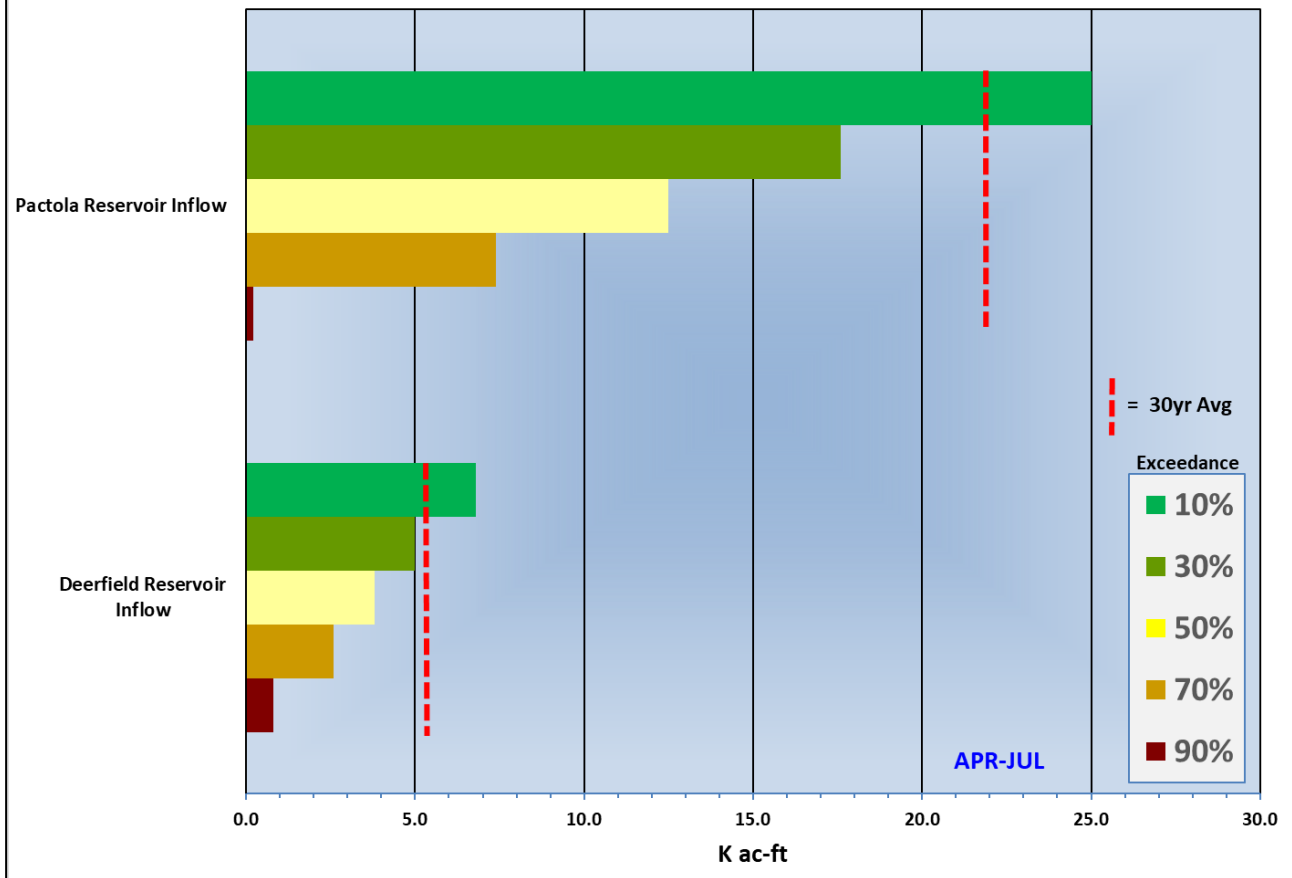
**Cheyenne River Basin
Precipitation**

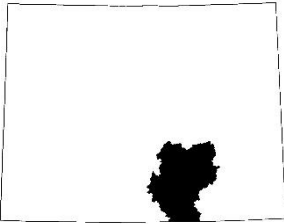


Cheyenne Surface Water Supply (Reservoir Storage + Streamflow)



Cheyenne River Basin Streamflow Forecasts -- April 1, 2021

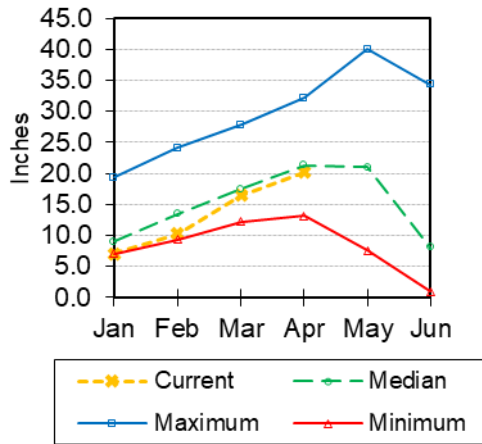




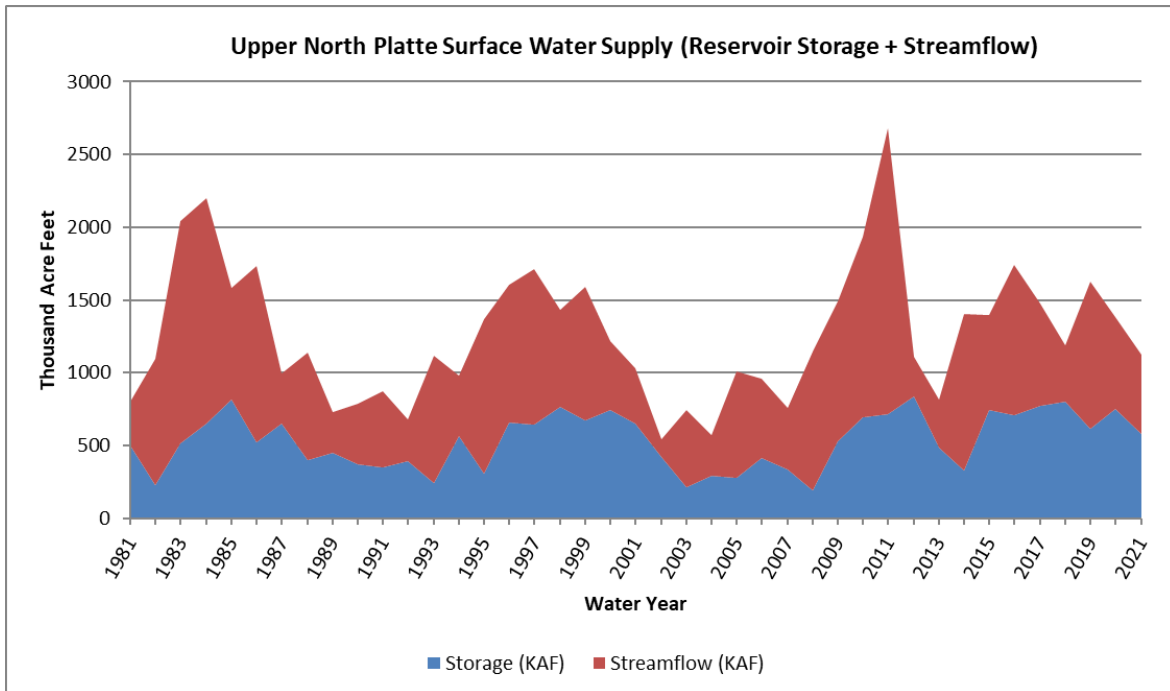
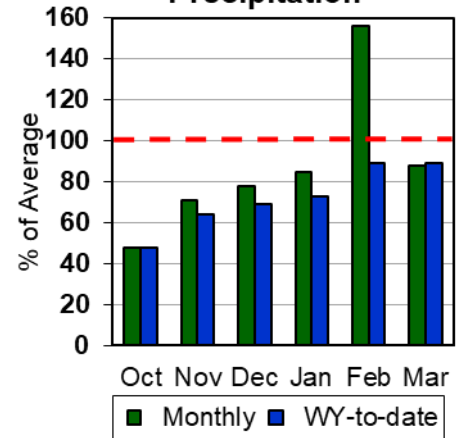
Upper North Platte River Basin

- The overall Upper North Platte River Basin SWE is **near 95%** of median.
- Last month's precipitation for the Upper North River Basin was near **90%** of average. Water-year-to-date precipitation is around **90%** of average.
- Current reservoir storage is near **120%** of average for one main reservoir in the basin.
- Streamflow forecasts for April through July are **below** average (**79%**) for this basin. Rock Creek near Arlington is expected to have flows at **108%** of average.

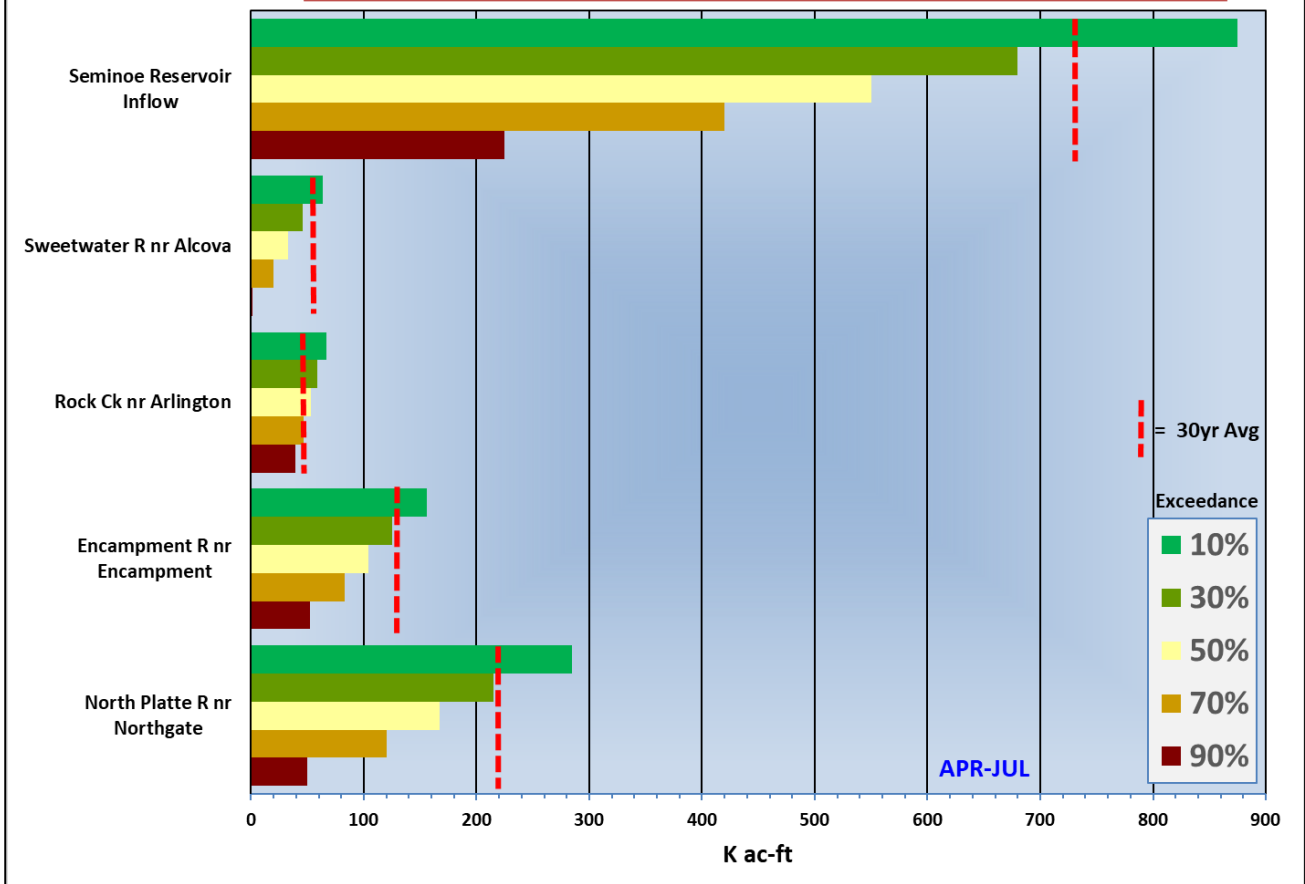
**Upper North Platte Basin
Snow Water Equivalent**

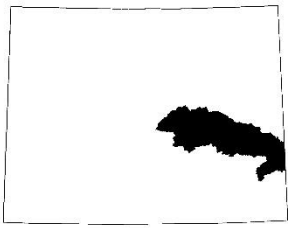


**Upper North Platte Basin
Precipitation**



Upper North Platte River Basin Streamflow Forecasts -- April 1, 2021

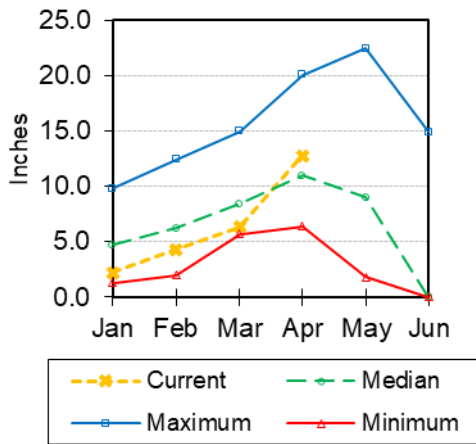




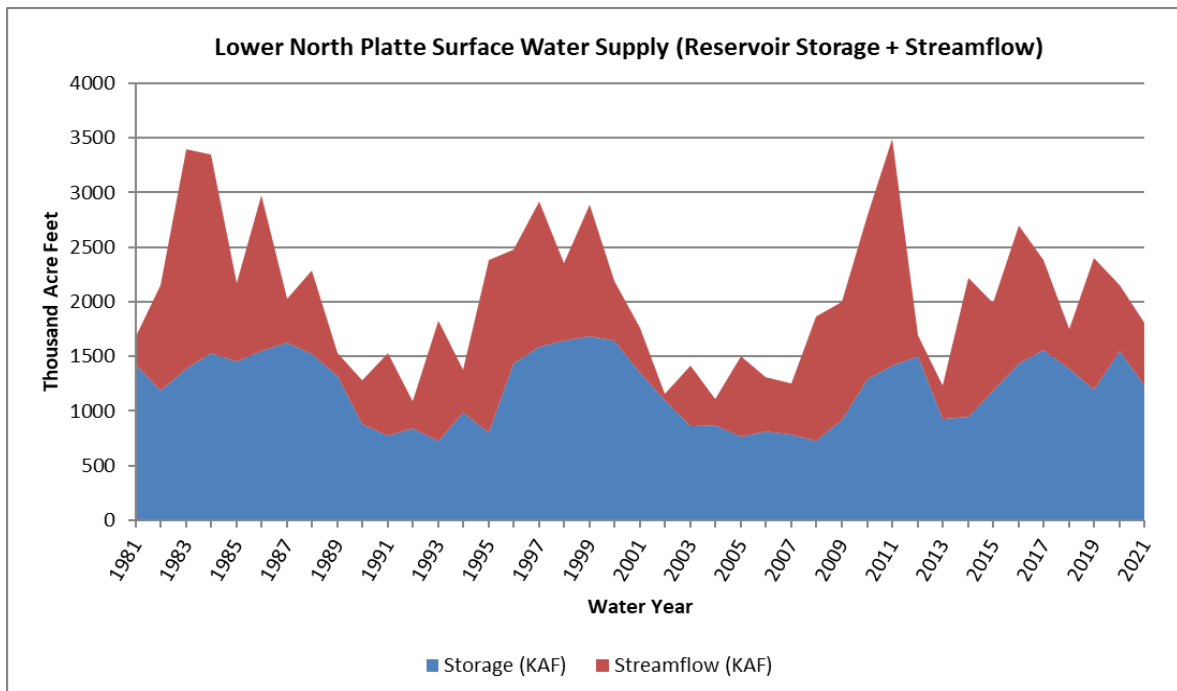
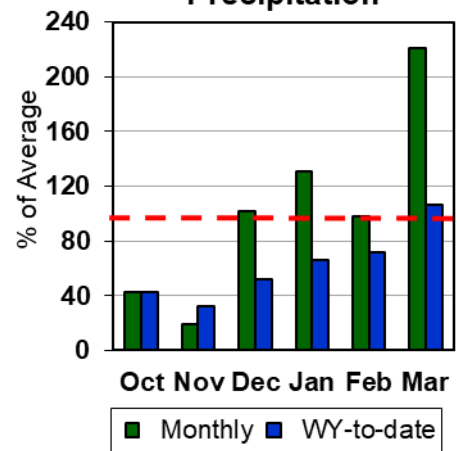
Lower North Platte River Basin

- The overall Lower North Platte River Basin SWE is near **115%** of median.
- Last month's precipitation for the Lower North Platte River Basin was near **220%** of average. Water-year-to-date precipitation is around **105%** of average.
- Current reservoir storage is near **105%** of average for four main reservoirs in the basin.
- The 50% exceedance forecasts for April through July are **below** average (**86%**) for this basin. However, La Prele Creek near Douglas is forecasted to have flows at **121%** of average.

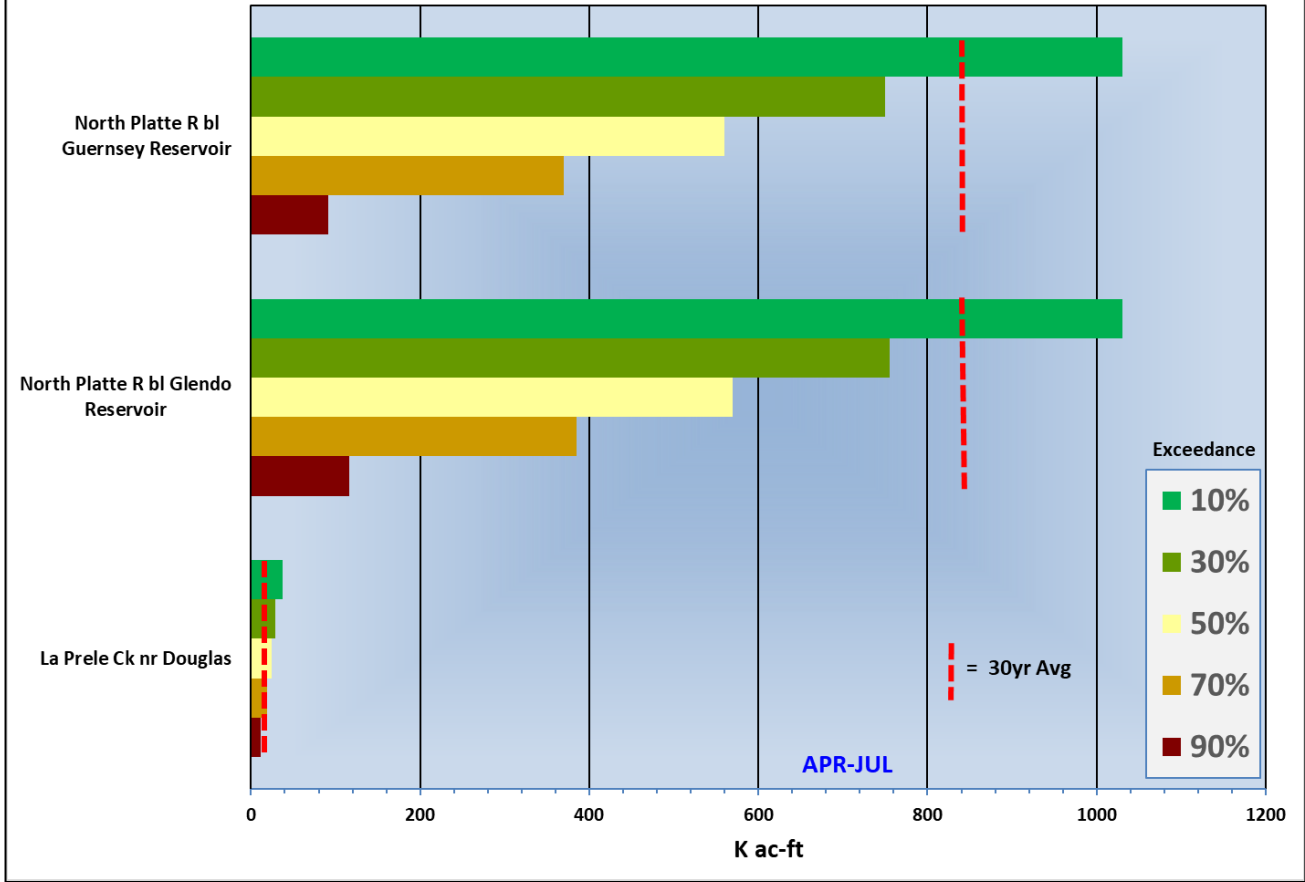
**Lower North Platte Basin
Snow Water Equivalent**

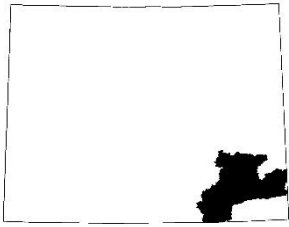


**Lower North Platte Basin
Precipitation**



Lower North Platte River Basin Streamflow Forecasts -- April 1, 2021

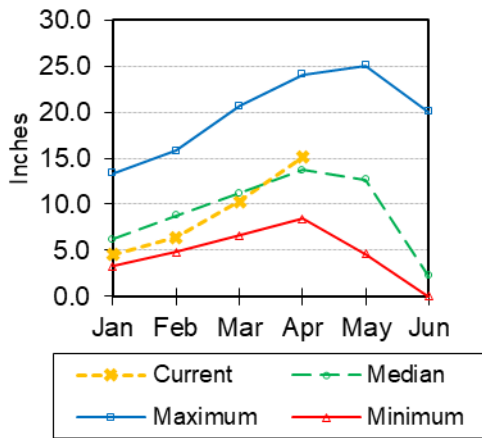




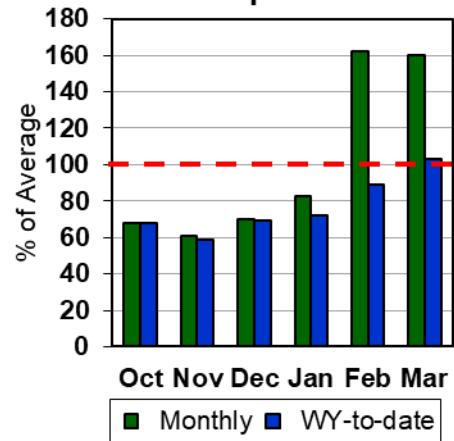
Laramie River Basin

- The overall Laramie River Basin SWE is around **110%** of median.
- Last month's precipitation for the Laramie River Basin was around **160%** of average. Water-year-to-date precipitation is near **105%** of average.
- Current reservoir storage is around **125%** of average for one main reservoir in the basin.
- Streamflow forecasts for April through July are **above** average (**111%**) for this basin. Little Laramie River near Filmore is expected to have flows at **116%** of average.

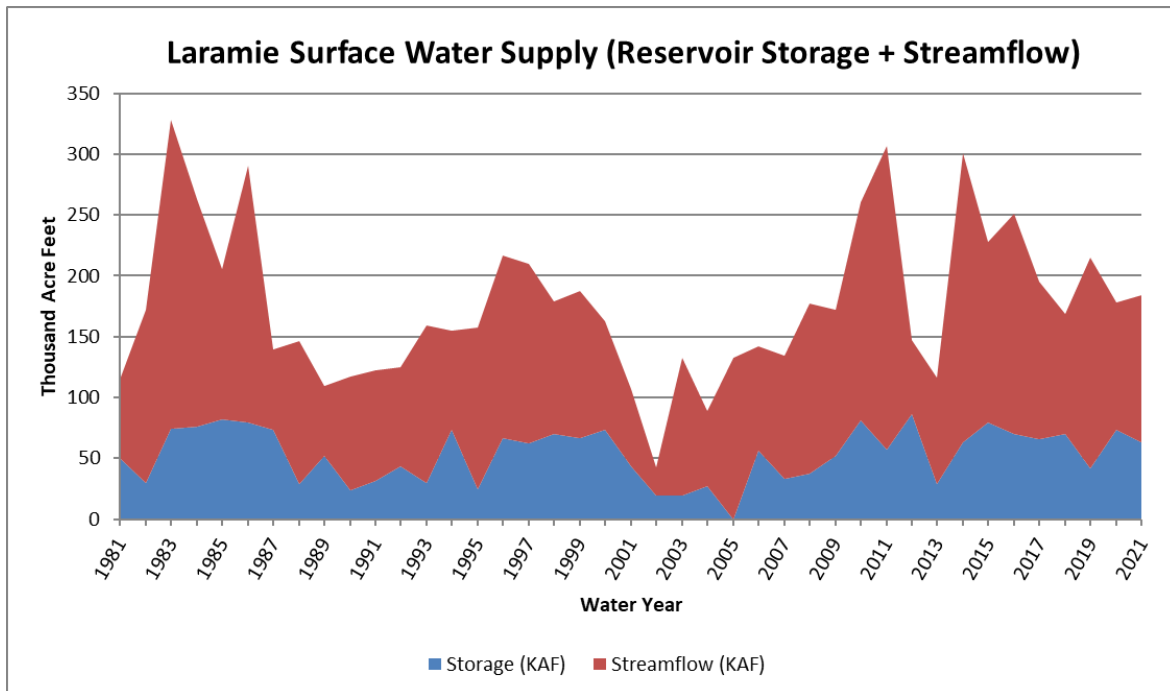
**Laramie River Basin
Snow Water Equivalent**



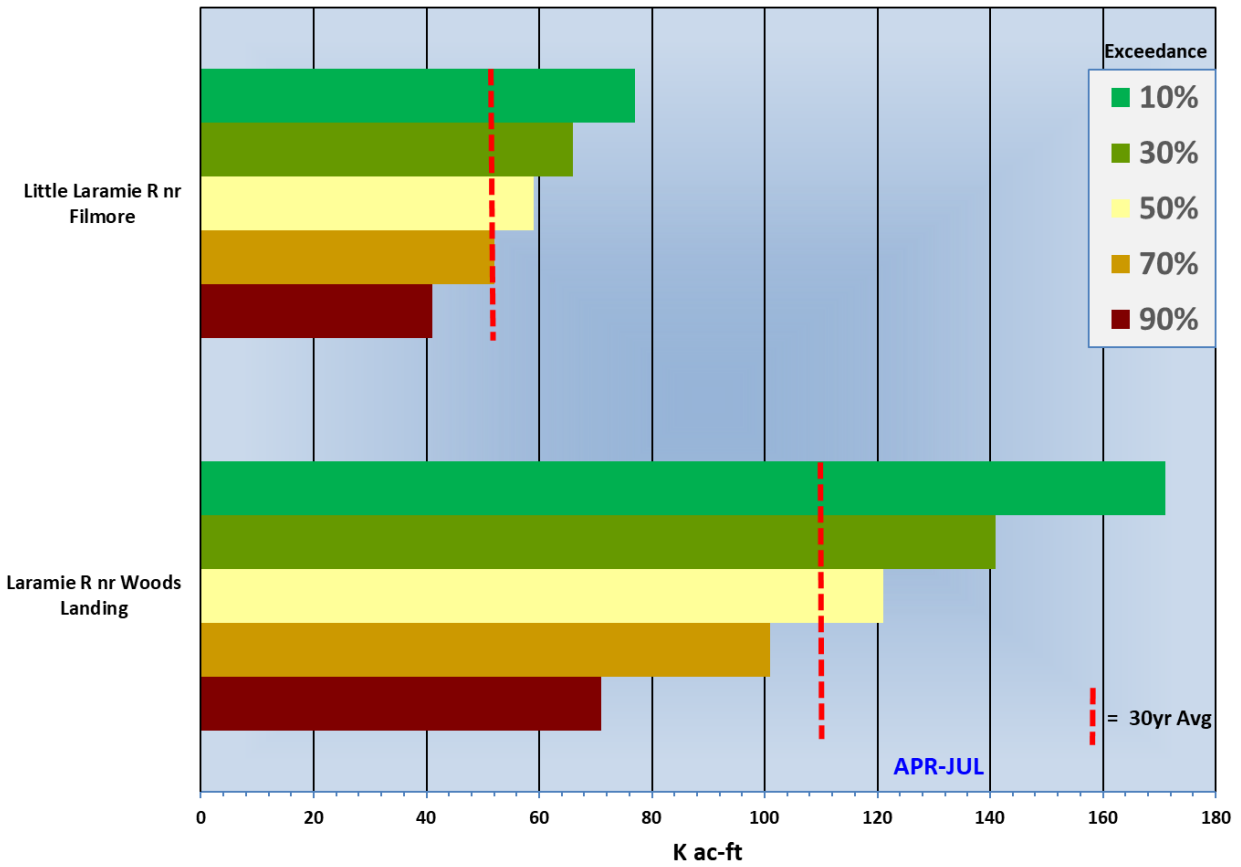
**Laramie River Basin
Precipitation**

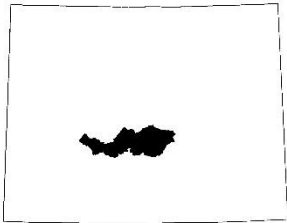


Laramie Surface Water Supply (Reservoir Storage + Streamflow)



Laramie River Basin Streamflow Forecasts -- April 1, 2021

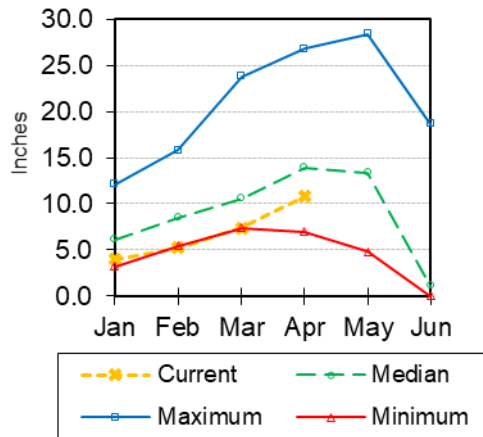




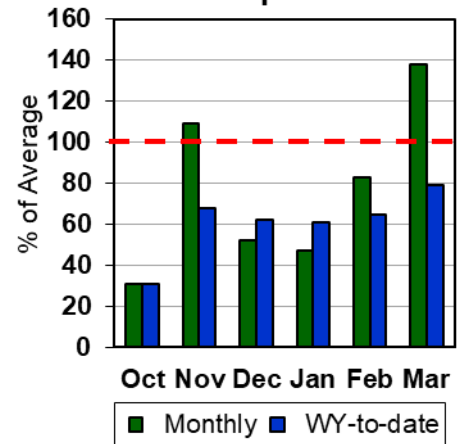
Sweetwater River Basin

- The overall Sweetwater River Basin SWE is around **80%** of median.
- Last month's precipitation for the Sweetwater River Basin was near **140%** of average. Water-year-to-date precipitation is near **80%** of average.
- Current reservoir storage is near **105%** of average for one main reservoir in the basin.
- Streamflow forecast for Sweetwater River near Alcova (April-July) is **well below** average at **56%**.

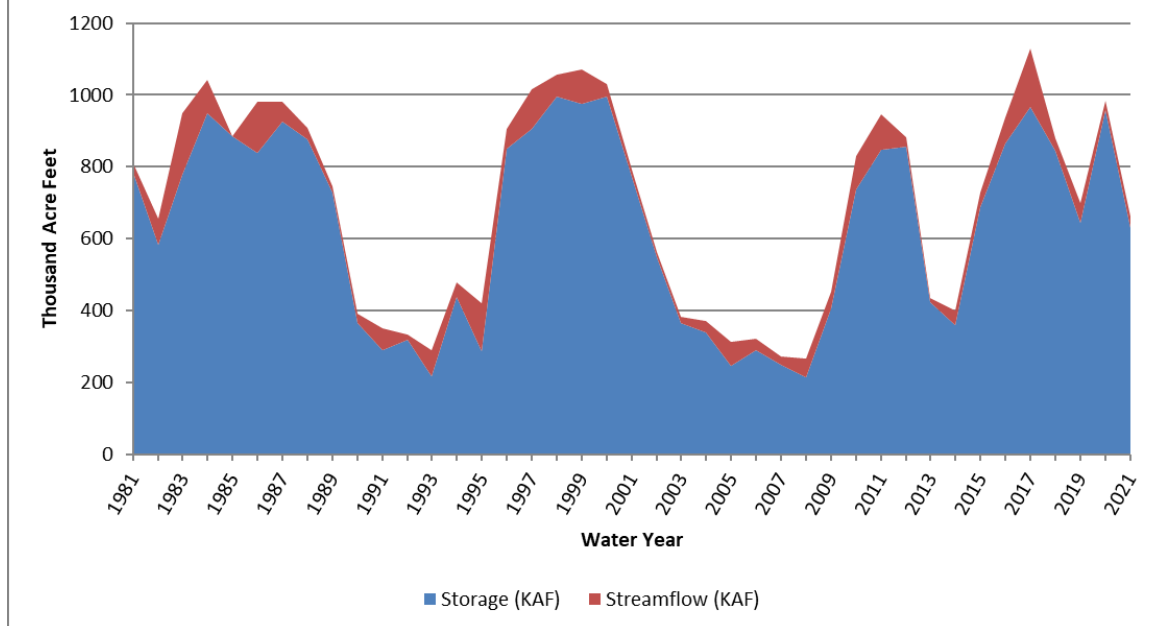
**Sweetwater River Basin
Snow Water Equivalent**



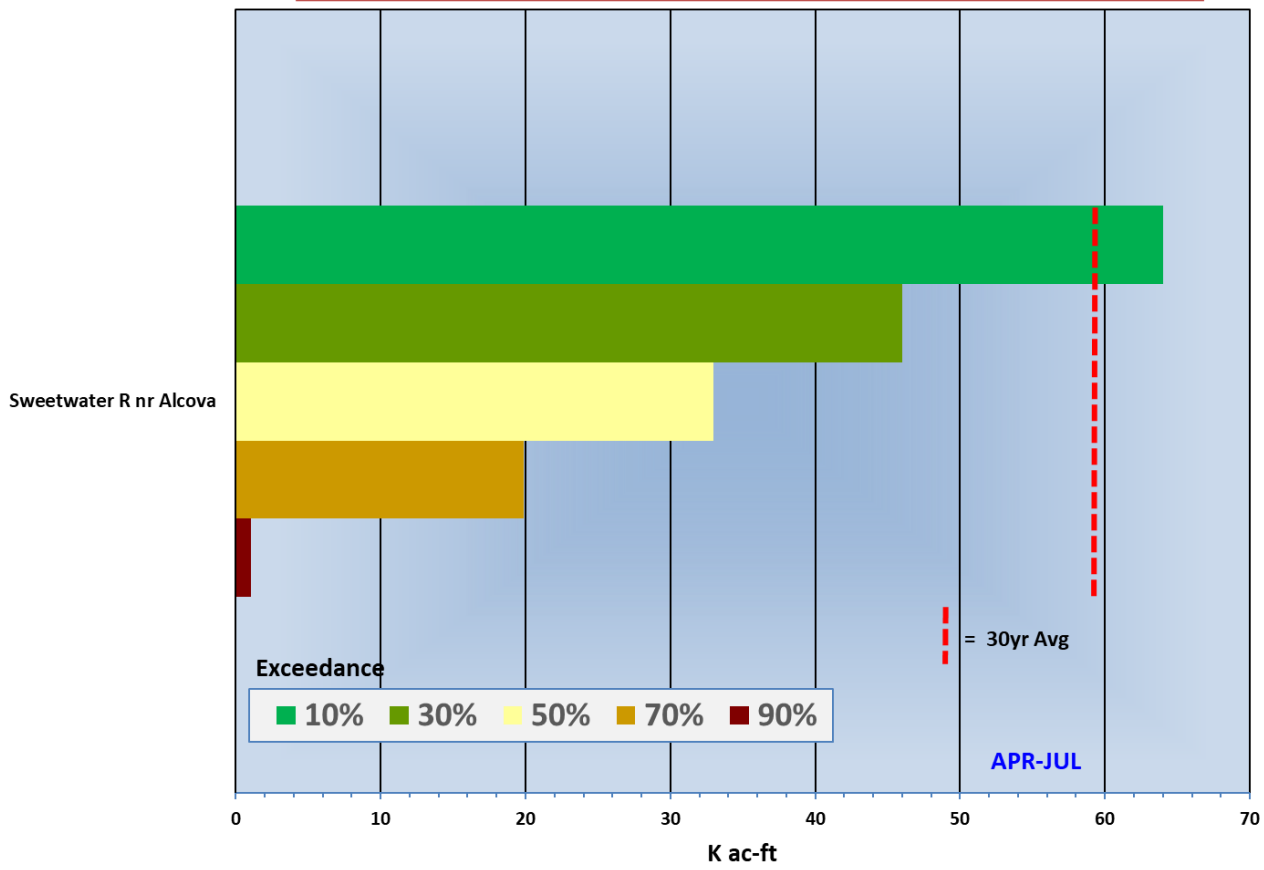
**Sweetwater River Basin
Precipitation**

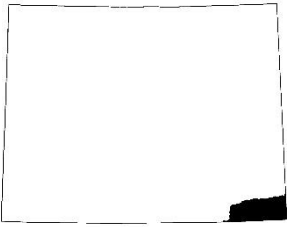


Sweetwater Surface Water Supply (Reservoir Storage + Streamflow)



Sweetwater River Basin Streamflow Forecast -- April 1, 2021

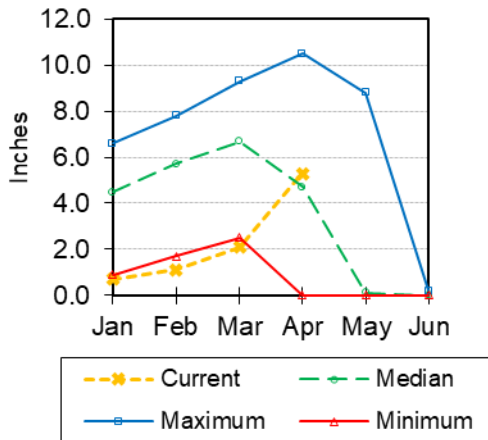




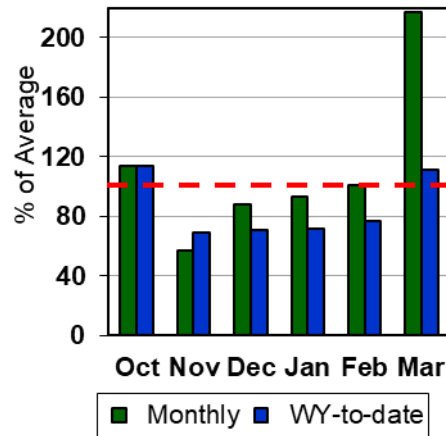
South Platte River Basin (WY)

- The overall South Platte River Basin SWE is close to **105%** of median.
- Last month's precipitation for the South Platte River Basin was near **215%** of average. Water-year-to-date precipitation is close to **110%** of average.

**South Platte River Basin
Snow Water Equivalent**

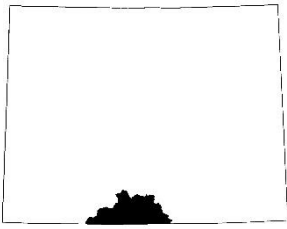


**South Platte River Basin
Precipitation**



No reservoir data for the basin.

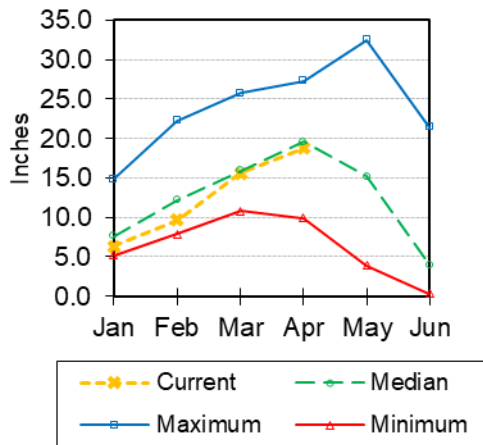
There are no streamflow forecast points for the basin.



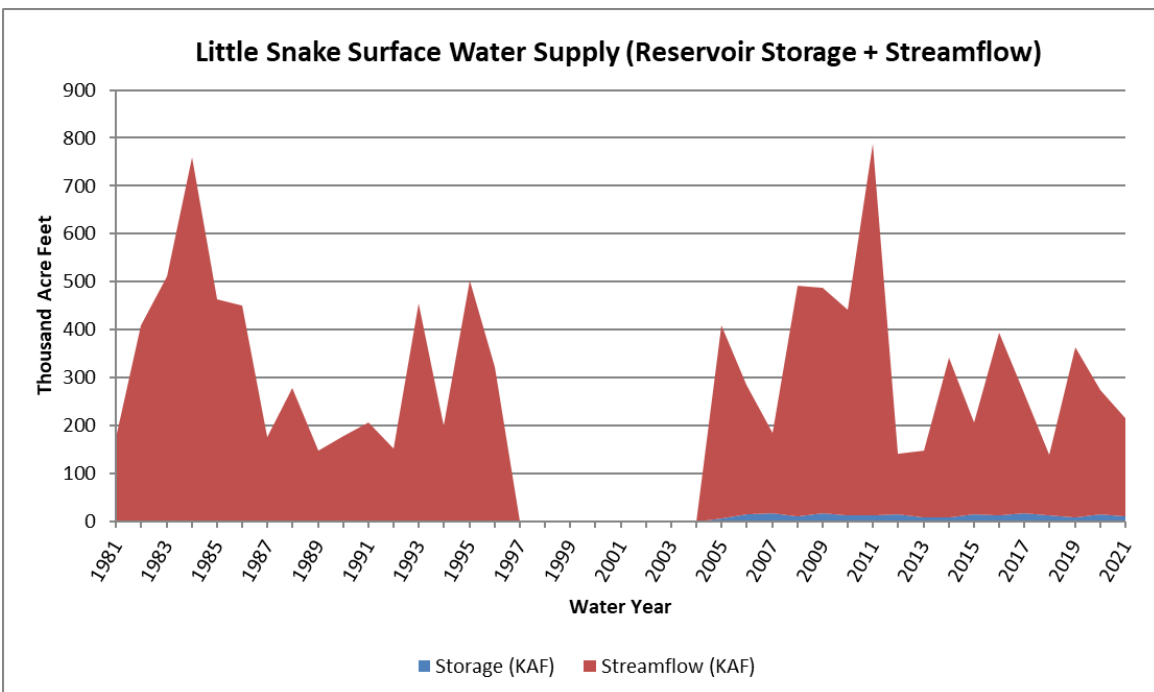
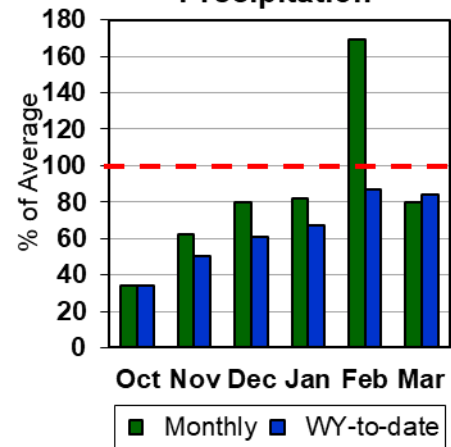
Little Snake River Basin

- The overall Little Snake River Basin SWE is near **95%** of median.
- Last month's precipitation for the Little Snake River Basin was near **80%** of average. Water-year-to-date precipitation is **80 to 85%** of average.
- Current reservoir storage is close to **75%** of average for one main reservoir in the basin.
- The 50% exceedance forecasts for April through July are **below** average (**64%**) for this basin.

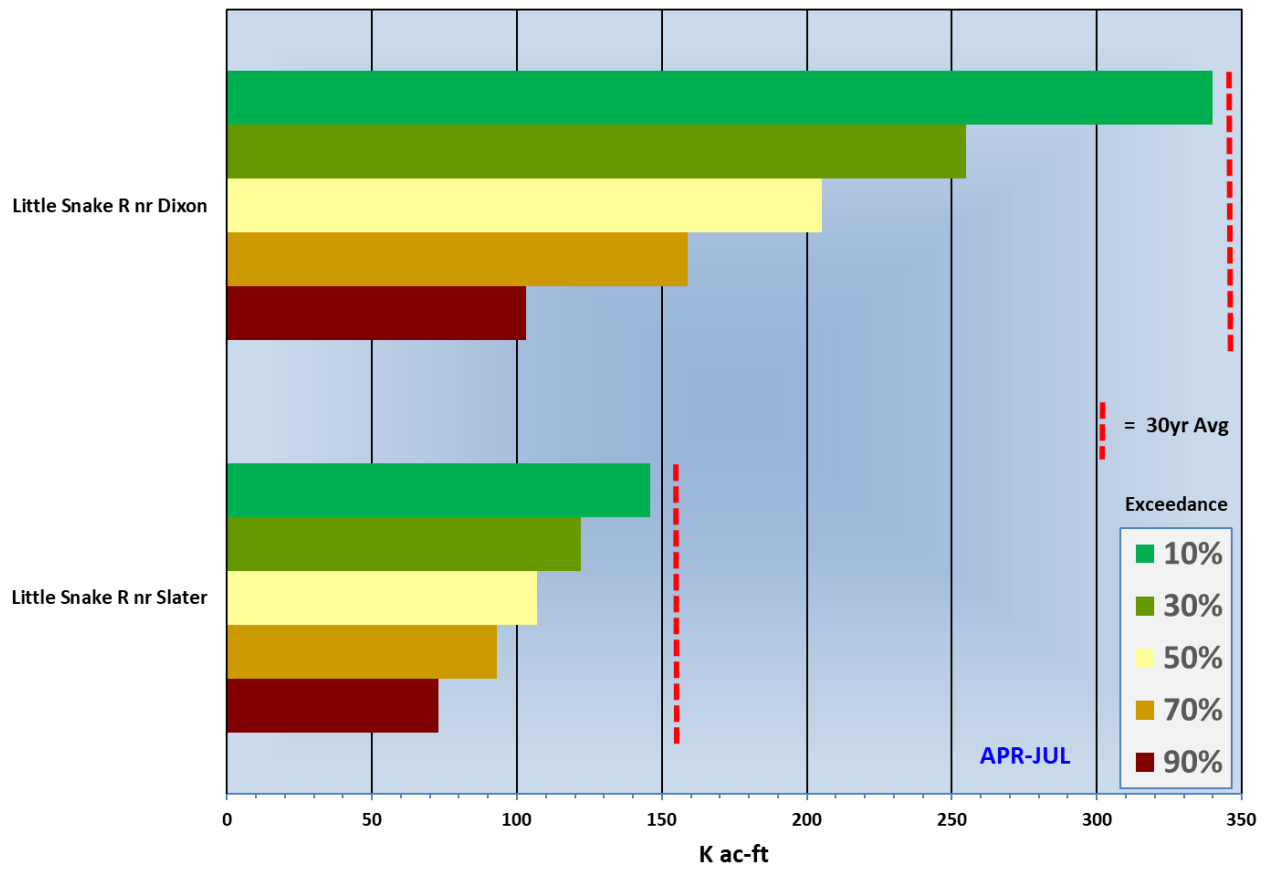
**Little Snake River Basin
Snow Water Equivalent**

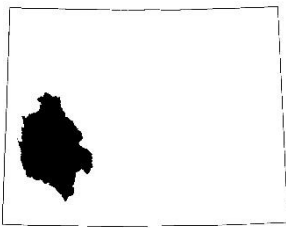


**Little Snake River Basin
Precipitation**



Little Snake River Basin Streamflow Forecasts -- April 1, 2021

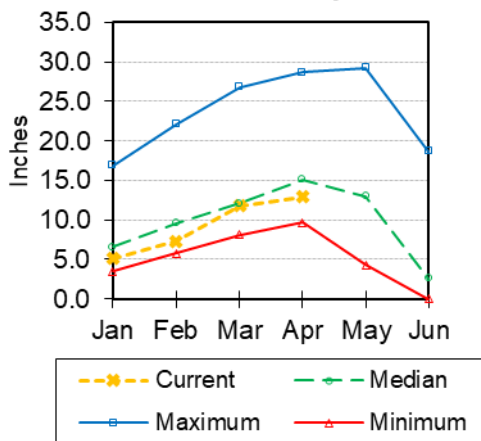




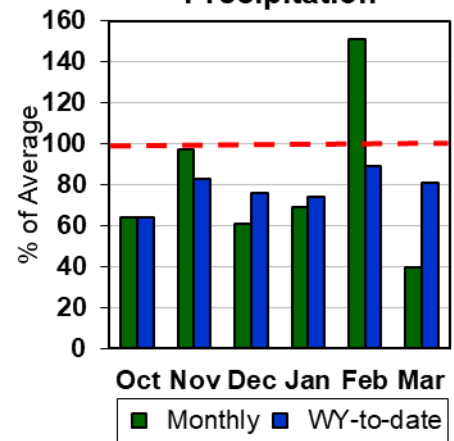
Upper Green River Basin

- The overall Upper Green River Basin SWE is near **85%** of median.
- Last month's precipitation for the Upper River Basin was near **40%** of average. Water-year-to-date precipitation is around **80%** of average.
- Current reservoir storage is near **90%** of average for two main reservoirs in the basin.
- Streamflow forecasts for April through July are **well below** average (**62%**) for this basin. Green River at Warren Bridge is expected to have flows at **72%** of average.

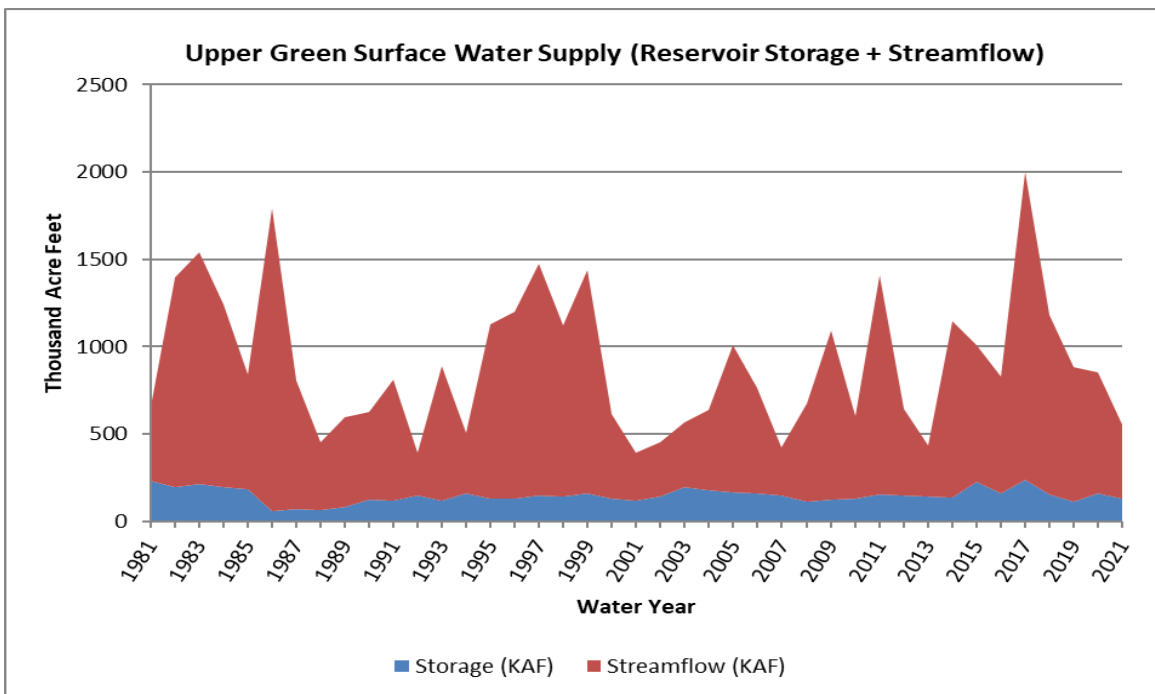
**Upper Green River Basin
Snow Water Equivalent**



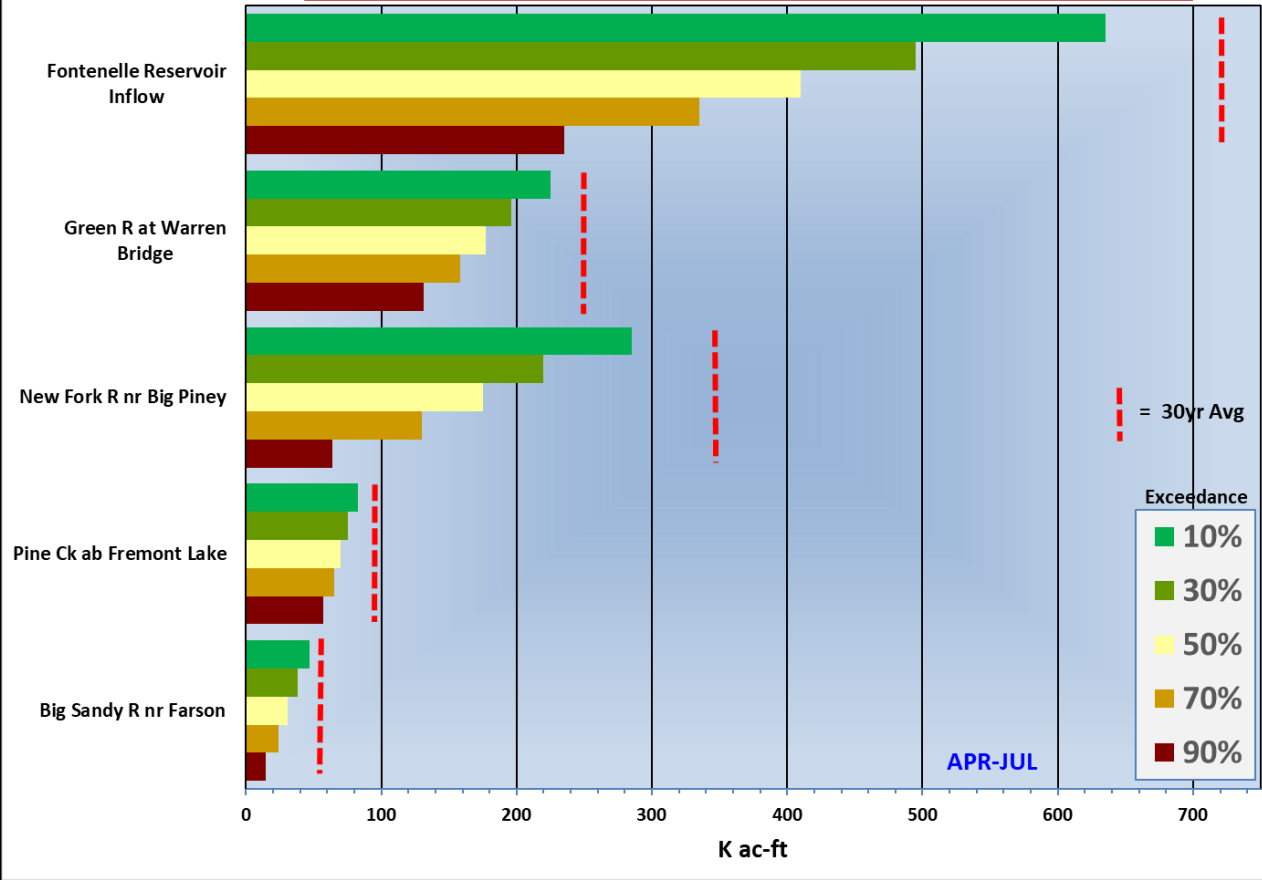
**Upper Green River Basin
Precipitation**

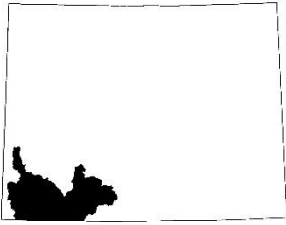


Upper Green Surface Water Supply (Reservoir Storage + Streamflow)



Upper Green River Basin Streamflow Forecasts -- April 1, 2021

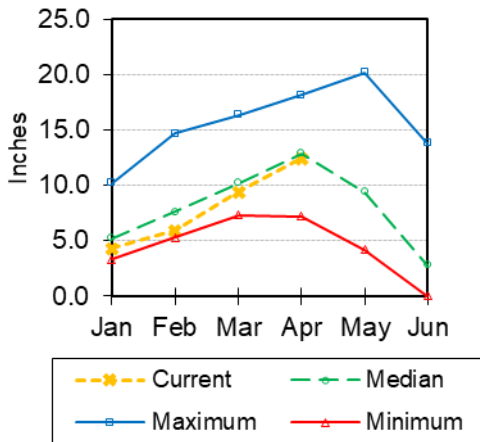




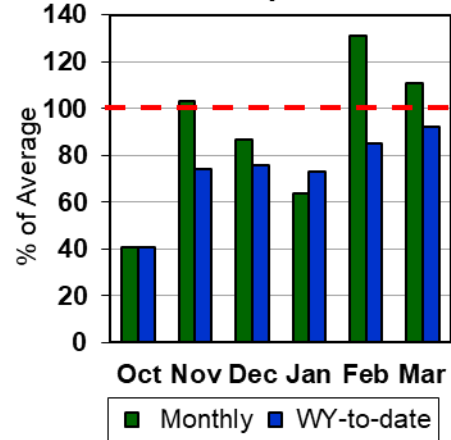
Lower Green River Basin

- The overall Lower Green River Basin SWE is near **95%** of median.
- Last month's precipitation for the Lower Green River Basin was near **110%** of average. Water-year-to-date precipitation is around **90%** of average.
- Current reservoir storage is close to **105%** of average for three main reservoirs in the basin.
- Streamflow forecasts for April through July are **well below** average (**63%**) for this basin.

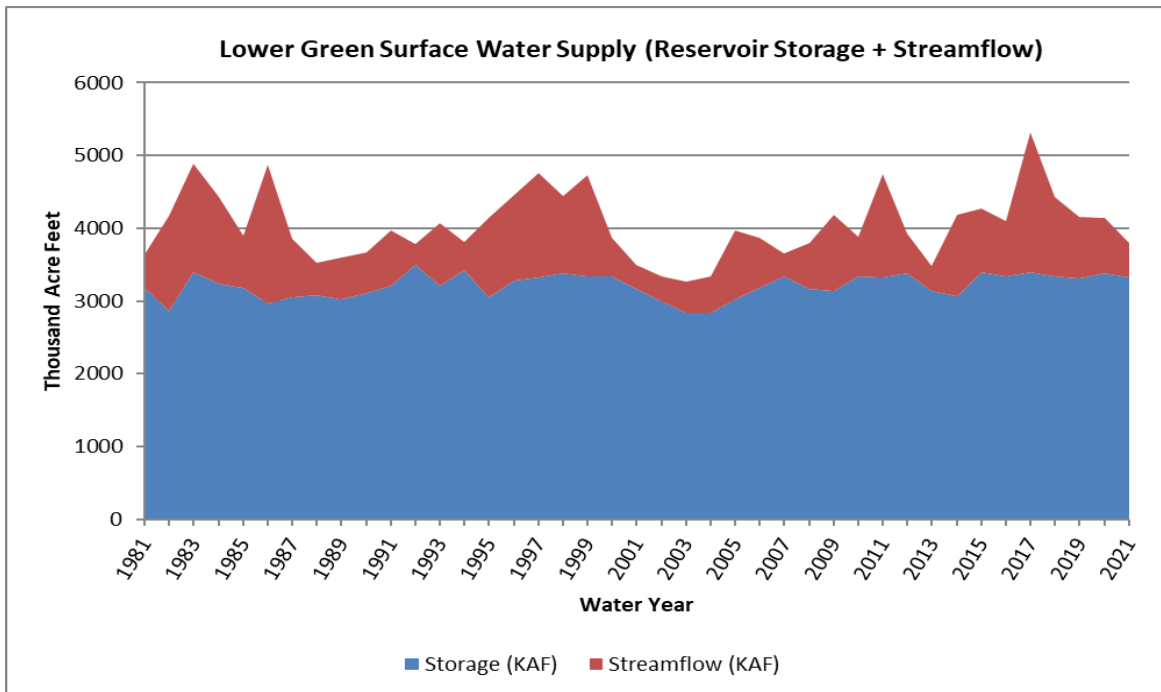
**Lower Green River Basin
Snow Water Equivalent**



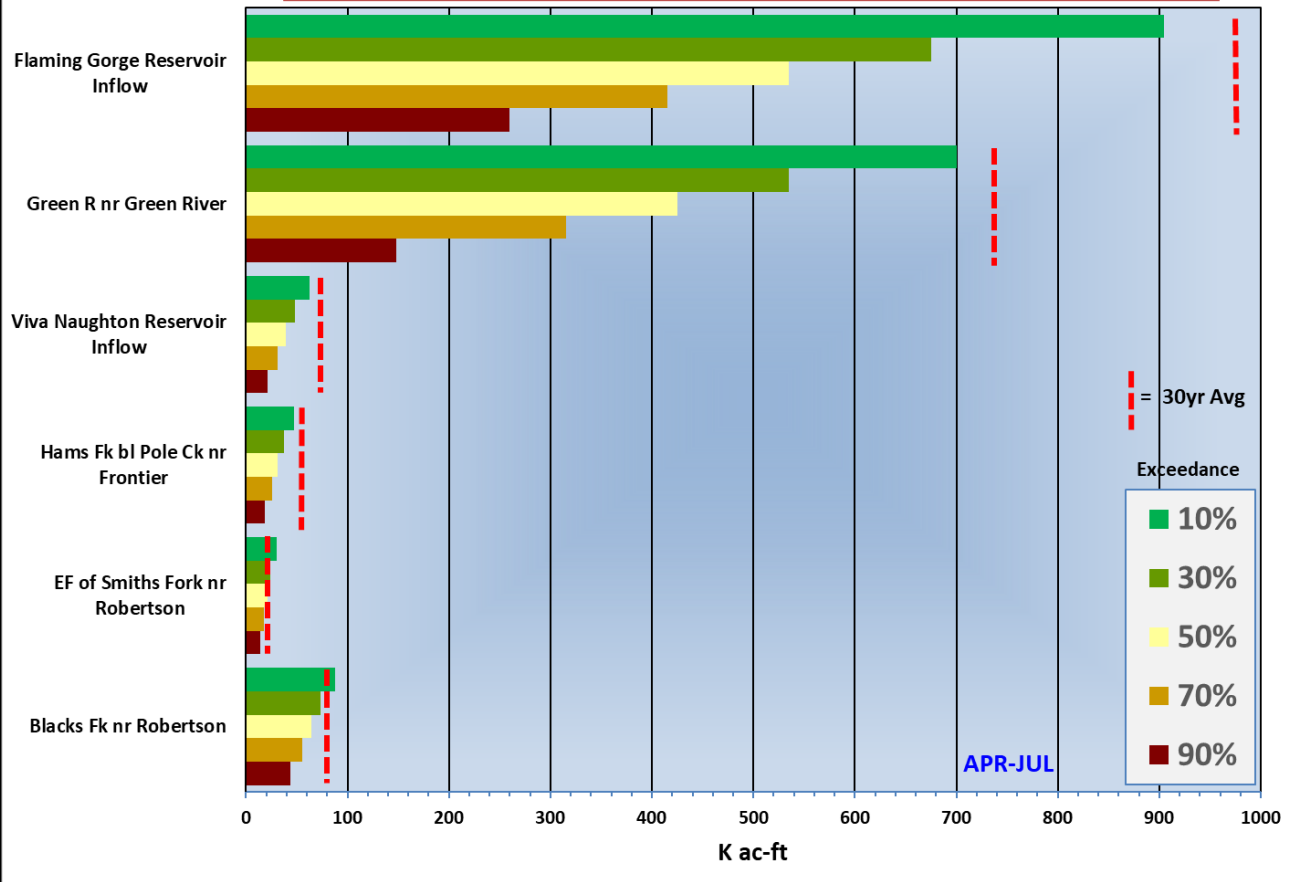
**Lower Green River Basin
Precipitation**

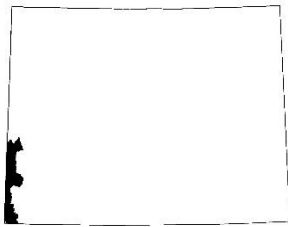


Lower Green Surface Water Supply (Reservoir Storage + Streamflow)



Lower Green River Basin Streamflow Forecasts -- April 1, 2021

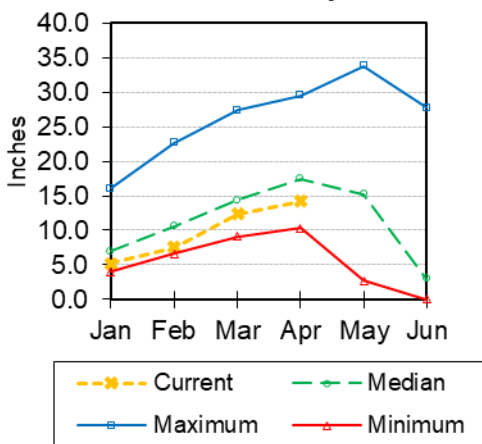




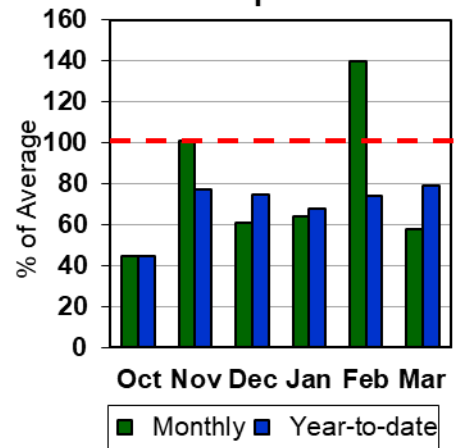
Upper Bear River Basin

- The overall Upper Bear River Basin SWE is near **80%** of median.
- Last month's precipitation for the Upper Bear River Basin was near **60%** of average. Water-year-to-date precipitation is around **80%** of average.
- Current reservoir storage is near **70%** of average for one main reservoir in the basin.
- The 50% exceedance forecasts for April through July are **well below** average (**56%**) for this basin.

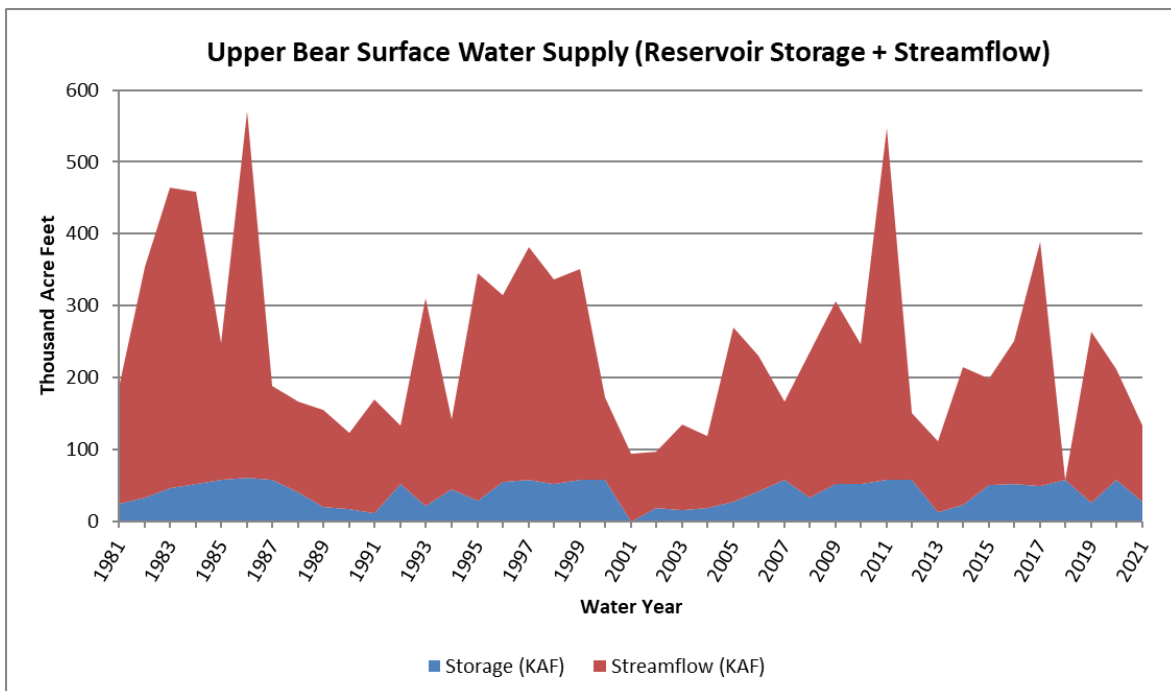
**Upper Bear River Basin
Snow Water Equivalent**



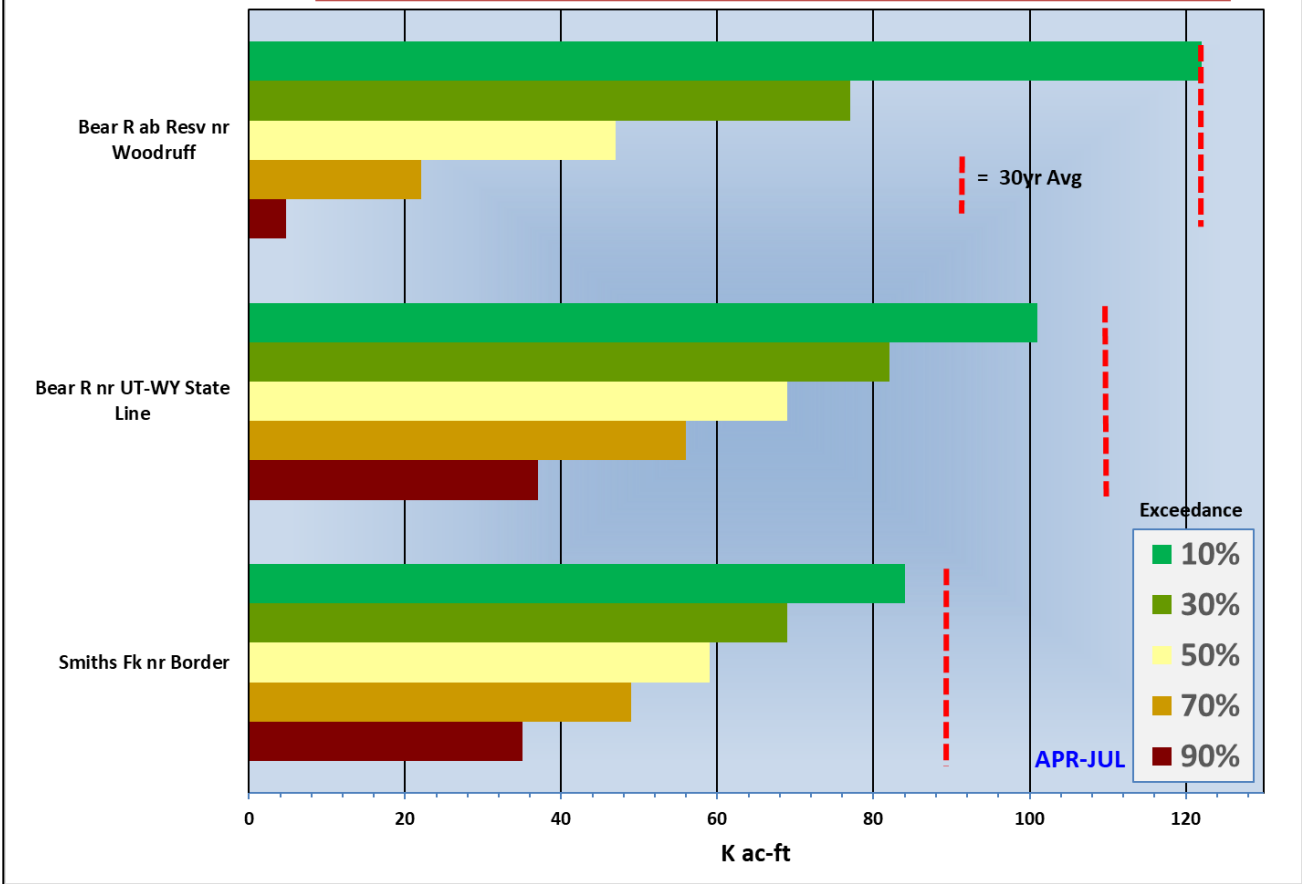
**Upper Bear River Basin
Precipitation**



Upper Bear Surface Water Supply (Reservoir Storage + Streamflow)

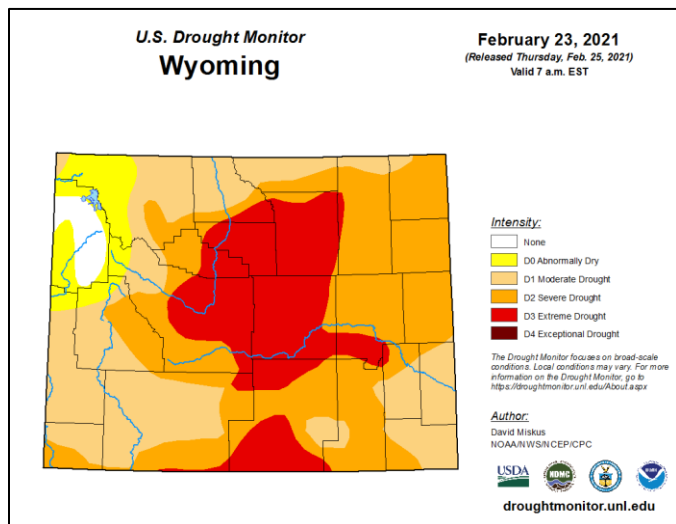


Upper Bear River Basin Streamflow Forecasts -- April 1, 2021

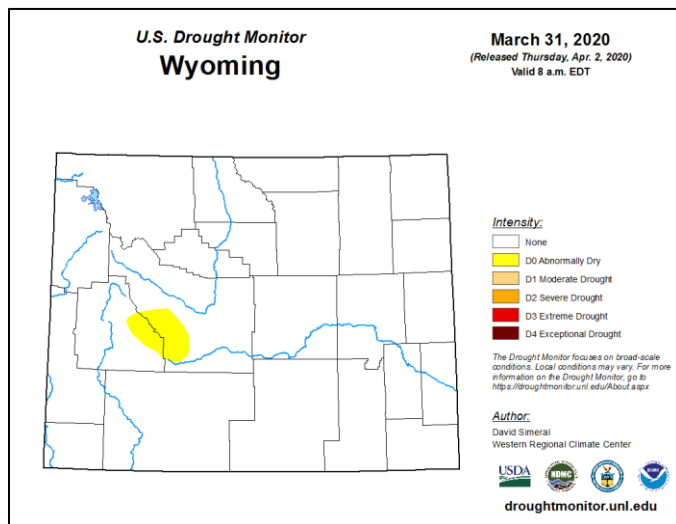


Appendix

DROUGHT

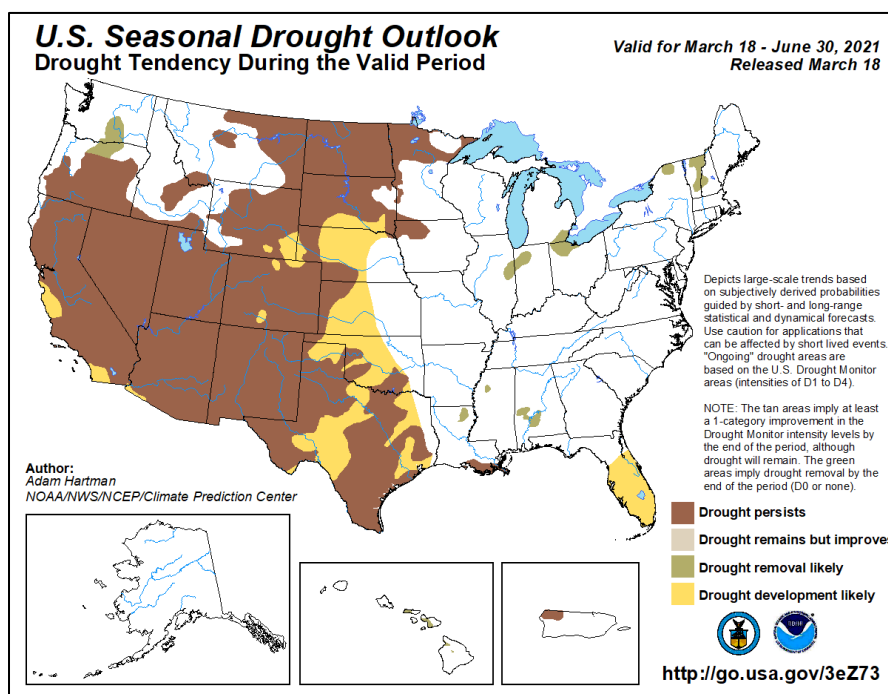


CURRENT CONDITIONS

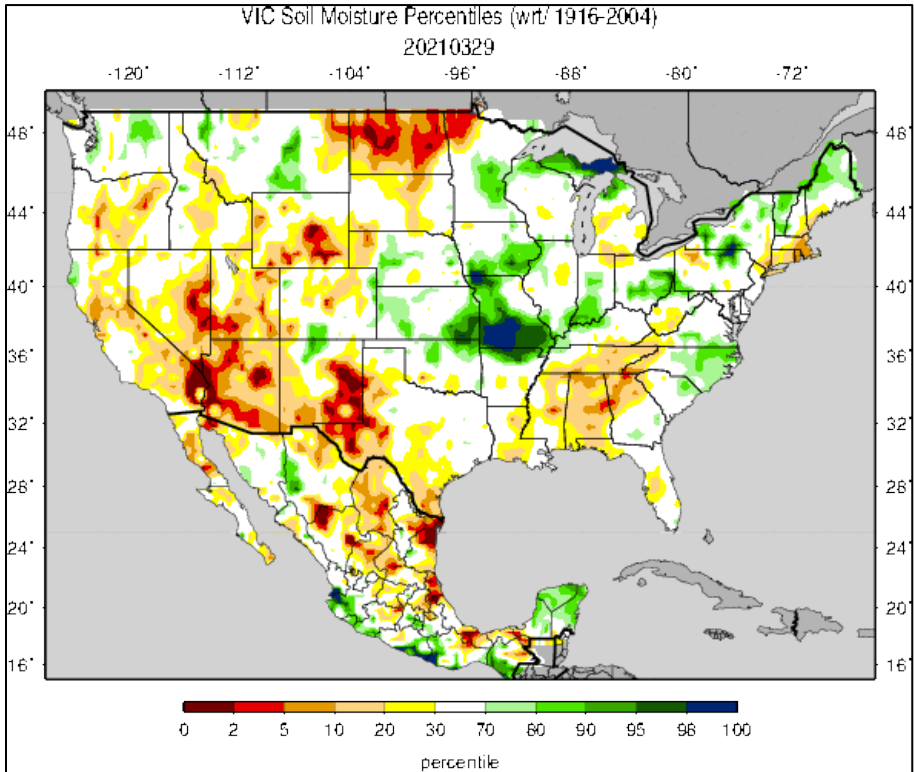


CONDITIONS 1 Year Ago

OUTLOOK through June 30th



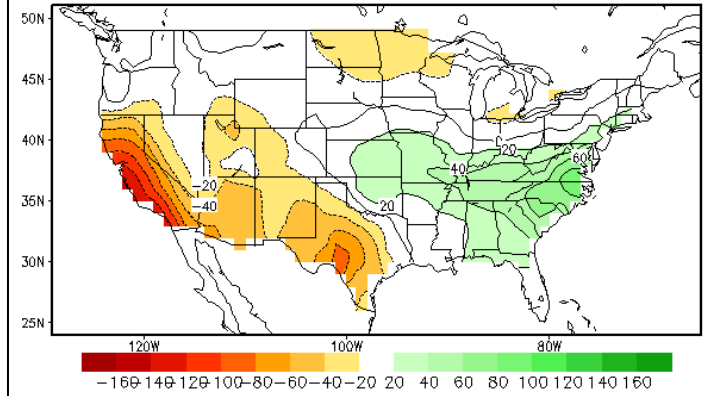
SOIL MOISTURE



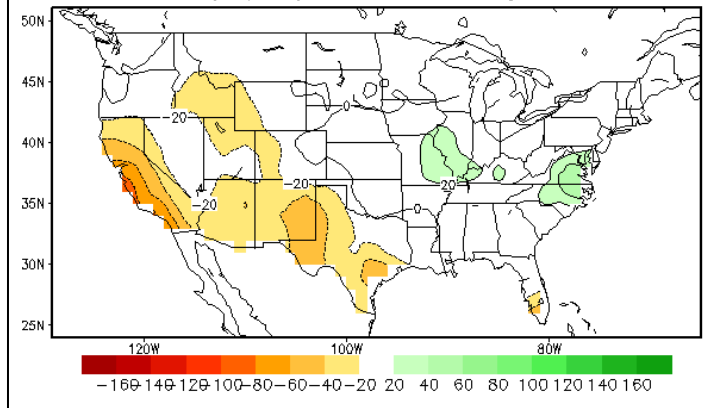
CURRENT CONDITIONS

FORECAST through JUNE

Lagged Averaged Soil Moisture Outlook for End of APR2021
units: anomaly (mm), SM data ending at 20210330



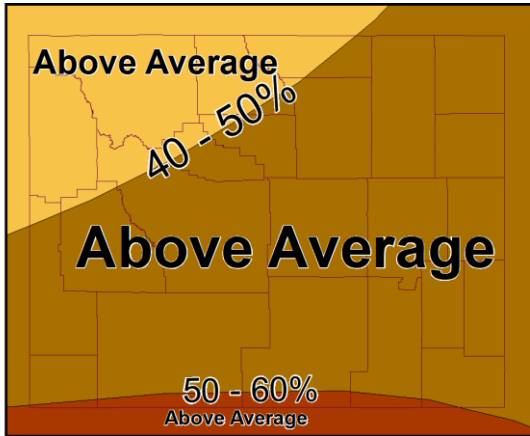
Lagged Averaged Soil Moisture Outlook for End of JUN2021
units: anomaly (mm), SM data ending at 20210330



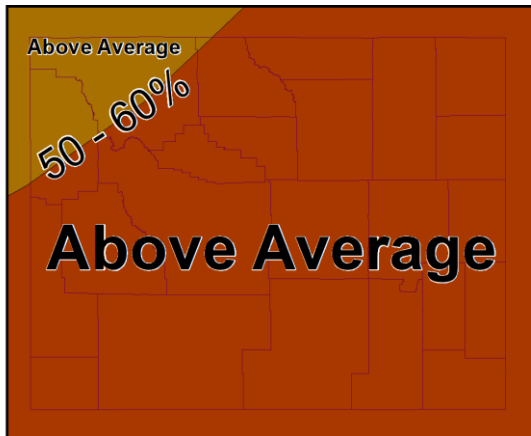
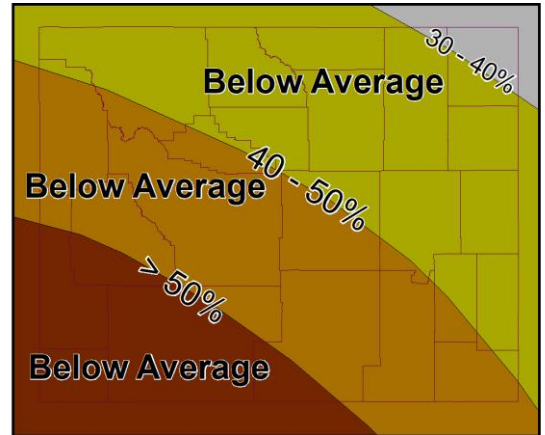
TEMPERATURE/PRECIPITATION OUTLOOKS

TEMPERATURE

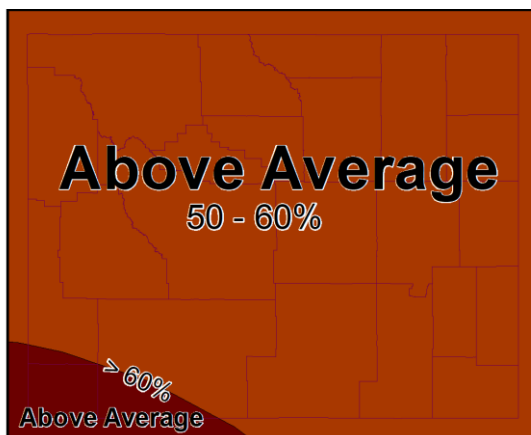
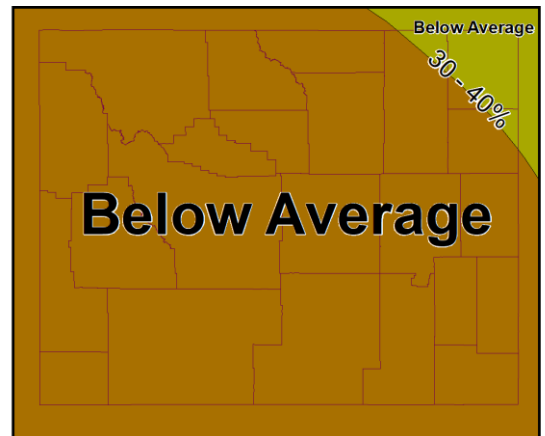
PRECIPITATION



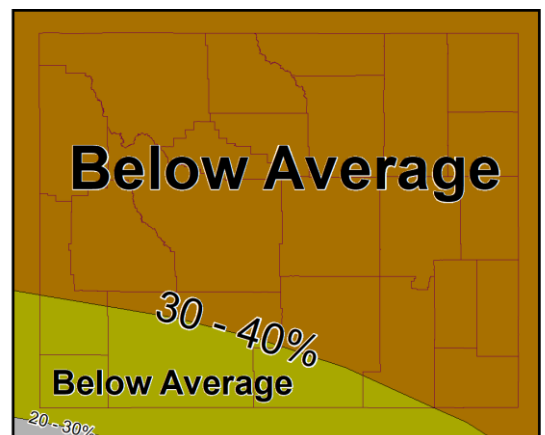
APR - JUN



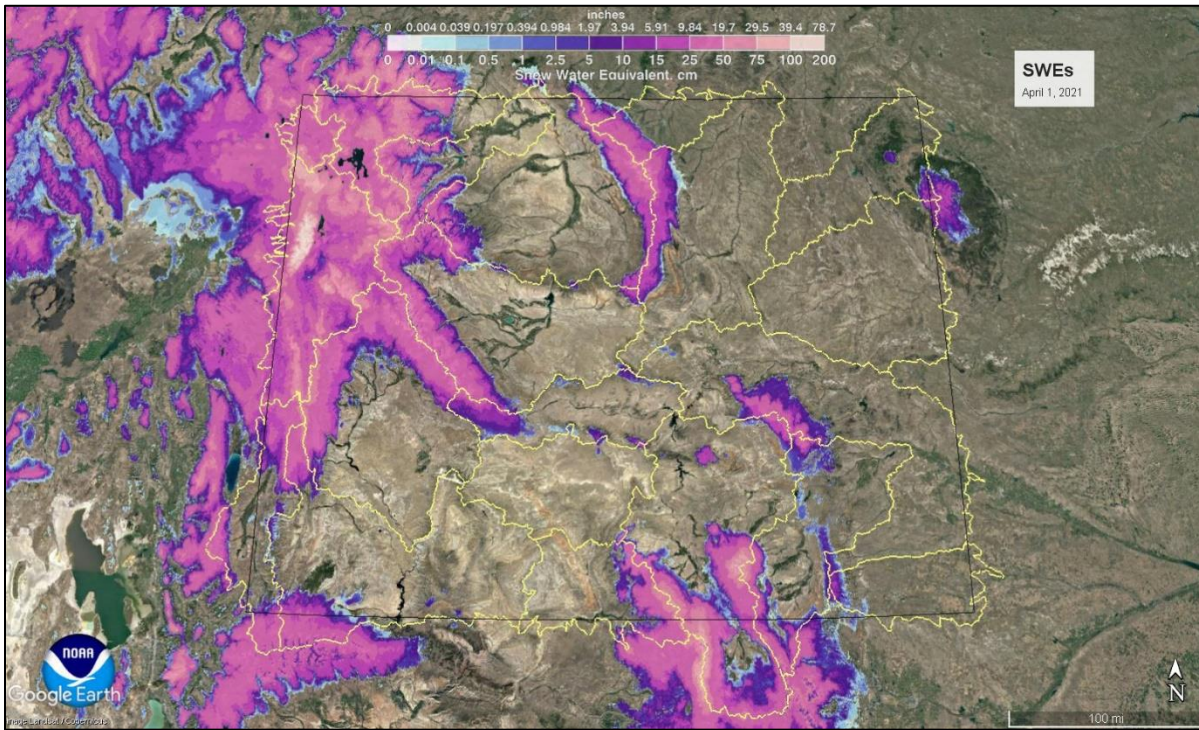
MAY - JUL



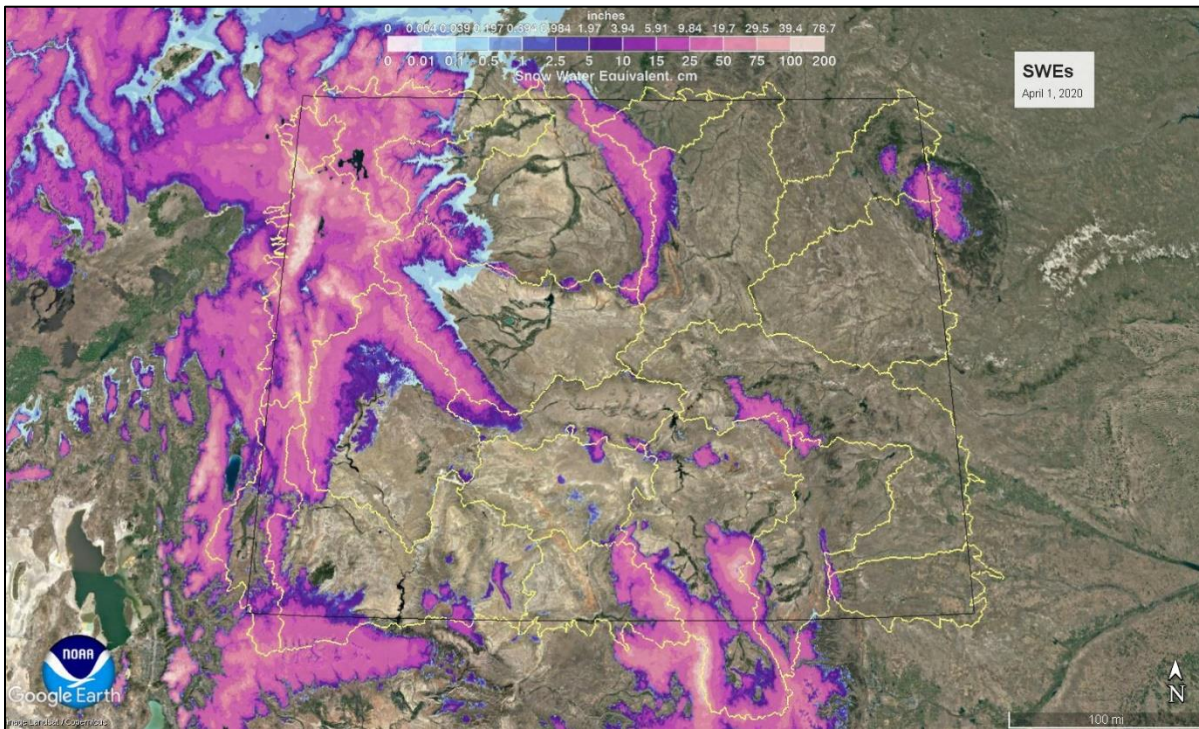
JUN - AUG



SWE ANALYSIS FROM NOHRSC

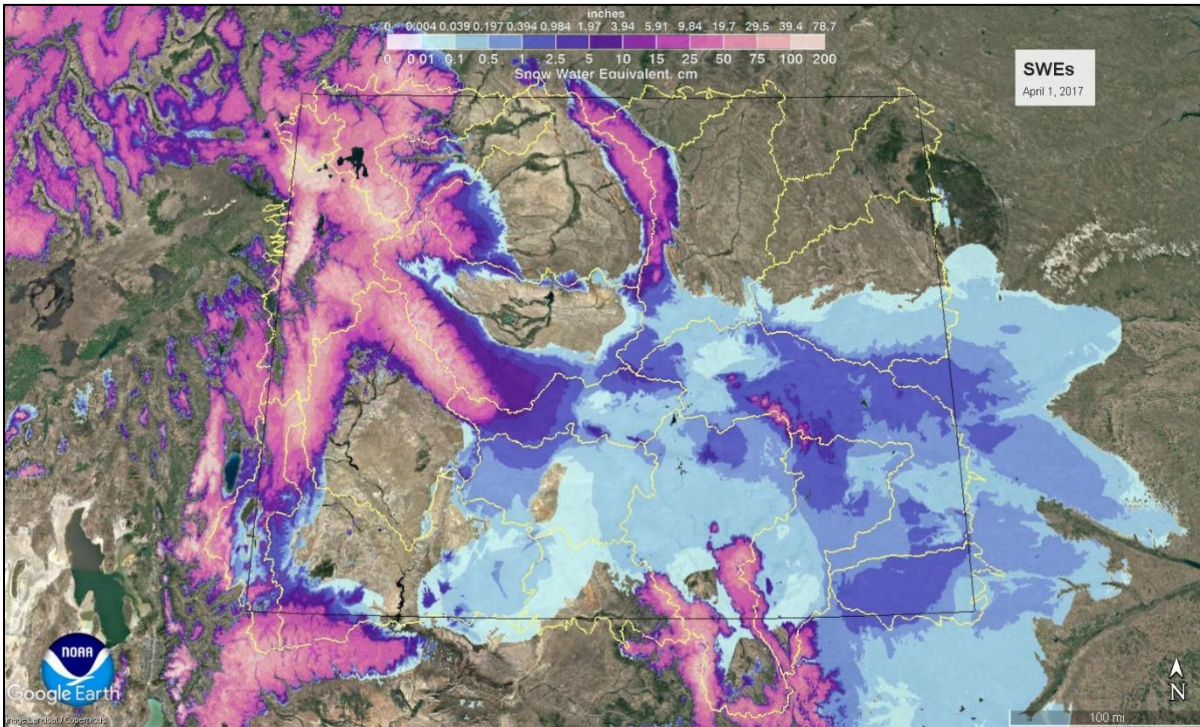


APRIL 1, 2021

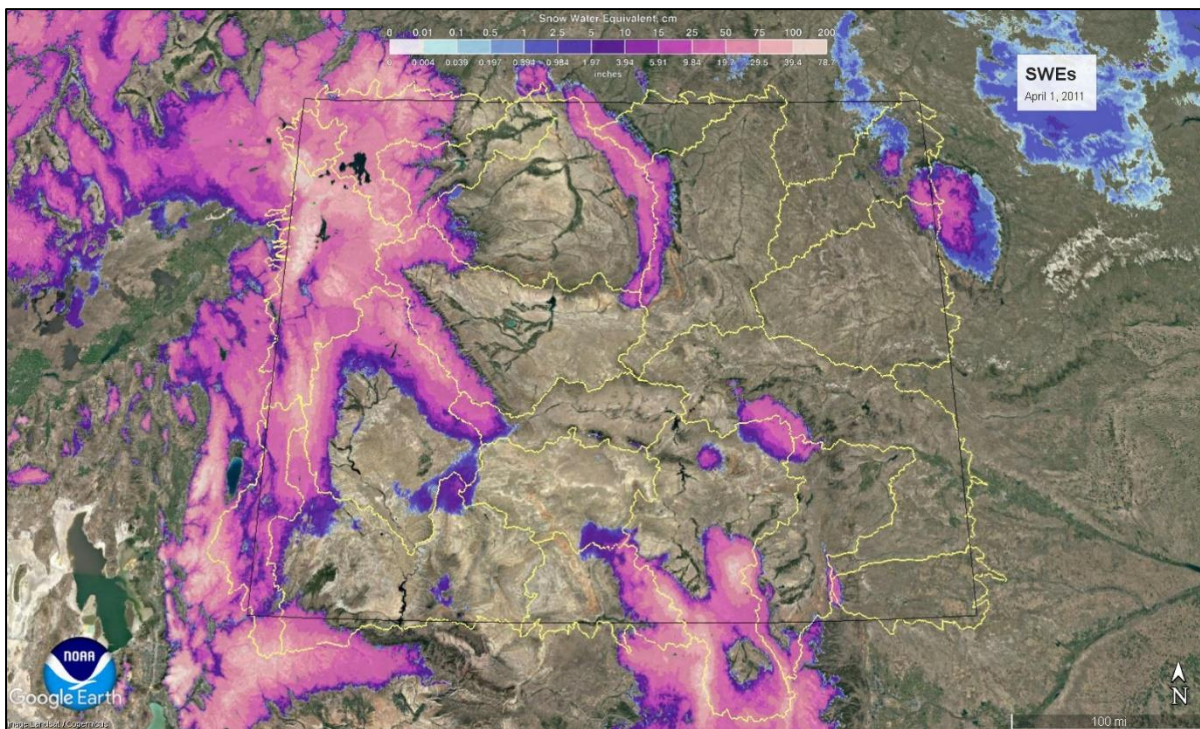


APRIL 1, 2020

Record Water Years

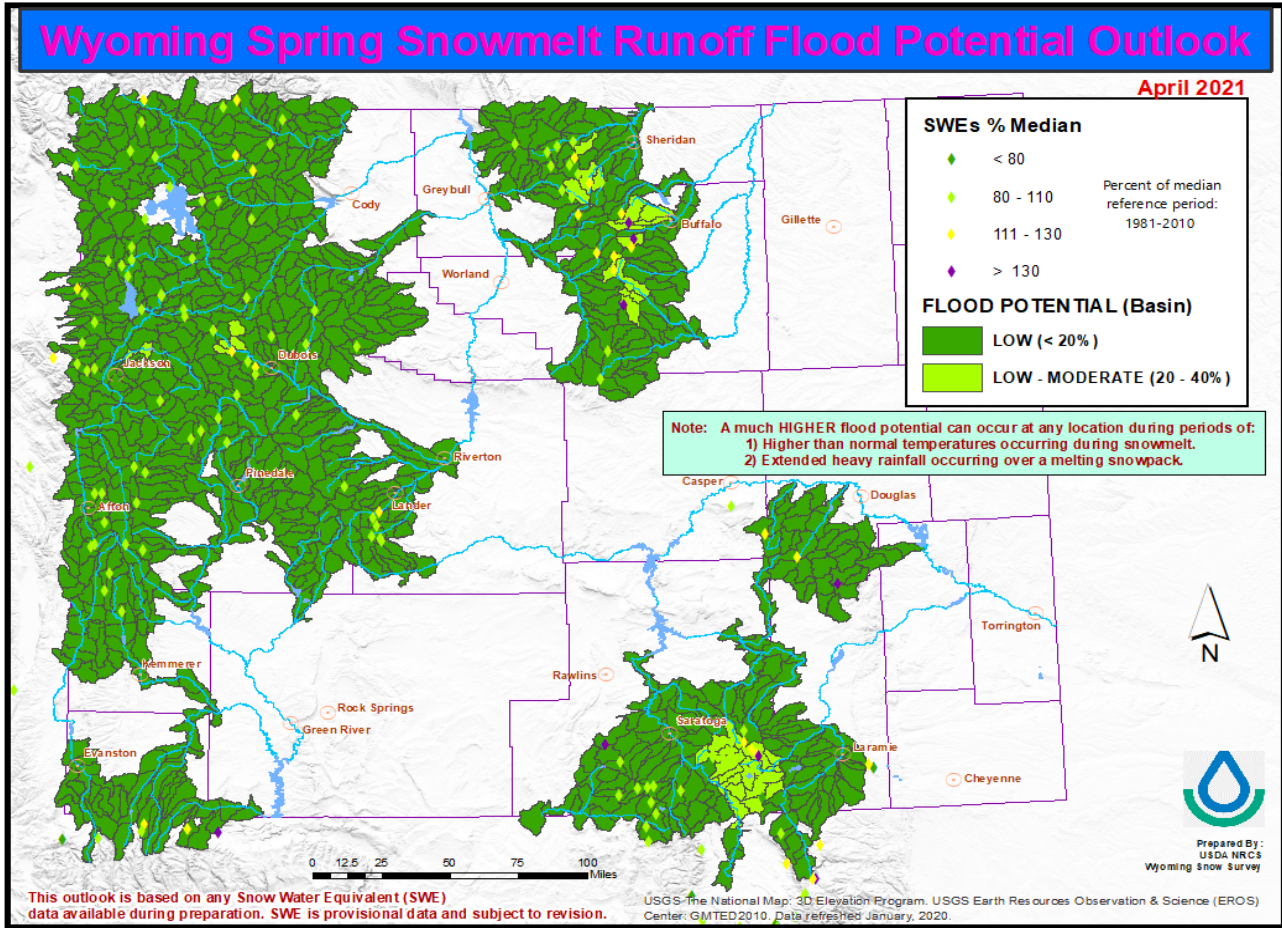


APRIL 1, 2017



APRIL 1, 2011

SPRING SNOWMELT RUNOFF FLOOD OUTLOOK



TABULAR DATA

Snowpack (SNOTEL/Snow Course) Data

In Word double click the object below to view entire document



SWE_data_0401202
1.pdf

Precipitation Data

In Word double click the object below to view entire document



Precip_data_040120
21.pdf

Reservoir Data

In Word double click the object below to view entire document



Reservoir_data_040
12021.pdf

Stream Flow Forecasts

In Word double click the object below to view entire document



Streamflow_forecas
ts_04012021.pdf

LINKS (for more information/graphics)

National Water Climate Center (NWCC)

- Interactive maps featuring current conditions of snow, precipitation, reservoir storages:

<https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/wcc/home/quicklinks/predefinedMaps/>

Water Resources Data System and State Climate Office (WRDS)

- Clearinghouse of hydrological and climatological data for the State of Wyoming:

<http://www.wrds.uwyo.edu/>

USGS WaterWatch

- Tools and products to monitor streamflow, runoff, drought, and floods:

<https://waterwatch.usgs.gov/index.php>

Wyoming Basin Outlook Report

National Resources Conservation Service

Casper, Wyoming

Issued by:

Terry Crosby (Acting Chief)
U.S.D.A.
Natural Resources Conservation Service
Washington D.C.

Released by:

Astrid Martinez
State Con.
N R C S
Casper, Wyoming

The Following Agencies and Organizations Cooperate with the Natural Resources Conservation Service with Snow Surveys and/or with Data:

FEDERAL:

United States Department of the Interior (National Park Service)

United States Department of the Interior (Bureau of Reclamation)

United States Department of Agriculture (Forest Service)

United States Department of Commerce NOAA (National Weather Service)

STATE:

The Wyoming State Engineer's Office

The University of Wyoming

LOCAL:

The City of Cheyenne