

# STATE OF UTAH GENERAL OUTLOOK

Mar 1, 2004

## SUMMARY

Most of February was pretty nondescript from a snowpack point of view. The final ten days were spectacular. Snowpacks on the Virgin and Escalante Basins essentially doubled during that time frame. All of southern Utah had substantial increases in snow accumulation. For example the Virgin Basin actually has more snow now than it normally would on April 1 and given the past few years of abysmal runoff from this area, an above normal snowpack is extremely welcome. Northern Utah also saw large snowpack increases over most areas although not nearly the gains seen in the south. February snowpack accumulation in southern Utah was 129% to 214% of average and in the north, it ranged between 83% on the Bear and 134% over the Utah Lake Basin. Precipitation for February was near to much above average state wide, ranging from 84% to 156% of average, bringing seasonal precipitation, (Oct-Feb) to 118%. Soil moisture remains a concern as there was very little precipitation accumulation prior to the onset of snowpacks. This condition will persist until the melt season saturates the soils and in some cases, could take an above normal amount of snow. Soil moisture deficits range from 6 to 9 inches in the upper 24 inches of soil, similar to last year. Low reservoir storage is also a concern with total reservoir storage down 8% (428,000 Acre-Feet) from last year. 428,000 AF would be the entire reservoir capacity of the Sevier River Basin and then some. Areas of greatest concern are the Bear and Sevier River basins with current storage of 4% and 26% respectively. Streamflow forecasts are scattered across the spectrum, ranging from 13% to 149% of average. Surface Water Supply Indexes range from 2% on the Bear River to 64% over the western part of the Uintah Basin.

## SNOWPACK

January first snowpacks as measured by the NRCS SNOTEL system range from 91% on the Bear River to 115% on the Virgin watershed. This is 135% to 197% of last years snowpack, so Utah is doing far better than the recent past. The lowest snowpacks are on the Bear which needs 141% of average snowpack accumulation during March to reach average by April 1. The probability of getting that amount of snow is about one in five. Other areas across the state require 40% to 93% of average March accumulation to reach a normal April 1 snowpack with the exception of the Virgin which already has more snow than the typical April 1 peak. Depending on wetter/drier March conditions, snowpacks could range between 70% and 170% of average by April 1.

## PRECIPITATION

Mountain precipitation during February was above average statewide (118%). In the north it was actually below normal (84%) and in the south, much above average (156%). This brings the seasonal accumulation (Oct-Feb) to 99% of average statewide.

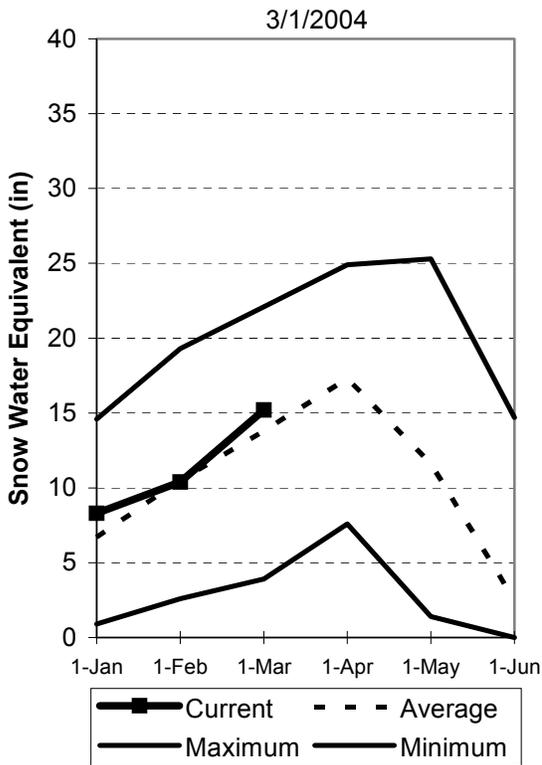
## RESERVOIRS

Storage in 41 of Utah's key irrigation reservoirs is at 41% of capacity, up 2% from last month. This is down substantially (8%) from last year indicating heavy use of reservoir storage to make up the streamflow deficit. Most reservoir operators are utilizing a conservative strategy, storing as much water as possible.

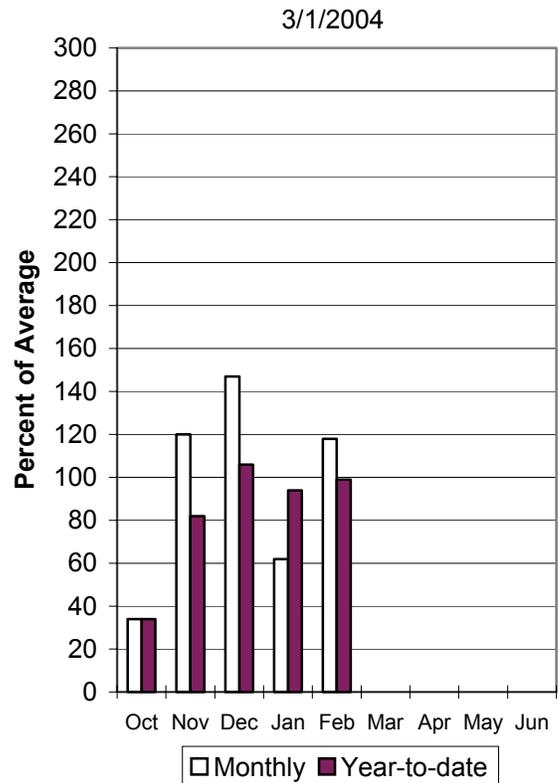
## STREAMFLOW

Snowmelt streamflows are expected to be much below to much above average across the entire state of Utah this year. Forecast streamflows range from 13% on the Bear at Stewart dam to 149% on Vernon Creek. Most flows are forecast to be in the 60% to 100% range. Overall water supply conditions are below to near normal.

### Mountain Snowpack



### Precipitation



### Statewide Basin Reservoir Storage

