STATE OF UTAH GENERAL OUTLOOK
May 1, 2006

SUMMARY

The 2006 water year has been a series of ups and downs - dry months and wet months. March was phenomenally wet and April was a little on the dry side but had much above normal snowmelt across the entire state. This is a very positive thing with regards to the potential of high snowmelt runoff in the north but a little disappointing in areas of southern Utah where snowpacks were below average to begin with. The Lasal and Blue Mountains have melted out along with much of the Fremont River Basin now at 23% of average. The East Fork of the Sevier and Escalante Basins are losing snow quickly and are now at 44% and 21% of average respectively. On the Virgin River, snowpacks below 8000 feet have melted out, leaving only the higher elevations to sustain runoff. In northern Utah, April snowmelt was much above average: Bear - 175%, Weber - 148%, Provo - 145%, and the Uintahs - 260% of average which has removed substantial low and mid elevation snow and reduces somewhat the potential for higher peak flows later in the snowmelt cycle. Northern Utah snowpacks range from 84% on the Uintahs to 124% on the Provo. There are individual areas which have much higher amounts such as the Logan River - 138% and the Wasatch Front at 151% that bear close scrutiny over the next few weeks. In these areas where higher flows are expected, adequate preparation should be taken. Soil moisture values in water producing areas have increased substantially with the onset of snowmelt and in northern Utah are similar to last year. In the south, values are still below those of last year's record runoff which could have a significant negative impact on spring runoff. Overall, soil moisture values range from about 60% in southwestern Utah to 79% of saturation in the upper 24 inches of soil on the Bear River Watershed. Precipitation for April was near average at 96%. This brings the seasonal precipitation, (Oct-Apr) to 110%. Reservoir storage ranges from 34% on the Bear to 96% of capacity in southwestern Utah. Statewide reservoir storage is at 73% of capacity, up 20% from last year. The Bear River basin has relatively poor reservoir storage but otherwise decent streamflow prospects. In general, most areas of the state have excellent reservoir carryover. General water supply conditions range from below to above average and have been improving. Streamflow forecasts range from 18% to 171% of average. Surface Water Supply Indices range from 21% on the Bear River, to 88% on the Provo.

SNOWPACK

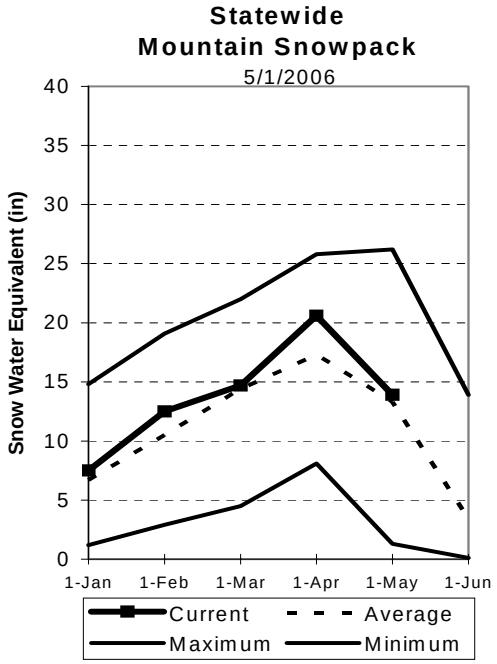
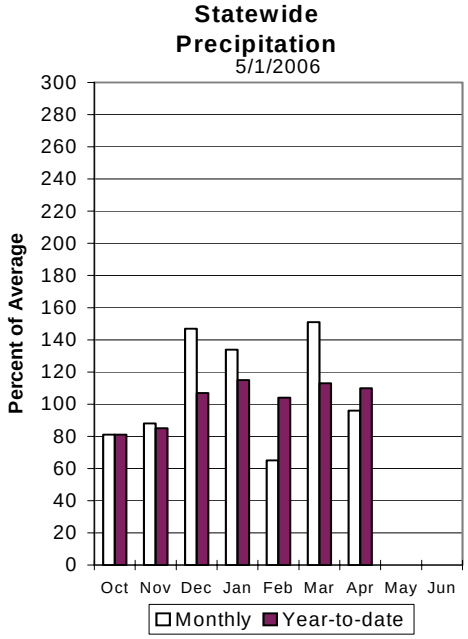
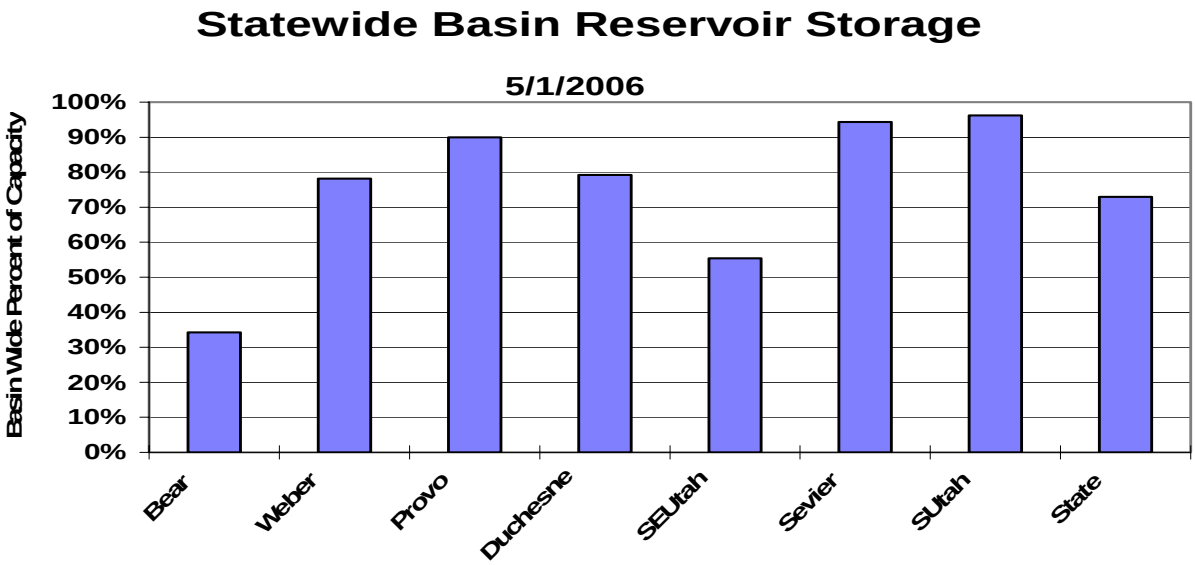
May first snowpacks as measured by the NRCS SNOTEL system range from 65% in southwest Utah to 124% on the Provo River Watershed. In select areas of southeastern Utah, snowpacks have already melted out. Higher snowpacks in northern Utah include the Logan - 138% and the Wasatch Front - 151% of normal. April snowmelt was much higher than normal removing much of the lower and some mid elevation snowpack.

PRECIPITATION

Mountain precipitation during April was near normal at 96% of average statewide. Precipitation was lowest on southwestern watersheds at 71% and highest on the Provo drainage at 119% of average. This brings the seasonal accumulation (Oct-Apr) to 110% of average statewide.

RESERVOIRS

Storage in 41 of Utah’s key irrigation reservoirs is at 73% of capacity. This is an increase of 20% from last year. Reservoirs across the State have been making steady gains in storage. Bear Lake really is the last reservoir to remain in an extremely low condition due to the prolonged drought.

STREAMFLOW

Snowmelt streamflows are expected to have a wide range from much below average to much above average across the state of Utah this year. Forecast streamflows range from 20% on Recapture Creek near Blanding to 181% of average for Wheeler Creek on the Ogden Basin. Most flows are forecast to be in the 70% to 125% range.