

## 1997 COLORADO WEATHER SUMMARY IN BRIEF

(Source: Colorado Climate Center, Colorado State University)

**January** - Storms arrived every few days in western areas and heavy snows continued to pile up in nearly all high mountain areas. Dry, fluffy snow also fell east of the mountains bringing a few weeks of snowcover to parts of the Eastern Plains. Extreme eastern areas remained dry for the fourth month in a row. Temperatures were generally above average west of the mountains while eastern Colorado experienced extreme cold and record warmth.

**February** - Most storm systems passed south of the state. A few modest but widespread snows brought all of eastern Colorado much needed moisture. The southern mountains also got plenty of snow while the northern and central mountains and western valleys were drier than average for the first time in several months. For the month as a whole, temperatures ended up slightly colder than average over eastern and northern areas and warmer than average in the southwest.

**March** - March weather provided a jump start to spring. Some storms crossed the state but none delivered much precipitation. The eastern foothills along the Front Range received near average precipitation but most of the state was much drier than average. Temperatures were warmer than average statewide except for the Gunnison Valley where the combination of lingering valley-wide snowcover and clear skies locally trapped a pool of cold air. One brief surge of frigid but shallow arctic air chilled eastern areas at mid month.

**April** - Winter-like weather returned early in the month with frequent heavy mountain snows, mixed rain and snow at lower elevations, and cold temperatures. The second half of the month was more seasonal except for a potent spring storm that dropped heavy amounts of snow in several eastern foothills locations. Temperatures were colder than average during the month, especially east of the mountains. Southwest areas escaped much of the cold and completed the month only slightly below average.

**May** - The first half of the month brought plentiful sunshine and pleasant temperatures but very little precipitation. Moist air moved into the southwest late in the month followed by daily rains. Much of eastern Colorado fell short of average moisture while many western areas of the state were considerably wetter than average. Mild temperatures early in the month accelerated mountain snow melt. Then, cooler weather during the last half of the month slowed melt rates and reduced the potential for lowland flooding. May temperatures as a whole ended up near the long-term averages.

**June** - Cool, humid air lingered over the state for much of the first 17 days. Thundershowers developed almost every day during this period with some storms producing heavy rain and causing localized flooding. Then, summer weather arrived abruptly with hot, dry weather for the rest of the month. Hot weather late in June made up for the cool weather early in the month, leaving most of the state near or slightly above average for the month.

**July** - A pleasant July 4<sup>th</sup> was followed by two weeks of typically hot and dry July weather. After July 18, tropical air moved into the state and caused numerous widely scattered thundershowers during the rest of the month. Up to 15 inches of rain fell in a short time period in Fort Collins July 27-28 and northwest of Sterling on July 29 which caused catastrophic flooding in those areas. With no unusual extremes of heat or cold, western areas ended up cooler than average while eastern Colorado experienced slightly above normal July temperatures.

**August** - August temperatures were comfortable but unusually high humidity during the first half of the month helped fuel numerous, widespread and locally heavy storms. More localized flooding occurred with the heaviest storms from the Front Range southeastward into the Arkansas Valley. Most of the state was wetter than normal for August. The first half of the month was unusually and persistently cool and cloudy. The hottest weather of the month came at the end of the month. August ended up near or slightly above average in the high country with cooler than average temperatures noted both east and west of the mountains.

**September** - Pleasantly warm, summer-like weather continued throughout much of September. Moist, tropical air from the southwest contributed to an unusually humid month for western Colorado with much more rainfall than usual. After the 17<sup>th</sup>, one band after another of heavy rains fell over northwest Colorado. The storms dissipated as they crossed the mountains so much of eastern Colorado ended up drier than average for September. With no extremes of either hot or cold temperatures during the month, the entire state ended the month averaging a few degrees warmer than normal.

**October** - This month will long be remembered for the late-month blizzard that buried nearly all of eastern Colorado under deep and drifted snow, brought transportation to a standstill, killed thousands of livestock and several Coloradans. Also, there was a massive forest blow down near Steamboat Springs on the 25<sup>th</sup>. Earlier in the month, a series of storms brought significant moisture to western Colorado, and eastern areas picked up a lot of rain on the 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> during a vicious round of thunderstorms.

**November** - In the aftermath of the October blizzard and concerns over the possible impacts from "El Nino", Coloradans prepared for an exciting winter. A few days of dry and seasonal weather were followed by a week of very cold and snowy weather. The last two weeks were seasonably cool with little or no precipitation statewide except for some south central areas which received moderate to heavy precipitation.

**December** - A few storms crossed the state bringing snow and some moderate winds. However, the month as a whole was not spectacular and mountain snows were meager. For the month as a whole, southern areas were cooler than normal while western and northern areas were slightly warmer than average. Parts of southern Colorado remained snow covered the entire month, a fairly rare occurrence in that area.