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Arizona Snowpack Levels Below Average

Runoff predicted to be less than normal

PHOENIX, February 6, 2019 - The Arizona Basin Outlook Report released this week by USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) shows the state snowpack to be at below average levels. The federal agency monitors snow conditions in Arizona's mountain watersheds each winter to estimate the amount of water available for spring and summer uses.

"The state snowpack was near average throughout much of January" said Travis Kolling, state water supply specialist with the NRCS in Phoenix, Arizona. "Increased temperatures and lack of precipitation toward the end of the month diminished lower elevation snowpack, resulting in the below average conditions for the state."

Among the findings in the February 1 Basin Outlook Report, the Salt River Basin snowpack was measured at 72 percent of the 30-year average; the Verde River Basin at 79 percent of average; the Upper Gila River Basin at 66 percent of average; and the Little Colorado River Basin at 74 percent of average.

"Cumulative precipitation since October 1 has been near average, which is a marked improvement from the dry conditions we experienced last year," Kolling continued. "These conditions increase the chances for improved runoff in the state's streams and rivers that replenish our reservoirs."

The streamflow forecasts call for below normal runoff in the Upper Gila, Little Colorado River, and Salt River Basins, while calling for normal runoff in the Verde River Basin. NRCS hydrologist runoff predictions are conducted bi-monthly, based on the current snowpack accumulations. As the season progresses, forecasts become more accurate, primarily because a greater portion of the weather conditions have been recorded.

The NRCS Arizona Basin Outlook Report and other related reports are available at www.az.nrcs.usda.gov/snow. For further information, contact Travis Kolling, at 602-280-8834, or travis.kolling@az.usda.gov.

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