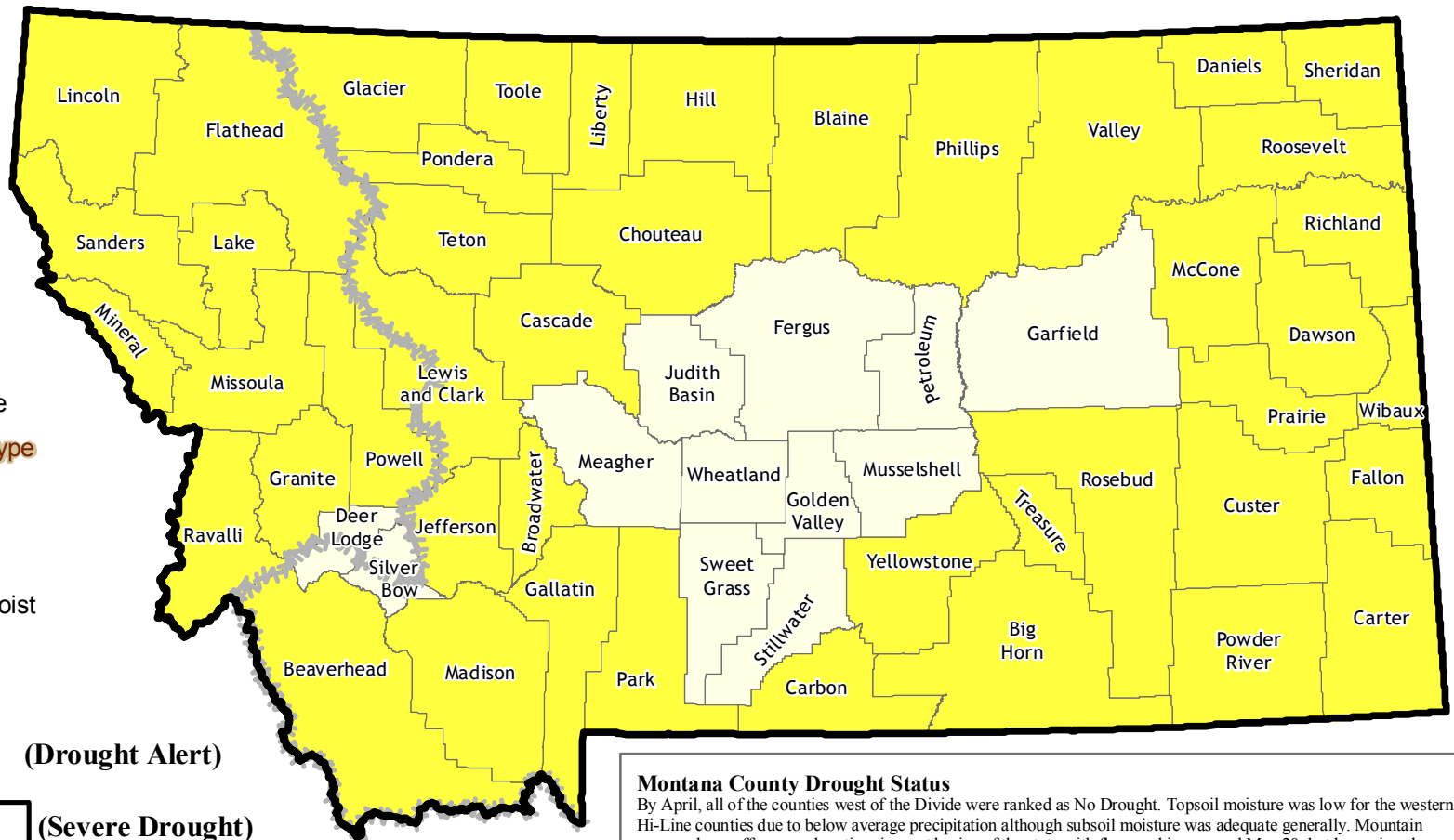


Montana Drought Status by County - December, 2009



Map Key

Continental Divide

Drought Impact Type

Drought Status

December 2009

- No Drought - Moist
 - No Drought
 - Slightly Dry
 - Moderately Dry (Drought Alert)
 - Severely Dry
 - Extremely Dry
- (Severe Drought)**

Drought Impact Types - A = Agricultural - Soil Moisture, Range conditions

H = Hydrological - Water Supplies, Streamflow, Groundwater

Drought Alert - Governor's Drought Advisory Committee strongly encourages local officials to convene local drought committees.

Severe Drought - Local officials should have local drought planning efforts underway or should reconvene the local drought committee at the earliest opportunity.

For recommended responses, see the Montana Drought Plan.



<http://nr.is.mt.gov/drought/>



<http://drought.mt.gov/>

Montana County Drought Status

By April, all of the counties west of the Divide were ranked as No Drought. Topsoil moisture was low for the western Hi-Line counties due to below average precipitation although subsoil moisture was adequate generally. Mountain snowpack runoff occurred on time in most basins of the state with flow peaking around May 20, but have since begun to fall off somewhat sharply to seasonal levels. May was very dry at valley elevations and ended the month as the tenth driest May for Montana in over 100 years of record-keeping according to the National Climate Data Center. Precipitation for the Crop Year, which began April 1 through May 31 was the 24th driest such period since 1895. See: <http://www.ncdc.noaa.gov/oa/climate/research/prelim/drought/st024dv00pcp.html>

The Drought Advisory Committee heard May 21 that the outlook for state and federal reservoirs remained very good with no shortfalls for water users anticipated for the 2009 use season. According to NRCS, average precipitation for June will be necessary to avoid below average streamflow into July. Mountain rain and snow showers occurred from early to mid-June. About 25 percent of the mountain snowpack remains.

Extension agents are, for the most part, reporting good subsoil moisture with the topsoil layer drier until the wet event of June 6-10 when the moisture needs of emergent range and crops was met in much of the state. The outlook for dryland farming and livestock grazing remains good especially across the southern tier and throughout much of the east-central region. The NRCS June 1, 2009 Surface Water Supply Index shows most of the state's 52 river basins as Average to Moderately Wet with a few exceptions in the northwest corner.

The June 6, 2009 El Niño / Southern Oscillation (ENSO) status discussion from the Climate Prediction Center (CPC) concluded that the La Niña (cool phase) dating to early 2008 had ended and that it now appears that conditions consistent with an El Niño event appear to be developing. An El Niño generally means warm and dry winter climate conditions for Montana.