

May 1, 2013

Snowpack Rebounds To Near Normal in Middle Park

The USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) Kremmling Field Office snow surveyors Mark Volt, and Noah Bates took the May 1 snow survey measurements during the last days of April. Snowpack in the high country typically starts decreasing during the month of April but due to unusual April snowstorms and lower than normal temperatures, the monthly snowpack for the upper Colorado River Basin has increased to 113% of average. Last year we were at only 27% on May 1. Snowpack in the mountains above Middle Park now ranges from 77% to 195% of the 30-year average. Snow density is averaging 37%, which means that for a foot of snow there are 4.4 inches of water. Irrigators, towns, river runners and other water users can expect near normal river levels this summer. However reservoir storage remains low, so river flows below these reservoir will be affected. Most reservoir operators are not expecting reservoirs to fill this year due to severe draw downs last year.

Reported average readings for the major river basins in Colorado are as follows: Colorado River Basin 95%; Gunnison River Basin, 72%; South Platte River Basin, 89%; Yampa and White River Basins, 92%; Arkansas River Basin, 69%; Upper Rio Grande Basin, 46%; San Miguel, Dolores, Animas, and San Juan River Basins 45%; and Laramie and North Platte River Basins, 96%.

Most of the snow courses around Middle Park have been read since the 1940s. Snow course readings are taken at the end of each month, beginning in January and continuing through April. March is historically the snowiest month, and the April 1 readings are the most critical for predicting runoff and summer water supplies, as most of our high country snowpack peaks around that time. From this point on, late spring runoff will be highly dependent on melting conditions (i.e., temperature and wind), as well as spring snow accumulation and/or rainfall.

For further information, including real-time snow and precipitation data for SNOTEL (automated Snow Telemetry) sites, visit <http://www.co.nrcs.usda.gov/snow/index.html>.



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NRCS Kremmling Field Office snow survey for May 1, 2013, compared to long-term average.

| Snow course or SNOTEL (SC or ST) | Last year | | This year | | 30-year average (1981 - 2010) | | Percent of average | |
|-------------------------------------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------|---------------------|----------------------------------|---------------------|--------------------|---------------------|
| | Snow depth | Moisture content | Snow depth | Moisture content | Snow depth | Moisture content | Snow depth | Moisture content |
| | ------(inches)----- | | | | | | -----(%)------ | |
| Arapaho Ridge ST | | 11.5 | | 21 | | 22.3 | | 95% |
| Arrow ST | | 0 | | error | | 15.2 | | |
| Berthoud Summit ST | | 3.1 | | 19.9 | | 21.8 | | 91% |
| Buffalo Park ST | | 6.3 | | 15.7 | | 9.3 | | 169% |
| Columbine ST | | 13.7 | | 17.1 | | 18.2 | | 94% |
| Copper Mountain ST | | 0.2 | | 13.1 | | 15.0 | | 87% |
| Corral Creek SC | | Not read | | Not read | | 13.8 | | |
| Elliot Ridge ST | 3.4 | | | 20.7 | | | | |
| Fremont Pass ST | | 12.3 | | 17.1 | | 18.4 | | 93% |
| Gore Pass SC | 0 | 0 | 21 | 8 | | 7.1 | | 112% |
| Granby SC | 0 | 0 | 10 | 3.7 | | 4.2 | | 88% |
| Grizzly Peak ST | | 1.9 | | 15.8 | | 15.9 | | 99% |
| Jones Pass ST | | 3.5 | | 15.1 | | 14.9 | | 101% |
| Kremmling Reservoir SC | | Not read | | Not read | | | | |
| Lake Irene ST | | 8.4 | | 23.3 | | 24.0 | | 97% |
| Lynx Pass ST | | 0 | | 6.6 | | 5.5 | | 120% |
| Middle Fork Camp SC | 0 | 0 | 35 | 13.6 | | 7.7 | | 177% |
| Phantom Valley ST | | 0 | | 8.2 | | 4.2 | | 195% |
| Stillwater Creek ST | | 0 | | - | | | | - |
| Summit Ranch ST | | 0 | | 5.9 | | 7.7 | | 77% |
| Willow Creek Pass SC | | 0 | 42 | 13.9 | | 11.8 | | 118% |
| <i>Average</i> | | | | | | | | 113% |

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NRCS Kremmling Field Office snow survey May 1 moisture content records.

| Snow course or SNOTEL | Highest May 1 moisture content | | Lowest May 1 moisture content | |
|--|--------------------------------|-------------|-------------------------------|--------|
| | (inches) | (year) | (inches) | (year) |
| Arapaho Ridge ST (read since 2003) | 35.4 | 2011 | 19.1 | 2007 |
| Arrow ST | 24.8 | 1984 | 0.0 | Many |
| Berthoud Summit ST | 31.8 | 2011 | 6.4 | 2002 |
| Buffalo Park ST (read since 1996) | 21.2 | 2011 | 0.0 | 2002 |
| Columbine ST | 39.6 | 2011 | 0.0 | 1981 |
| Corral Creek SC (read since 1995) | 13.5 | 1999 | 8.3 | 2006 |
| Gore Pass SC | 17.4 | 2011 | 0.0 | Many |
| Granby SC | 13.0 | 2011 | 0.0 | Many |
| Jones Pass ST (read since 2000) | 24.9 | 2011 | 0.0 | 2002 |
| Kremmling Reservoir SC (read since 2001) | 14.6 | 2003 | 13.0 | 2007 |
| Lake Irene ST | 44.0 | 2011 | 8.0 | 1981 |
| Lynx Pass ST | 17.7 | 1947 | 0.0 | Many |
| Middle Fork Campground SC | 17.6 | 1984 | 0.0 | Many |
| Phantom Valley ST | 19.8 | 2011 | 0.0 | Many |
| Stillwater Creek ST (read since 1986) | 6.7 | 2011 | 0.0 | Many |
| Summit Ranch ST | 18.8 | 1984 | 0.0 | Many |
| Willow Creek Pass SC | 22.9 | 2011 | 1.5 | 1981 |