

April 1, 2017

Snowpack Takes a Dive – But still 103% of average

The USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) Kremmling Field Office snow surveyors Mark Volt and Vance Fulton took the April 1 snow survey measurements during the last days of March. Snowpack for Middle Park and the upper Colorado River Basin stands at 103%. Lack of snowfall and warm weather during March, which is usually our snowiest month, has melted all of the valley snow and most of the mid-elevation snow up to 8,500 feet. The snowpack at lower elevation snow courses suffered the worse and high elevation courses have plummeted off their near record highs. Snow density is averaging 40%, which means that for every foot of snow there are 4.8 inches of water, which is unusually high for April 1st. From this point on, spring runoff will be highly dependent on melting conditions (i.e., temperature and wind), as well as additional spring snow accumulation and/or rainfall.

Reported average readings for the major river basins in Colorado are as follows: Colorado River Basin 107%; Gunnison River Basin, 122%; South Platte River Basin, 104%; Yampa and White River Basins, 91%; Arkansas River Basin, 116%; Upper Rio Grande Basin, 114%; San Miguel, Dolores, Animas, and San Juan River Basins 127%; and Laramie and North Platte River Basins, 100%.

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. Manual snow courses will be read for the final time this year at the end of April.

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 April 1, 2017, compared to long-term median.

Snow course or SNOTEL	Last year		This year		30-year average (1981 - 2010)		Percent of median	
	Snow depth	Moisture content	Snow depth	Moisture content	Snow depth	Moisture content	Snow depth	Moisture content
	------(inches)-----						-----(%)------	
Arapaho Ridge st		24.2		24.6		20.2		122%
Berthoud Summit st		20.7		17		19		89%
Buffalo Park st		16.1		15		10.5	suspect!	143%
Columbine st		24.4		18.6		22.6		82%
Copper Mountain st		14.8		16		13.5		119%
Corral Creek sc	45	13.2		Not read	45	13		#VALUE!
Elliot Ridge st		19.3		Not read				#VALUE!
Fremont Pass st		15.8		17.6		15.1		117%
Gore Pass sc	38	11.6	21	8.1	34	9.7	62	84%
Granby sc	35	8.8	28	11.4	26	7.2	108	158%
Grizzly Peak st				21.8		16.2		135%
Jones Pass st		16.7		14.2		13.3		107%
Lake Irene st		22.9		25.1		24.1		104%
Lynx Pass st		11.5		4.3		10.9		39%
Middle Fork Camp sc		14.5	21	7.6		11.5		66%
Phantom Valley st		10.7		8.9		9.3		96%
Stillwater Creek st		10		4.2		7.1		59%
Summit Ranch st		11.3		10.3		11.2		92%
Willow Creek Pass sc		15.2		17.1		11.9		144%
<i>Average</i>								<i>103%</i>

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

Snow course or SNOTEL (SC or ST)	Highest Apr. 1 moisture content			Lowest Apr. 1 moisture content		
	(inches)	(%)	(year)	(inches)	(%)	(year)
Arapaho Ridge ST (read since 2003)	26.9	117%	2008	14.8	65%	2010
Berthoud Summit ST	25.3	138%	1996	10.9	59%	2002
Buffalo Park ST (read since 1996)	17.7	123%	1996	8.0	56%	2002
Columbine ST	37.9	152%	1984	12.0	48%	1981
Copper Mountain ST	18.1	129%	2008	7.9	56%	1981
Corral Creek SC (read since 1995)	16.9	116%	1996	8.0	55%	2002
Fremont Pass ST	21.9	135%	1978	10.0	62%	1966
Gore Pass SC	16.6	157	2011	4.3	41%	1966
Granby SC	14.8	206%	2014	0.0	0%	2004
Grizzly Peak ST	27.7	151%	1996	8.7	47%	1981
Jones Pass ST (read since 2000)	19.2	119%	2006	9.7	60%	2002
Lake Irene ST	37.6	146%	1962	11.8	46%	1977
Lynx Pass ST	20.8	163%	1962	6.0	47%	1977
Middle Fork Campground SC	17.0	168%	1996	5.8	57%	1981
Phantom Valley ST	14.9	160%	1996	1.1	12%	2004
Stillwater Creek ST (read since 1986)	12.8	164%	1965	1.1	14%	2012
Summit Ranch ST	17.0	153%	1996	5.9	53%	2012
Willow Creek Pass SC	20.5	164%	1952	6.6	53%	2012



Mark Volt taking snow measurements near Willow Creek Pass

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