

April 1, 2013

Snowpack Low...But Not As Bad as Last Year

The USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) Kremmling Field Office snow surveyors Mark Volt, Noah Bates 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 79% of average. We were at 58% last April 1st. and 62% in the drought year of 2002.

Snowpack in the mountains above Middle Park now ranges from 48% to 96% of the 30-year average. Snow density is averaging 27%, which means that for a foot of snow there are 3.2 inches of water. Irrigators, towns, river runners and other water users can expect lower than normal river levels this summer. Reservoir storage remains lower than last year. It is almost impossible to catch up on snowpack at this late date. From this point on, spring runoff will be highly dependent on melting conditions (i.e., temperature and wind), as well as spring snow accumulation and/or rainfall. . We can only hope for a rainy summer.

Reported average readings for the major river basins in Colorado are as follows: Colorado River Basin 77%; Gunnison River Basin, 71%; South Platte River Basin, 70%; Yampa and White River Basins, 77%; Arkansas River Basin, 67%; Upper Rio Grande Basin, 69%; San Miguel, Dolores, Animas, and San Juan River Basins 71%; and Laramie and North Platte River Basins, 78%.

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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	------(inches)-----						------(%)-----	
Arapaho Ridge st		15.4		17.6		19.8		89%
Arrow st		3.4		6.9		14.4		48%
Berthoud Summit st		11.2		15.3		18.6		82%
Buffalo Park st		12.5		12.3		14.4		85%
Columbine st		13.7		19.6		22.8		86%
Copper Mountain st		9.3		10.1		13.7		74%
Corral Creek sc	28	8.6	35	9.2	45	14.6	77	63%
Elliot Ridge st		12.2		15.4				
Fremont Pass st		10.7		12.6		15.2		83%
Gore Pass sc	24	7.9	35	10.2	34	10.6	103	96%
Granby sc	30	8.7	22	5.4	26	7.2	85	75%
Grizzly Peak st		11		12.8		16.2		79%
Jones Pass st		8.5		11.7		13.4		87%
Lake Irene st		14.2		16.3		24.3		67%
Lynx Pass st		6.5		9.8		10.9		90%
Middle Fork Camp sc	20	6.6	37	9.9	35	10.1	106	98%
Phantom Valley st		1.6		7.2		9.3		77%
Stillwater Creek st		1.1		5.2		7		74%
Summit Ranch st		5.9		7.5		11.4		66%
Willow Creek Pass sc	22	6.6	37	9.7	44	12.5	84	78%
<i>Average</i>								79%

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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
Arrow ST	21.9	154%	1996	3.4	24%	2012
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	12.3	171%	1965	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
Kremmling Reservoir SC (read since 2001)	19.4		2008	11.4		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