

April 1, 2011

Snowpack Remains High in Middle Park

The USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) Kremmling Field Office snow surveyors Mark Volt and Jenny Stricker took the April 1 snow survey measurements during the last days of March, when the monthly snowpack for the upper Colorado River Basin increased to 135% of average.

Snowpack in the mountains above Middle Park now ranges from 108% to 194% of the 30-year average. Snow density is averaging 32%, which means that for a foot of snow there are 3.8 inches of water. A new record high was set for Gore Pass, with a total snow moisture content of 16.6" and a depth of 50". (This beats the old record high of 16.0" which was set in 1965.)

The highest snowpack, relative to normal, is in the Laramie and North Platte River Basins, which measure 135% of average. Reported average readings for the major river basins in Colorado are as follows: the Colorado River Basin averages 124%; Gunnison River Basin, 116%; South Platte River Basin, 117%; Yampa and White River Basins, 127%; Arkansas River Basin, 96%; Upper Rio Grande Basin, 81%; San Miguel, Dolores, Animas, and San Juan River Basins 92%; and Laramie and North Platte River Basins, 135%.

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, 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 April 1, 2010, compared to long-term average.

Snow course or SNOTEL (SC or ST)	Last year		This year		30-year average (1971 - 2000)		Percent of average	
	Snow depth	Moisture content	Snow depth	Moisture content	Snow depth	Moisture content	Snow depth	Moisture content
	------(inches)-----						-----(%)------	
Arapaho Ridge ST	55	14.8	91	28.5		22.9		124%
Arrow ST	33	8.7		15.4		14.2		108%
Berthoud Summit ST	56	17.6		23.4		18.4		127%
Buffalo Park ST	32	9.1	61	18.3		14.4		127%
Columbine ST	48	17.9	89	33.1		25.0		132%
Copper Mountain ST	35	11.2	67	17.7		14.0		126%
Corral Creek SC	29	8.6	Not	Measured	45	14.6		
Elliot Ridge ST	44	14.0	79	21.6				
Fremont Pass ST	52	13.1		19.1		16.2		118%
Gore Pass SC	31	8.8	50	16.6	34	10.6		157%
Granby SC	24	7.7	44	14.0	26	7.2		194%
Grizzly Peak ST	40	11.5		23.8		18.4		129%
Jones Pass ST	37	10.7	69	17.9		16.2		110%
Kremmling Reservoir SC	47	12.8	70	23.8				
Lake Irene ST	55	17.5		33.6		25.7		131%
Lynx Pass ST	25	8.6	53	16.5		12.8		129%
Middle Fork Camp SC	28	7.7	36	11.0	35	10.1		109%
Phantom Valley ST	19	6.8	51	16.3		9.3		175%
Stillwater Creek ST	11	5.4		11.3		7.8		145%
Summit Ranch ST	23	7.7	51	13.0		11.1		117%
Willow Creek Pass SC	31	7.8	57	16.1	44	12.5		129%
<i>Average</i>								135%

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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	7.4	52%	1966
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	16.0	151%	1965	4.3	41%	1966
<i>New record high</i>	16.6	157%	2011			
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	1.5	19%	2004
Summit Ranch ST	17.0	153%	1996	7.4	67%	1981
Willow Creek Pass SC	20.5	164%	1952	7.2	58%	1977