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NEWS RELEASE

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April 1, 2012

Snowpack Near Record Low in Middle Park

The USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) Kremmling Field Office snow surveyors Mark Volt, Noah Bates and Joe Messina took the April 1 snow survey measurements during the last days of March. Due to a lack of March snowstorms and higher than normal temperatures, the monthly snowpack for the upper Colorado River Basin has decreased to only 58% of average. Last year we were at 135% on April 1.…We were at 62% in the drought year of 2002.

Snowpack in the mountains above Middle Park now ranges from 17% to 87% of the 30-year average. New record lows were broken for a few local snow courses. Snow density is averaging 32%, which means that for a foot of snow there are 3.8 inches of water. Low and mid elevation snows melted off rapidly during the last two weeks of March and high elevation snows, which usually don't start coming off until April and May have also been melting off much earlier than normal. Irrigators, towns, river runners and other water users can expect lower than normal river levels this summer. It is almost impossible to catch up on snowpack at this late date. We can only hope for a rainy summer.

Reported average readings for the major river basins in Colorado are as follows: Colorado River Basin 55%; Gunnison River Basin, 66%; South Platte River Basin, 64%; Yampa and White River Basins, 57%; Arkansas River Basin, 69%; Upper Rio Grande Basin, 62%; San Miguel, Dolores, Animas, and San Juan River Basins 62%; and Laramie and North Platte River Basins, 62%.

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, 2012, 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	91	28.5		15.4		22.9		67%
Arrow ST		15.4		3.4		14.2		24%
Berthoud Summit ST		23.4		11.2		18.4		61%
Buffalo Park ST	61	18.3		12.5		14.4		87%
Columbine ST	89	33.1		13.7		25.0		55%
Copper Mountain ST	67	17.7		9.3		14.0		66%
Corral Creek SC	Not	Measured	28	8.6	45	14.6		59%
Elliot Ridge ST				12.2				
Fremont Pass ST		19.1		10.7		16.2		66%
Gore Pass SC	50	16.6	24	7.9	34	10.6		75%
Granby SC	44	14.0	30	8.7	26	7.2		120%
Grizzly Peak ST		23.8		11		18.4		60%
Jones Pass ST	69	17.9		8.5		16.2		53%
Kremmling Reservoir SC	70	23.8		Not measured				
Lake Irene ST		33.6		14.2		25.7		55%
Lynx Pass ST	53	16.5		6.5		12.8		51%
Middle Fork Camp SC	36	11.0	20	6.6	35	10.1		65%
Phantom Valley ST	51	16.3		1.6		9.3		17%
Stillwater Creek ST		11.3		1.1		7.8		14%
Summit Ranch ST	51	13.0		5.9		11.1		53%
Willow Creek Pass SC	57	16.1	22	6.6	44	12.5		53%
Average								***58%***

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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	~~**16.0**~~	~~**151%**~~	~~**1965**~~	4.3	41%	1966
New record high	**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	1.1	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