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NEWS RELEASE

U.S. Department of Agriculture • Natural Resources Conservation Service • 106 S 2nd Street, PO Box 265
Kremmling, CO 80459-0265 • Phone: (970)724-3456 • Fax: (970)724-0807 • http://www.co.nrcs.usda.gov

March 1, 2010

Snowpack above Middle Park low despite February storms

The USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) Kremmling Field Office snow surveyors Mark Volt and Matt Barnes took the February 1 snow survey measurements during the last days of February, when the monthly precipitation for the upper Colorado River Basin returned to near normal at 96% of average.

Snowpack in the high-elevation mountains above Middle Park now ranges from 50% to 101% of the 30-year average, with the highest readings on the southeast side of the valley, and the lowest readings on the north side. This is slightly less snow than March 1, 2004, but now slightly more than 2002, except for the north side and Jones Pass, which still have even less snow than they did in 2002.

Snow density is averaging 22%, which means that for a foot of snow there are 2.7 inches of water. This is less water than normal for this depth of snow on March 1.

Northwestern Colorado and the North Platte River have the lowest snowpack in the state. The highest snowpack, relative to normal, is in the upper Rio Grande Basin and the San Juan Mountains of southwestern Colorado. Reported readings for the major river basins in Colorado are as follows: the Colorado River Basin averages 79%; Gunnison River Basin, 95%; South Platte River Basin, 78%; Yampa and White River Basins, 74%; Arkansas River Basin, 95%; Upper Rio Grande Basin, 109%; San Miguel, Dolores, Animas, and San Juan River Basins 105%; and the Laramie and North Platte River Basins, 72% of average for this time of year.

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.

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

Snow course or SNOTEL	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	62	17.5	50	12.8	63	18.8	79%	68%
Arrow ST	55	16.2	43	7.4		11.1		67%
Berthoud Summit ST	61	16.3	66	14.5		14.3		101%
Buffalo Park ST	46	12.1	35	8.0	42	10.8	83%	74%
Columbine ST	73	23.8	55	16.0	78	21.9	71%	73%
Copper Mountain ST		13.5	39	8.4		11.2		75%
Corral Creek SC	51	15.4	32	6.6	48	13.1	67%	50%
Elliot Ridge ST	*New site*		45	11.2	*New site*		*New site*	
Fremont Pass ST		15.9	52	10.8		12.9		84%
Gore Pass SC	42	12.1	35	7.2	34	9.2	103%	78%
Granby SC	33	8.0	24	4.6	27	6.4	89%	72%
Grizzly Peak ST		15.6	47	9.7		13.7		71%
Jones Pass ST	56	14.3	39	8.5		12.8		66%
Kremmling Reservoir SC	52	16.1	46	10.6				
Lake Irene ST	75	21.6	59	14.9		21.0		71%
Lynx Pass ST	42	11.3	33	7.3	41	10.2	80%	72%
Middle Fork Camp SC	36	10.7	29	6.0	35	8.7	83%	69%
Phantom Valley ST	39	9.1	30	7.8		8.4		93%
Stillwater Creek ST	33	8.9	23	4.7	28	7.2	82%	65%
Summit Ranch ST	43	12.0	31	7.0	36	8.5	86%	82%
Willow Creek Pass SC	40	10.3	32	6.7	40	10.6	80%	63%
Average							***82%***	***73%***

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

Snow course or SNOTEL	Highest Feb. 1 moisture content			Lowest Feb. 1 moisture content		
	(inches)	(%)	(year)	(inches)	(%)	(year)
Arapaho Ridge ST (read since 2003)	23.5	125%	2006	**13.6**	**72%**	**2003**
New record low				***12.8***	***68%***	***2010***
Arrow ST	17.7	159%	1996	4.8	43%	1977
Berthoud Summit ST	20.3	142%	1996	7.5	52%	1981
Buffalo Park ST (read since 1996)	16.5	153%	1996	6.6	61%	2002
Columbine ST	40.1	183%	1984	8.2	37%	1981
Copper Mountain ST	18.9	169%	1996	4.8	43%	1981
Corral Creek SC (read since 1995)	18.0	137%	1997	**8.5**	**65%**	**2002**
New record low				***6.6***	***50%***	***2010***
Fremont Pass ST	18.8	146%	2006	6.4	50%	1981
Gore Pass SC	14.3	155%	1962	2.6	28%	1981
Granby SC	10.8	169%	1997	1.8	28%	1981
Grizzly Peak ST	23.7	173%	1996	6.1	45%	1981
Jones Pass ST (read since 2000)	18.1	141%	2006	**8.7**	**68%**	**2002**
New record low				***8.5***	***66%***	***2010***
Kremmling Reservoir SC (read since 2001)	16.3		2008	8.6		2002
Lake Irene ST	32.3	154%	1956	7.1	34%	1977
Lynx Pass ST	17.5	172%	1962	2.8	27%	1981
Middle Fork Campground SC	13.9	160%	1996	3.0	34%	1981
Phantom Valley ST	12.0	143%	1996	3.4	40%	1977
Stillwater Creek ST (read since 1986)	11.4	158%	1997	2.9	40%	1981
Summit Ranch ST	15.4	181%	1996	5.0	59%	1981
Willow Creek Pass SC	20.4	192%	1952	3.8	36%	1977