

Forest Service News

USDA Forest Service

Sequoia National Forest and the Giant Sequoia National Monument

1839 S. Newcomb Street, Porterville, CA 93257



Date: April 7, 2009

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Cindy Thill, Public Affairs-Fire

Phone: (760) 376-3781, ext. 625

Forest Service Performs Third Snow Survey of the Season

Kernville, CA....The U.S. Forest Service recently completed the third (3rd) snow survey for this winter season on multiple snow courses across the Kern Plateau.

These snow surveys target the Kern River drainage. Results for this area also include data from several other surveys. Additional surveys were performed on the Western Divide Ranger District near Tobias and the Sequoia/Kings Canyon National Park. Surveys in the Park are performed by both park personnel and the California Department of Water Resources.

The Kern River Ranger District average for the Kern River drainage is between 63% and 85% of normal, with the overall average at 73%. Statewide surveys show California at 83% of normal.

The surveyors are local Forest Service employees who have added "snow surveyor" to their list of skills. Snow surveyors venture out into the mountains, via snowmobiles, skis or a "snow cat" several times a year and at varying elevations to observe changing conditions throughout the season. The work can be hazardous; therefore the surveyors travel in teams and must be trained to handle emergencies.

Californians are dependent on snow for many reasons. Snowmelt provides a good portion of water for irrigation, energy generation, recreation, municipal, and industrial uses throughout the state.

To make optimum use of the state's water resources for these needs, advanced planning is essential. Data is collected from the snow pack amongst other water sources each year in order to anticipate the approximate amount of water that will be available. Snow surveying is just one important part of the water information gathering program.

A snow sampling tube with a cutter end is driven through the snow pack, measuring depth. By weighing the snow core, the water content (water equivalent) is obtained.

This information is fed into a state computer network and, when correlated, enables the State to forecast snow melt runoff in California. Forecasts are updated regularly and snow pack information can be obtained from the following site:

<http://cdec.water.ca.gov/snow/bulletin120/>

-more-

Chris Stewart, Kern River District Hydrologist stated, “We have experienced some warm weather and the snow is starting to melt. However; we are not at “peak” runoff as of yet.”

Stewart went on to say, “There will be a fourth and final survey in the first week of May, but this past (third) survey is the most important as the snow pack is beginning to melt and the water content is higher at this point.”

####