

SnowNews

September 2012

Volume 2, Issue 1

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Wildfires damage SNOTELs, threaten Master Station

Summer wildfires drew within 120 feet of the Boise Master Station perimeter, and several SNOTEL sites across the West were either badly damaged or destroyed this season.

SNOTEL sites impacted

The SNOTEL sites affected by wildfires are in six states:

1. Box Creek, UT (destroyed)
2. Oak Creek, UT (destroyed)

3. Disaster Peak, NV (destroyed)
4. Lamance Creek, NV
5. Sierra Blanca, NM
6. Silver Creek Divide, NM
7. Quemazon, NM
8. Snider Basin, WY
9. Spring Creek Divide, WY
10. Weminuche Creek, CO
11. Hourglass Lake, CO
12. Mancos, CO
13. Chowder Flat, CA

Three sites were totally lost, and NRCS crews removed

valuable sensors and components from many others. The efforts of the Forest Service to protect these sites were substantial and greatly appreciated.

The fires seriously altered the watersheds where many of these monitoring sites are located. The snowpack, and perhaps the precipitation-catch characteristics that are important for water supply models, will be affected at some sites for years to come. And even where the immediate sites weren't burned, the watersheds in many places have been modified to the point that the relationships between snow, precipitation-catch and streamflow runoff have changed significantly. Fires also affect the future climate record for sites.

As an example, **Phil Morrisey**, Idaho Data Collection Officer (DCO), provided the photo at left from a wildfire in late June at the Snider Basin, Wyoming SNOTEL site. This site is in southwest Wyoming, near Big Piney.

Fortunately, the site continued uninterrupted. The photo was provided by our excellent cooperating partners at the Bridger-Teton National Forest.



Fire damage at Snider Basin, Wyoming SNOTEL site. Photo courtesy Bridger-Teton National Forest cooperating partners.

Special points of interest:

- Snow School registration underway
- New SCAN installation & maintenance
- GeoNames geographical database
- Free wireless weather emergency alerts
- 800m 30-year normals released

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Flames within 120' of Master Station perimeter

Close call for Boise Master Station

Jeff Anderson, Idaho DCO Hydrologist, reported that the most crucial close call this fire season was the Boise Master Station.

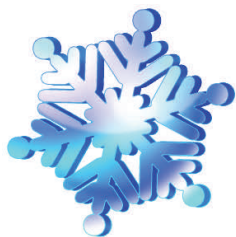
In June, the Cole Complex fire burned to within 120 feet of the Master Station's perimeter fence.

If not for the efforts of the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) to keep the fire from

affecting the Master Station, the equipment losses could have been substantial.



Aerial view of the Boise Master Station following the Cole Complex fire in mid-June.



Time to register for Snow School

Registration for the Snow Survey and Water Supply Forecasting (SSWSF) Program annual Snow School is now underway.

The 2013 Snow School is scheduled for **January 13–18**. This year's school will be held at the **Seventh Mountain Resort** in Bend, Oregon.

Annual Snow Survey School is required training for current and new NRCS employees and cooperators that perform

snow survey duties as part of their job. It is an intense week of training in data collection, safety and outdoor survival.

Most instructors are NRCS personnel who work directly with the SSWSF Program. Instructors in avalanche and outdoor survival are world-renowned experts in their fields.

Course work is about 50% Classroom lecture and 50% field exercises, including an overnight bivouac.

To register for 2013 Snow School:

- If you're an **NRCS employee**, register via [AgLearn](#).
- If you're a **cooperator, partner or other non-NRCS employee**, contact [Jo Huelshoff](#), (503) 414-3031.

For questions or more information, contact [Tony Tolsdorf](#), (503) 414-3006.



Spotlight On... Dino De Simone

This month's spotlight is on Dino De Simone, Arizona Resource Conservationist and Water Supply Specialist.

Dino De Simone was eight years old when his father, a 20-year veteran of the New York City police force, decided to pack up the station wagon and "move out West" with his family. The warmer climate of Phoenix was especially attractive to Dino's mother and the family decided to settle in Arizona.

So this transplanted New Yorker found himself in the desert, and soon began to enjoy it. He grew up hiking and backpacking his surroundings, developing a love for the outdoors. It eventually drew him into his studies at Arizona State University, where he graduated with a BS degree in Environmental Resources Management in 1980.



Dino at the Chalender, AZ SNOTEL site installation

While attending ASU, Dino spent two summers working with the Youth Conservation Corps, assisting the Forest Service in New Mexico and

Oregon. "This cemented my love for the career," Dino remarked, adding, "It was a great opportunity at the time."

After graduation, Dino submitted his application to the National Register and worked for the Bureau of Land Management in temporary assignments in New Mexico.

After about 18 months of temporary work, Dino got the call from the Soil Conservation Service (SCS) asking if he'd be interested in an interview. In the summer of 1982, Dino started work as a Soil Conservationist in the Phoenix office.

In 1988, Dino moved into the role of District Conservationist. He held this job until 1993, when he was named Resource Conservationist for the state of Arizona. In 2007, Ron Jones, the Water Supply Specialist for the state of Arizona retired, and Dino agreed to

split his duties between the two roles. He calls his position as Water Supply Specialist "my fun job."

He recalls field activities where farmers would often thank him for his efforts by inviting him to share lunch. They would routinely express their appreciation for helping them predict and manage their water resources. Dino also has high praise for his co-workers, say-

ing, "They are good people, with great attitudes, who always try to do it right."

Outside the office, Dino's activities are varied. He enjoys music, and continues to play the clarinet and sing. He was even a member of a barber-shop quartet for several years.

An avid vegetable gardener, Dino plants two crops a year — spinach, carrots and radishes went in the ground recently. Organic weed eating is left to his pet desert tortoise, appropriately named "Rocky."

Hiking and overnight backpack trips are also still high on the list of things to do. These are often shared with Dino's family, daughter Miranda (16) and sons Bryce (18) and Lance (21).

August marked Dino's 30-year anniversary with the SCS/NRCS. With a job he loves, in a place he wants to be, as Dino puts it, he's "livin' the good life in Mesa, Arizona."



Dino also has high praise for his co-workers, saying, "They are good people, with great attitudes, who always try to do it right."



Dino, Miranda, Bryce and Lance De Simone visiting the crown of the Statue of Liberty.



PRISM Climate Group to provide real-time data QC tool

The PRISM Climate Group at Oregon State University (OSU) has a long history of collaboration with the National Water and Climate Center (NWCC).



Beginning in the 1990s, the PRISM team developed ground-breaking digital maps of 1961-1990 precipitation and temperature "Normals." The group has continued to support this effort, updating the Normals for 1971-2000, and most recently, with funding support from the NRCS through the Climate Change Program Office and the Risk Management Agency, for 1981-2010.

The SNOTEL network is essential to the success of these

and other mapping efforts, as it provides the only source of climate data in many remote, high-elevation locations in the western U.S. Therefore, in order to ensure the quality of the climate maps, the PRISM team developed sophisticated quality control (QC) algorithms for SNOTEL data, as well as other networks.

The result of these efforts was a serially-complete, quality controlled time series of daily temperature and monthly precipitation for the entire period of record for each SNOTEL station.

While this project was successful for historical data, there was no ability to run this program on an ongoing basis in near real-time.

To meet the need for a near real-time data QC system, the PRISM group, through the Cooperative Ecosystem Stud-

ies Unit ([CESU](#)) agreement funded by the NWCC, is in the process of developing an improved, operational system for the SNOTEL network.

The system components will include:

- Operational single-station QC checks
- In-situ SNOTEL checks, such as comparing SWE to precipitation
- RADAR QC checks
- Correlation-based spatial QC

A map-based web portal will allow Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) data editors access to the final QC values and flags.

This project is expected to complete in 2014.

For more information on the QC tool, contact [Jan Curtis](#) (503) 414-3017.

New SCAN site installations and maintenance

The summer months saw much activity in the Soil Climate Analysis Network (SCAN).

Eleven new SCAN sites were installed in 2012, bringing the total number of sites in the network to 190.

In June, **Tony Tolsdorf** and **John Weeks** (NWCC) and **Deb Harms** (National Soil Survey) completed installation of three new SCAN sites in southern California.

In July, Tony, John and Deb travelled to Missouri to install

two new sites at Schell-Osage and Journagan Ranch.

Excellent assistance from local technicians made this installation a stellar example of teamwork.

Puerto Rico and the US Virgin Islands were the target of a new installation as well as much-needed site maintenance in September.

The new site was in Puerto Rico. Site maintenance occurred at both venues. This work was completed by volunteers and maintenance crews under contract to the NWCC.

For more information on SCAN, contact [Tony Tolsdorf](#), (503) 414-3006 or [Deb Harms](#) (402) 437-5324.

Next generation Meteor Burst Master Station

When the NRCS Meteor Burst Master Station was deployed near Boise, Idaho in 1975, it was the first of its kind. Able to receive data from SNOTEL sites across the western United States, the Master Station design remained relatively unchanged for two decades.

A key component of the new Master Station design is the **MRC-520X Meteor Burst Communications Terminal**.

The MRC-520X together with an exciter, a high-power RF amplifier, a Power Amp Interface Module (PAIM), coax

relay module and a set of antennas and duplex filters form the complete MBCS system.

Maiden Rock has prototyped the new components and tested them on the master station mock-up at our Electronics Maintenance Facility in Portland, Oregon.

Field testing of the new system occurred in July at the Boise Master Station. Final deployment of the new equipment is targeted for the end of the calendar year.

For more information on the design and deployment of the new Master Station components, contact [Tony Tolsdorf](#), (503) 414-3006.



Boise Master Station, circa 1976

The 1990's saw upgrades in computers, radios and power amplifiers, but the basic design endured.

Fast forward to 2012...Maiden Rock Communications (MRC), Seeley Lake, Montana has contracted with the National Water and Climate Center to work on the third generation Meteor Burst Communications System (MBCS) components.

The objective is to replace outdated, difficult-to-replace components with more reliable, faster and less expensive components.



New MRC-520X components at Boise Master Station during field testing. The final system components will have silk-screened front and back panels and be housed in a standard rack mount (July 2012)



“Field testing of the new system occurred in July. Final deployment is targeted for the end of the calendar year.”



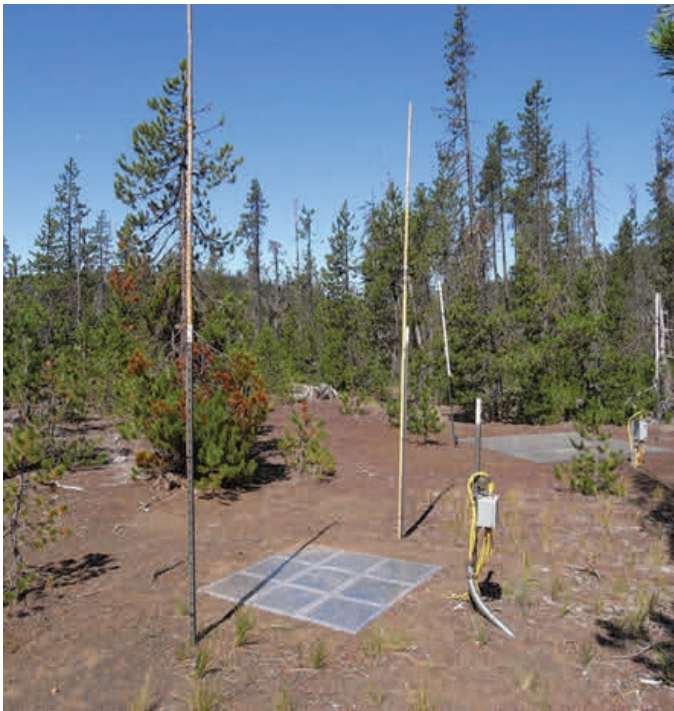
Fluidless snow pillow update

Over the summer, **Ellie Dunklee**, earth team volunteer, was busy plotting hourly and daily data from three experimental, fluidless snow-water equivalent sensors at Santiam Junction, Oregon. With the assistance of Tony Tolsdorf, Ellie used the plots to analyze the data from the three sensors and observed some encouraging and some not-so-encouraging results from the 2011/2012 snow season.

The three sensors use load cells to weigh the amount of water resting on the sensor. The sensors are 9-foot, 6-foot and 4-foot in diameter. The 9-foot version has been extensively studied and its performance was encouraging, while the 6-foot and 4-foot sensors showed extreme data fluctuations during the melt-out season.



Earth team volunteer, Ellie Dunklee taking notes at the Santiam Junction SNOTEL site.



The 4-foot fluidless snow pillow exhibited extreme data fluctuation during melt-out.

Ellie, Tony and Jon Lea (Oregon Snow Survey Supervisor) went on a field trip in August to observe the sensors and check their performance under controlled conditions. They used batteries as weights to check the sensor output based on applied weight.

The team checked the overall condition of the sensors, which was very good. They then checked the calibration of the fluidless sensor, which took the cooperated effort of all three people:

- Ellie was the note-taker and coordinated the application of the calibration weights.
- Jon systematically applied and removed calibration weights (three, 63-pound batteries applied one by one) to each load cell.

- Tony took readings of sensor output and reported to the note-taker.

After the field testing, Ellie took the new calibration values and calculated the current pounds/millivolt, and compared that to the calibration readings from last November. When there was a significant difference in the correlation between millivolts and pounds from the sensors, Ellie re-plotted the data from last year, to see if the comparison between the fluidless sensors and the Hypalon sensors would improve.

The field day ended with Ellie, our earth team volunteer, treating herself to some much-deserved nachos and ice cream.

GeoNames geographical database

The [GeoNames](#) geographical database contains over 10 million geographical names and consists of over 8 million unique features. All features are categorized into nine feature classes and further sub-categorized into 645 [feature codes](#).

The data are available free of charge through a number of [web services](#) and a daily [database export](#).

GeoNames is already serving over 30 million web service requests per day.

The database integrates geographical data such as names of places in various languages, elevation and population from various sources.

All latitude/longitude coordinates are in WGS84 (World Geodetic System 1984) format.

Users may manually edit and add new names via a wiki interface.

The example shows the GeoNames Google Maps display for Logan, Utah.



GeoNames Home | Postal Codes | Download / Webservice | About

Map center : N 41° 44' 24" W 111° 50' 24"

google earth tazania mapquest

Map | Satellite | Hybrid | Terrain

only 50 objects displayed, zoom in or deselect some features

	Name	country	feature	km to center
1	City of Logan	United States	administrative division	0.06 km
2	Logan	United States	seat of a second-order administrative division	0.68 km
3	Utah State University	United States	school	2.27 km
4	Willow Park	United States	park	2.37 km

GeoNames Google Maps display for Logan, Utah.

The River Seers

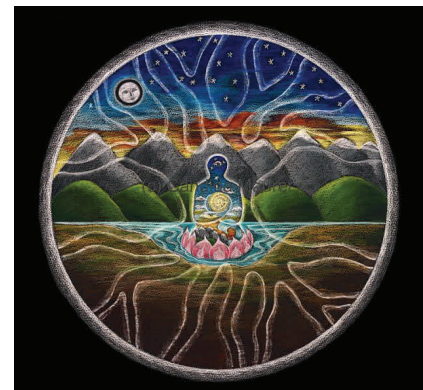
Tom Pagano is a former hydrologist with the National Water and Climate Center. For six years, he forecast the Colorado River, Rio Grande, Arkansas River and Alaska.

Three years ago, Tom moved to Australia as a research scientist at the [CSIRO](#), developing methods to forecast floods, for use at the Bureau of Meteorology.

In August 2011 Tom and wife, Kitty, started traveling for a year overseas, visiting scientists and forecasters to gather material for a book about "the people behind the river forecasts." His goal is to give a "first-person perspective of the pressures, challenges, joys and agony of the work."

Tom chronicles his travels in an ongoing blog called [The River Seers](#).

His narratives of places like Indonesia, Iran, Thailand, South Korea and Nepal infuse the culture, the people and the societal issues of the locales he visits.





Free wireless emergency weather alerts

The National Weather Service (NWS), in coordination with the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), recently launched a system that will send text messages to people in areas threatened by severe weather.

Wireless Emergency Alert (WEA) messages will be broadcast to cell towers located in geographic areas where the alerts apply, which in turn will relay the messages to all WEA-capable cell phones within reach of their signals.

The system does not use a GPS; it is described as "point to multi-point."

Alerts are sent to cell towers, not to cell phones. This way, if you live in Virginia but happen to be in Florida when a hurricane hits, you will be notified of an impending storm. If you were home in Virginia, you

would not receive the alert.

Another advantage to this approach is that it's not subject to congestion.

WEAs are limited to warnings and are restricted to 90 characters, so they only convey urgent information. They do not include severe weather watches, and only address certain weather conditions: blizzards and ice storms, dust storms, extreme winds, flash floods, hurricanes/typhoons, tornadoes and tsunamis.

Wireless carriers participate in the alert program voluntarily. Among national carriers, Sprint and Verizon are fully ready, but there are many smaller carriers that have not yet enabled the broadcasts. A list of participating carriers is available at CTIA.org.

There are a number of WEA-capable devices available

today, and many new phones sold from participating carriers will be able to receive these alerts. If your device has the CTIA Wireless Emergency Alerts logo, then it is WEA-capable.



Look for this logo on devices capable of receiving WEA messages.

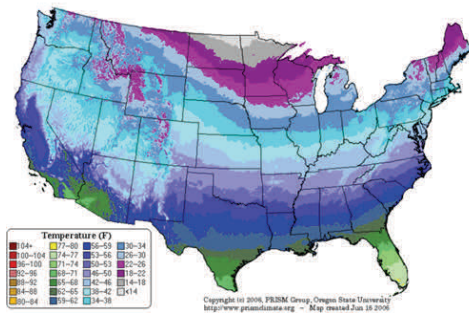
Here's a list of current [WEA-capable devices](#).

To confirm Wireless Emergency Alerts are available in your area and your device is capable of receiving the alerts, check with your carrier.

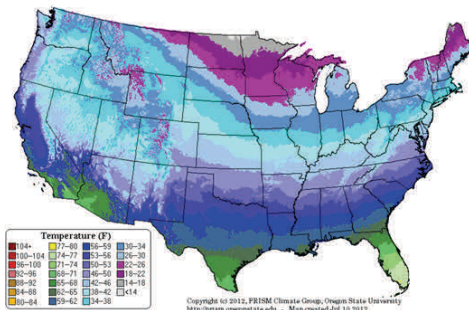
Questions about the WEA system? Check out these [FAQs](#).

PRISM Climate Group releases 800m 30-Year Normals

Maximum Temperature: January Climatology (1971-2000)



Maximum Temperature: January Climatology (1981-2010)



The new, 800m 1981-2010 Normals (for T_{max} , T_{min} , precipitation and temperature dew point) are now available on the PRISM Climate Group [website](#). Funding for this effort was provided by NRCS through their Climate Change Program and the Risk Management Agency (RMA).

A comparison between the 1971-2000 and 1981-2010 Normals shows some change, but not of a significant kind. The minimum temperatures have modified over the extreme northern tier states. Cold, alpine valleys in the West have also moderated.

The annual precipitation amounts have increased over the northern Great Plains and decreased slightly over the

southern Gulf States.

To see the change yourself, open these two links for maximum January temperature ([1971-2000](#) and [1981-2010](#)) in separate tabs in your browser. Then, toggle between the two tabs to show the slight changes in maximum temperature.

Chris Daly, PRISM Climate Group leader, reports that his team has been working with the Risk Management Agency (RMA) and insurance companies to deliver customized datasets and reports based on the new 30-Year Normals. These reports are currently access-limited due to bandwidth availability. However, they will be publically available within a year.

Largest fire in New Mexico history

Whitewater-Baldy Complex fire analyzed

On May 16, lightning sparked a wildfire east of Glenwood, New Mexico. Over the course of several weeks, the fire grew to become the largest in New Mexico history.

Affecting over 297,000 acres, the Whitewater-Baldy Complex Fire, continued to burn in extreme and inaccessible terrain through July and into August.

In early July, **Jim Marron** (NWCC Resource Conservationist), **Gus Goodbody** (NWCC Forecast Hydrologist) and **Dan Moore** (West National Technology Support Center) completed an analysis of the fire.

The analysis was done under the direction of **Wayne Honeycutt** (NRCS, Washington,

DC) and **Noller Herbert** (NRCS, Washington, DC).

The analysis team had two objectives:

- Determine the locations for flash flood alert installations in Mineral and Whitewater Creeks to protect life and property downstream from the effects of the fire at the towns of Glenwood and Alma.
- Provide estimates of potential discharge from these two watersheds in the San Francisco River watershed of the Gila River.

Sites were identified by analysis of severe burn and monsoonal precipitation pattern

spatial layers to determine locations in the affected watersheds that had a high potential for damaging debris flows.

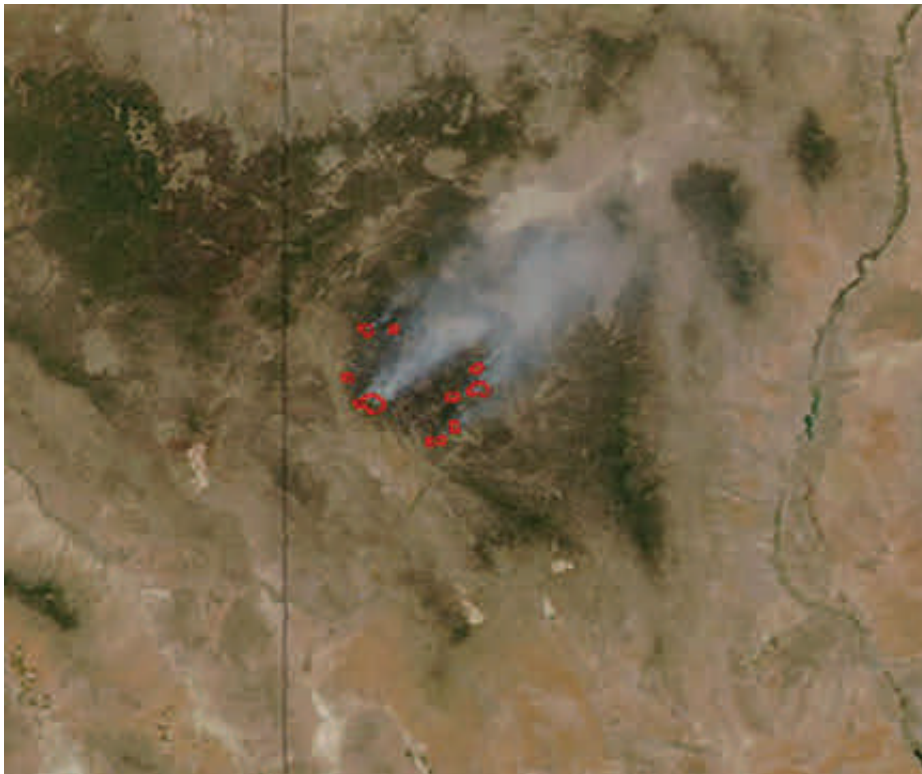
WinTR20 technology was applied to determine peak flow runoff under various monsoonal precipitation events.

The technology the team used for this analysis could be used for **any** fire situation, as well as other land disturbance, that affects the hydrology of a watershed.

For more information, contact [Jim Marron](#) (503) 414-3047.



*“The technology used for this analysis could be used for **any** fire situation, as well as other land disturbance, that affects the hydrology of a watershed.”*



An image from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Moderate Resolution Imaging Spectroradiometer (MODIS) aboard the [Aqua](#) satellite. The satellite captured this true-color image of the Whitewater-Baldy Complex fire on June 12. The red “hot spots” ringing the fire are most likely the result of controlled back burns.



Snow Survey and Water Supply Forecasting Program

Resource Locator

Here's a handy reference for finding resources in the Snow Survey and Water Supply Forecasting Program.

Where	What	Who	How
Alaska	Forecast Hydrologist Snow Survey Supervisor	Jolyne Lea 503-414-3040 jolyne.lea@por.usda.gov Rick McClure 907-271-2424 richard.mcclure@ak.usda.gov	
Arizona	Forecast Hydrologist Water Supply Specialist	Gus Goodbody 503-414-3033 angus.goodbody@por.usda.gov Dino DeSimone 602-280-8786 dino.desimone@az.usda.gov	
California	Forecast Hydrologist Water Supply Specialist	Jolyne Lea 503-414-3040 jolyne.lea@por.usda.gov	
Colorado	Forecast Hydrologist Data Collection Office Supervisor (acting)	Cara McCarthy 503-414-3088 cara.s.mccarthy@por.usda.gov Brian Domonkos 406-587-6991 brian.domonkos@mt.usda.gov	
Idaho	Data Collection Officer Forecast Hydrologist Water Supply Specialist	Phil Morrisey 208-685-6983 phil.morrisey@id.usda.gov Rashawn Tama 503-414-3010 rashawn.tama@por.usda.gov Ron Abramovich 208-378-5741 ron.abramovich@id.usda.gov	
Montana	Data Collection Office Leader Forecast Hydrologist Water Supply Specialist	Scott Oviatt 406-587-6844 scott.oviat@mt.usda.gov Cara McCarthy 503-414-3088 cara.s.mccarthy@por.usda.gov Brian Domonkos 406-587-6991 brian.domonkos@mt.usda.gov	
Nevada	Forecast Hydrologist Water Supply Specialist	Jolyne Lea 503-414-3040 jolyne.lea@por.usda.gov Dan Greenlee 775-857-8500 dan.greenlee@nv.usda.gov	
New Mexico	Forecast Hydrologist Water Supply Specialist	Gus Goodbody 503-414-3033 angus.goodbody@por.usda.gov Wayne Sleep 505-761-4431 wayne.sleep@nm.usda.gov	
Oregon	Forecast Hydrologist Snow Survey Supervisor	Rashawn Tama 503-414-3010 rashawn.tama@por.usda.gov Jon Lea 503-414-3267 jon.lea@or.usda.gov	
Utah	Forecast Hydrologist Snow Survey Supervisor	Gus Goodbody 503-414-3033 angus.goodbody@por.usda.gov Randy Julander 801-524-5213 randy.julander@ut.usda.gov	
Washington	Forecast Hydrologist Snow Survey Supervisor Water Supply Specialist	Rashawn Tama 503-414-3010 rashawn.tama@por.usda.gov Jon Lea 503-414-3267 jon.lea@or.usda.gov Scott Pattee 360-428-7684 scott.pattee@wa.usda.gov	
Wyoming	Forecast Hydrologist Water Supply Specialist	Cara McCarthy 503-414-3088 cara.s.mccarthy@por.usda.gov Lee Hackleman 307-233-6744 lee.hackleman@wy.usda.gov	
All States	Center Director/Program Manager Database Manager Information Systems Team Lead Meteorologist Modeling Hydrologist Operations Specialist (SNOTEL/SCAN) Resource Conservationist SNOTEL Database Manager Statistical Assistant/SCAN QC	Mike Strobel 503-414-3055 michael.strobel@por.usda.gov Del Gist 503-414-3007 del.gist@por.usda.gov Laurel Grimsted 503-414-3053 laurel.grimsted@por.usda.gov Jan Curtis 503-414-3017 jan.curtis@por.usda.gov Dave Garen 503-414-3021 david.garen@por.usda.gov Rose Loehr 503-414-3042 rose.loehr@por.usda.gov Jim Marron 503-414-3047 jim.marron@por.usda.gov Maggie Dunklee 503-414-3049 maggie.dunklee@por.usda.gov Denice Schilling 406-727-7580 denice.schilling@mt.usda.gov	



NWCC highlights

Jan Curtis, NWCC Applied Climatologist, presented a poster at this year's American Association of State Climatologists (AASC) conference. The conference was held July 9-12 in Destin, Florida.

Jan's objective was to foster partnerships with State Climatologists in matters of climate services as they relate to agriculture and natural resources management. Jan's poster

focused on the new "1981-2010 SNOTEL and Snow Course 30-Year Normals."

Hai Mai, Team Vistrionix, joined the NWCC recently as a contract programmer. Hai's current work is focusing on new product development activities.

Earth team volunteers **Ellie Dunklee**, daughter of **Maggie**

Dunklee, SNOTEL database manager, and **Kelsey Hewitt** spent several weeks this summer assisting the Center. Their work involved SCAN data entry, EMF shop work and field work.

Ellie, a sophomore at the University of Oregon, is majoring in Biology. Kelsey is a senior at the University of Colorado, Boulder, majoring in Environmental Sciences.



Photo of the month

This photo, taken by NWCC meteorologist Jan Curtis, shows Mt. Hood, Oregon during a mid-winter wind storm. The photo was an honorable mention in this year's photo contest.

Products and resources on the web

Storm Events Database

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) [Storm Events Database](http://www.ncdc.noaa.gov/stormevents/ftp.jsp) (www.ncdc.noaa.gov/stormevents/ftp.jsp) is a great way to access storm statistics and details from 1950 to the present.

Weather Map Archive

Climate data is not only weather data like average temperatures or total precipitation. It also includes weather maps that are archived. A great resource for this type of information is the University Corporation for Atmospheric Research (NCAR) [Weather Image Archive](http://www.mmm.ucar.edu/imagearchive/) (<http://www.mmm.ucar.edu/imagearchive/>).

This is a collection of images maintained by the Precipitation Diagnostics Group (PDG) in the Mesoscale and

Microscale Meteorology Division of NCAR. The images include satellite, radar, surface, upper-air and model output. Data are held since 1996.

Weather and Climate Data Portal

North Carolina State University (NCSU) Libraries offers a [Weather and Climate Data](http://www.lib.ncsu.edu/gis/noaaclim.html) (www.lib.ncsu.edu/gis/noaaclim.html) portal to many online resources, including the National Climatic Data Center (NCDC), National Weather Service (NWS), PRISM Climate Group and other selected data sites.

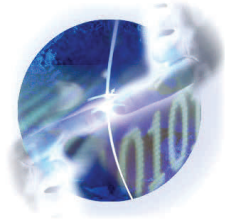
The web site contains an overview of each resource and details on how to use it.

Climate Data for Southern US

The Southern Climate Impacts Planning Program (SCIIPP) is a climate research initiative with the goal of helping communities plan for weather and climate-related disasters in the southern United States. The new site offers several experimental [Data Products](http://www.southernclimate.org/data.php) (<http://www.southernclimate.org/data.php>), including an Average Monthly Temperature and Precipitation Tool, an Historical Climatic Trends Tool and a Climograph Tool.

State of the Climate

A nice NOAA summary of the [State of the Climate \(SOTC\)](http://www.ncdc.noaa.gov/sotc/briefings) is available here: www.ncdc.noaa.gov/sotc/briefings. Data are available since 1998. Briefings are provided since 2011.





Helping People Help the Land.

National Water & Climate Center
Natural Resources Conservation Service
US Department of Agriculture
www.wcc.nrcs.usda.gov

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For issues of **SnowNews** go to:
www.wcc.nrcs.usda.gov/publications/

Our mission is: *"To lead the development and transfer of water and climate information and technology which support natural resource conservation."*



With a vision of the future as:

"A globally-recognized source for a top quality spatial snow, water, climate, and hydrologic network of information and technology."

From the Director's desk



The fiscal year is coming to an end, and it has been an interesting year for the program. We have seen the retirement of many members of the program, such as Mike Gillespie and Garry Schaefer, to name a few. Because of uncertainty with potential organizational realignments, we haven't been able to replace many of these vacancies, resulting in a larger workload for the existing staff. I really appreciate how so many staff have stepped up and handled additional work and more responsibilities. Your dedication and work ethic have been amazing.

During this fiscal year, we began a process to evaluate the structure and activities of the Snow Survey and Water Supply Forecasting Program, which was referred to as the Snow Survey Organizational Assessment. On the team were Claudia Hoeft, Jim Marron, Carla Kertis, Scott Oviatt, Jon Lea, Jeff Burwell, Randy Julander and myself. We began meeting in the fall and had a 2-day face-to-face in Portland in December. As part of this meeting, we laid the groundwork for a number of options for the program that would improve efficiency and reduce costs. There were many drivers for instituting this assessment, but the main one was the reduced budget, with projections for future budget trends to decline even more. NHQ leadership felt that all programs needed to look at how they do business and provide options for improvements that would lead to lower

costs. The key point here, and one with which I am very impressed and encouraged, is that NHQ leadership asked us, a team that represents the program personnel, to come up with the options and make recommendations. All too often, decisions about programs are decided at the highest levels and pushed down to the staff in the field. The final decision, which is still pending, will be made by the Chief, but based on our input. That is a very important point and something that I feel reflects very highly on our agency leadership.

Because (at the time of this writing) the recommendations have not been presented to the leadership committee and the Chief has not made a final decision, I am not at liberty to discuss the options. I realize there is a working document circulating with the States that outlines one possible option where program leadership is put under the NWCC and there are a number of changes, such as reducing NRCS snow courses. This is one possible scenario, as are many others, including status quo (no changes).

I understand the concern and questions expressed to me about the outcome of the assessment. The reality is that the road to change is difficult and it comes with potholes, speed bumps and detours. It has been said that the only thing certain about change is opposition to it, and I fully ex-

pect that any changes we make will come with different levels of pushback. We will get through these things. I expect any changes we take on will be over a transition period and not all immediately. I will need all of our folks to help us, as a program, get through this and continue to be successful.

To be honest, my biggest concern is not taking on potential changes to the program, because that is a challenge I feel we, as a group, can handle. My biggest concern is how the changes will impact the people and the morale of the staff. Change can be scary and there are bound to be some who either lose interest in their jobs or fight each new direction every step of the way.

I ask each of you to help us as we move into next FY and to try to remain positive and energized. Even if we don't change a thing in the program structure, we still have huge challenges ahead. So, please be leaders to those around you by staying positive, providing critical input on how to handle changes, and helping move our program forward. I will need all of your help with this, and I appreciate the important role each of us will have as we head into FY13. Change can be scary, but it can also be exciting and lead to new opportunities, new ways to grow, and new ways to do things even better.

Thank you for your continued dedication and outstanding work.

Mike



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