

No snow to measure at Echo Summit; reservoir storage OK

By Kathryn Reed

PHILLIPS STATION – Frank Gehrke with the Department of Water Resources did not need his instruments Tuesday as he walked through a barren field. Snowmelt was more in evidence on the final snow survey of the season than the actual white stuff.

“With climate change, we’ll definitely see more of these extremes,” Gehrke said comparing the abundance of snowfall a year ago to the dismal showing this season.

The May 1 reading in 2011 had 5 feet of snow with 3 feet of water content in the open area near the entrance to Sierra-at-Tahoe off Highway 50. This week the evidence of snow was the runoff at the far end of the field that was puddling and the patches on the higher peaks.



No snow for Frank Gehrke of the Department of Water Resources to measure on May 1. Photo/Kathryn Reed

Statewide, the snowpack water content is at 40 percent of

average for this time of year.

According to the National Weather Service in Reno, the streams in the Lake Tahoe area have already hit their high water mark.

“Some of the smaller creeks had decent rises this year, but nothing to warrant an advisory or flood warning,” meteorologist Scott McGuire told *Lake Tahoe News*. He said the minimal snowpack this year meant no flooding, unlike a year ago.

While a small weather system is expected to settle over the basin this week, scattered showers and cooler temps are all that’s expected. No big weather events are on the horizon.

But McGuire did caution that while flooding is not an issue, rivers and creeks are running fast and are extremely cold.

“It doesn’t take a whole lot of water to sweep someone off their feet,” McGuire said.

It’s all that water in California reservoirs that is keeping the nerves of farmers and municipal water purveyors calm. Last year’s deluge and the late storms this season have kept the water levels at serviceable levels.

“Overall, our water supply is OK this year,” Gehrke said.

Lake Oroville is at 97 percent capacity.

Source: *Department of Water Resources*

Location	Elevation	Snow Depth	Water Content	% of Long Term Average
Alpha	7,600 feet	26.5 inches	12 inches	45
Phillips Station	6,800 feet	0 inches	0 inches	0
Lyons Creek	6,700 feet	37 inches	15 inches	66