

SnowNews

Winter 2013-2014

Volume 3, Issue 2

Report Generator: One stop shopping for snow, climate, soils and water resource data

The National Water and Climate Center recently released version 1.0 of its [Report Generator](#) tool.

Report Generator is a web-based tool that allows users to create custom reports using NRCS and external data sources.

Under development for several months, the tool uses long-term snowpack, precipitation, reservoir, streamflow, and soils data from a variety of quality-controlled sources to create reports.

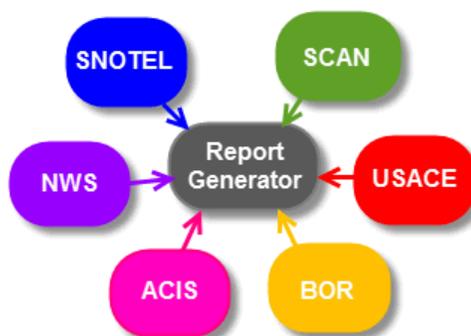
Users can choose from predefined templates or build custom reports.

Data from tabular reports may be exported to different formats, including comma-separated

value (csv) files or Excel® spreadsheets. Charts can be saved to Adobe® pdf or graphics formats. In the current release, only single-station charting is supported.

The **Report Generator** network incorporates data from many agency databases. The NRCS snow survey flagship database, the Water and Climate Information System (WCIS), provides a wealth of data, including manually-collected snow course data and information from automated Snow Telemetry (SNOTEL) and Soil Climate Analysis Network (SCAN) stations across the United States.

Report Generator also uses precipitation, streamflow, and reservoir data from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation (BOR), the National Weather Service (NWS), the Applied Climate Information System (ACIS), the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS), water districts, state agencies and other entities.



Report Generator uses data from many sources

In addition to creating reports and graphs, **Report Generator** lets users view information on sites, including "metadata," such as elevation, latitude/longitude and hydrologic unit code (HUC).

View photos of the site, including a site map (in Google maps when available).

Inside this issue:

| | |
|--|----|
| Stormwater runoff calculator | 2 |
| SnowPAC annual meeting | 3 |
| Climate Science Digest | 4 |
| GRACE data assimilation | 5 |
| Spotlight on Wayne Sleep | 6 |
| US tornado browser | 7 |
| In memoriam Mary Martin | 9 |
| Rainfall atlas of Hawaii | 10 |
| From the Director: What is essential? | 12 |

Special points of interest:

- NWCC highlights
- Call for papers: Western Snow Conference
- Products and resources on the web
- Resource locator

Mt Hood Test Site (651) Oregon SNOTEL Site - 5370 ft

(As of: Thu Jan 02 08:23:59 PST 2014)
Provisional data, subject to revision

| Date | Snow Water Equivalent (in) | Snow Depth (in) | Precipitation Accumulation (in) |
|------------|----------------------------|-----------------|---------------------------------|
| 2013-12-27 | 10.4 | 24 | 26.7 |
| 2013-12-28 | 10.1 | 24 | 26.7 |
| 2013-12-29 | 10.7 | 24 | 26.7 |
| 2013-12-30 | 10.0 | 24 | 26.7 |
| 2013-12-31 | 10.0 | 24 | 26.7 |
| 2014-01-01 | 10.4 | 24 | 26.9 |
| 2014-01-02 | 10.5 | 24 | 26.8 |

Tabular report format

continued page 2



Site photos and other "metadata"

Stormwater calculator helps manage runoff

Last summer, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) introduced the [National Stormwater Calculator](#). The

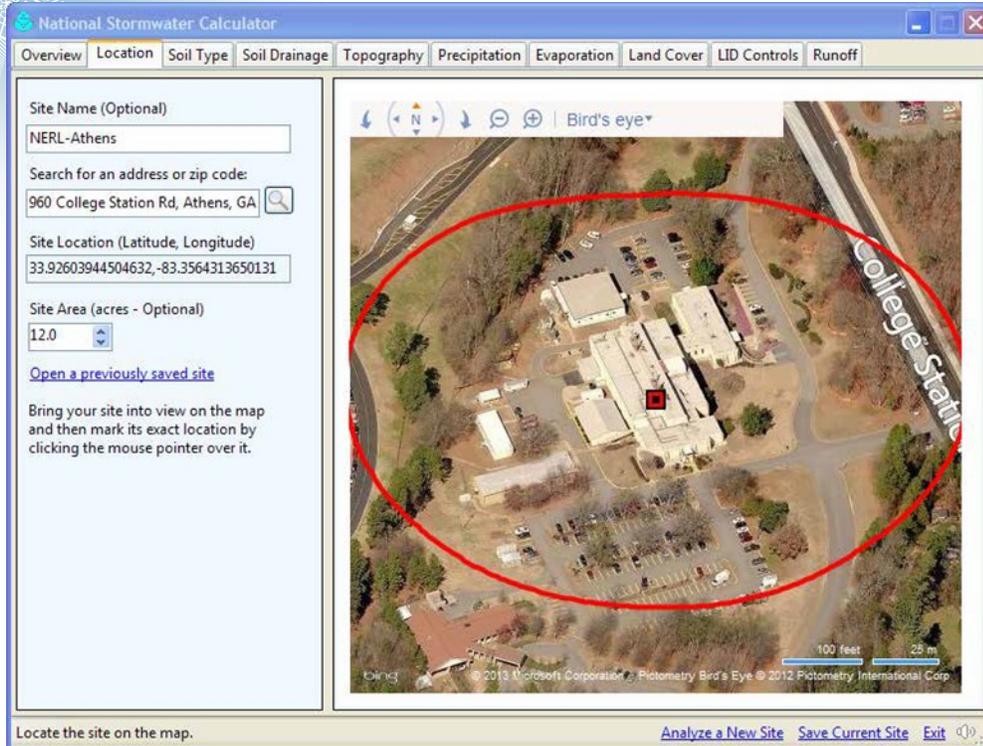
calculator is phase 1 of the **Stormwater Calculator and Climate Assessment Tool Package** announced as part

of President Obama's Climate Action Plan.

The calculator is a desktop application that estimates the annual amount of stormwater runoff from a site, based on local soil conditions, slope, land cover and historical rainfall records.

Users simply enter the location and then select from different scenarios to see how simple infrastructure changes, such as using rain barrels, can help prevent pollution. The information also helps determine how adding green infrastructure can be a cost-effective way to reduce stormwater runoff.

An update to the National Stormwater Calculator, including the ability to link to future climate scenarios, will be released in early 2014.



Page from the Stormwater Runoff Calculator

Report Generator: One stop shopping...

from page 1

Check out Report Generator!

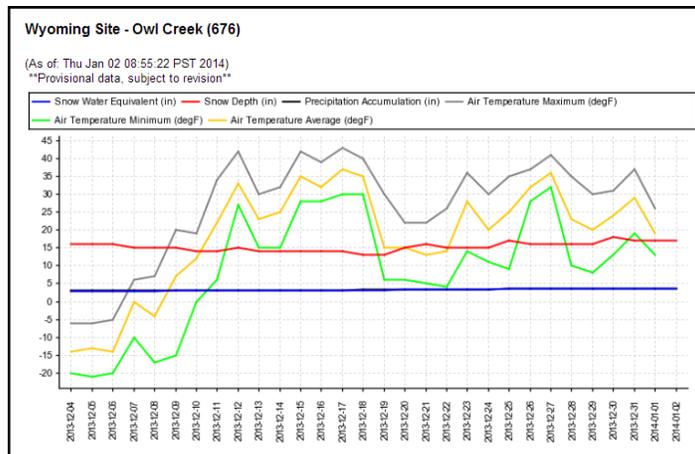
Go to the [new Report Generator Resource Center](#). It has tutorials, FAQs and other tools to help get you started.

Who can benefit from using these data and products?

Farmers, municipalities, water and hydroelectric utilities, environmental organizations,

fish and wildlife managers, tribal nations, reservoir managers, recreationists, wetlands managers, urban developers, transportation departments, and research organizations regularly use these data.

For more information on **Report Generator**, contact [Gus Goodbody](#) at 503-414-3033.



Report Generator's single station chart

SnowPAC tackles budget, staffing issues

Representatives from 12 western states met in Portland, Oregon, December 2-5 for the annual SnowPAC (Snow Program Advisory Committee) meeting.

SnowPAC is a team comprised of state data collection officers, water supply specialists and National Water and Climate Center (NWCC) staff. The team meets monthly via teleconference to resolve issues and share information as it relates to the Snow Survey and Water Supply Forecasting (SSWSF) Program.

The 2013 annual SnowPAC meeting focused on how to respond to ongoing budget and staffing issues, both at the NWCC and within the States.

The Continuing Resolution, sequestration, and other budget issues have forced difficult decisions for some states this year, including the

move to discontinue the measurement of some snow courses.

Travel restrictions have meant less time in the field to perform maintenance, provide outreach, and work face-to-face with our customers. As an example, several participants this year chose not to travel to Portland, and participated in the meeting via video teleconference.

In addition, the inability to replace key vacancies within the Program was discussed. The good news on this front is the recent opening for several important positions within the Program.

The committee brainstormed on ways they could be more efficient in their activities. Several ideas surfaced, including sharing duties across states, centralizing some purchasing activities, and locating some

employees nearer to their work.

Another result of the meeting was the formation of a Web Content Committee. **Laurel Grimsted** (NWCC), **Scott Pattee** (Washington Water Supply Specialist) and **Brian Domonkos** (Montana Data Collection Office) will lead this effort.

George Couch, National Headquarters Public Affairs, presented information to the group relating to web site migration, including new features in the Web Contribution Tool.

New products, such as Report Generator, the Streamflow Adjustment Calculator, and External Data Fetch were demonstrated by **Rashawn Tama** and **Gus Goodbody**, NWCC Water and Climate Services.

Continued page 4



Front Row: Laurel Grimsted, Tom Perkins, Rose Loehr, Jan Curtis. **Back Row:** Curt Charles, BJ Shoup, Ron Abramovich, Cara McCarthy, Brian Domonkos, Jolyne Lea, Maggie Dunklee, Mike Strobel, Scott Oviatt, Tony Tolsdorf, Troy Brosten, Daniel Fisher, Mage Hulstrand, Gus Goodbody, Julie Koeberle. **Not Pictured:** Rashawn Tama, Melissa Webb, John Weeks, Dino DeSimone, Greg Norris, Jeff Anderson, Phil Morrissey, Wayne Sleep, Amy Burke, Randy Julander, Beau Uriana, Kent Sutcliffe, Jordan Clayton, Scott Pattee, Ken Von Buettner, Karl Wetlaufer, Jeffrey O'Connell, George Couch. **Photo by:** Jacquie Workman



Monthly Climate Science/Management Digest

The North Pacific Landscape Conservation Cooperative (NPLCC) is now providing managers, scientists, and the public a monthly e-publication called the ***NPLCC Climate Science/Management Digest***.

The monthly e-publication is designed to increase access to climate change information important to natural and cultural resource managers throughout the North Pacific LCC region.

Each Science/Management Digest focuses on climate-related aspects of resource management and highlights:

- Learning opportunities
- Effects to species, habitats and ecosystems
- Adaptation practices/opportunities
- Research on reducing/mitigation impacts
- Climate trends reports
- Significant climate change findings

Click [here](#) to see the September 2013 issue.

Each e-digest is aimed at helping North Pacific LCC partners -- and all parties throughout the Pacific Temperate Forest region -- stay connected to management-relevant climate change information. The report is technical in nature and is targeted to resource management specialists, the conservation community, students and the research community.

The digest also provides access to tools, knowledge and resources to incorporate this information into relevant man-

agement decisions. This communication will also provide a forum for research entities within the LCC to share their new publications, products and announcements.

To receive monthly issues of the Climate Science/Management Digest, join the NPLCC's list serve ([link](#)).

To learn more about the North Pacific LCC, and what they're doing to advance conservation and sustainable resource management in a changing world, visit their website at NPLCC.org.



Prince of Wales Island, Southeast AK

SnowPAC annual meeting

...from page 3

John Weeks, Electronics Maintenance Facility lead, presented an overview of the new Master Station components, as well as the scope of the maintenance activities his team provides.

Tony Tolsdorf, Water and Climate Monitoring acting lead, provided an update on the fluidless snow pillow project, upcoming safety training, and cell phone telemetry.

NWCC Climatologist **Jan Curtis** gave the committee an update on the PRISM Data QC project and provided a seasonal weather outlook.

Recent activities from the Investment Review Board (IRB) were covered by Jolyne **Lea**, NWCC Forecast Hydrologist and IRB team representative. **Cara McCarthy**, Senior Forecast Hydrologist, presented data from the recent 1000-year rainfall event in Colorado.

Curt Charles, Team Vistrionix, provided an overview of the projects underway by the Center's software development contractors.

Information Systems Team lead **Laurel Grimsted** discussed high level goals and deliverables from her team.

To round out the meeting, representatives from each of the 12 states shared highlights of their activities for the year.

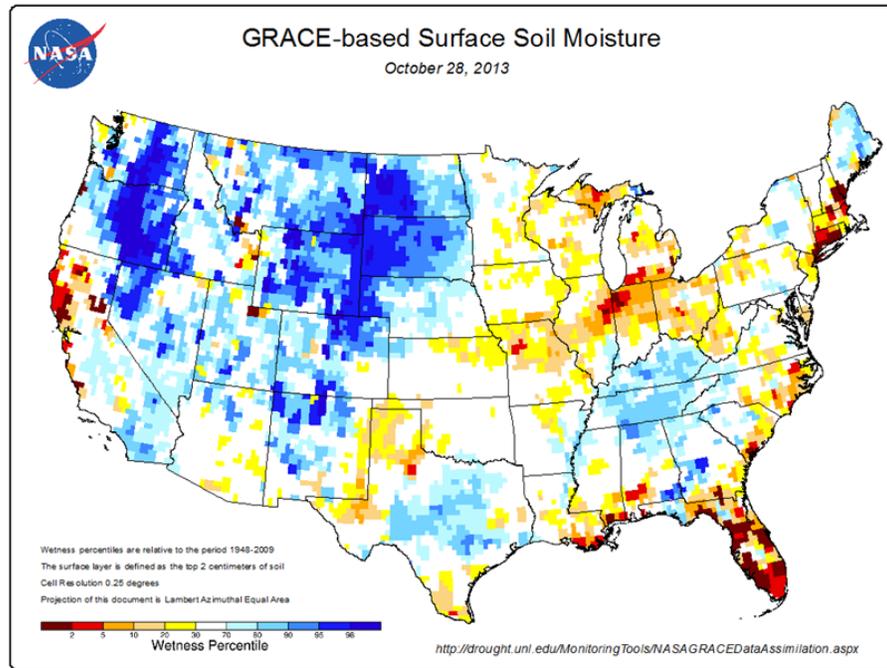
Groundwater, soil moisture conditions from GRACE data assimilation

Scientists at NASA's Goddard Space Flight Center generate [groundwater and soil moisture drought indicators](#) each week.

The indicators are based on terrestrial water storage observations derived from Gravity Recovery and Climate Experiment (GRACE) satellite data and integrated with other observations, using a sophisticated numerical model of land surface water and energy processes.

GRACE satellites detect small changes in the Earth's gravity field caused by the redistribution of water on and beneath the land surface.

The drought indicators describe current wet or dry conditions, expressed as a percentile showing the probability of occurrence within the period of record from 1948 to the present, with lower values (warm colors) meaning dryer than normal, and higher values (blues) meaning wetter than normal.



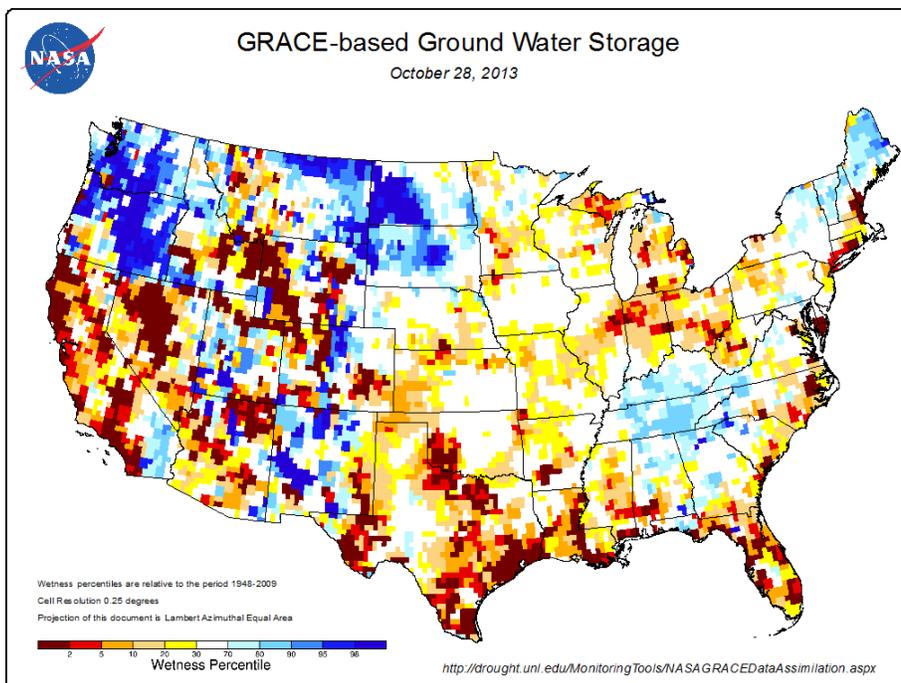
The maps are meant to depict drought associated with climatic variability, as opposed to depletion of aquifers due to groundwater withdrawals that exceed recharge.

The meteorological data includes precipitation, tempera-

ture, solar radiation and other ground- and space-based measurements.

They are provided as both images and binary data files.

For more information contact [Matthew Rodell](#).





Spotlight On...Wayne Sleep

This issue's spotlight is on Wayne Sleep, New Mexico Water Supply Specialist

Wayne Sleep has called New Mexico home for most of his life.

Born in the northern part of the state, Wayne moved with his family to a small farm near Silver City when he was a boy. He remembers his father having to rely on runoff water for irrigating his crops and pasturelands.

Perhaps this is what first sparked Wayne's interest in water supply?

Wayne graduated from New Mexico State University with a degree in Agriculture Economics and Business. After college, he accepted an internship with a grain company in Kansas. In his role as a crop consultant he performed field checks and made watering recommendations.

After a few years in Kansas, Wayne decided to return to

New Mexico, where he worked for a large ranch for about 18 months.

When a job for an NRCS soil conservationist opened in his area, Wayne made the jump from the private sector to the public sector. That was in January 2002.

As part of his early duties, Wayne was introduced to snow course measurements. As with many others in the Snow Survey and Water Supply Program, this was all it took. He was hooked.

Over the years, Wayne has taken on more responsibility for his state's water supply information needs. He recently automated the process of distributing Basin Outlook Reports and other water supply data to his user community.

He has also been instrumental in building strong, ongoing relationships with local media outlets, including television and print. In addressing local and regional water issues Wayne helps to "expose the Program."



Wayne at the Rice Park SNOTEL site.

Wayne also enjoys working with "non-traditional" users like skiers and recreationists.

Due to the fact New Mexico has been in a long-term drought situation (the last three years being the driest on record), Wayne says one challenge has been keeping up with drought issues as well as water supply issues in the state. As he puts it, "Water is crucial in New Mexico."

In his off-work time, Wayne enjoys all kinds of outdoor activities, especially hiking, hunting and fishing. He also has a slew of ongoing remodeling and construction projects.

His three daughters, ages 6, 9 and 12, help keep everyone busy, too. Between the gym, ballet classes and 4H meetings, the Sleep household is an active one.

When speaking of his family, Wayne puts it simply, "They are my source of joy and excitement."

"I think the time I spent working in the private sector helped me understand our users' needs better"



Allison (6), Abigail (9) and Amanda Sleep (12).

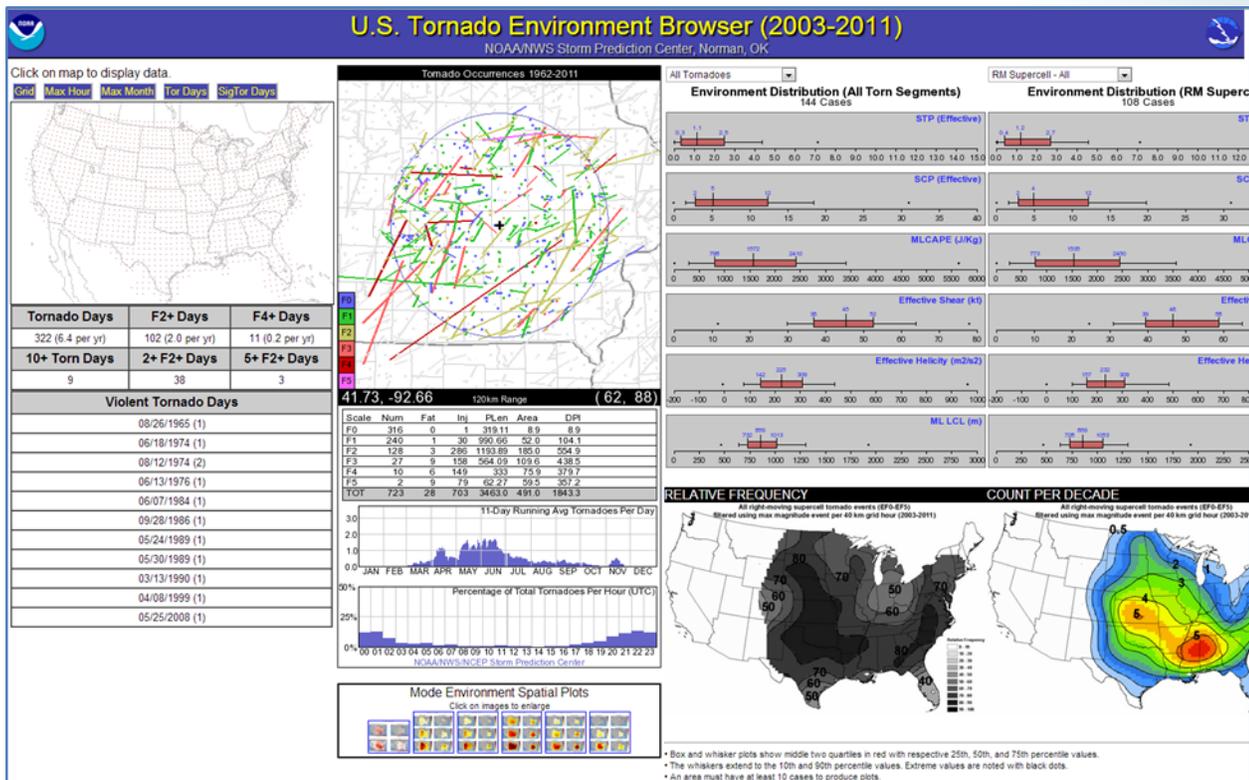
US Tornado Environment Browser

The National Weather Service (NWS) Storm Prediction Center (SPC), based in Norman, Oklahoma, has introduced a [US Tornado Environment Browser](#).

This web resource provides data such as the number and severity of tornado occurrences, relative frequency of tornadoes, count per decade and distribution in the environment. The site also offers

mode environment spatial plots.

Simply click on an area in the map at the upper left of the browser to select the location of the data to view.



US Tornado Event Browser showing data for central Iowa.

Call for Papers: Western Snow Conference

The 82nd Western Snow Conference (WSC) will be held April 14-17, in Durango, Colorado.

Interested individuals are invited to submit an abstract of 150-300 words by January 31, 2014. Click [here](#) for an abstract submission form.

Some topics to consider for submission of papers: Human Impacts on Snow, Climate Change Impacts on Snow and Runoff, Water Management and Forecasting, Snow Meas-

urement and Instrumentation, Remote Sensing, Spatial and Temporal Variability, and Mountain and Hydrological Processes. However, submissions on all aspects of the cryosphere are welcome.

The South Continental Committee is busy compiling a full agenda of oral and poster papers, a Monday morning short course and a Thursday technical tour. Additional information will be posted on the WSC web page.

Check the [WSC web page](#) for conference registration and the most current information, or contact one of the Chairs for more information.

[Peter Palmer](#), General Chair, (208) 385-9198.

[Randy Julander](#), Local Chair, (801) 524-5213.



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 | Jolyne Lea 503-414-3040 | jolyne.lea@por.usda.gov |
| | Data Collection Office Supervisor | Daniel Fisher 907-271-2424 | daniel.fisher@ak.usda.gov |
| Arizona | Forecast Hydrologist | Gus Goodbody 503-414-3033 | angus.goodbody@por.usda.gov |
| | Water Supply Specialist | Dino De Simone 602-280-8786 | dino.desimone@az.usda.gov |
| California | Forecast Hydrologist | Jolyne Lea 503-414-3040 | jolyne.lea@por.usda.gov |
| | Water Supply Specialist | Greg Norris 530-792-5609 | greg.norris@ca.usda.gov |
| Colorado | Forecast Hydrologist | Cara McCarthy 503-414-3088 | cara.s.mccarthy@por.usda.gov |
| | Hydrologist | Mage Hultstrand 720-544-2855 | mage.hultstrand@co.usda.gov |
| | Data Collection Office Supervisor (acting) | B.J. Shoup 720-544-2850 | william.shoup@co.usda.gov |
| Idaho | Data Collection Officer | Phil Morrissey 208-685-6983 | phil.morrissey@id.usda.gov |
| | Forecast Hydrologist | Rashawn Tama 503-414-3010 | rashawn.tama@por.usda.gov |
| | Water Supply Specialist | Ron Abramovich 208-378-5741 | ron.abramovich@id.usda.gov |
| Montana | Data Collection Office Supervisor | Scott Oviatt 406-587-6844 | scott.oviat@mt.usda.gov |
| | Forecast Hydrologist | Cara McCarthy 503-414-3088 | cara.s.mccarthy@por.usda.gov |
| | Water Supply Specialist | Brian Domankos 406-587-6991 | brian.domankos@mt.usda.gov |
| Nevada | Forecast Hydrologist | Jolyne Lea 503-414-3040 | jolyne.lea@por.usda.gov |
| | Water Supply Specialist (acting) | Beau Uriona 801-524-5213 x16 | beau.uriona@ut.usda.gov |
| New Mexico | Forecast Hydrologist | Gus Goodbody 503-414-3033 | angus.goodbody@por.usda.gov |
| | Water Supply Specialist | Wayne Sleep 505-761-4431 | wayne.sleep@nm.usda.gov |
| Oregon | Forecast Hydrologist | Rashawn Tama 503-414-3010 | rashawn.tama@por.usda.gov |
| | Hydrologist | Melissa Webb 503-414-3270 | melissa.webb@or.usda.gov |
| Utah | Data Collection Officer Supervisor (acting) | Thor Thorson 503-414-3003 | thor.thorson@or.usda.gov |
| | Forecast Hydrologist | Gus Goodbody 503-414-3033 | angus.goodbody@por.usda.gov |
| Washington | Snow Survey Supervisor | Randy Julander 801-524-5213 | randy.julander@ut.usda.gov |
| | Forecast Hydrologist | Rashawn Tama 503-414-3010 | rashawn.tama@por.usda.gov |
| Wyoming | Water Supply Specialist | Scott Pattee 360-428-7684 | scott.pattee@wa.usda.gov |
| | Forecast Hydrologist | Cara McCarthy 503-414-3088 | cara.s.mccarthy@por.usda.gov |
| All States | Water Supply Specialist | Lee Hackleman 307-233-6744 | lee.hackleman@wy.usda.gov |
| | Center Director/Program Manager | Mike Strobel 503-414-3055 | michael.strobel@por.usda.gov |
| | Database Manager | Del Gist 503-414-3007 | del.gist@por.usda.gov |
| | Database Manager | Maggie Dunklee 503-414-3049 | maggie.dunklee@por.usda.gov |
| | Information Systems Team Lead | Laurel Grimsted 503-414-3053 | laurel.grimsted@por.usda.gov |
| | Meteorologist | Jan Curtis 503-414-3017 | jan.curtis@por.usda.gov |
| | Modeling Hydrologist | David Garen 503-414-3021 | david.garen@por.usda.gov |
| | Operations Specialist (SNOTEL/SCAN) | Rose Loehr 503-414-3042 | rose.loehr@por.usda.gov |
| | Resource Conservationist | Vacant | |
| | Statistical Assistant/SCAN QC | Denise Schilling 406-727-7580 | denise.schilling@mt.usda.gov |
| Water & Climate Monitoring Team Lead (acting) | Tony Tolsdorf 503-414-3006 | tony.tolsdorf@por.usda.gov | |
| Water & Climate Services Team Lead | Tom Perkins 503-414-3059 | tom.perkins@por.usda.gov | |

Upcoming events

Events of interest in the coming months.



[Randy Julander](#). Local Chair, (801) 524-5213.

What: 82nd Western Snow Conference

When: April 14-17, 2014

Where: Durango, Colorado

How: [Conference Web Site](#)

More Information:

[Peter Palmer](#), General Chair, (208) 385-9198.

In Memoriam: Mary Irene Martin (1948-2013)



Mary graduated from Western Oregon University in Monmouth as a math teacher. Lucky for the USDA, she decided to pursue a career in information technology instead. She started with the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) in 1978 as a computer operator on the Information Resource Management staff at the West National Technical Center (WNTC) in Portland, Oregon.

After Mary mastered the Harris computer, her job evolved into computer support for the entire center as employees were starting to get computers. She became an expert in communications (DAR), the Water and Climate Information System, server and PC operations, documentation, equipment management, and procurement.

In 1994, the Oregon State Office and the WNTC collocated so the IRM staffs were combined. Mary started providing support to state employees also. In 1995, the WNTC was closed and Mary was moved to the National Water and Climate (NWCC) staff. She had a way of making herself invaluable no matter what the task involved.

As a part of the USDA Information Technology Convergence in 2004, Mary was moved to International Technology Services (ITS). She continued to excel.

Mary provided her brand of great support outside of the work place. Don Domes from Hillsboro High School wrote the following message:

"Mary volunteered at Hillsboro High School in the Counseling and Engineering Technology Departments for many years. Mary was passionate about helping students succeed and doing whatever needed to be done to help create a better learning environment.

She was gifted as a grant writer and composed many grant and award documents. Her efforts resulted in the engineering related programs being recognized both locally and nationally.

She was THE executive assistant behind the scenes that made so many wonderful things happen. Her attention to detail and tenacity were inspirational. She had a unique ability to wordsmith and format documents in interesting and award winning ways. Mary was a remarkable and key member of our team and we miss her greatly."

Throughout her life, Mary willingly helped other people. Al, her husband, said "she was the motor that kept things going." She helped one cousin buy her first car, move, and made her wedding gown. One summer she helped make a wedding gown for her friend's daughter, a medieval

wedding gown for the same friend's daughter-in-law, and parts of 33 other costumes for the medieval wedding. Mary helped her brother, Tex, when he became disabled. She also spent many weekends helping a friend clean out her grandparents' house which only had narrow walkways in it. Mary was always finding unique and special little gifts that she thought would improve other people's lives.

At the work place and in her personal life, we all knew Mary as a customer service expert. She always put the customer's needs first. Her intelligence and great troubleshooting skills were demonstrated when she creatively solved problems for her users.

Mary was always willing to take on the most challenging tasks and projects. Her USDA customers will definitely miss her outstanding help and problem solving skills.

Laurel Grimsted
Information Systems Team
Lead





Rainfall Atlas of Hawaii

While many of us are in the throes of winter snowfall, our neighbors in Hawai'i are experiencing much warmer temperatures and rainy conditions.

The [Rainfall Atlas of Hawai'i](#) is a set of maps of the spatial patterns of rainfall for the

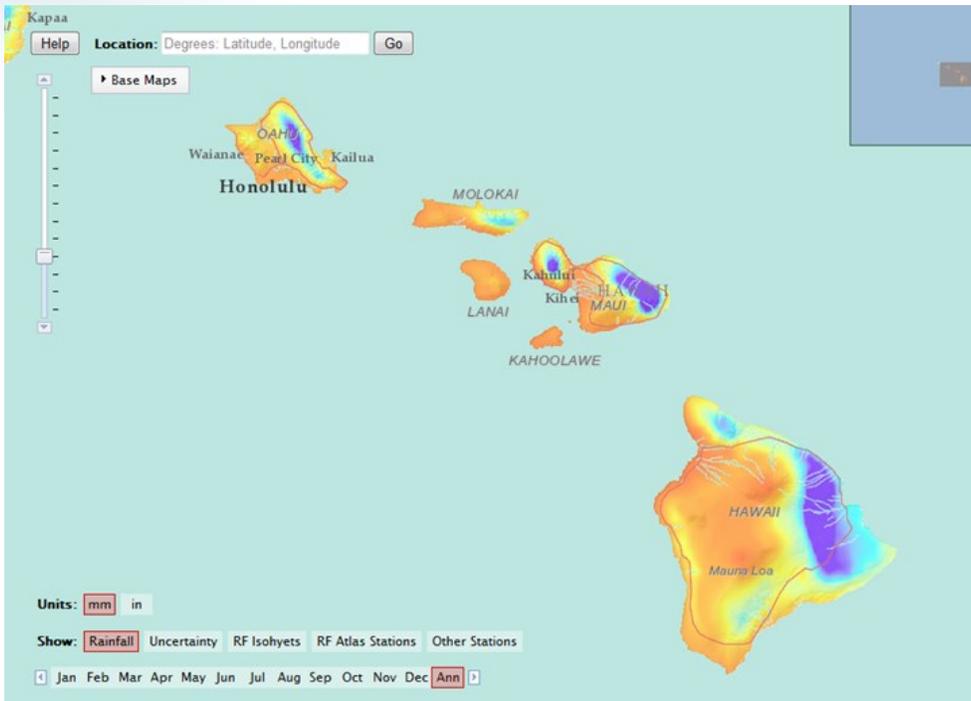
major Hawaiian Islands. Maps are available for mean monthly and annual rainfall. Developed by the State of Hawaii Commission on Water Resource Management and the US Army Corps of Engineers, the maps depict rainfall

patterns by color and by isohyets (lines of equal rainfall).

The Atlas is hosted by the Geography Department at the University of Hawaii at Manoa.

The [interactive map](#) feature lets users see the patterns of mean monthly and annual rainfall and corresponding uncertainty, zoom in on areas of particular interest, navigate to specific locations with the help of a choice of different base maps, and click on any location to get the mean annual rainfall and a graph and table of mean monthly rainfall.

The interactive map also shows station locations. Selecting a station provides station and mapped estimates of monthly rainfall, along with station metadata.



Source Credit: Giambelluca, T.W., Q. Chen, A.G. Frazier, J.P. Price, Y.-L. Chen, P.-S. Chu, J.K. Eischeid, and D.M. Delporte, 2013: Online Rainfall Atlas of Hawai'i. *Bull. Amer. Meteor. Soc.* 94, 313-316, doi: 10.1175/BAMS-D-11-00228.1



NWCC highlights

The retirement of several Snow Survey and Water Supply Forecasting Program employees is highlighted this month.

After 46 years of service, **Jim Marron**, Resource Conservationist, retired from his position at the National Water and Climate Center in October of last year.

In the field, **Dan Greenlee**, Water Supply Specialist for Nevada, retired on November 1. Dan had worked for NRCS for 22 years. **Paul Gallegos**,

Electronics Technician in the Colorado Data Collection Office retired in December.

January 2014 marks the retirement of two other long-time NWCC employees:

Tom Perkins, Water and Climate Services Team Leader, will retire on January 31. Tom has worked with the government for 40 years; 31 of those years with the Snow Survey and Water Supply Forecasting Program.

Last, but not least, **Rose Loehr**, IT Operations Specialist, will retire with over 24 years of service to the Center. Known as "Miss SNOTEL," Rose's last day will also be January 31.

The contributions each of these individuals has made to the growth and success of our Center and our Program are too numerous to mention.

Thank you, Jim, Dan, Paul, Tom and Rose for your service. We all wish you the best!



This photo of Mt. Hood shrouded in mist is courtesy of Jan Curtis, NWCC Climatologist

Photo of the month

Products and resources on the web

PRISM Climate and Weather System Introduction

The [PRISM Climate Group](#) is part of the Northwest Alliance for Computational Science and Engineering, based at Oregon State University.

The group gathers climate observations from a wide range of monitoring networks, applies sophisticated quality control measures, and develops spatial climate datasets to reveal short- and long-term climate patterns. The resulting datasets incorporate a variety of modeling techniques and are available at multiple spatial/temporal resolutions, covering the period from 1895 to the present.

The PRISM Climate Group recently published an **Introduction to the PRISM Climate and Weather System**. Click [here](#) to read more.

Crucial Habitat Assessment Tool

The Western Governors' Association (WGA) recently introduced the Crucial Habitat Assessment Tool (CHAT) for regional planning.

CHAT provides a "30,000-foot view" of habitat that can be used for projects as varied as "macro-siting" energy corridors and transmission routes, to comparing fish and wildlife habitat across the West.

The free, [online tool](#) was unveiled at a press conference at the conclusion of the WGA's **2013 Winter Meeting** in Las Vegas.

CHAT is designed to enable industry to reduce time, costs, conflicts and surprises. It also will help conservation groups, state and Federal agencies ensure wildlife values are better incorporated into land use decision-making.

Download a four-page publication with CHAT highlights [here](#).

Interactive Soil Moisture Data Map

The North American Soil Moisture Database (NASMDB) at Texas A&M University provides academic, industry, governments researchers and decision-makers with information to do science, drive data-informed policy, and be responsive to environmental change.

A new, [interactive map](#) provides an easy to use interface for downloading data from the database.

Simply select the stations, years, and reading depths and click **Extract**. This will start the extract process and email you with a link to download the results.





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

“During the shutdown, the website at the National Water and Climate Center was, at first, the only active site for NRCS. We were considered mission-critical to the nation ...”



USDA NRCS is an equal opportunity employer and provider

From the Director's desk What is essential?



During the shutdown of the Federal government in October, hundreds of thousands of employees were furloughed as “non-essential” for this period. This classification received much attention in the press and had many people asking why the government keeps positions that are not essential.

Titles and labels have the power to both elevate and degrade the general perception of individuals or groups of people. In the case of “non-essential,” this certainly didn't improve the view of government employees for many in the public and demoralized the attitudes of many federal workers.

There have been many suggested classifications that would have been better, such as “critical or non-critical” to describe immediate need versus long-term need for positions. I hope the classification of our employees is given more thought before future shutdowns.

In deciding what was “essential,” the government looked at risk to life and property. Even then, the argument could be made that personnel in the National Weather Service are essential for flood and storm warnings and the per-

sonnel in the U.S. EPA are essential for monitoring and protecting our water supplies, yet most of their staffs were furloughed. The critical nature of these roles in collecting and monitoring data for public benefit was often overshadowed in the media by stories of park and museum closures.

For the Snow Survey and Water Supply Forecasting Program, all of our personnel were deemed “non-essential” except for one individual each day to serve as duty officer to monitor data flow and web service.

During the shutdown, the website at the National Water and Climate Center was, at first, the only active public site for NRCS. We were considered mission-critical to the nation and we needed to keep access to our data and products available to our users.

This says a great deal about us, and something I take huge pride in pointing out. First, we built a robust, automated data system that operated throughout the 16-day shutdown without problems. The efforts made to construct the SNOTEL and web services operations proved successful.

Second, the fact that we were the sole portal for NRCS during most of this period showcases the critical importance of our program and mission, not only to the agency, but to the nation.

In previous government shutdowns, our program personnel were identified as essential and worked during furloughs. It was my decision this time not to request this classification for us (besides our duty officers). Part of my rationale

was due to the robust, automated system we built. Part of it was because it was still early October, and although the Black Hills and parts of Wyoming got a huge snow during the furlough, for most of the West it was still prior to the snow season. And part of it was the spirit of the shutdown and that there needed to be (in my interpretation) an immediate risk to life and property.

If I had felt this risk increasing during the shutdown which would have required our participation, I would have requested a decision to allow our staff to return. That didn't happen.

What happens if we shut down again?

It depends on the time of year and if there is an immediate risk to life and property. We will evaluate those factors should the situation arise in the future.

My overall point is that everyone in our program is, in my judgment, essential and critical. Don't allow labels or critics to tell you otherwise.

People value our data and products, and respect the work all of you do to maintain the quality, integrity and availability of that information. I am exceedingly proud to be associated with this Program and the people with whom I work.

Mike