

A Science Service Feature

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? WHY THE WEATHER ? Mailed Feb. 21, 1935

SNOW SURVEYS

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The season has now arrived when interest grows keen in the West concerning the amount of water stored in the form of snow on mountain slopes, from which will come the main supply for power, irrigation and other purposes during the spring and summer.

Some years ago forecasts on this subject were little better than guesses. A new era arrived with introduction of "snow surveys." Pioneered mainly in Nevada, under the direction of Prof. J. E. Church Jr., though preceded by some experimental work elsewhere, these surveys have now spread to several other states.

The methods of the snow-surveyor are entirely different from the old plan of sizing up the mountain snowfields by means of fixed gauges, snow-stakes, etc. The procedure consists of determining the water content of the snow cover along suitably selected "snow courses" in each river basin by cutting and weighing samples of snow at intervals along each course, these measurements being made at the same points every year. The results of the survey are compared with a normal, based on the records of previous seasons, and an indication of the run-off from the melting snows is thus obtained.

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