

# Rio Grande River basin snow is studied

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A multi-million dollar, 10-year study is under way in the Rio Grande basin to track the water cycle from the river's Colorado headwaters across New Mexico.

Paul Brooks, a hydrologist at the University of Arizona, told the Albuquerque Journal researchers want improve water management and policy by filling in knowledge gaps.

For example, he said while snow is a significant contributor to the region's water, scientists don't know how much that contribution is or how long it takes to recharge ground water levels. Nor do they know exactly where the high-elevation snows enter the ground water or to what extent other environmental factors influence ground water recharge.

The information is important, since the region's ground water is the primary source of water for much of the Southwestern United States, the Journal said.

Funded by a National Science Foundation grant, researchers are collecting such data as snowpack depths, carbon dioxide exchange rates with the atmosphere, soil moisture, wind speeds, solar radiation, temperature, and relative humidity.

"The science that we learn here will be transportable to much of the West," Brooks told the newspaper.

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