

Thin Colorado snowpack reported again

May 22 2006

Another warm and dry spring in Colorado has resulted in a thin snow pack possibly increasing risk of wildfires and parched farm fields, a report said.

Colorado mountain snow depths are way below average, with the snow already gone near some mountain treelines, and scattered areas expect to be entirely devoid of snow by Memorial Day, the Denver Post reported Monday.

"The snow pack that looked healthy six weeks ago is melting very fast," Klaus Wolter, a University of Colorado climatologist, told the newspaper. "We might end up with one of the earliest melt-offs ever."

Wolter says the state has been experiencing a yearly spring warming trend since 1995. He notes the "mud season" lasted into July during wet years. "This year we've had a few mud hours," he said. "That's it."

Although snow depths were above average in four of eight Colorado River basins last month, April was so dry and windy that some of the snow simply blew into the clouds instead of melting, The Post reported.

The past week has been so hot and dry that western Colorado already faces a "red-flag warning" for forest fires.

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