

Writer:

David Frey

Byline:

Aspen Daily News Staff Writer

EL JEBEL — Local rivers, already running high and fast, are expected to reach their peak in 10 to 20 days.

It's an early runoff, especially compared to last year, when a cool spring and heavy snows left high water peaking in late June.

This spring's heavy runoff is due in part to late snows that pushed snowpack levels up above average in the Colorado River drainage and much of the state.

It's peaking early, said Dave Kanzer, senior water resources engineer for the Colorado River District, due partly to the dust storms that have coated the snow on area mountains, causing the snow to melt faster than usual. Officials have counted 12 different storms that have left area white-capped peaks with a distinctly reddish hue.

The Colorado River below Glenwood Springs was running at 10,700 cubic feet per second Wednesday afternoon, nearly double a week ago.

The Roaring Fork River at Glenwood Springs was running at 3,940 cfs Wednesday afternoon, up from 2,000 cfs a week ago. Near Aspen it was running at 325 cfs.

In an unusual turnaround, Western Slope peaks are melting faster than on the Eastern Slope, Kanzer said.

The runoff has Ruedi Reservoir filling well, Kanzer said, boding well for summer water users.

"We were really heading for a problem when we had a nice late March and early April," Kanzer said. That period brought some spring snow to the peaks that were getting bare and helped boost snowpack to above-average levels.

Kanzer discussed the runoff situation on Tuesday at the annual state of the Roaring Fork River Basin, a joint presentation by the Colorado River District and the Roaring Fork Conservancy.

dfrey@aspensdailynews.com

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Megan Frye, left, and her mother, Marilyn, walk across a bridge overlooking Hunter Creek on the base of the Hunter Creek Trail on Wednesday.

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