

Announcing... NWS “Snow Survey Days”!!!

A snow survey is a measure of the water content in a snow pack, which is also known as Snow Water Equivalent (SWE).

During the winter months, our region can accumulate layers of snow from multiple snow storms, creating a deep snow pack. People such as hydrologists, engineers, power companies, and emergency managers are interested in the water content of the snow pack. Knowing the amount of water in the snow assists with flood control, can determine runoff into rivers, and helps monitor drought conditions and water supply.

As a CoCoRaHS observer, you may have reported SWE before. Whether you are a “seasoned” observer or are a new recruit, these valued reports are much appreciated!

Each winter, the National Weather Service releases a schedule for snow surveys, which are typically done every 2 weeks by Cooperative Weather Observers. A snow survey is conducted when there is **2 inches or more of snow depth on the ground. This year, we invite all CoCoRaHS observers in southern New England to participate!**

Below is the Snow Survey Schedule for this winter. During the scheduled weeks, the reporting window falls between Mondays and Wednesdays. We ask that you include your SWE report ***preferably on Wednesday mornings during the scheduled week.*** If it is more convenient in your schedule to do a snow survey on a Monday or Tuesday of the scheduled week, then feel free to do so.

2010 Snow Survey Dates

Mon Jan 4 – Wed Jan 6

Mon Jan 18 – Wed Jan 20

Mon Feb 1 – Wed Feb 3

Mon Feb 15 – Wed Feb 17

Mon Mar 1 – Wed Mar 3

Mon Mar 15 – Wed Mar 17

So how do you do a SWE measurement of snow survey? If the snow depth on the ground is 2 inches or more, take your rain gauge overflow can (the larger outside one), turn it upside down and press it into the snow pack. Once you have met the ground, tilt the overflow can back up. Hopefully the snow core will remain intact inside the can. If not, pick up the loose snow as outlined in the cut and place it in the can. Take the snow core inside and let it melt. You can add a measured amount of hot water to speed up the melting process. Once melted, pour the water into the inner tube and measure to the nearest tenth of an inch. Report this value on your CoCoRaHS online form, along with your snow depth. More detailed instructions on determining SWE (along with photos) can be found in the Training section of the CoCoRaHS web site.