

Spring 2023 Run Off

Since 1970 the Federal Government has collected data on the water content of our winter snow. The measuring site for our area is located near the summit between North Fork and American Fork Canyons. For statistical reason, they use medians as the statistical tool, and publish the information on the Snotel Utah website. As of March 19, the median was 246%, which is above the prior peak of 224%, there by breaking all previous reports. That figure represents a column of water about 42 inches deep. It should be clear that in some areas the snow will hold more water and some less. But for our purposes the point is made, we will be dealing with substantially increased run off. How all that extra water will affect us will depend upon several factors. If we have a cool spring with slowly rising temperature, we can expect the snow around our homes to melt and the soil to absorb most of the moisture. There will be second melt that is likely to occur sometime from May to mid-June. This in the past has been the most troublesome melt. In the worst-case spring temperatures will increase dramatically and produce a rapid melt sending large amounts of water down our rivers in a very short time. Even in a normal to cool spring we can expect much more water than we have seen in years.

Except for SR 92 all roads in the canyon are private. Thus, the homeowners and businesses that use them are responsible for their upkeep. In high water bridges, roads that parallel the rivers and dwellings become vulnerable to water damage. If bridges become blocked the river will wash them out and many residences may find themselves isolated. To make matters worse, this heavy snow year has broken many tree branches, toppled trees and in some cases added other debris to the riverbed and adjacent areas. These materials add to the problems we must face. It will be up to individual property owners to remove these potential impediments as the snow melts.

The North Fork Special Service district in its March meeting agreed to establish a committee to deal with the runoff thereat. The District Fire Chief, Dave Marcella will be responsible for leading the effort. He will coordinate and work with Federal, State and County emergency managers, manage and direct District staff. Chris Wright our Public Works Director will assist the Chief in his management duties. Chris has extensive experience in the management of storm water issues and will work closely with the Chief. We have appointed Steve Spiker to coordinate and work with the HOA's in the canyon. The Sundance resort as well as BYU Family Camp are on board as well.

We will let you know of our committee's progress as we continue with our planning and implementation. We will post all meeting actions and try to keep you posted on our day-to-day activities. We are going to utilize our website just go to the Spring 2023 Run Off for information. It should be clear to everyone that District and its personnel cannot take responsibility for the consequences of our efforts, we will do our best, but it is up to you to keep yourself safe.

Stewart Olsen
Vice Chair
North Fork Special Service District