

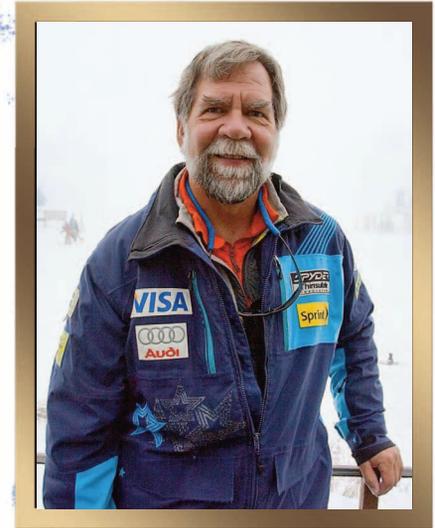
Nominated by:
Barbara Bryant
Steve Coxen

Jordan-Reily Nomination

Ron Abramovich

Years of Service: 2020 - 2022

Idaho's hydrology profession had big snowshoes to fill at the end of April 2019 when **Ron Abramovich** retired from the Boise-based USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) Snow Survey as the state's water supply specialist. He was the Idaho state snow survey's public face for decades. He spent many days trekking through untouched snow to measure the snow in Idaho's rugged mountains. He met many local snow and water users across the state to better understand their watershed, the hydrology interaction between surface and ground water, and what makes it flow. He developed many tools such as snow to flow relationship to better understand when their rivers will peak and when the water will run dry, and when to suspend cloud seeding operations.



"I felt lucky to start my 30-year career as Idaho's NRCS Snow Survey" commented Ron. Times were changing from the historic use of manual snow survey data to automated hourly snow SNOTEL (*snow telemetry*) data collected by bouncing radio signals off incoming meteors that burn up as they hit our atmosphere. He considered his job was more as an educator to inform end users on how to use SNOTEL data in their snow water management decisions.

Ron learned to work with the news media on monthly snow surveys by inviting them on monthly treks. By the end of his 30-year Idaho career he was providing 100 news media interviews a year to TV news stations, radio and newspaper publications about current and the ever-changing snow and water supply conditions. After his retirement, he has continued giving 40 presentations a year.

At the 2017 Far West Ski Association Annual Convention in Boise, Ron was invited to share his experiences about working with the news media and "how to get the word out about what you are trying to promote. Never turn down a request for an interview", he told attendees.

Historically snow surveys in the West started in the early 1900s to measure the snow water equivalent (*SWE*) and snow depth above Lake Tahoe to predict summer stream flow. When these flow predictions came true, the installation of snow courses (*snow courses are permanent locations and represent the snow pack at a given elevation in a given area*) across the West spread like wildfire. These manual snow surveys were made by rugged individuals for decades and are still providing a wealth of information of past snowfall patterns. Automated SNOW TELEMETRY (*SNOTEL*) sites replaced many snow courses in the 1980s. "The increase, rapidity, and value of information these automated sites provided was inconceivable compared with waiting until the end of the month to hear from your local snow surveyor about how much snow was measured in your local mountains," noted Ron. Unfortunately, these new SNOTEL sites did not measure the snow depth until 1998 when an ultrasonic snow depth sensor was developed.

This is when the ski community, snowmobilers and winter recreationists became interested in these Snow Survey sites called SNOTELs. Gradually more and more snow depth sensors were installed at SNOTEL sites. In the 1990's the data was collected once a day, and gradually increased to every 6 hours for avalanche polls, and then to hourly data at every site as data collection and transmission improved over the years. The measurement of water content in the snow was invaluable to the ski industry in decision making, and planning for water usage in snowmaking.