Disappointing Winter so far for Mammoth by Mammoth Lakes

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La NiÃ±a often known as the anti-El NiÃ±o, has produced some of the largest snow storms of the last few years throughout the United States. The system often brings colder air flow and temperatures and pushes weather patterns such that a setup occurs where cold air and moisture can meet up and produce significant amounts of snow. So far this year, it is looking like this will not be the case.

In December worry had already begun to set in. December of 2010 saw more than 200 inches of snow, yet December 2011 had only two inches of snow at the same time. At that time the snow pack in reservoirs was a mere quarter of normal and it hasn't improved much though January more than slightly better with 56 inches of snow, yet warm and uneven temperatures has created a base of only 40-60 inches.

The bulk of the January snowfall all took place during the second to last week of January and has quickly fallen of since, requiring the snow machines to come out in the Mammoth area yet again. While the total snow for the season is listed at 108 inches, that amount could be easily argued. A surprise 20 inches fell in October and almost immediately melted. Without that October flurry the total is 88 inches, below the all-time low of 94 and well below the annual average of 400 inches over its 300 yearly days of sun.

At the time of this writing, the second week of February, there are several small systems going through the area but they are only expected to turn out two to four inches of snow at most, hardly enough to provide a significant boost. It will take a late February or possibly even early March deluge of snow to stop this from being one of the lower snow totals for the area on record. This is not unheard of, but as of right now, long term forecasts for most of the area and all throughout the Pacific Northwest are looking mostly dry, in some areas record-breakingly so.

There is still skiing to be had and of course all of the other great things the Mammoth area has to offer including shows, fine dining and family fun. Mammoth currently has 78 runs operating over nearly 709 acres of mountain despite the fact that snow levels are just 37% of normal. Take one of Mammoth's 29 lifts (2 gondolas and 2 high-speed six-packs) throughout over 3,500 skiable acres over 3,100 feet of elevation.

One benefit to low snow totals is that the roads and routes to the Mountain and throughout the area are open and easily navigable with only 18% of normal snowpack at Mammoth Pass. Nearly 99% of the mountain is still open with areas for beginners up through advanced. Nearly half of the mountain is setup for intermediate runs with around 20% for beginner and advanced runs and 15% ready for experts.

So, despite the low snow total, there is still plenty of groomed snow and runs for everyone to have fun on and of course all the great stuff in the town of Mammoth Lakes itself.

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