

THE WEATHER OUTLOOK

on Wednesday, February 20

Clear weekend, then moderate short-wave

by Gary Sprung

THE ONE STORM OF LAST WEEK, on Sunday, came in on an unusual band of clouds which stretched southwest almost to Hawaii and fed into central Colorado--but not southern or northern--and brought two inches here, four inches in Aspen, six in Vail, and none elsewhere. Then that band moved south and gradually developed into the southern jet now increasingly apparent.

Wednesday's "storm" was not connected to the southern system. It came "over the hump" of the big northeastern Pacific ridge which continues to dominate weather in the Northwest. Though it blasted Idaho and Utah, those lands stole its umph and it disappointed all Colorado ski areas.

But the Wednesday night short-wave also drew northward a shot from the southern system to deliver four inches to the southern side of the San Juans.

We expect the ridge to stay in place and control our weather all week as it does today. Friday will be clearer with scattered clouds and highs around 32. The weekend will be quite clear and even warmer.

The next chance for snow is a short-wave due to arrive around Monday, but it's likely to behave the same as Wednesday's did because it will come in on the same path.

The southern jet will be too far south to affect the Gunnison country, but it will likely bring more snow to the San Juans over the week.

On the map, note the cut-off lows situated over Arizona, New Mexico and Texas. (They're cut off from the main jet/long wave flow.) These should increase southerly flows into all of Colorado, bringing warmth. Is this the first hint of spring? Mid-winter's cold is ending; spring brings more storms.

The whole pattern may back up over the next week, which means it may move westward while maintaining the same shape. That would subject central Colorado to more southwesterly winds and probably bring more snow than we've forecast.

Any way you look at it, this won't be a totally dry week. March is statistically the wettest month of the winter/spring season.

Accuracy rating for last week: 70%; for the week before: 20%.

Long wave pattern, Friday through Monday

