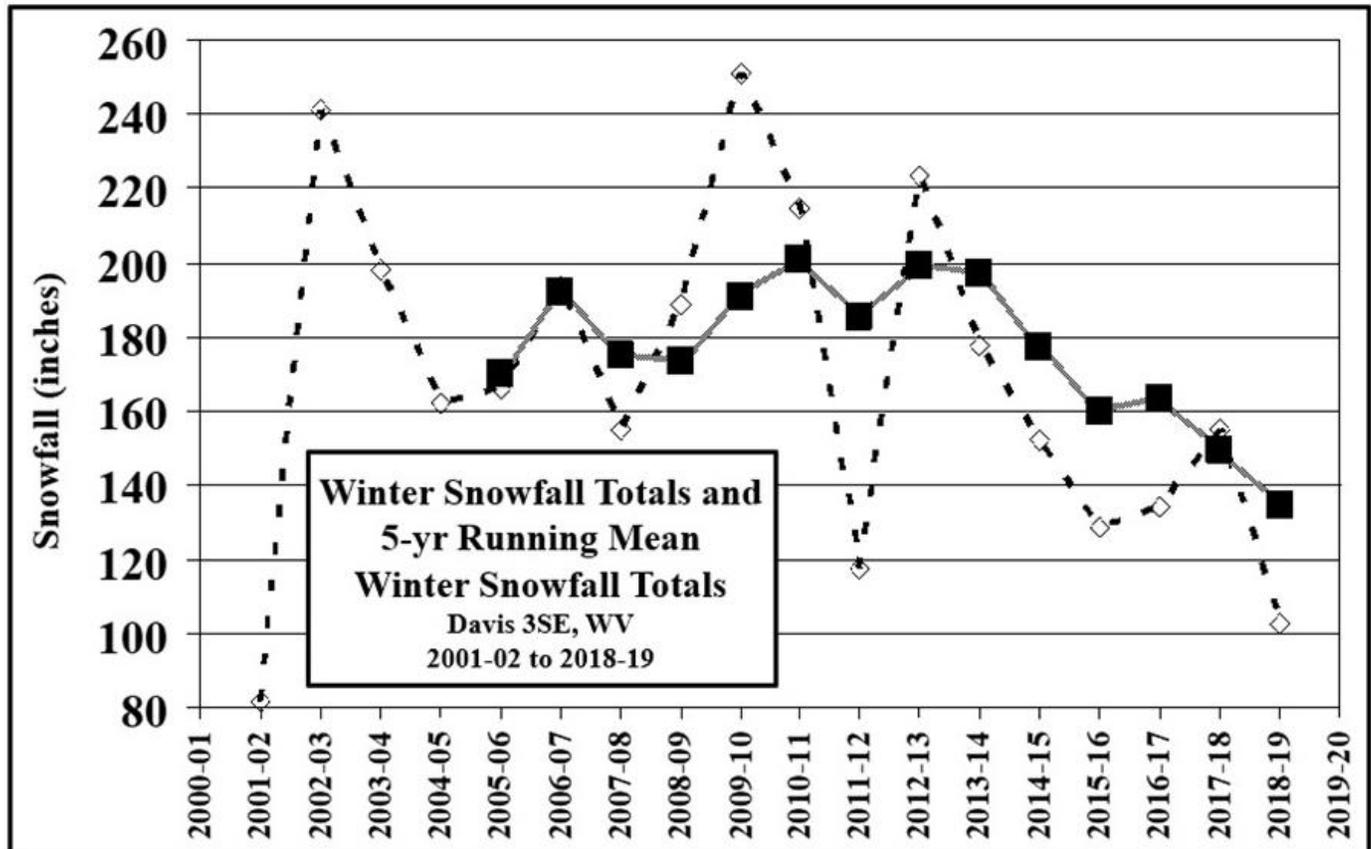


What's Happening to Snowfall in Canaan?

Dave Leshner

For many of the locals and visitors who come to Canaan Valley to ski, it's no secret that it's not been snowing as often and as much in this and the past few winters.

At the Canaan Heights weather station, there's only been 41 inches of snow so far this winter as of January 17. That's 24 inches less than the long-term average for that date. In the 19 years of snowfall measurements there, it's unmistakable that average winter snowfall has been on the decline over the past five winters. And it seems that this winter so far fits into that pattern.



The accompanying chart shows two graphs of snowfall at Canaan Heights for the 18 winters from 2001-02 to 2018-19. The dashed line is graph of the individual winter snowfall totals. The solid line is a graph of the running five-year averages of the individual winter snowfall totals. The graph of five-year averages is a good tool to smooth out the ups-and-downs from year to year and more clearly reveals trends in the data. Note that for the nine winter seasons from 2005 to 2014, the five-year average winter snowfall ranged steadily between about 170 and 200 inches. But that changed after 2014. Since then, the five-year average winter snowfall has steadily declined almost every winter, reaching just 135 inches as shown on the graph.

The slow start of this winter's snowfall so far could mean we're headed for another drop in the five-year average. If that trend is to be reversed in what remains of this winter, well over 100 inches of snow must fall between now and May. It's possible. It's happened before. We'll check

back in a few months to report whether this was the winter that Canaan pulled out of its ongoing snowfall drought.

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