

## 2014 Athabasca River at Fort McMurray Report No. 04

On Sunday, April 13, 2014, an observation flight of the Athabasca River was conducted by Alberta Environment and Sustainable Resource Development. The flight covered an approximately 140 km reach of the Athabasca River from downstream of Grand Rapids to Stony Island, downstream of Fort McMurray.

The Athabasca River ice cover remains intact and in place. No signs of movement in the ice cover were observed during the observation flight. The decay of the ice cover continues to be a process controlled largely by air and water temperatures. Recent snowfalls have slowed this process from the topside of the ice cover, but this process will speed up as the snow on the ice cover melts, water ponds on the ice cover and open leads develop.

River levels have risen near Fort McMurray, but are now holding level, as local snowmelt has made its way into the Athabasca River. The Athabasca River at Athabasca River is rising as snowmelt runoff from southern portions of the Athabasca River flows northward. This runoff has not yet reached the Fort McMurray area.

### Observation Details

#### Athabasca River:

- Pointe La Biche/Livock River to Crooked Rapids – The ice cover in this reach is intact except for at the rapids sections. The rapids sections continue to open up, however the open leads that form near the rapids are still separate and have not formed a continuous open section. Water is ponding along the shorelines and in some locations flow is visible alongside the shorelines. Open leads continue to form at various locations in this reach and small accumulations of broken ice are collecting at the downstream ends of some open leads.
- Crooked Rapids to the Clearwater River Confluence – The ice cover in this reach is intact and in place. The rapids sections in this reach continue to be at various stages of opening up. Small open leads are developing and they have been spilling water onto the ice cover. The ice cover remains largely snow covered, which is delaying wide spread decay of the ice cover.
- Clearwater River Confluence to Stony Island – The ice cover is intact and in place. Open leads and areas of ponded water are appearing on the ice cover near the islands, however the open lead which typically develops along the right bank downstream of the Clearwater River has not formed yet. The main channel ice cover still has a patchy snow cover and widespread decay of the ice cover does not appear to have begun.

#### Clearwater River:

- The ice cover is intact from the confluence and upstream towards the Christina River. Areas where water spilling onto the ice cover from creeks and ponding along the shoreline are appearing. Open leads have not developed yet. The ice cover remains snow covered and widespread decay of the ice cover does not appear to have begun.

The most current information with interactive maps and photos is posted on the Alberta Environment web site at <http://www.environment.alberta.ca/forecasting/RiverIce/index.html>

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