

2015 Athabasca River at Fort McMurray Report No. 2

On Wednesday, April 8, 2015, an observation flight of the Athabasca River was conducted by Alberta Environment and Sustainable Resource Development. The flight covered a 201 km reach of the Athabasca River from the confluence of the House River (km 442) to near Fort McKay (km 241).

The ice jam on the Athabasca River through Fort McMurray has remained in place since the last observation report. There has been no change in conditions at the downstream end, and it has shortened in length (eroded and/or melted and/or consolidated) by less than a kilometre at the upstream end. The localized flooding in low-lying areas at the Syne has persisted. Water level gauges indicate that water levels on the Athabasca River downstream of Fort McMurray have dropped since yesterday afternoon and held steady overnight. Water levels on the Clearwater River at the Draper gauge have also remained stable since midnight.

Observation Details

Athabasca River:

- From the confluence of the House River (km 442) to km 304.5 (the head of the ice jam downstream of Mountain Rapids) – The main channel is clear of ice. Stranded ice remains on the banks. High shear walls, created by the ice jam and ice run, line the river banks. Trace remnant ice was flowing downstream (surface concentration <5%).
- From km 304.5 to 283 – Ice jam is stationary. Side channels in this reach have been filled with stranded ice from the ice run.
- From km 283 to 282 - Immediately downstream of the ice jam there is an open pocket before an intermittent ice cover starts.
- From km 282 to km 275 – Surface ice cover has broken into large intact sheets, which have shifted a short distance downstream.
- From km 275 to km 260 - Deteriorated but intact ice cover with frequent open pockets developing.
- From km 260 to km 250 - Surface ice cover has broken into large intact sheets, which have shifted a short distance downstream.
- From km 250 to km 243 - Deteriorated but intact ice cover with frequent open pockets developing.
- End of observation flight at km 243 - just upstream of Fort McKay.

Clearwater River:

- From km 0 to 3 - Ice from the Athabasca River ice jam has been pushed up the Clearwater River. The backwater from the shoved ice continues to cause localized flooding at the Syne.
- From km 3 to 30 - The Clearwater River ice cover remains intact. Deterioration of the ice cover is progressing slowly, with transverse cracks and partial darkening of the ice cover beginning to show. Open leads are present downstream of the Christina River confluence.

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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