



Water Supply Outlook Overview

For Immediate Release: April 10, 2003

March snowfall significantly improves water supply outlook

Water supply forecasts for Alberta have improved significantly as a result of above-normal snowfall during March in many mountain, foothill, and central and northern plains areas.

Plains areas:

Spring snowmelt runoff is forecast to be above-average to much-above-average in the Peace River, Grande Prairie, and Red Deer regions. Snowpacks range from above-average to much-above-average in these areas.

The Edmonton, Slave Lake and Cold Lake regions also have above-average to much-above-average snowpack, but soil conditions are extremely dry so average to above-average runoff is expected. All other areas of northern and central Alberta are forecast to receive generally below-normal runoff this spring.

Last month, the southern plains areas recorded average to much-above-average runoff due to rapid melting during very warm, sunny weather. Currently, little snow remains south and east of the Red Deer area resulting in no further runoff forecasted.

Mountain areas:

Heavy March snowfall increased the snowpack by approximately 20% in the upper Oldman and Bow River basins, and 50% in the Red Deer and North Saskatchewan River basins. However, as of April 1, 2003 the mountain snowpack is generally below-average to much-below average for this time of year. Snowpack measurements generally range from 70 to 90% of average for this time of year, ranking from third lowest to twenty-first lowest on record.

Below-average to much-below-average mountain runoff volumes are forecast for the March to September 2003 period in the Milk, Oldman, Bow, Red Deer, and North Saskatchewan River basins, generally ranging from 60 to 90% of average. Current forecasted volumes are higher than those recorded in 2001, but lower than those recorded during the same period last year except in the Red Deer River basin where forecasted volumes are similar to 2002 recorded volumes.

Other highlights of the April Water Supply Outlook include:

- Water storage as of April 1, 2003 in the major irrigation reservoirs in the Oldman River basin is above-normal for this time of the year, with the exception of the Waterton Reservoir, which is below-normal. Water storage in the Red Deer River basin is normal for this time of the year.
- Water storage as of April 1, 2003 in the major hydroelectric and irrigation reservoirs in the Bow River basin is above-normal for this time of the year except for the Upper and Lower Kananaskis Lakes, which are normal, and Lake Minnewanka and Spray Lake, which are below-normal. Storage levels in the North Saskatchewan River basin are normal for this time of year.

-30-

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