

For Immediate Release: April 8, 2004

## **Mountain runoff forecast to be below average to much below average this year**

For the March through September 2004 period, Alberta Environment is forecasting below average natural runoff volumes for the Red Deer River basin, and below average to much below average volumes for the Milk, Oldman, Bow, and North Saskatchewan River basins. Forecasted volumes are greater than the near-record low volumes recorded during the drought year of 2001.

Snow accumulations in the mountains as of April 1, 2004 are generally below-average to much-below-average in the Waterton/St. Mary, North Saskatchewan and Athabasca River basins for this time of the year, below-average in the Oldman, Bow and Smoky River basins, and below-average to average in the Red Deer River headwaters. Typically, the accumulation of snow for this time of the year is nearing the seasonal total in the Oldman River basin and is normally 80 to 95 per cent of the seasonal total in mountain areas north of this basin.

### *Plains areas:*

Spring snowmelt runoff from plains areas is estimated to be generally average to above average near Fort Chipewyan and between Slave Lake, Edmonton and Cold Lake. Below average runoff is forecast for the remainder of northern Alberta. There is little to no snow left in the province south of Edmonton and Lloydminster.

Much above normal precipitation was recorded during March in a band from Peace River to Slave Lake to Cold Lake and Lloydminster. Snowpack as of April 1 was above average to much above average in this area, as well as in the Fort Chipewyan region. Generally below normal to much below normal precipitation was recorded south of the band. Areas to the north and west recorded normal precipitation, resulting in average to below average snowpack.

Significant precipitation is needed to improve the overall water supply outlook. Environment Canada's current long-range weather forecast for Alberta is for normal precipitation during the March through May 2004 period in most areas.

### ***Other Highlights (As of April 1, 2004):***

- Water storage in major irrigation reservoirs in the Oldman River basin is generally below average, except the Chain Lakes Reservoir and Keho Lake, which are average.
- Water storage is average in the major hydroelectric and irrigation reservoirs of the Bow River basin, except in the Upper Kananaskis Lake and Lake Minnewanka, which are below average, and the Glenmore Reservoir and Lower Kananaskis Lake, which are above average.
- Water storage levels in the North Saskatchewan and Red Deer River basins are currently below average at the Brazeau Reservoir, and average at Lake Abraham and Glennifer Lake.