

For Immediate Release: April 12, 2005

Mountain runoff forecast to range from much below average to average

Alberta Environment is forecasting below to much below average natural runoff volumes for the Milk and Oldman River basins, and below average to average volumes for the Bow, Red Deer and North Saskatchewan River basins between April and September 2005.

As of April 1, 2005, snow accumulations in the mountains remain among the lowest measured in up to 42 years of record at most locations in the Oldman River basin. Mountain snowpack measurements are below average in the Bow River basin, average in the North Saskatchewan River basin and above average in the Red Deer and Athabasca River basins for this time of year. As of April 1, snow accumulation is typically near completion in the Oldman River basin, and is normally 80 to 95 per cent of the seasonal total in mountain areas north of the basin.

Natural flow volumes were above normal in most mountain-fed rivers during March, due mainly to an early start to snowmelt this year. However, natural runoff volumes during March in the Oldman River basin were generally below average to average, and much below average in the Milk River basin, as a result of prior depletion of the snowpack from January melting and below normal March precipitation. March volumes typically comprise a small portion of the March to September total, ranging from 15% for the Milk River basin to less than 5% for the other major basins.

Plains areas:

As of April 1, 2005, spring snowmelt runoff from plains areas along the foothills between Red Deer and Edson is expected to range from above to much above average. Runoff in northeastern Alberta and in the High Level region is expected to range from below average to above average. An area of central Alberta from Cold Lake to Coronation to Whitecourt is forecast to record below average to average runoff. Snowmelt is currently active in all these areas. Spring runoff is complete for the season in a band from Edmonton to Slave Lake to the Grande Prairie – Peace River region due to early April melting, and in the province south of Red Deer.

Plains snowpack as of April 1, 2005 is generally above average in northeastern Alberta, the High Level region, and in a band through central Alberta from Coronation to Red Deer to Edson. East of Edson to Edmonton, and in the Cold Lake – Lloydminster area, snowpack is below average.

Below to much below normal precipitation was recorded during March in northwestern, east central, and southern Alberta. March precipitation ranged from normal to above normal in northeastern and west central Alberta.

Other Highlights (As of April 1, 2005):

- Water storage in major irrigation reservoirs in the Oldman River basin is generally above average, except the Milk River Ridge Reservoir and Keho Lake, which are average.
- Water storage is average to above average in the major hydroelectric and irrigation reservoirs of the Bow River basin, except for the Ghost Reservoir, which is below average.
- Water storage levels in the North Saskatchewan and Red Deer River basins are currently above average at the Brazeau Reservoir, Bighorn Reservoir and Glennifer Lake.