

For Immediate Release: April 11, 2006

Natural runoff forecasted to be below average to average in Alberta this year

As of April 1, 2006, natural runoff volumes are forecast to be generally below average for the Milk, Red Deer and North Saskatchewan River basins between March and September 2006. In the Bow and Oldman River basins, natural runoff volumes are expected to range from below average to average. Forecasted volumes have decreased since March 1 in most basins, due to much below normal precipitation during March, however they have increased slightly for the Waterton and Kananaskis Rivers and for the Oldman River at Brouck.

Precipitation during March 2006 varied widely. Most of the western half of Alberta, including the mountains, recorded much below normal precipitation. Most of the eastern half of the province recorded precipitation ranging from normal to much above normal.

Snow accumulations in the mountains as of April 1, 2006 generally improve moving from north to south and at higher elevations. Measured snowpacks are generally much below average in the Athabasca, Red Deer and North Saskatchewan River basins, below average in the Highwood and upper Bow River basins, below average to average in the Kananaskis and Elbow River basins, and average to above average in the Oldman River basin. Snowpack at lower elevations of many of these basins is below average. The snowpack in the upper Peace River basin, in British Columbia, is generally below average.

Mountain snowpack is an important source of water supply in the spring. On average, the accumulation of snow at this time of the year is nearing the seasonal total for the Oldman River basin and is normally 80 to 95 per cent of the seasonal total in mountain areas north of this basin.

Due to March snowstorms, snowpack in the eastern half of central Alberta improved dramatically from below to much below average on March 1 to average to above average as of April 1. Snowpack measurements elsewhere as of April 1 show plains snowpack ranges from below average to average in west central and northwest Alberta, and from much below average to average in northeast Alberta.

As a result, spring snowmelt runoff is forecast to range from average to above average in east central Alberta, below average to average in west central Alberta, and below to much below average in northern Alberta. Snowpack in southern Alberta plains areas melted during March.

Other Highlights (as of April 1, 2006):

- So far this winter (November 1, 2005 to April 1, 2006), much below normal precipitation has been recorded in most of western and east central Alberta, however below normal to normal winter precipitation was recorded in southern mountain areas. Normal precipitation was recorded in High Level, northeast Alberta, Lloydminster and in a small strip between Edmonton and Red Deer. Above to much above normal precipitation was recorded in the Medicine Hat area and in Calgary.
- Water storage is above normal in the major irrigation reservoirs of the Oldman River basin, except in the Milk River Ridge Reservoir, which is normal.
- Water storage is generally normal to above normal in the major hydroelectric and irrigation reservoirs of the Bow River basin, except for Lake McGregor, which is below normal.
- Water storage in the major reservoirs of the Red Deer and North Saskatchewan River basins is above normal.