

## Water Supply Outlook Overview

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For Immediate Release: December 8, 2003

### **Mountain snowpack average to above average so far**

Snowpack measurements taken in the mountains of the Red Deer, Bow, and Oldman River basins indicate average to above-average snow accumulations for this time of year. Accumulations at this time of year typically account for only one-fifth of the season's total.

Precipitation in northern and central Alberta during November was generally below normal to much below normal, while precipitation in the south ranged from normal to much above normal.

Soil moisture conditions, measured by Alberta Agriculture, are very dry in Alberta except in the Lloydminster and Cold Lake areas, where the soil moisture is average. The dry conditions are a result of a very dry last half of summer, followed by fall precipitation that largely fell as snow, instead of rain.

Significant precipitation is needed to improve the overall water supply outlook. Current long-range weather forecasts for Alberta are for above normal precipitation through February followed by below normal precipitation through May.

***Other Highlights*** of the December Water Supply Outlook include:

- As of December 1, 2003, water storage in major irrigation reservoirs in the Oldman River basin is generally below average, except the Chain Lakes Reservoir which is average. However, storage in the basin is much greater than at this time during the drought of 2001.
- Water storage in the major reservoir of the Red Deer River basin is above average for this time of year, similar to last December.
- Water storage is below average to average as of December 1, 2003 in the major hydroelectric and irrigation reservoirs of the Bow River basin, except in the Upper Kananaskis Lake reservoir which is above average. Storage in the Bow River basin is greater than at this time in the drought of 2001.
- Water storage levels in the North Saskatchewan River basin are below average at the Brazeau Reservoir, and average at Lake Abraham, both similar to last year.
- In the Athabasca River basin, the storage level at the Paddle River Reservoir is lower than last year's, and in the South Heart Reservoir, the storage level this year is significantly greater than this time during the drought of 2002.