



# Water Supply Outlook

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For immediate release: February 8, 2002

## **Spring runoff forecast greater than last year, but still below normal**

Much-needed January snowfall in higher elevations that feed the Bow River basin is an encouraging sign for some Southern Alberta reservoirs.

Although snowpack accumulation is near normal in most of the higher elevations of the province, it is very low at elevations below 6,000 feet. Therefore, natural runoff is forecast to be below normal in most parts of the province. However, spring runoff volumes are still projected to be 10 to 20 percent greater than last year.

Environment Canada's long-lead precipitation forecast for the December to February period indicates above-normal precipitation for the northern third of the province, normal precipitation in central areas, and below-normal in the southwestern portion of the province. The forecast for the spring period (March to May) is for above-normal precipitation in eastern areas of Alberta and normal precipitation elsewhere. The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) is forecasting near normal precipitation from February through the spring (March to May) and summer (June through August) periods.

Typically, the accumulation of snow at this time of the year accounts for nearly two-thirds of the seasonal total. Accumulations normally cease in late April.

Other highlights of February's Water Supply Outlook include:

- Much-below-normal January precipitation in areas north of Red Deer as well as the southeastern corner of the province and near normal precipitation in all areas.
- Overall winter precipitation is near normal west of a line extending from High Level in northern Alberta to Jasper. Precipitation is also near normal in south-central Alberta around the areas of Red Deer, Calgary and Brooks. In the rest of the province, precipitation over the winter season remains below normal to much below normal, particularly in Southern Alberta.
- Snow accumulations in the mountains as of Feb. 1, 2002 are near normal values for this time of the year with the exception of the headwaters of the Oldman River basin, which have below-normal accumulations.
- Thirteen of January's 23 snowpack measurements recorded values higher than the seasonal maximum recorded last year.
- The headwaters of the Bow River basin have shown the most improvement in terms of snowpack compared to last year.
- Below-normal water storage for this time of the season in the major irrigation and hydroelectric reservoirs in the Bow, Oldman and Red Deer River basins, with the exception of Keho Lake, Lake Newell and Crawling Valley Reservoir, which are normal. Storage conditions in these basins are less than last year at this time.
- Water storage in the North Saskatchewan River basin is normal for this time.
- As of February 1, 2002, the spring snowmelt runoff is forecast to be much below normal to below normal for most of the plains areas of the province.