



Water Supply Outlook Overview

For Immediate Release: February 7, 2003

Snowpack much-below-average in most of Alberta

Mountain snow accumulations as of February 1, 2003 are much-below-average for this time of year, generally ranging from 40 to 80% of average. These snowpacks rank from the lowest to fifth-lowest on record. Snow accumulations at this time are generally much lower than last year, but higher than in 2001 which was the lowest on record in many areas.

January snowstorms brought much-above-normal precipitation for the month to areas between the Peace River and Edmonton regions. A band of near-normal precipitation fell in January from the Red Deer area southeast toward Saskatchewan. January snowfall significantly raised precipitation totals for the winter to near normal levels between the Peace River and Edmonton regions, however the rest of the province has received much-below-normal precipitation this winter, ranging from 10 to 75% of normal.

Significant precipitation is needed in both mountain and plains areas of Alberta to improve the overall water supply outlook.

Other highlights of February's Water Supply Outlook include:

- In mountain areas, much-below-average runoff volumes are forecast for the March to September 2003 period in the Milk, Oldman, Bow, Red Deer, and North Saskatchewan River basins. Current forecasted volumes are lower than those recorded during the same period last year, but higher than those recorded in 2001.
- In plains areas north of Calgary, much-below-average runoff is forecast due to the extremely dry soil conditions. Areas between Peace River, Slave Lake and Edson are forecast to receive slightly more runoff due to higher snowpack and marginally better soil moisture conditions.
- Much-below-average runoff is forecast for the province south of Calgary despite near normal soil moisture because there is little or no snow cover.
- Water storage as of February 1, 2003 in the major irrigation reservoirs in the Oldman River basin are normal for this time of the year, with the exception of Keho Lake and the Forty Mile and Oldman Reservoirs, which are above-normal and Waterton Reservoir, which is below-normal. Water storage in the Red Deer River basin is normal for this time of the year.
- Water storage as of February 1, 2003 in the major hydroelectric reservoirs in the Bow River basin are above-normal for this time of the year except for the Spray and Upper and Lower Kananaskis Lakes, which are normal and Lake Minnewanka, which is below-normal. Storage levels in the North Saskatchewan River basin are normal for this time of year.

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