

February 15, 2008

Mountain snowpack below average to average in most areas of Alberta

As of February 1, 2008, snow accumulations in the mountains generally range from below average to average for this time of year, except above average in the Waterton, Belly, and Athabasca River basins.

Mountain snowpack is an important source of water supply to reservoirs in the spring. Accumulations at this time of year typically account for almost two-thirds of the season's total.

Satellite estimation of plains snowpack as of February 1, 2008 shows the snowpack in southern Alberta varies from below normal to above normal, while the central and northern plains have generally above normal snow accumulations. Detailed snow course measurements will be conducted for March 1.

As of February 1, preliminary forecasts for the March to September 2008 period for basins in the mountains indicate natural runoff volumes will likely be below average for the Milk River basin, below average to average in the Oldman and Highwood River basins, near average in the Elbow, Kananaskis, Spray and Cascade River basins, below average for the Bow River at Banff and Calgary and the North Saskatchewan River basin, and below average to average in the Red Deer River basin. As it is still early in the year, precipitation over the next several months could affect these forecasts significantly.

Other Highlights (as of February 1, 2008):

- Precipitation during January was much below normal for much of Alberta including the mountain areas of the Smoky and Athabasca River basins, and generally above normal in other mountain regions and in the Cold Lake and Cypress Hills areas.
- Winter precipitation totals to date (November 1, 2007 to February 1, 2008) have been much below normal in southern plains areas except above normal in the Cypress Hills. In northern plains areas, precipitation has been below normal to normal, except much below normal in the Grande Prairie – Jasper and Fort Chipewyan areas and much above normal in the Cold Lake area.
- Water storage in the major irrigation and hydroelectric reservoirs of southern and central Alberta is generally below normal, except normal in the Oldman, Ghost, and Dickson Reservoirs.