

Mountain runoff forecasts (natural volumes for March to September 2009)

[Milk River basin](#)

- Below average

[Oldman River basin](#)

- Below to much below average for the St. Mary, Belly and Waterton Rivers and the Oldman River at Lethbridge
- Below average for the Oldman River at the Oldman River dam

[Bow River basin](#)

- Below average for the Bow River at Banff and Calgary and for Lake Minnewanka
- Below average to average for the Spray, Kananaskis, Elbow and Highwood River basins

[Red Deer River basin](#)

- Below average to average

[North Saskatchewan River basin](#)

- Below average

Precipitation can have a major impact on water supply between now and the end of September. The forecasts above assume that precipitation over the remainder of the winter period and through the summer will be normal. However, the range of possible precipitation scenarios is large as a result, probable range forecasts and a minimal precipitation forecast of natural runoff volume are also provided for each individual basin. Since more information becomes known over time, forecast ranges will narrow. Streamflow volume forecasts are updated monthly from February to May, and again in July.

Check our [Forecaster's Comments](#) throughout the month for updated information regarding runoff conditions.

Mountain snowpack

[Snow accumulations measured in the mountains as of February 1, 2009:](#)

- Oldman River basin: below to much below average at eight locations, ranking from second to eighth lowest in generally 15 to 40 years of record. Above to much above average at two locations (Wilkinson in the upper Oldman River basin and Lee Creek in the middle St. Mary River basin).
- Bow River basin: ranging from below to much below average at all 13 locations, ranking from second to tenth lowest in generally 20 to 40 years of record.
- Red Deer, North Saskatchewan, Athabasca River basins: ranging from below to much below average at four locations, ranking from fifth to ninth lowest in generally 12 to 40 years of record. Above to much above average at one location, Limestone, towards the foothills near the divide between the Red Deer and North Saskatchewan River basins.
- Upper Peace River basin in British Columbia: greater than normal, as indicated in [British Columbia's Snowpack and Water Supply Outlook](#)

Mountain snowpack is an important source of water supply to reservoirs in the spring. Accumulation at this time of year typically accounts for nearly two-thirds of the seasonal total.

Plains snowpack

- [Snow course measurements](#) were taken in mid-February in the Cypress Hills, and values were slightly below average. Detailed information on plains area snowpack will be available in March as snow course measurements will be conducted near the start of the month.

- [Environment Canada](#) map of satellite estimation of plains percent of normal snow water equivalent (SWE) as of February 1, 2009 is shown [here](#). Although southern plains snowpack is indicated as over 200% of normal, snow water content amounts are only moderate or moderately high.
- [Alberta Agriculture](#) publishes maps of modelled plains snow accumulations and accumulations as compared to normal.

Precipitation

Contoured maps of precipitation amounts and as a percent of normal for the past month and for current and recent seasons are available [here](#). Maps of precipitation amounts for the most recent day, week and month to date are available [here](#).

Soil Moisture

[Alberta Agriculture](#) models soil moisture for non-mountainous, agricultural areas of Alberta. Modelled soil moisture compared to average as of February 2, 2009 is available [here](#).

Long-Lead Precipitation Outlooks

[Environment Canada](#) (issued on February 1, 2009): normal temperature and precipitation, except below normal precipitation for southeastern Alberta, for the February through April 2009 period.

[National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration \(NOAA\)](#) (issued on February 18, 2009): even chance of below normal, normal or above normal precipitation, and below normal temperatures in southern Alberta, for March through May 2009.

[Climate indicators](#): The NOAA reported on February 5, 2009 that La Nina conditions are likely to continue into spring 2009, gradually weakening to neutral conditions.

Note that forecasting weather for such a long time period into the future is very difficult, and so the historical accuracy has been variable, dependent on location and time period, and is often low, more so for precipitation than temperature. Environment Canada provides an assessment of their forecast method's historical accuracy on their website.

Reservoir storage

Water storage volumes in the major irrigation and hydroelectric reservoirs of the Milk, Oldman, Bow, Red Deer, North Saskatchewan, and Athabasca River basins is updated each weekday and is available in the [Provincial Reservoir Storage Summary](#).

Questions

Background information on the Water Supply Outlook is available in [Frequently Asked Questions](#)

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