



# Water Supply Outlook Overview

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## **Warm, Dry Weather Hurting Water Supply Outlook**

Warm and dry weather this winter due to El Nino conditions has resulted in December precipitation being much-below-normal in Alberta. The lowest precipitation totals were recorded in the Slave Lake, Rocky Mountain House, and Peace regions, where less than 10% of normal precipitation was recorded for the month. Winter precipitation (November and December 2002) remains much-below-normal in the province, ranging from 20 to 80% of normal.

Snow measurements taken in the mountains at the end of December were much-below-average for this time of year. Snow accumulation is much better than at this time in 2001, the lowest on record in many areas, but less than last year. Normally the accumulation of snowpack at this time of the year accounts for 40 to 50% of the seasonal total.

The very warm, dry weather has left plains areas with much-below-average snowpack. The Peace region and areas south of Edmonton have little or no snow cover.

Very significant precipitation is needed to improve the overall water supply outlook. Most areas north of Calgary are extremely dry as a result of several months of much-below-normal precipitation.

Other highlights of January's Water Supply Outlook include:

- Below-average runoff volumes are forecast for the Milk River basin for the March to September 2003 period.
- Water storage as of January 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 January 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, except for the Brazeau Reservoir, which is below-normal.

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