

For Immediate Release: January 10, 2006

Mountain snowpack below to much below average south of Calgary

Snow accumulations measured in the mountains as of January 1, 2006 are below to much below average for this time of the year in the Oldman and Highwood River basins, and below average to average in the rest of the Bow River basin and in the Red Deer River basin.

Mountain snowpack is an important source of water supply to reservoirs in the spring. Accumulations at this time of year typically account for only 40 per cent of the season's total.

Satellite estimation of plains snowpack as of January 1, 2006 shows little to no snow throughout the province.

It is still very early in the year and soil conditions are very wet in southern Alberta, hence future precipitation could easily result in good runoff volumes for rivers and streams. This month's preliminary forecasts produced for the Milk River (at Milk River) are for 86 per cent of average natural runoff volumes. Natural runoff volume forecasts for rivers in the Oldman, Bow, Red Deer and North Saskatchewan river basins begin in February.

Most regions in Alberta recorded much below normal precipitation totals during December. Winter (November 1, 2005 to January 1, 2006) precipitation totals have been much below normal in most areas. Exceptions include the Jasper, Pincher Creek, Oyen and Cypress Hills areas, which recorded near normal precipitation for the winter, and the mountains in Montana (origin of the Waterton, Belly and St. Mary Rivers), which recorded precipitation ranging from below to much above normal.

Water storage in the major irrigation and hydroelectric reservoirs of southern and central Alberta is above normal as of January 1, 2006, with the exceptions of the Barrier and Spray Lakes Reservoirs in the Bow River basin, which are normal.

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