



Water Supply Outlook Overview

For Immediate Release: March 7, 2003

Greatly improved snowpack in many plains areas - but mountain snowpacks remain low

Plains snowpack

February snowstorms significantly improved the plains snowpack west of a line extending from Peace River to Edmonton to Calgary.

As of March 1, 2003 the plains snowpack in these areas is above-average for this time of year. February snowfall was not as significant in other areas of Alberta, where snowpack remains generally below-average to much-below-average.

Mountain snowpack

Snowfall in mountain areas during February was much-below-normal, resulting in mountain snowpacks remaining much-below-average. Snowpack measurements generally range from 40 to 75% of average for this time of year, ranking from lowest to ninth-lowest on record.

Current snow accumulations are generally much lower than last year, but higher than in 2001 which was the lowest on record in many areas. Significant precipitation in the mountains is needed to improve the water supply outlook.

Other highlights of the March Water Supply Outlook include:

- In mountain areas, much-below-average runoff volumes are forecasted 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 similar to or higher than those recorded in 2001.
- In plains areas west of a line between the Peace River and Edmonton regions, below-average to average runoff is forecast. In plains areas east and north of this line, the forecast is for much-below-average runoff. Below-average runoff is forecast for plains areas south of Edmonton. Although above-average snowpack exists in many areas of the province north of Calgary, soil conditions there are extremely dry.
- Water storage as of March 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 March 1, 2003 in the major hydroelectric reservoirs in the Bow River basin are above-normal for this time of the year except for the Upper and Lower Kananaskis Lakes, which are normal and Spray Lake and Lake Minnewanka, which are below-normal. Storage levels in the North Saskatchewan River basin are normal for this time of year.

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Media Contact:

Communications Division
Alberta Environment
Phone: (780) 427-6267
Fax: (780) 427-1874