

For Immediate Release: March 12, 2007

Record snowpack in North Central Alberta's plains areas

Snow course measurements in North Central Alberta as of March 1, 2007 indicate 20 of 43 locations recording the highest or second highest snowpack in up to 35 years of record.

As a result of record or near record snowpack combined with above-average fall soil moisture conditions (below-average in the northern portion of this area), much-above average spring runoff is forecast in the Peace River-Grande Prairie-Whitecourt-Edmonton-Cold Lake-Lloydminster areas. There is a high potential of significant runoff in all areas of North Central Alberta, particularly if the snowpack melts very quickly or significant precipitation occurs during the month of March. Alberta Environment will be monitoring these areas very closely during snowmelt.

Snow accumulations in the mountains as of March 1, 2007 generally improve moving from north to south and at higher elevations. Measured snowpacks are generally average to above average in the Oldman, Highwood and Elbow River basins, and above to much above average in upper Bow and North Saskatchewan River basins. Snowpack measured in the Red Deer and Athabasca River basins generally ranked among the five highest in up to 33 years of record. Snowpack at lower elevations of many of these basins is below average to average. The snowpack in the upper Peace River basin, in British Columbia, is generally well above average.

The mountain snowpack is an important source of water supply to reservoirs in the spring. On average, the accumulation of snow at this time of the year accounts for nearly three-quarters of the seasonal total.

As of March 1, 2007, natural runoff volumes are forecast to be generally above average for the Red Deer River basin, average to above average for the Bow River basin, average for the North Saskatchewan River basin, and below average to average for the Oldman and Milk River basins for the March to September 2007 period. Forecasted volumes have increased since February 1 in most basins, however they have decreased slightly in the North Saskatchewan River basin.

Other Highlights (as of March 1, 2007):

- Precipitation during February 2007 was generally above to much above normal in western and southern Alberta, and below normal to normal in northeastern and east central Alberta.
- Water storage is normal to above normal in the major irrigation reservoirs of the Oldman River basin.
- Water storage is generally below normal to normal in the major hydroelectric and irrigation reservoirs of the Bow River basin, except for Lower Kananaskis Lake, which is above normal.
- Water storage in the major hydroelectric reservoirs of the North Saskatchewan River basin are normal. Water Storage in the major reservoir of the Red Deer River basin is above normal.