

For Immediate Release: March 14, 2008

Snowpack much above average in Cold Lake, Slave Lake and Peace River areas

Snow course measurements as of March 1, 2008 indicate snowpack is much above average in a band across the province from the Cold Lake area to the Peace River region. Snow accumulations are generally fifth highest in 35 years of record from Lesser Slave Lake to Cold Lake, and ninth highest in the Peace River region.

As a result, the potential of significantly high runoff this spring is elevated in the Cold Lake and Lesser Slave Lake areas, particularly if the snowpack melts very quickly or significant precipitation occurs this spring. In the Peace River and Athabasca regions, spring snowmelt runoff is expected to be average or above average due to much drier soil conditions. Alberta Environment will be monitoring these areas very closely during snowmelt.

Plains snowpack in most other areas of the province ranges from below average to average. There were average to above average amounts of snow in the Cypress Hills in mid February.

Snowmelt runoff in the rest of northern Alberta is expected to be generally average, while central plains areas of the province are expected to record generally below average runoff this spring. In southern Alberta much of the snow has since melted.

In the mountains, snow accumulations as of March 1, 2008 are generally above average in the Oldman River basin, average to above average in the Athabasca River basin, average in the Highwood and Kananaskis areas and in the North Saskatchewan River basin, and below average in the upper Bow and Red Deer River basins. The snowpack in the upper Peace River basin, in British Columbia, is generally above average. Mountain snowpack is an important source of water supply to reservoirs in the spring. Accumulations at this time of year typically account for almost three quarters of the season's total.

As of March 1, forecasts for the March to September 2008 period for mountainous basins indicate natural runoff volumes will likely be average for the Oldman, Highwood, and Kananaskis River basins, below average to average for the Milk and Red Deer River basins, and below average for the Bow River and the North Saskatchewan River basin. As it is still early in the year, precipitation over the next several months could affect these forecasts significantly.

Other Highlights (as of March 1, 2008):

- Water storage in the major irrigation and hydroelectric reservoirs of southern and central Alberta is generally below normal, except normal in the Oldman Reservoir.
- Precipitation during February 2008 was generally above to much above normal in northwestern Alberta, below normal to normal in the southwest and northeast, and below to much below normal southeastern Alberta.