

Mountain runoff forecasts (natural volumes for March to September 2009)

Forecasts have decreased for most locations since February 1, except for the Waterton, Belly and St. Mary Rivers and the North Saskatchewan River at Edmonton, where forecasts have increased.

[Milk River basin](#)

- Below average

[Oldman River basin](#)

- Below to much below average

[Bow River basin](#)

- Below average

[Red Deer River basin](#)

- Below average

[North Saskatchewan River basin](#)

- Below average

Precipitation can have a major impact on water supply between now and the end of September. The forecasts above assume that precipitation over the remainder of the winter period and through the summer will be normal. The range of possible precipitation scenarios is large however, and as a result, probable range forecasts and a minimal precipitation forecast of natural runoff volume are also provided for each individual basin. Since more information becomes known over time, forecast ranges will narrow. Streamflow volume forecasts are updated monthly from February to May, and again in July.

Check our [Forecaster's Comments](#) throughout the month for updated information regarding runoff conditions.

Mountain snowpack

[Snow accumulations measured in the mountains as of March 1, 2009](#): Snow accumulations have improved slightly since February 1 in the Athabasca River basin, but worsened in the areas between Canmore and the Crowsnest Pass.

- [Oldman River basin](#): below to much below average south of the Crowsnest Pass. Below average to average at Lee Creek in the middle St. Mary River basin. Much below average in most of the rest of the upper Oldman River basin, ranking from third to fifth lowest in generally 15 to 30 years of record.
- [Bow River basin](#): below to much below average upstream of Canmore. Much below average in the southern half of the basin, ranking from second to sixth lowest in generally 20 to 40 years of record.
- [Red Deer, North Saskatchewan River basins](#): below to much below average, except above to much above average at three locations in the foothills.
- [Athabasca River basin](#): below average, except average at Hinton
- [Upper Peace River basin in British Columbia](#): 95 to 120% of normal at most locations, as indicated in [British Columbia's Snowpack and Water Supply Outlook](#)

Mountain snowpack is an important source of water supply to reservoirs in the spring. Accumulation at this time of year typically accounts for nearly three-quarters of the seasonal total.

Plains Spring Snowmelt Runoff Forecasts

Conditions are variable across the province, please refer to the [map in the Plains Runoff Forecast](#) section of our maps and Data Summaries webpage.

Plains snowpack

- [Snow course measurements](#) were taken at the end of February and beginning of March in many areas of central and northern Alberta.
- [Environment Canada](#) map of satellite estimation of plains percent of normal snow water equivalent (SWE) as of March 1, 2009 is shown [here](#). Although some southern plains snowpack is indicated as over 200% of normal, snow water content amounts are moderate or moderately high.
- [Alberta Agriculture](#) publishes maps of modelled plains snow accumulations and accumulations as compared to normal.

Precipitation

Contoured maps of precipitation amounts and as a percent of normal for the past month and for current and recent seasons are available [here](#). Maps of precipitation amounts for the most recent day, week and month to date are available [here](#).

Soil Moisture

[Alberta Agriculture](#) models soil moisture for non-mountainous, agricultural areas of Alberta. Modelled soil moisture compared to average as of March 6, 2009 is available [here](#).

Long Lead Precipitation Outlooks

[Environment Canada](#) (issued on March 1, 2009): normal temperature and precipitation for the March through May 2009 period, except:

- below normal precipitation for southern Alberta,
- above normal precipitation in northeastern Alberta
- below normal temperatures in the southeastern quarter of the province

[National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration \(NOAA\)](#) (issued on February 18, 2009): even chance of below normal, normal or above normal precipitation, and below normal temperatures in southern Alberta, for March through May 2009.

[Climate indicators](#): The NOAA reported on March 5, 2009 that La Nina conditions are gradually weakening, returning to neutral conditions by summer.

Note that forecasting weather for such a long time period into the future is very difficult, and so the historical accuracy has been variable, dependent on location and time period, and is often low, more so for precipitation than temperature. Environment Canada provides an assessment of their forecast method's historical accuracy on their website.

Reservoir storage

Water storage volumes in the major irrigation and hydroelectric reservoirs of the Milk, Oldman, Bow, Red Deer North Saskatchewan, and Athabasca River basins is updated each weekday and is available in the [Provincial Reservoir Storage Summary](#).

Questions

Background information on the Water Supply Outlook is available in [Frequently Asked Questions](#)

Media Contact:

Communications Division, Alberta Environment

Phone: (780) 427-6267