



# Water Supply Outlook Overview

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## **Water supply conditions continue to improve**

Alberta Environment forecasters say significant precipitation in April will continue to improve moisture across the province for the third straight month. A major snowstorm at the beginning of May brought upwards of 70 mm of snow water to the foothills and higher elevations in the Sundre-Calgary-Lethbridge region. This will have a significant impact on June's water supply forecasts in the Highwood, Elbow, Oldman and Upper Red Deer Rivers.

Snow accumulations in the mountains as of May 1, 2002 are above-average to much-above-average for this time of the year. The headwaters of the Highwood and Kananaskis Rivers have much-above-average snowpack for this time of the year. In April, much-below-normal temperatures combined with above-normal precipitation resulted in an increase in snowpack in many areas. The mountain snowpack is an important source of water supply to reservoirs in the province. Typically the peak snowmelt runoff from the mountain areas occurs in late May or in early June.

The May 1 natural runoff volume forecasts in the province have increased three to 20 percent from those produced on February 1. The May 1, 2002 water supply forecast is for much-below-average natural runoff volumes in the Milk River basin, below-average natural runoff volumes in the North Saskatchewan and Red Deer River basins and below-average to average natural runoff volumes in the Oldman and Bow River basins. Despite above-average snow accumulations at the higher elevations, the extreme soil moisture deficit and average snowpack below 6000 feet at most locations are the major reasons for the runoff forecast being below-average to average. However, the forecast volumes produced on May 1 are generally 15 to 40 percent higher than the recorded March to September 2001 natural runoff volumes.

Winter precipitation (November 1, 2001 to April 30, 2002) is near normal in most areas west of a Grande-Prairie-Whitecourt-Red Deer-Lethbridge line and below-normal in areas east of this line. Areas along the eastern side of the province have received much-below-normal precipitation to date.

As of May 1, 2002, water storage in the major irrigation reservoirs in the Oldman and Red Deer River basins is below-normal for this time of the season with the exception of Keho Lake, which is normal. Water storage in the major hydroelectric reservoirs in the Bow and North Saskatchewan River basins is normal for the season, except for Spray Lake, Lake McGregor, Travers Reservoir and Brazeau Reservoir, which are below-normal.

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