



Water Supply Outlook Overview

For Immediate Release: May 9, 2003

Major storms dramatically improve water supply outlook for parts of Alberta

Mountain areas:

An unusually large April storm has greatly improved the water supply forecasts for the Red Deer River basin. Average to above-average runoff volumes are now forecasted for the Red Deer River headwaters during the March through September 2003 period.

The outlook for the lower elevations of the North Saskatchewan River basin and the northern half of the Bow River headwaters have also shown improvement, but below-average runoff is still forecast for this year. Forecasted volumes for the remainder of the North Saskatchewan and Bow River basins, as well as the Oldman and Milk River basins, have changed only slightly since the [April 1 Outlook](#), and remain below-average.

Current forecasted volumes are generally much higher than in 2001, but lower than those recorded last year. The exceptions are the Red Deer and North Saskatchewan River basins where forecasted volumes are generally much greater than 2002 recorded volumes.

Mountain snowpack in Alberta is generally below-average to much-below average. However, there is average snowpack in the northern half of the Bow River basin, and above-average snowpack in the Red Deer River basin and parts of the North Saskatchewan River basin.

Precipitation since May 1 in the upper Oldman, Bow, and Red Deer River basins was generally above-normal. Many of these areas have already received approximately one-third to over half of the total average May precipitation. This precipitation will factor into the June water supply forecasts, and its effects will depend on how much precipitation falls during the rest of May.

Plains areas:

Plains snowmelt runoff was substantially complete in April when two major storms, one in late April and one in early May, returned significant snow cover to many plains areas. Further snowmelt runoff, with the ground already wet and at this late stage of spring, could be high. A [Spring Runoff Advisory](#) (issued on May 6 and still in effect) warns that small streams in southern and central Alberta may experience high water levels.

April precipitation was generally much-above-normal in most of Alberta, with the exception of some areas in the northeast and southeast, which received below-normal to normal precipitation. Precipitation for the winter period (November 2002 through April 2003) was generally above-normal in western plains areas from Calgary to Edmonton to Peace River, and in the Cold Lake area, and below-normal elsewhere.

Other highlights of the April Water Supply Outlook include:

- As of May 1, 2003, water storage in the major irrigation reservoirs in the Oldman River basin is above-normal, except for the Waterton Reservoir which is normal. Water storage in the major reservoir of the Red Deer River basin is above-normal for this time of the year.
- Water storage is normal as of May 1, 2003 in the major hydroelectric reservoirs of the upper Bow River basin, except in Spray Lake which is below-normal and Upper Kananaskis Lake which is above-normal. In the lower Bow River basin the major irrigation reservoirs are above-normal, except Travers Reservoir which is below-normal. Storage levels in the North Saskatchewan River basin are normal.