

For Immediate Release: October 13, 2006

2006 runoff below average in most mountain and foothills in Alberta

Between March and September 2006, natural runoff volumes generally rank between the 20th and 40th lowest volumes in up to 91 years recorded for the same period. However, volumes were much below average in the North Saskatchewan River at Edmonton (12th lowest), the Bow River at Banff (13th lowest), and at the Brazeau Reservoir (2nd lowest in 41 years of record). Natural runoff volumes were near normal into the Bighorn and Spray Lakes reservoirs, and in much of the Oldman River basin.

This year began with wet soil moisture conditions due to heavy precipitation last year. Mountain snowpacks were below average to average in the Milk, Oldman, and most of the Bow River basin, but below to much below average in the North Saskatchewan, Red Deer, and Highwood River basins. Precipitation was slightly below normal in many areas during spring and early summer, but heavy precipitation occurred in the first half of June. Natural runoff volumes between March and June were average in most of the Oldman and Bow River basins and below average elsewhere.

From mid-June through August, precipitation was much below normal in much of south and west-central Alberta. July natural runoff volumes were among the 25 lowest on record, most notably 2nd lowest at Brazeau, 3rd at Lake Minnewanka, 4th at Edmonton, and 5th at Banff. Record lows for August volumes were set at Banff, Spray Lakes, Calgary, and the Belly River, while Edmonton was second lowest. September precipitation totals provided some recovery, as they generally ranged from near normal to much above normal in the mountains and foothills.

Precipitation totals in the mountains and foothills for the water year (November 2005 through September 2006) were generally below to much below normal in central Alberta, and below normal in southern Alberta.

This month's Water Supply Outlook provides a review of recorded and forecasted water supplies in Alberta during the last year. Currently, soil moisture is average and flows range from below average to above average, as we head into winter.

Other Highlights (As of October 1, 2006):

- Precipitation totals for the water year in the plains areas of Alberta were generally below to much below normal in the northern half of the province and below normal to normal in the southern half.
- Water storage in the major irrigation reservoirs in the Oldman River basin range from average to above average.
- Water storage ranges widely from below average to above average in the major hydroelectric and irrigation reservoirs of the Bow River basin, generally similar to last year at this time except at Travers Reservoir, which is much lower.
- Water storage levels in the North Saskatchewan River basin are currently below average at the Brazeau Reservoir and above average at Lake Abraham. Water storage is average at Glennifer Lake, the Red Deer River basin's major reservoir.