



NEWS RELEASE

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Ministry of Environment

B.C. SNOWPACK AND WATER SUPPLY UPDATE RELEASED

VICTORIA – Following the very heavy January snowfall throughout south and central British Columbia, February and March brought near normal to slightly below normal snowfall and April brought slightly greater than normal snowfall.

The May 1 snow survey reflects the maximum snow accumulation for the year. From this date forward, snowpack will decline as the spring melt accelerates. The conditions defined by the May 1 snow survey largely reflect the flood potential for the spring, and the water supply potential for the summer.

“Despite an overall positive water supply outlook, we’re still encouraging British Columbians to conserve water whenever possible,” said Environment Minister Barry Penner. “It’s an incredibly valuable resource.”

Current Snowpack

Snowpack conditions in central and southern B.C. are as follows:

- Above normal across Vancouver Island (121 per cent) and the South Coast (111 per cent).
- Above normal in the Okanagan and Kettle basins (114 per cent).
- Near normal in the South Thompson (99 per cent) but slightly below normal in the North Thompson (90 per cent).
- Slightly below normal in the Columbia (93 per cent) and Kootenay (91 per cent), except southern portions of the Kootenay, which are above normal.
- Below normal in the Similkameen (72 per cent) and Nicola-Coldwater (70 per cent) basins.

Northern B.C. snowpacks remain below normal. The Upper Fraser basin is only 70 per cent of normal. The Peace River basin is currently 86 per cent of normal and the Skeena is 84 per cent, both of which are slight increases from their April 1 levels.

Water Supply Outlook

- There are currently no water supply concerns for the Okanagan, Kootenay and Thompson basins, or for Vancouver Island and the South Coast.
- Spring and early summer stream flow runoff is forecast to be above normal on Vancouver Island and the South Coast, near or slightly above normal in the Okanagan and Kettle basins, near or slightly below normal in the Thompson, Columbia and Kootenay regions, and about 80 per cent of normal in the Similkameen basin.
- For northern B.C., spring and early summer runoff is forecast to be only 70-85 per cent of normal (upper Fraser, Peace, Skeena basins).

Most major rivers in the province will experience their snowmelt-generated peak discharge in late May or early June. Based on current snow conditions, the Ministry of Environment is forecasting below average peak flows throughout the upper, middle and lower Fraser River. Because of improved snow water conditions in the Thompson River watershed during April, we are now forecasting a near average peak flow for the Thompson River at Kamloops (the April 1 forecast was for a slightly below average peak flow).

Rivers in the Kootenays and Okanagan have the potential to experience average or above average peak flows during snowmelt. In particular the Elk River in the East Kootenay and small and mid-sized rivers in the southern portions of the Kootenay and Columbia have the potential for a high peak flows.

Whether or not high flows occur depends on weather conditions during spring melt for the remainder of May and June, particularly rainfall patterns. British Columbia regional climatology is currently being affected by a mild La Niña, which generates an increased probability of cooler-than-normal and wetter-than-normal spring weather.

To date, B.C. has had two low-level flood events this spring, both produced by rain-on-snow. The first occurred on April 14 in the Trail and Fruitvale area, and the second was on April 30, in the Christina Lake and Revelstoke areas.

This provincewide snow survey was compiled by the B.C. River Forecast Centre. For additional information, refer to the centre's webpage at:
http://www.env.gov.bc.ca/rfc/river_forecast/bulletin.htm.

For everyday tips to reduce water consumption, refer to the Ministry's webpage at:
http://www.env.gov.bc.ca/wsd/plan_protect_sustain/water_conservation/index.html.

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