



Early Water Supply Warning

Warm and dry weather conditions in Northeast B.C. are setting up for another summer of challenging water supply. Strong El Niño conditions over the winter and spring have resulted in above normal temperatures, below normal precipitation, and a shortfall of accumulated snow in the plains of the northeast.

During the Oct. 1 - April 30 period, Fort St. John received 134.8 mm of precipitation (78 per cent of the normal volume), and Fort Nelson received 129.8 mm of precipitation (87 per cent of the normal volume). Average temperatures were 3.1 degrees warmer than normal over the winter at Fort St. John and 2.5 degrees warmer than normal at Fort Nelson. The warm and dry weather persisted through April, with Fort St. John and Fort Nelson receiving only 63 per cent and 67 per cent of normal April precipitation, respectively. In addition, April temperatures were well above normal, producing earlier snowmelt.

	Fort St. John	Fort Nelson	
Precipitation (mm)	Oct. 1 – April 30	134.8	129.8
	Normal	172.3	149.8
	% of Normal	78%	87%
	April	12.5	13.0
	Normal	19.8	19.3
	% of Normal	63%	67%
Temperature (°C)	Oct. 1 – April 30	-2.3	-7.7
	Normal	-5.4	-10.2
	April	7.6	4.6
	Normal	3.9	3.0

With the low precipitation, below normal snow accumulations, and warm spring weather, rivers in the plains portion of the northeast appear to have experienced their spring “freshet” peaks three to four weeks earlier than usual, and have begun their recession. Some rivers (Kiskatinaw, Pouce Coupe, Beatton, Blueberry, Fontas, etc.) are low for the first week of May and dropping, and are anticipated to become lower than normal earlier than expected, unless the next few weeks bring rain.

In July of 2010, 2012, and 2014, the BC Oil and Gas Commission suspended short-term water withdrawals it had previously approved through the Water Act, due to drought conditions. Operators with valid short-term water use authorizations are advised it may be prudent to withdraw while available, and store it for use at a later date.

Due to these extremely dry conditions there is elevated fire risk in the northeast. Permit holders should take added fire safety precautions, such as removing woody and other combustible debris on and around sites, and ensure blackened areas around fire stacks are well maintained.

Should you have any questions regarding this Industry Bulletin, please contact:

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