BC Environment
River Forecast Centre

Water Supply and Streamflow Conditions:
Issued: July 18, 2008

Stream flow and water supply conditions can change quickly in British Columbia. Following a winter that produced near or above normal snow packs, and a cool spring that resulted in delayed snow melt, the warm and dry weather of the last few weeks is beginning to be reflected in below normal river levels in some areas of British Columbia, particularly in the southern one-third of the province.

Rainfall during June was variable, ranging from only one-third of normal for Kamloops and Fort St. John, to 60-90% of normal for much of the province. Some locations (Penticton, Fort Nelson, Williams Lake) received near normal rainfall during June. Beginning the last week of June, strong high pressure system settled over southern B.C., and resulting in sustained hot and dry weather. Rainfall amounts in the Coastal and Interior areas of B.C. have been well below normal in most areas, except the far north-east (e.g., Fort Nelson), where an intense frontal system brought heavy rain in early July. In most of the South Interior (Williams Lake, Kamloops, Merritt, Kelowna, Penticton, Grand Forks, Creston, others) and South Coast and Vancouver Island, rainfall amounts have ranged from negligible to slight over the past 3-4 weeks. In the North-East Interior, periodic waves of frontal moisture have brought some rainfall.

The sustained warmer than normal temperatures of the past three weeks has accelerated the loss of water from the soil, and from rivers, lakes and other water bodies, by evaporation and transpiration. River levels are variable across the province, but are falling quickly in many areas as a result of the warm and dry weather.

Many rivers are near their median water levels for this date in mid-July, but many others are at low levels seen on average once in five to ten years.

South and Central Interior:

- The Granby River and Kettle River (Westbridge, Midway, Grand Forks) are at 5-year to 10-year low flows;
- Camp Creek (Summerland), Salmon River (Salmon valley), Nicola River and Coldstream Creek (Merritt) are at 5-year to 10-year low flows;
- The Tulameen and Similkameen rivers (Hedley, Princeton) are well below median water levels for the date, and are dropping steadily.
- In the Kootenay, the Salmo River and Redfish Creek are at 5-year low flows;
- Penfold Creek and the Horsefly River are at 5-year low flows;
- The Bulkley River (Smithers) is near a 5-year low flow.

South Coast and Vancouver Island

- The Cowichan River and Englishman River are above their median levels for the date (likely reflecting late season snow melt from high elevation);
- Tofino Creek (west coast Vancouver Island) is at 200% of its median flow for the date;
- The Oyster River and Chemainus River (low relief, with no residual snow cover), are at 5-year to 10-year low flows.

BC Environment
River Forecast Centre

Outlook

Weather forecasts as of today indicate a continuation of the drier and warmer than normal weather for the South Interior for the next few days. River levels in some areas (Okanagan, Kettle, Nicola/Coldwater, Thompson, others) will continue to drop. For Vancouver Island and the South Coast, weather is forecast to be dry, with slightly above normal temperatures. River levels will continue to drop.

Should no significant and widespread rain occur during the next couple of weeks, river levels in many areas (particularly the South Interior) may approach significant low flow levels (25-year return period) by the end of July or early August.