

BC Environment

River Forecast Centre

Water Supply and Streamflow Conditions:

Issued: July 3, 2009

In British Columbia, this past winter produced above normal snow packs in the northern and central portions of the province, and near to below normal snow packs in the south. In the southern third of the province, the warm and dry weather for the month of June is beginning to be reflected in below normal river levels.

In the south, rainfall for the month of June was generally below average; in some areas significantly so. In the southwest portion of the province, Victoria, Vancouver and Kamloops received only one-fifth of the normal amount of precipitation in June. Conditions were slightly better in the Okanagan and Similkameen, with Kelowna and Princeton receiving about one-third the normal amount of rainfall, although further to the south Penticton recorded about three-quarters the normal amount of precipitation. Conditions continued to improve further east, where Castlegar also received about three-quarters the normal amount of precipitation, and rainfall in Cranbrook was normal for the month of June.

After the freshet peak in late-May and early-June river levels have steadily declined, although in the southwest conditions did stabilize or recover somewhat with a rainfall event during last weekend in June. At the beginning of this week, a strong high pressure system over southern B.C has resulted in hot and dry weather. The warmer than normal temperatures have 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. To date, the regions with the lowest water levels are the Nicola/Coldwater and Vancouver Island. Below is a summary of river levels in southern BC.

South Interior:

- The Nicola River (Merritt) and Coldwater River (Brookmere) are at 10-year to 20-year low flows;
- The Tulameen and Similkameen rivers (Hedley, Princeton) are at 5-year low flows;
- Camp Creek (Summerland), Salmon River (Salmon Valley) are at 5-year to 10-year low flows;
- Vaseux and Coldstream creeks in the Okanagan are approaching 5-year low flows;
- The Kettle River near Ferry and Moyie River at Eastport are between median and 5-year low flows;
- The Kootenay and Elk rivers are near a 5-year low flow, while the Slocan River is at median flow;

South Coast and Vancouver Island

- The Stave, Seymour and Coquihalla rivers are at median flows;
- The Chilliwack River is approaching a 5-year low flow;
- Oyster River is near a record low flow;

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- The Tsolum and Browns rivers near Courtenay and Englishman River near Parksville are at 10-year to 20-year low flows.

Outlook

Weather forecasts as of today show continued hot, dry conditions over the weekend. However, by the beginning of next week the weather will cool to slightly below seasonal normals accompanied by showers and cloudy conditions for most of the province. River levels in the southern portion of the province will continue to decline over the weekend, but the rate of decline should be lessened and water levels may become more stable with the more moist, cooler conditions next week.

Should no significant and widespread rain occur during the next couple of weeks, river levels in many areas of southern BC may approach significant low flow levels by the end of July or early August.