



Spring Conditions Overview in the Ottawa River Basin (March 20, 2020)

OTTAWA/GATINEAU, Friday March 20, 2020 — The Ottawa River Regulating Committee monitors the Ottawa River basin closely at this time of the year in preparation for the spring freshet. There are many factors that make long term forecasts of river peak conditions uncertain; however, the Committee is monitoring basin conditions and weather forecasts closely as we approach spring. This report is a summary of current early spring conditions in the Ottawa River basin.

Current Snowpack Conditions:

- As seen in the figure below, the snowpack (or the quantity of water held in the snowpack) in early March was above average in most locations. At that time, there was significantly less snow compared to 2019 in the western portion of the basin.
- The Spring melt has begun slowly in the southern part of the basin during the second week of March, which is three weeks earlier than the melt experienced last year. Thaws occurring in the month of March are typically more moderate than those occurring in April given that temperatures are typically cooler. The rain received the week of March 9 combined with above zero temperatures removed a significant portion of the snow in the southern part of the basin. This partial snow melt has brought the snowpack closer to or below normal in some areas, including in the Petawawa, Bonnechere, Mississippi, Rideau and South Nation basins.

Current Level and Flow Conditions:

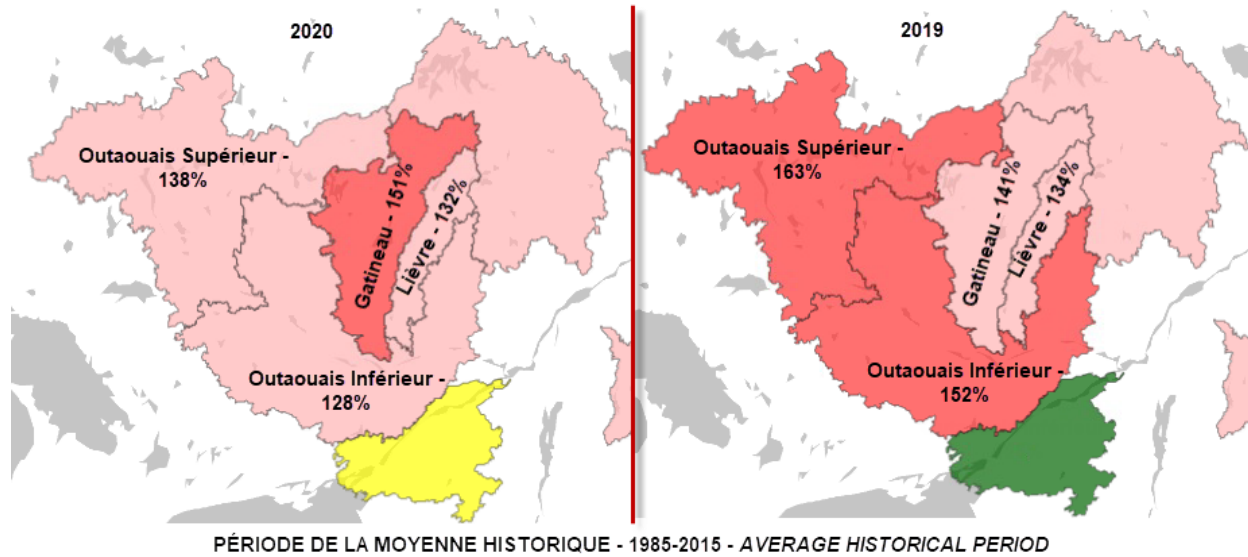
- The principal reservoirs located in the northern part of the Ottawa River basin are essentially empty as shown in the figure below and are ready to retain spring runoff once the freshet begins in those upstream basin areas.
- The levels and flows from Lake Timiskaming to Fort Coulonge are currently below or close to normal. Downstream of Fort-Coulonge, a slight rise in levels is observed in response to the slow ongoing snow melt. This is a good sign as it means that part of the snow pack is leaving the Ottawa River system early in the spring.

Longer-term Overview:

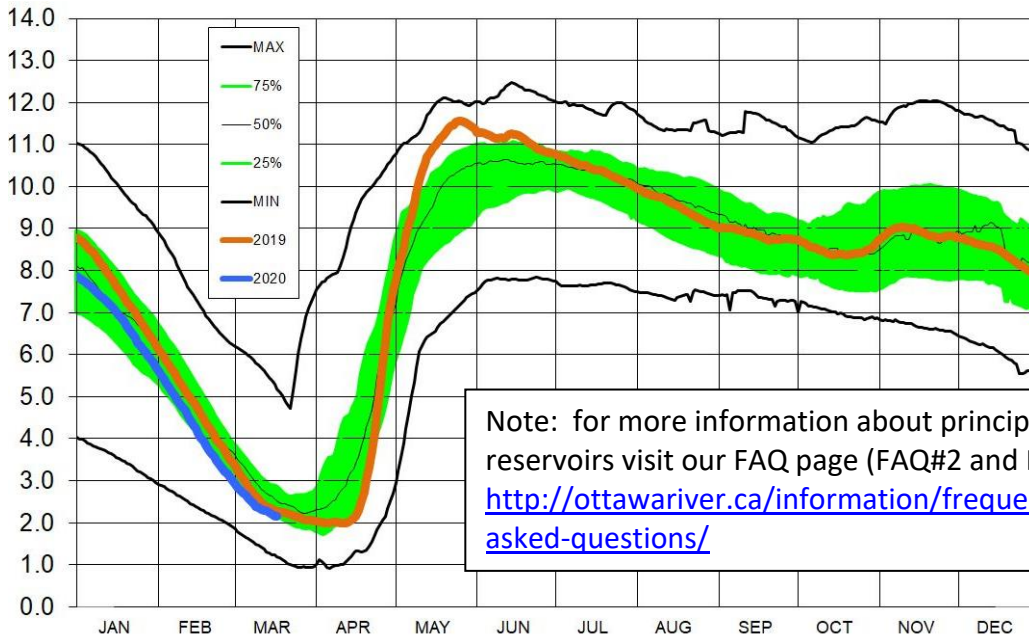
- While it is not possible to completely rule out the occurrence of a large spring freshet, the factors that are known at this time (i.e. decreasing snow pack, early spring start) are positive indicators of a year without excessive flooding along the Ottawa River.
- Higher than normal precipitation was a factor in producing the spring flood events of 2017 and 2019 and it is unfortunately not possible to accurately forecast precipitation amounts to come in the next six weeks. However, weather specialists are seeing signs of average precipitation to come in the next two weeks which would be beneficial for the spring freshet period.

The Ottawa River Regulating Committee will continue to monitor basin conditions and report conditions to residents on its website www.ottawariver.ca/.

ÉQUIVALENT EN EAU DE LA NEIGE - SNOW WATER CONTENT
 DÉBUT MARS - BEGINNING OF MARCH
 POURCENTAGE DE LA NORMALE (%) - PERCENT OF NORMAL (%)



WATER STORED IN PRINCIPAL RESERVOIRS / EAU EMMAGASINÉE DANS LES PRINCIPAUX RÉSERVOIRS
 IN BILLIONS OF CUBIC METRES (1963-2019) / EN MILLIARD DE MÈTRES CUBES (1963-2019)



Note: for more information about principal reservoirs visit our FAQ page (FAQ#2 and FAQ#5) <http://ottawariver.ca/information/frequently-asked-questions/>