



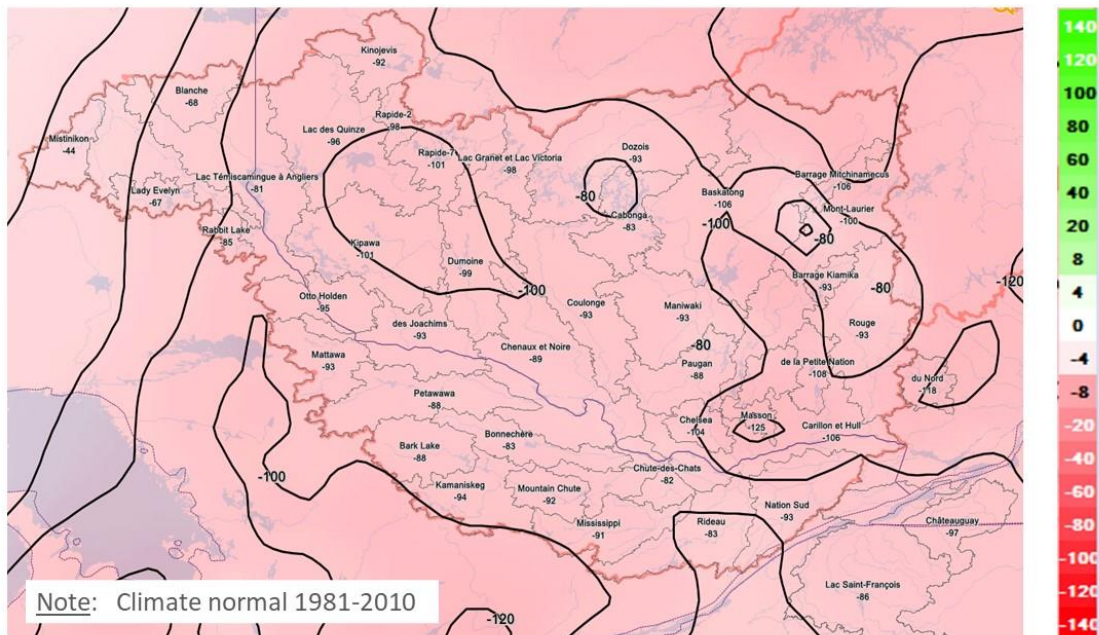
Low Flow Conditions in the Ottawa River Basin

OTTAWA/GATINEAU, Friday June 25, 2021 — The Ottawa River Regulating Committee provides integrated management of the principal reservoirs in the Ottawa River basin throughout the year and is closely monitoring the current low flow conditions on the Ottawa River. This report provides an overview of the current low flow conditions in the Ottawa River basin and the management of water in the principal reservoirs.

Low Water Conditions:

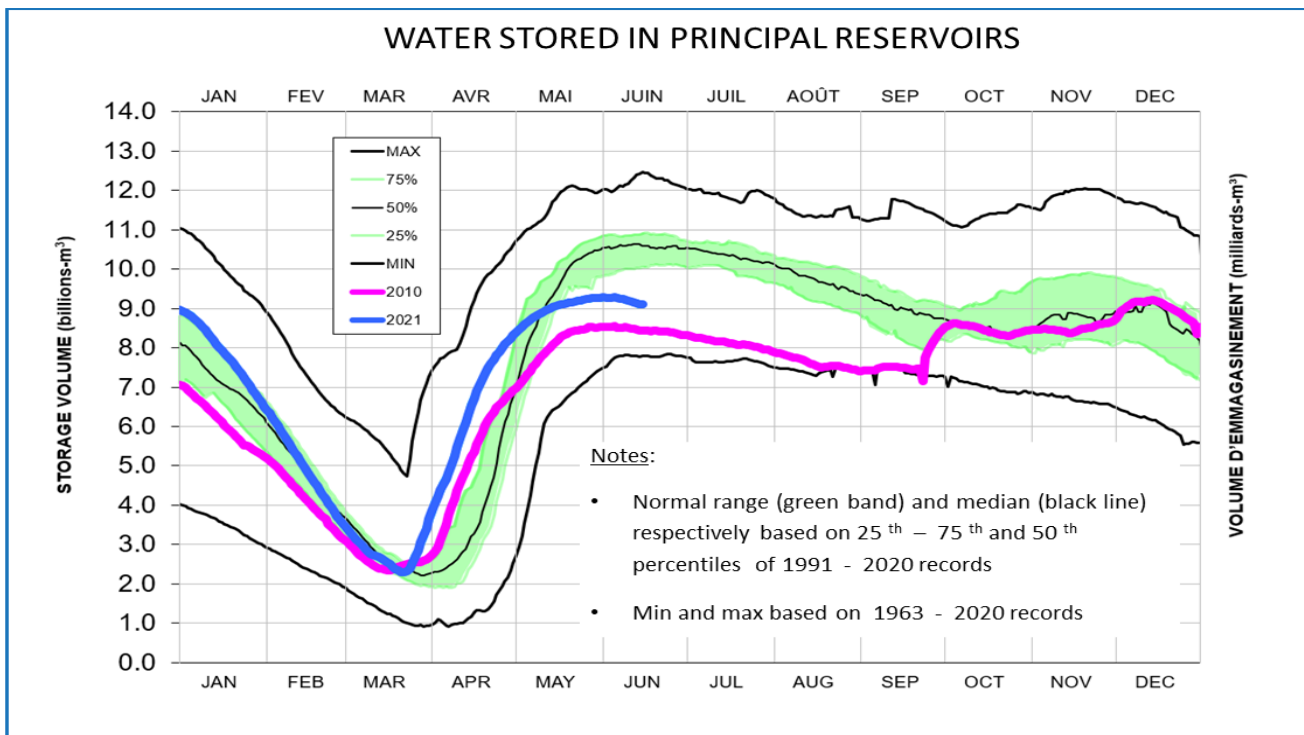
- Following an early freshet with below average snow melt volume, flows and levels along the Ottawa River have declined gradually over the last six weeks. Along with snowmelt, it is the amount of precipitation received during the spring that determines the quantity of water flowing in the Ottawa River in early summer. From April 1 to June 15, 2021, between 80 and 125 mm less rain than normal fell over the watershed, which is about 50% less than would usually be received (see figure).
- Lower flow rates mean that water levels are also low in some locations. Sections of the river located just below dams and river reaches that are not influenced by downstream dams, for example Lac Deschenes (Britannia beach / Aylmer) and the Pembroke area, are particularly at risk of experiencing low levels in such dry conditions. In late June of this year, levels observed in those areas were similar to levels experienced in drier years at the end of summer.
- Such low levels are not unprecedented and are similar to conditions on the river in 2010. Over the past 30 years, levels lower than currently observed have occurred several times. Since 1991, the lowest levels observed at Pembroke and Britannia occurred in September 2005 when levels were as low as 110.76 metres and 57.44 metres, respectively.

Total Precipitation April 1st to June 15, 2021 – Departure from normal (mm)



Reservoir Regulation Strategy:

- Despite receiving little precipitation this spring, most reservoirs were filled by late May to levels close to their target summer recreational levels. Reservoir management is particularly difficult in years like 2021 when spring runoff from snowmelt and rainfall is less than normal. However, compared to 2010 when similar spring conditions occurred, significantly more water was stored in 2021 in reservoirs (see figure). This notable achievement is the result of adopting a new technology that tracks the melting of the snowpack in real-time using snow water content sensors in several areas of the watershed.
- Since early June and as low flow conditions continue to prevail, water is being released prudently from principal reservoirs to meet essential needs, both locally on the reservoirs and along downstream river reaches. Despite the rain received over the last week, water released from reservoirs has recently been reduced to just above minimum environmental requirements in an effort to preserve water stored for later in summer when potential needs for water may become more pressing.



Viewing current conditions: To find out about water levels in your area and how they compare with normal conditions, visit the '[Current Conditions](#)' webpage and click on the map marker closest to where you live. In the pop-up box, click on 'Graph View and Advanced Data'. You can also view conditions on principal reservoirs by clicking on '[Reservoirs only](#)' above the interactive map.

Longer-term Overview:

- Flows are expected to remain low over the coming weeks in all locations along the main stem of the river depending on weather conditions.
- It is typical every year for flows and levels along the Ottawa River to gradually decrease until late August. Without significant rainfall, water levels and flows in reservoirs and on the main stem of the Ottawa River will continue to remain well below average.

Did you know? **Low water conditions on the Ottawa River can cause hazards for boaters.** As a good practice, boaters should know of the Low Water Datum used on [navigational charts](#) and be aware that actual levels may be lower than this datum. For example, the Low Water Datum at Britannia is 57.91 metres (190.0 feet). *Water levels observed at Britannia have been **below datum since May 30** and are not expected to increase to above datum over the next weeks. The current water level at Britannia can be obtained at ottawariver.ca*

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

Ottawa River Regulating Committee