

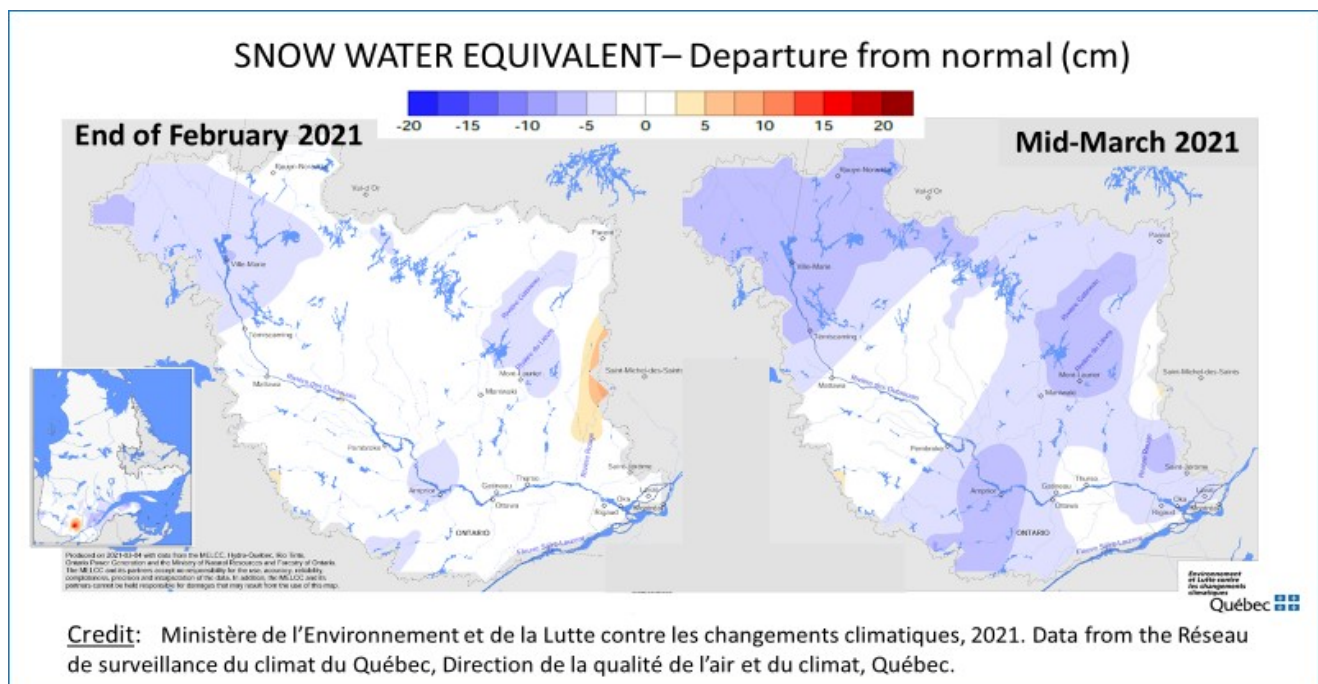


Spring Conditions Overview in the Ottawa River Basin

OTTAWA/GATINEAU, Monday March 22, 2021 — The Ottawa River Regulating Committee monitors the Ottawa River basin closely in preparation for the spring freshet. There are many factors that make forecasts of peak river conditions uncertain including the timing of the start of the spring freshet. Much like the spring of 2020, the Ottawa River basin is experiencing spring-like weather earlier than usual. In the coming week snowmelt is expected to increase due to forecast above seasonal temperatures. As flows and water levels begin to rise in the river, the Regulating Committee will publish a Press Release announcing the onset of freshet. This Spring Conditions Overview is a summary of current early spring conditions in the Ottawa River basin prior to the onset of the freshet.

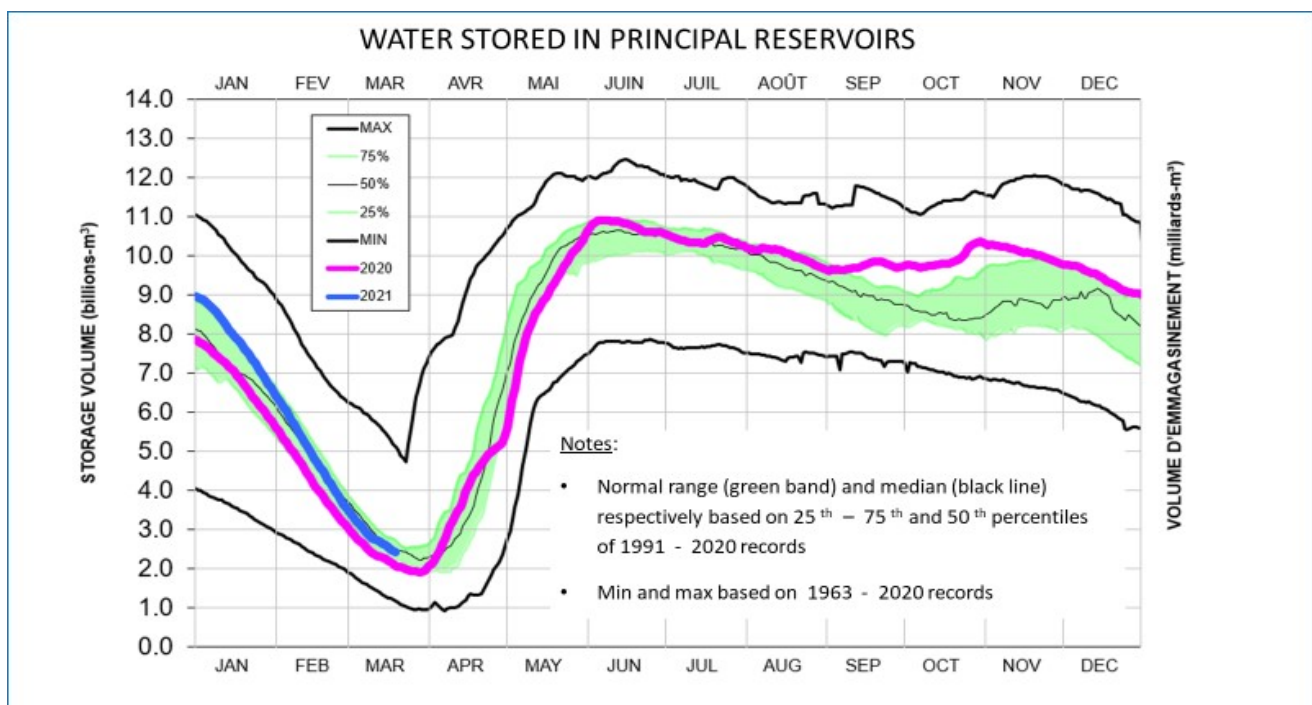
Current Snowpack Conditions:

- In general, the amount of precipitation received over the watershed has been close to normal this winter, except for the northwestern portion of the basin which has received less than average amounts. As there were no significant thaws in January or February, the snow cover was of average depth in most places and had a low density. This means the snow contained less water and may not produce as much runoff as a more dense snowpack. Thus, at the end of February (figure to the left below), the snow water content, or the quantity of water held in the snowpack, was close to normal in most locations.
- The Spring melt has begun slowly in the central and southern parts of the basin during the first and second week of March with periods of daytime high temperatures well above zero and some night-time low temperatures also being above zero. These periods of melt combined with snow loss through sublimation have resulted in a significantly reduced snowpack through mid-March (figure to the right). These early melt periods have been followed by periods with below average temperatures and night-time lows below zero. This has slowed down the rate of melt and hence runoff flowing into the river.



Reservoir Regulation Strategy / 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 on the mainstem of the river from Lake Timiskaming down to the Montreal area are currently close to normal with a slight rise in levels being observed in response to the slow ongoing snow melt. With average day and night-time temperatures expected to remain above zero over the next few days for much of the basin, snow melt is expected to continue to increase over the coming week.

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, namely below average snow water content in all locations and early spring start, are positive indicators of a year without excessive flooding along the Ottawa River.
- However, other weather factors may occur in the coming weeks and influence the strength of the freshet. These unpredictable weather factors are often known only a few days in advance.

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