



RISING OTTAWA RIVER WATER LEVELS

OTTAWA/GATINEAU, Thursday March 25, 2021 — The Ottawa River Regulating Committee would like to inform watershed residents that levels and flows along the Ottawa River have begun increasing with the onset of the spring freshet period. It cautions residents along the shores of the Ottawa River from Mattawa down to the Montreal region that throughout the spring freshet period water levels can rise rapidly at times and cause minor flooding in low-lying areas.

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 an early spring start, are positive indicators of a year without excessive flooding along the Ottawa River. The Regulating Committee will be closely monitoring the effects of precipitation and temperature increases throughout the spring freshet period as they may cause levels and flows to change rapidly. **Further bulletins will be published if flood risks increase.**

River Conditions Forecast / Flooding Risk: With the warm weather of the last few days and ongoing rainfall over a large part of the basin, spring runoff is increasing across the Ottawa River basin. Precipitation forecast over the next few days is expected to further increase spring runoff. With the increased quantity of water collecting in the river, flows and water levels along the main stem of the river are expected to begin to rise over the next few days.

At this time, the snow cover varies significantly across the basin, with some areas in the south of the basin having no snow remaining. The snow water content (that is the amount of water contained in the snow cover) is lower than average over much of the basin except in the west-central portion of the basin where average conditions prevail. However, snow water content is only one of several factors impacting the magnitude of the spring freshet, which largely depends on weather conditions that can only be known a few days in advance.

Based on the current weather forecast, flooding in low-lying areas is not expected to occur over the next few days. Low-lying areas are those that are flooded regularly during the spring freshet period. It is important to note, however, that the freshet period typically takes place over a period of six to eight weeks. Throughout the freshet period, the combination of heavy rainfall and snowmelt may result in rapid increases in water levels and flows on the main stem of the Ottawa River. Rising water levels may eventually result in minor flooding in low-lying areas along the main stem of the river from Mattawa down to the Montreal region.

Reservoir Regulation Strategy: Increases in water levels in the spring are caused by increases in flows. The principal storage reservoirs in the northern part of the watershed will store a large portion of runoff from these areas, thereby reducing flows in downstream basin areas. However, dams located in the central and southern portions of the basin are essentially “run of the river” with no significant storage capacity. As such, they do not reduce flows (and hence the levels) associated with increased spring runoff. During this critical freshet period, the Regulating Committee will take all possible actions to mitigate the amount of flooding and will continuously monitor conditions at all points along the river.

The Regulating Committee works closely, at all times, with provincial agencies responsible for issuing flood-related messages. In Ontario, Conservation Authorities and District Offices of the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry issue local flood-related messages and information to municipalities, Indigenous communities and other key agencies involved in flood preparedness and response. Current flood-related messages can be viewed on-line on the individual conservation authority websites and on the provincial flood webpage: <https://www.ontario.ca/flooding>. In Quebec, the Centre des opérations gouvernementales du Québec and the Sécurité civile collaborate with municipalities to protect residents. Monitoring of flood conditions can be viewed at <https://geoeql.msp.gouv.qc.ca/adnv2>.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Website: Current and forecast conditions on the Ottawa River along with conditions at the principal reservoirs in the system may be obtained by consulting our website. A general [four-day forecast](#) is also provided at key locations within the basin during the spring freshet period.

www.ottawariver.ca (English)

www.rivieredesoutaouais.ca (French)

Telephone: The river conditions forecast and information on current river levels may be obtained for the following locations: Lake Timiskaming, Mattawa, Pembroke, Lake Coulonge, Chats Lake, Ottawa (Britannia), Gatineau (Hull wharf), Grenville and Maniwaki, by calling the following numbers:

Ottawa-Gatineau
(819) 994-9049 English
(819) 994-8171 French

Outside the Ottawa-Gatineau region
1-800-778-1246 English
1-800-778-1243 French

Twitter: Follow us to be notified when press releases are issued, when we begin daily updates of the River Conditions Forecast message or the four-day forecasts at reference locations on our website, or when news bulletins are posted on our website.

www.twitter.com/ORRPB (English)

www.twitter.com/CPRRO (French)

The Ottawa River Regulating Committee consists of the following agencies that are responsible for the cooperative flow management of the principal reservoirs within the Ottawa River watershed: Hydro-Québec, Ministère de l'Environnement et de la Lutte contre les changements climatiques du Québec, Ontario Power Generation, and Public Services and Procurement Canada. In Ontario, the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry, as an associate member of the Regulating Committee, contributes important hydrometeorological information and plays a key role in disseminating information in Ontario. The Regulating Committee issues a press release when the spring freshet season is starting on the Ottawa River and when it anticipates that river conditions on the main stem of the Ottawa River (between the Lake Timiskaming outlet down to the Montreal region) may exceed significant flood levels.

For additional information, please communicate with the Ottawa River Regulation Secretariat using the 'Contact us' form on the website or leave a message at any of the telephone numbers listed above.