

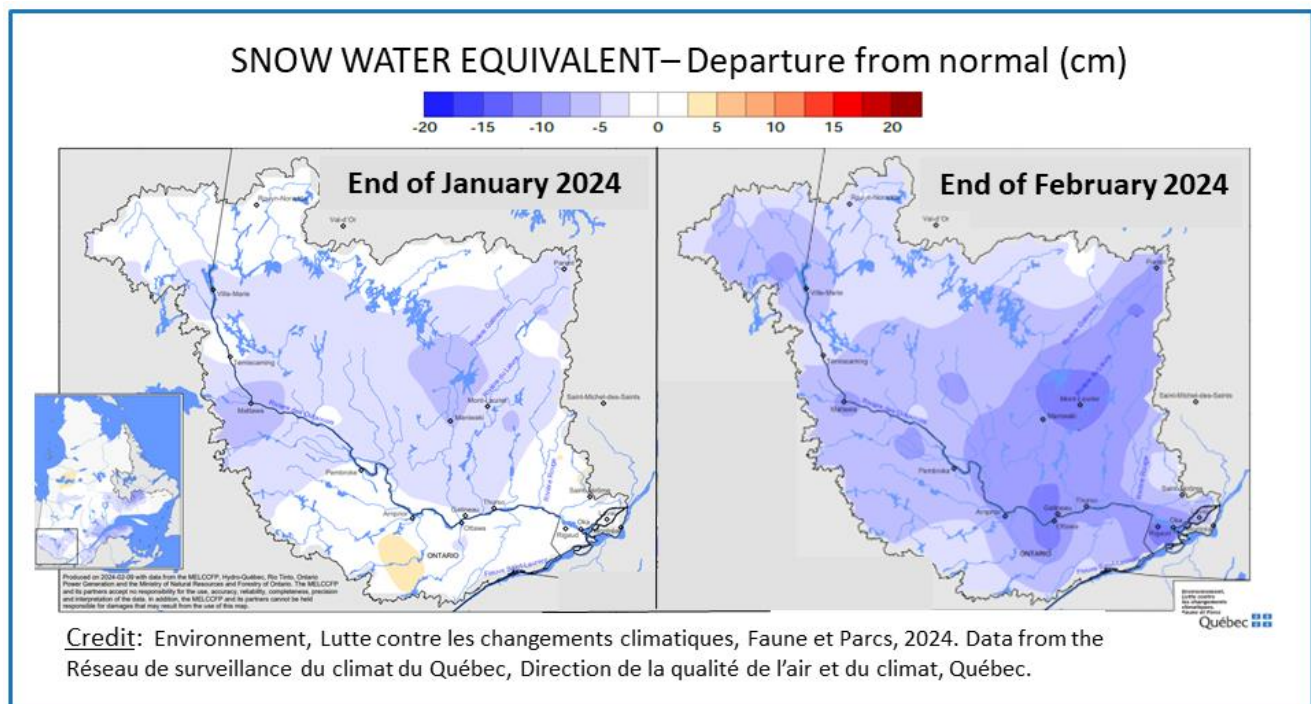


Early Spring Conditions Overview in the Ottawa River Basin

OTTAWA/GATINEAU, Wednesday March 13, 2024 — The Ottawa River Regulating Committee monitors the Ottawa River basin closely in preparation for the spring freshet. Overall, this winter has been characterized by unseasonably warm temperatures, below-average precipitation in many locations and several melt events. This Early Spring Conditions Overview is a summary of current conditions in the Ottawa River basin prior to the onset of the freshet.

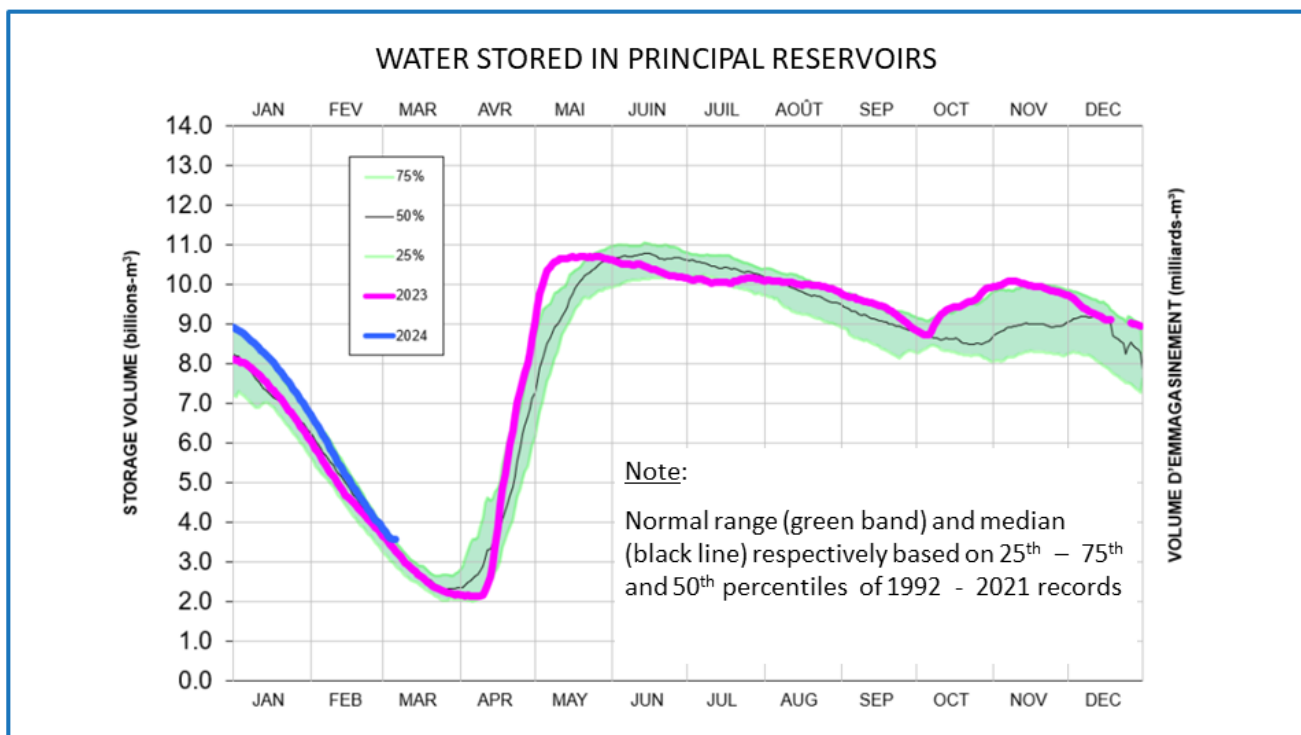
Current Snowpack Conditions:

- The snow cover started to form early this winter but disappeared in many locations the first week of January due to above normal temperatures. The second week of January brought a significant amount of snow across the basin. However, with below-average precipitation over the subsequent weeks and repeated warm spells, the snow water content, or the quantity of water held in the snowpack, was below average in most locations by the end of January (figure at left below).
- February brought little precipitation and the snow cover remained stable over the month in the central and northern portions of the basin. Above normal temperatures triggered repeated melt episodes in the southern portion of the basin. During the last week of February, warm weather combined with rain accelerated the melting of the snowpack in the southern portion of the basin. Overall, the basin had a significantly reduced snowpack by the end of February (figure at right below). In the southeastern portion of the basin, the snow was essentially gone by early March.



Reservoir Regulation Strategy / Current Level and Flow Conditions:

- The levels and flows on the main stem of the Ottawa River from Lake Timiskaming down to the Montreal area have been slightly above average in most locations over the month of February. Warmer temperatures combined with rain during the first week of March have generated spring runoff across the basin, with flows and levels increasing in most tributaries and along the main stem of the Ottawa River. Last weekend (March 8 - 10), a precipitation event brought rainfall and snowfall in the southern and northern portions of the basin respectively, producing runoff and increasing flows to slightly above normal for this time of the year.
- In early March, the principal reservoirs located in the northern part of the Ottawa River basin were on track with their normal drawdown schedule as shown in the figure below. However, because of the unusually reduced snowpack and moderate response to previous rain and snowmelt events, several reservoirs have slowed down their reservoir drawdown during the second week of March.



Longer-term Overview:

- As of March 13, the amount of water in the snowpack is well below average across the basin. This reduced snowpack combined with the forecast of no significant precipitation event over the coming week is prompting reservoir operators to carefully manage the transition from drawdown to refill to help reach summer levels while still reducing flooding risks.

- Although it is too early to forecast the magnitude and timing of the peak on the main stem of the Ottawa River, the ongoing slow melt of the snow pack in the central portion of the basin could constitute a mild start of freshet. However, it is not possible to completely rule out the occurrence of flooding this early in the year. Weather conditions over the coming weeks (such as additional snow falls and heavy rainfall events) will influence the strength of the freshet. Often, these weather conditions only become certain 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 .

Ottawa River Regulating Committee