

Rideau Valley Conservation Authority Watershed Conditions Bulletin

2008 Rideau River Spring Runoff — Long Range Outlook

The Rideau Valley Conservation Authority issues the Long Range Outlook bulletin at the beginning of March each year to provide an indication of the potential for flooding when the spring freshet occurs. Historically, freshet occurs between mid-March and mid-April in the Rideau Valley.

March 7, 2008, RIDEAU VALLEY WATERSHED — Based on present snow conditions on the Rideau Watershed and the assumption that there will be normal precipitation amounts over the next several weeks, the Rideau Valley Conservation Authority is presently expecting above average spring flow conditions this year in parts of the Rideau River watershed.

As everyone is all too aware, there has been a lot of snow this winter. Of the 105 days since the snow began to accumulate on the ground in November, some snow has fallen on 62 of those days and 21 of the 29 days in February. Fortunately, the snow has usually been light with a relatively low water equivalent. As well, one significant melt in January and some minor ones have helped to reduce the snowpack.

The Conservation Authority snow measurements were most recently completed on Tuesday, March 4th, when it was found that the overall watershed average water equivalent of the snowpack was 1.6 times the long-term average. However, the snowfall and melts have not been uniform over the watershed. The water equivalent was slightly less than the long-term average at two sites but considerably above average at the Jock and Tay River snow measurement sites. Therefore, when the eventual spring peak occurs, there is the potential for minor flooding in the Jock and Tay River tributary watersheds. How significant the flows will be depends on how much further accumulation of snow there is and the weather that induces the freshet. Already, the March 5th storm has added to the water equivalent and more snowfall is forecast through the weekend.

The RVCA is now in the daily planning cycle of its flood forecasting and warning program – weather forecasts and river flows and water levels are being routinely monitored. Flood advisory or warning messages will be issued as required based on those forecasts.

The RVCA recommends at this time each year that everyone living near a watercourse should inform themselves of the flood risks in their area and should review their own plans for minimizing flood-related property damages and inconveniences. Municipal officials should review their flood response plans at this time and the usual preparations should be made to respond to emergency situations as required. The role of the Conservation Authority in the delivery of flood response services is to provide early warning of a developing flood situation and continuous monitoring and analysis throughout the event, with a view to providing timely and useful information to municipal and provincial emergency response personnel on the expected severity and duration of the event.

Recent cold temperatures will have caused ice cover to become thicker throughout the watershed but everyone is advised to be cautious around watercourses and parents particularly need to supervise their children and make them aware of the danger of unstable ice and increasing flows as the spring thaw progresses.

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More Information:

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Rideau Valley Conservation Authority is a partnership of municipalities within the

Rideau Valley watershed created under the Conservation Authorities Act to deliver a range of programs in watershed management and natural resource conservation.