
RVCA News Release

PARTS OF RIDEAU WATERSHED IN LEVEL 1 DROUGHT CONDITIONS

MANOTICK, August 29, 2005 — Parts of the Rideau Watershed have received very little precipitation during the months of July and August, resulting in very dry conditions that are affecting agricultural operations and crop yields. Water levels in reservoir lakes are at lower levels than normal for this time of year, and the many local streams that feed the lakes and larger rivers like the Tay, and the Rideau have dried up. Groundwater water levels have dropped to the point where shallow well systems are beginning to be affected.

The southern and western portions of the Rideau Watershed – generally, the subwatersheds of the “Upper” and “Middle Rideau,” upstream of Burritt’s Rapids — are most affected by the dry conditions.

Precipitation amounts in the Lower Rideau (downstream of Burritt’s Rapids) were close to normal in July, and about 60% of normal for the first three weeks of August, based on data from the weather station at the Ottawa airport.

Based on these observations, the Rideau Valley Conservation Authority (RVCA) advises that the Upper and Middle portions of the Rideau Watershed are now experiencing at least “Level 1” drought conditions as defined in the “Ontario Low Water Response Program”¹. At Level 1 efforts are made to ensure that water managers and water users in the affected area are aware of the developing drought situation, and water users are asked to implement a voluntary reduction in their use of water from surface or ground water supplies. Also, a meeting of the local Water Response Team is to be convened to share information and to coordinate their actions aimed at minimizing the social, economic and environmental impacts of the drought situation. RVCA is now making arrangements for a meeting of the local Water Response Team, which includes personnel of government agencies at the municipal, provincial and federal level who are responsible for water management operations and regulation in the Rideau Watershed.

Hurricane Katrina, which is making landfall on the Louisiana coastline today, is presently expected to track towards Southern Ontario and the St. Lawrence Valley by late Wednesday, bringing with it the possibility of heavy rainfall and some relief to the developing drought conditions in our region. RVCA will continue to monitor conditions.

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For further information, contact:

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¹ A summary of the Ontario Low Water Response Program can be found on the internet at http://www.mnr.gov.on.ca/MNR/water/surface_water/reports/update/OLWRsummary.pdf.