

Manitoba Hydro Spring Water Outlook Burntwood, Churchill, and Nelson Rivers

#1 April 23, 2025

Churchill River and Nelson River Basins

Spring melt is starting and will continue for the next few weeks.

Precipitation amounts across the Churchill and Nelson River basins have improved over the past year, but total precipitation remains at around a 1 in 5-year low.

Lower Churchill River (Southern Indian Lake to Hudson Bay)

The snowpack on the upper Churchill River watershed is above average, while the region near the mouth at Hudson Bay has average snowpack.

Current inflows from Saskatchewan to Southern Indian Lake (SIL) are about 20,000 cubic feet per second (cfs) and have not yet started to rise from spring melt.

The level of SIL is normal for this time of year at 844 ft and is declining slowly until it starts to rise with the spring melt. Outflows through Missi Control Structure are around 1,650 cfs which is typical for this time of year.

The lower Churchill River remains iced-over. Peak flows of about 25,000 cfs are expected near Churchill between the end of May and mid-June.

Burntwood River

Much of the Churchill River flow is diverted out of SIL through the Churchill River Diversion via the Notigi Control Structure to the Rat and Burntwood rivers. Flows through Notigi have been around 25,000 cfs most of the winter and are forecasted to rise to about 35,000 cfs through spring.

Nelson River Basin

Water conditions on the Nelson River are low to moderate.

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact:

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More information on water levels and flows (forecasts and current) are available on our website at:
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The Nelson River flow is at a 1 in 4-year low and declining. Lake Winnipeg is at 712.4 ft. This is higher than last year, but still around a 1 in 8-year low level.

Water levels on Cross and Sipiwek lakes will continue to decline through the spring due to outflow reductions at Jenpeg to help recover storage in Lake Winnipeg following the high winter load period.

Changes in precipitation affect Manitoba Hydro's operations and water levels across the system. Manitoba Hydro closely monitors water supply conditions across the entire Nelson-Churchill River drainage basin and updates its forecasts and operating plans weekly to ensure adequate energy supply.

Long-term precipitation forecasts are unreliable and there remains considerable uncertainty in water level projections for the late spring and summer period. Manitoba Hydro will continue to provide spring outlooks for the Lower Churchill, Burntwood and Nelson Rivers in the coming weeks.

The Outlook is based on a combination of current and forecasted weather data from Environment and Climate Change Canada; recent and historic streamflow conditions based on both federal and Manitoba Hydro data; Manitoba Hydro regulation models for Reindeer Lake and SIL; snow surveys conducted by Manitoba Hydro; and snowpack estimates from satellite data.

Note that spring flows depend on how long it takes for snow to melt (for example, warm temperatures will cause a fast melt and higher water flows, while cooler temperatures will cause a slow melt and moderate flows for a longer period of time). Conditions can also change rapidly if a large rainfall or snowfall event occurs. Outlook information will be updated as conditions change.

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