



Ducks Unlimited Canada
CANADA'S CONSERVATION COMPANY

Winter Habitat Conditions in Canada

February 18, 2005

The outlook for habitat conditions has improved for the central and northern parts of Alberta, the parklands of Saskatchewan and much of the western boreal forest. Additional snow accumulations are needed to ensure good spring habitat conditions in the extreme southern areas of Saskatchewan, Alberta and British Columbia.

Winter snow accumulations are generally at normal levels across **British Columbia** with the notable exceptions of Vancouver Island and the south coast which received below-average accumulations this winter. Spring habitat conditions are predicted to range from good to fair for these areas. Snowfall in the Interior has ranged from slightly above average in the central portion to average in the south and slightly below average in the southeast. In the Peace region, snow levels are generally average and the frost seal still is very good, although the recent warm spell caused some early runoff. Many basins and ditches are full and some roads have been closed due to high water. This suggests we will have a better than average spring in the Peace region in 2005. In the far northeast, snow levels are below average and conditions are expected to be good-fair.

Conditions continue to improve over much of the **Western Boreal Forest**. Snow accumulation is average to above average in most areas. Winter precipitation in northern Saskatchewan, Manitoba, and the Yukon has been particularly good. Habitat conditions are expected to range from good in northern Alberta to very good in the Yukon and the boreal forest of Saskatchewan and Manitoba. In the Northwest Territories, spring conditions are expected to range from very good to good and conditions in Nunavut are expected to be good.

Alberta's precipitation picture has improved measurably over the last month with gains mostly in the central and northern regions. The central parkland is rated good with some areas in the north rated as very good. This represents a notable upgrade for these eco-regions in a single month. Snow accumulation in southern Alberta grasslands remains below average and conditions are expected to be fair with some below-average areas. Mild temperatures were experienced over the entire province in January and February but this only reduced snowpack in the most southerly areas. Frost seal prospects are better than they have been for the last several years in central and northern areas owing to good fall moisture and recent periodic freeze-thaw events. These positive factors must be tempered by the fact that many semi-permanent and permanent basins remain in a deficit situation due to the effects of prolonged drought.

A recent snowstorm has greatly improved snow conditions in the parklands of **Saskatchewan**. Conditions are now expected to be very good in the central region of the

province and good in the south-central region. In the extreme south of the province, snow accumulations are below average and habitat conditions are expected to be fair-poor. This area needs additional precipitation to improve the chances of good spring runoff. The Missouri Coteau has patches of snow mixed with areas of bare ground so additional precipitation is needed to improve conditions there as well.

Snow accumulations are generally above average throughout southern **Manitoba** and conditions are typically very good despite the recent lack of snowfall. In the southwest snow accumulations have settled considerably since last report but good levels remain and the consolidated snowpack appears to have high moisture content. The good accumulation of snow, coupled with favorable fall conditions and a good frost seal, should provide very good pairing and staging conditions throughout the southwest this spring.

Snow accumulations are average to above average in northern **Ontario** and habitat conditions are currently expected to be good to very good. The frost seal has been good throughout the north. Winter conditions across much of southern Ontario have continued to be extremely atypical for the region. Much of the snow accumulation across the south has been greatly reduced due to the recent rainfall and warm temperatures. Currently, most permanent and seasonal wetlands are full due to recurring melts and runoff events.

In **Quebec** all regions have received below-average snowfall. A good frost seal has been maintained by cold temperatures at the beginning of February and predicted habitat conditions vary now from good-fair to good.

Atlantic Canada is experiencing an average winter with average snowfall and a good frost seal. Habitat conditions are expected to be good for this region.

