



Porcupine River Ice Breakup Forecast

May 11, 2022 at 1:30 p.m.

Key message

Water levels are now rising on the Porcupine River and its tributaries, and the ice cover is showing signs of decay.

There is a moderate probability of a sudden rise in water levels caused by ice jamming as early as this weekend.

Winter and early spring conditions

Winter 2021-2022 temperatures were close to average in Old Crow, suggesting that the thickness of the ice cover is likely close to average. This was confirmed at the Porcupine River hydrometric station at the international border, however extensive overflow in January and February was also observed on the Porcupine River at Old Crow, which required multiple reroutes of the winter ice road into Old Crow. Observations from early April indicate that the Bluefish River icing is extensive, extending from bank to bank across the Porcupine River. Snowpack in the Porcupine River basin is well above average, estimated to be 154% of the median historic value on May 1 (refer to the [May 2022 Snow Bulletin](#)). Spring snowmelt volumes are forecast to be above normal in the Porcupine River. Combined with a potentially more resistant ice cover, conditions are conducive for ice jamming and high water levels.

Current conditions

Temperatures have averaged close to normal for the first 10 days of May, with daytime highs in the high single digits and overnight lows a few degrees below freezing. Water level gauges on the Porcupine River at Old Crow and on the Whitestone River were frozen until recently, but show that water levels are increasing in both tributaries and the Porcupine River. Water levels have increased 20 cm in the last 24 hours on the Porcupine River at Old Crow. Ice movements began on the Porcupine River at the border on April 24, while the Old Crow River began showing signs of ice movement on May 3. Recent satellite images from May 9 and 10 show extensive sections of intact but decaying ice cover on the Porcupine River. Photos of the Porcupine River at Old Crow indicate that ice cover decay is well underway with water pooling on the ice and areas of open water.

Weather forecast

Unsettled weather is forecast for the coming week. Currently, cloudy conditions are expected from Thursday to Saturday, with a chance of rain or flurries and daytime highs ranging from four to 10°C. Following a sunny and warm Sunday, temperatures are expected to be mostly below freezing early next week.

Breakup forecast

The generally cool conditions over the coming days may limit the amount of snowmelt runoff generated and associated water level rises, while continuing to allow for ice degradation. The probability of a sudden rise in water level caused by ice jamming becomes moderate in Old Crow as early as this weekend.

Conditions are being closely monitored. Any relevant information or observations are appreciated.

Contact

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