



## Porcupine River Ice Breakup Forecast

May 12, 2023 at 8:30 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 high probability of a sudden rise in water levels caused by ice jamming as early as this weekend.**

### Winter and early spring conditions

Winter 2022-2023 temperatures were slightly above average in Old Crow, suggesting that the ice cover may be slightly thinner than average. Measurements at the Porcupine River near the international border also found slightly below average ice thicknesses, but it is likely to vary along the river. Observations from early April indicate that there is no icing from the Bluefish River across the Porcupine River. It is believed that severe icing at the Bluefish River can contribute to ice jamming. While there are limited data for assessing freeze-up conditions on the Porcupine, it is believed that freeze-up ice jams are likely to have occurred as they did in other areas of the Yukon. Assessment of current satellite imagery also suggests freeze-up jams occurred. Snowpack in the Porcupine River basin is well above average at an estimated 174% of the historic median for May 1 (refer to the [May 2023 Snow Bulletin](#)). Spring snowmelt volumes are forecast to be high in the Porcupine River.

### Current conditions

Temperatures have averaged close to normal for the first 12 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 and Ogilvie Rivers show increasing water levels in both tributaries and the main channel. Photos of the Porcupine River at Old Crow and at the Bluefish River confluence indicate that ice cover decay is well underway with water pooling on the ice and growing areas of open water. Open sections and small ice jams are already forming in the upper reaches of the watershed.

### Weather forecast

Daytime highs are forecast to be 15 degrees or higher for the next three days.

### Breakup forecast

The warm temperatures over the coming days will significantly increase the amount of snowmelt runoff and are likely to cause a rapid rise in water levels. Breakup may occur as early as this weekend. The current conditions and weather forecast are likely to cause a dynamic (mechanical) breakup and more severe ice jamming. **Flood risk along the Porcupine River is considered high for the next 5 to 7 days.**

Conditions are currently being monitored remotely. Forecasters will fly to Old Crow Sunday, May 14 and conduct survey flights to monitor the Porcupine River. Daily updates will follow in the current advisory for the Porcupine River. Please visit the [Yukon Flood Atlas Advisory details page](#) for observations.

Any relevant information or observations are appreciated.

### Contact

For water level and ice conditions or to share observations: Water Resources Branch: [waterlevels@yukon.ca](mailto:waterlevels@yukon.ca)

For flood response: Yukon Emergency Measures Organization: 867-667-5220 or [EMO.yukon@yukon.ca](mailto:EMO.yukon@yukon.ca)