Water Security Agency

wsask.ca

Spring Runoff Outlook

Based on conditions as of March 2, 2026

Prepared by: Flow Forecasting & Operations Planning - Water Security Ag

Executive Summary

The Water Security Agency continuously monitors existing moisture conditions and expected weather patterns to prepare for spring runoff.

- The amount of spring runoff depends on fall soil moisture, snowpack water content and how quickly the snowpack melts.
- In fall 2025, most of Saskatchewan experienced below-average precipitation, leading to dry conditions at freeze-up, especially in southern and northern Saskatchewan.
- Winter precipitation amounts have been near normal throughout most of the province, with north and west central areas receiving more precipitation than normal and southern areas along the Saskatchewan-Manitoba border receiving less than normal. Mid-winter melting events and precipitation falling in the form of rain have led to a consolidation and loss of the snowpack in many southern areas.
- At this time, it is anticipated that the runoff across most of northern, southwest and west central Saskatchewan will be below and well below normal.
- Southeast and most of the central Saskatchewan are expected to see a near normal runoff response due to a near normal snowpack, in combination with wetter fall conditions. In the area around Yorkton and Wynyard, an above normal runoff is expected.
- Most major water supply reservoirs in southern Saskatchewan are at or above normal levels for this time of the year. The exceptions are McDougald and Harris, which are below normal levels.
- Most reservoirs are expected to remain near normal levels following the spring runoff; however, if conditions do not improve, some reservoirs in the Bigstick Basin (i.e., McDougald and Harris) and in the north (i.e., Reindeer Lake) may continue to be lower than normal this year.
- The Water Security Agency is monitoring basin conditions and managing Lake Diefenbaker accordingly. Currently, Lake Diefenbaker is slightly above its normal operating level for this time of year. Considering the expected below normal prairie runoff this spring, operations are targeting the upper end of the mid-March elevation target.
- In the Souris Basin, reservoirs are projected to remain within normal operating ranges.
- All lakes within the Qu'Appelle River Basin are expected to remain in the normal operating ranges.
- In the Churchill River Basin, dry conditions are expected to result in lower flows and lake levels this year.
- In the Quill Lakes Basin, runoff is expected to be above normal this year due to an above-normal snowpack.
- Long-range forecasts predict normal precipitation and warmer than normal temperatures across the southern part of Saskatchewan from March to May.
- The Water Security Agency will continue to monitor and report on landscape conditions and water supply reservoirs to allow for timely response to conditions. The agency continues to work internally and across government to support residents in times of drought or flooding.

Cover Photo: South Saskatchewan River near Lemsford, Jan. 19, 2026 (Charlotte Fuller, Water Security Agency)

Spring Runoff Potential

Summary:

- Runoff across most of the northern and southwestern Saskatchewan is anticipated to be below to well below normal, due to dry soil moisture conditions at the time of freeze-up, variable winter precipitation, and intermittent mid-winter melt events.
- Most of the central Saskatchewan and parts of the southeast are expected to see a near normal runoff response, reflecting near normal snowpack combined with generally normal to slightly wetter fall conditions.
- In the area near Yorkton and Wynyard, an above normal runoff response is expected due to above normal winter precipitation.

To facilitate preparations for spring runoff in 2026, the Water Security Agency (WSA) issues this preliminary runoff outlook. Figure 1 shows the projected snowmelt runoff potential for the province, based on conditions as of March 2, 2026. Average climatic conditions between March 2 and the spring melt were assumed when developing the spring runoff potential map. The runoff potential and lake level forecasts (Tables 1 and 2) were determined considering conditions at freeze-up (Figure 2) and the snow accumulation over the winter months (Figure 4).

A below normal snowpack, in combination with generally dry fall conditions, has resulted in below to well below normal runoff expectations across most of the northern and southwestern portions of the province. In addition, intermittent mid-winter snowmelt across most of the southwest and within the Moose Jaw River watershed has further reduced the snowpack to well below normal levels.

An above normal runoff response is forecast for the areas around Yorkton and Wynyard this spring due to near normal soil moisture conditions in the fall and above to well above normal snowpack. The remainder of the province, including most of central Saskatchewan and part of the southeast, is expected to see a near normal runoff response.

Snowfall throughout the remainder of the winter, and the melt rate, is expected to have a significant impact on runoff amount. A slow melt will result in most of the snowpack recharging the soil column. A rapid melt and additional precipitation may result in higher-than-expected runoff yield.

Photo Credit: Waterhen River near Goodsoil, Feb. 25, 2026
(Troy Watt, Water Security Agency)

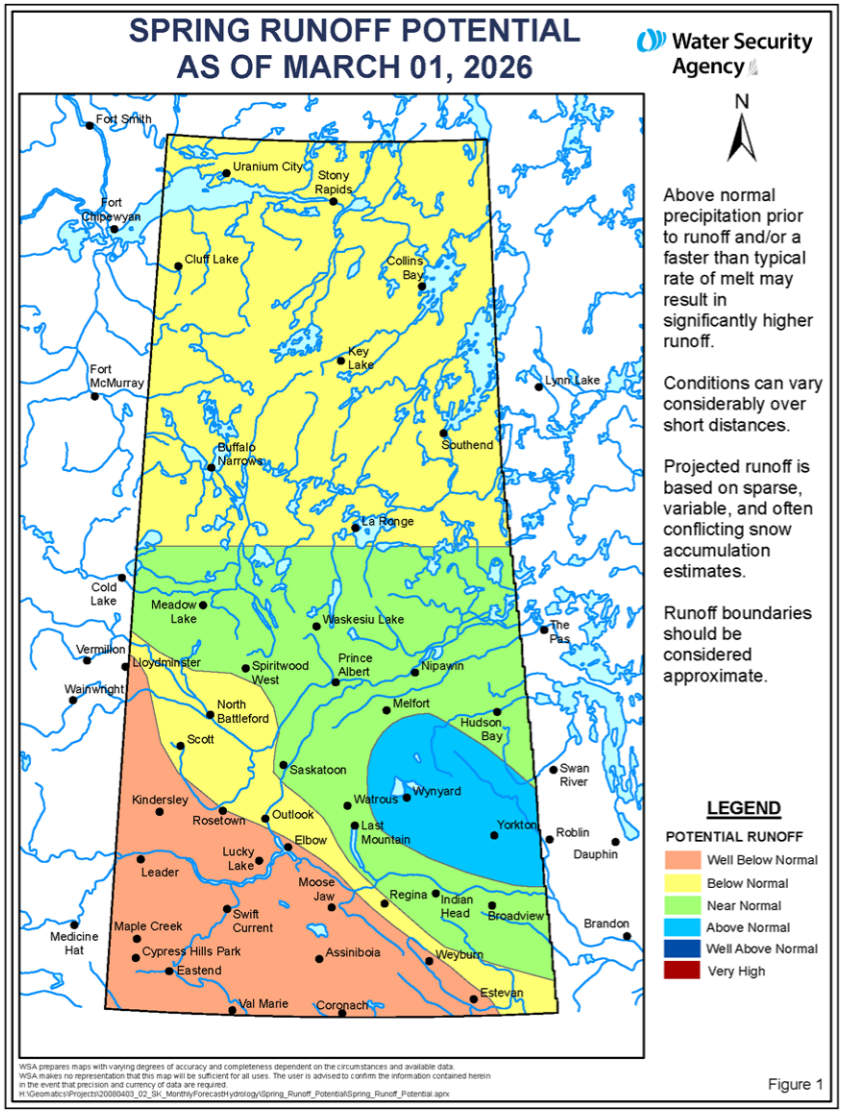

Figure 1: Spring Runoff Potential as of March 1, 2026

Category	Description	Approximate Frequency of Expected Flow
Well Below Normal	Little to no runoff is expected	<< 1:2-year event
Below Normal	Some runoff is expected	< 1:2-year event
Normal	Flows are expected to be average and will generally not exceed channel capacity in most reaches	≈ 1:2-year event
Above Normal	Flows from snowmelt runoff will exceed natural channel capacity in some areas	≈ 1:5-year event
Well Above Normal	Significant out of channel flow and some flooding will likely occur	≈ 1:10-year event
Very High	Significant flooding is likely to occur	≈ 1:25-year event or greater

- Above normal precipitation prior to runoff (especially if it occurs as rainfall), and/or a faster than normal melt, could result in significantly higher runoff than presently forecast.
- Below normal precipitation prior to runoff and/or a slow melt, can result in significantly lower runoff than presently forecast.
- Earlier than normal snow cover depletion, followed by significant rain events, can result in significantly higher spring runoff than the present forecast because of wet and partially frozen soils.
- Figure 1 is based on local prairie runoff, and it does not consider potential mountain runoff to large systems such as Saskatchewan River Basin. This forecast is based on limited data and should be used as a general guide for large geographical areas. Local conditions may vary significantly from the regional conditions and boundaries. Figure 1 should be considered approximate.

Table 1: Provisional Forecast for Saskatchewan – March 2026

Lake/Reservoir	2026 March 2 Level (metres)	Forecast* 2026 Peak Spring Levels (metres)	Shoreline [1] Level/FSL (metres)	Normal Summer Level (metres)	2025 Peak (metres)	Recorded Historical Extreme	
						Level (metres)	Year
Anglin	515.40	515.5	515.40	515.40	515.46	516.05**	2013
Big Quill	519.54	519.8	521.47 (spill)	515.0	519.80	520.92	2017
Boundary	560.52	560.8	560.83	560.65	560.83	561.15	1979
Buffalo Pound	509.33	509.7	509.47	509.32	509.68	511.45	1974
Candle Lake	494.14	494.3	494.50	494.40	494.31	495.25	1973
Cookson	751.45	751.8	753.00	752.20	752.00	753.35	1979
Crooked	450.69	451.5	452.30	451.56	451.81	454.40**	2014
Echo and Pasqua	478.38	479.0	479.30	479.00	479.17	480.98	2011
Fishing	529.94	530.2	529.70	530.10	530.27	530.92	2011
Good Spirit	484.46	484.9	484.60	484.65	484.92	485.68**	2010
Grant Devine	560.97	562.7	562.00	561.60	561.65	566.58**	2011
Jackfish	529.38	529.5	529.40	529.50	529.62	530.0	1985
Katepwa and Mission	478.25	478.4	478.70	478.23	478.55	479.58	2011
La Ronge	364.05	364.1	364.10	364.20	364.23	364.98**	2020
Last Mountain	490.00	490.2	490.70	490.30	490.35	492.09	1955
Moose Mountain	620.18	620.4	620.30	620.39	620.63	621.9	2011
Nickle Lake	562.68	563.0	563.00	562.96	563.41	564.0	2011
Rafferty	549.26	549.6	550.50	549.60	550.05	554.05**	2011
Round	441.71	442.3	443.28	442.27	442.43	445.70**	2014
Wascana	570.58	570.9	570.60	570.74	571.14	572.23	1974

* These forecast peaks are based on a typical spring precipitation and rate of melt. Above normal precipitation and/or rapid melt may result in significantly higher levels.

** Occurred after spring runoff during summer event(s).

Table 2: Spring Runoff Forecast

Basin and Location	March 2026 Forecast*		2025 Spring Peak Flow (m^3/s)**	Historical		
	Peak Flow (m^3/s)	Peak Flow Frequency		Normal Year Flow (m^3/s)	Recorded Maximum Spring Flow (m^3/s)	Recorded Maximum Spring Year
ASSINIBOINE RIVER BASIN						
Assiniboine River at Sturgis	45	1:5	12	30	111	1995
Whitesand River near Canora	77	1:5		36	247	1995
Assiniboine River at Kamsack	120	1:5	117	78	488	1995
QU'APPELLE RIVER BASIN						
Qu'Appelle River near Lumsden	25	<1:2	40	31	436	1974
Qu'Appelle River below Craven	10	<1:2	44	20	141	1974
Qu'Appelle River below Loon Creek	20	1:2	45	26	163	2011
Qu'Appelle River near Hyde	35	1:2	56	35	254	2011
Qu'Appelle River near Welby	40	1:2	46	40	345	2011
Moose Jaw River above Thunder Creek	6	<1:2	13	24	252	1974
Moose Jaw River at Burdick	8	<1:2	14	30	368	1974
Wascana Creek at Regina	13	1:2	27	20	102	1974
Lanigan Creek above Boulder Lake	7.0	1:2	32	9.3	56	2006
Pheasant Creek near Abernethy	8	1:2	7	6.9	47	1976
Cutarm near Spy Hill	6	1:2	20	5.6	35	1955
BEAVER RIVER BASIN						
Beaver River near Dorintosh	75	<1:2	41	92	654	1962
LAKE WINNIPEGOSIS BASIN						
Red Deer River near Steen	25	1:2	24	20	102	1972
Red Deer River near Erwood	140	1:2	113	150	878	2006

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NORTH SASKATCHEWAN RIVER BASIN						
North Saskatchewan River near Deer Creek	765	<1:2	643	900	1660	1974
Eagle Creek near Environ	22	1:2	35	12	136	1970
North Saskatchewan River at Prince Albert	612	<1:2	715	433	3880	1974
SASKATCHEWAN RIVER BASIN						
White Fox River near Garrick	48	1:3	56	26	160	1974
Torch River near Love	82	1:3	100	43	170	1955
Carrot River near Armley	101	1:2	N/A	71	377	1974
Carrot River near Smoky Burn	298	1:3	368	200	816	1972
SWIFT CURRENT CREEK BASIN						
Swift Current Creek below Rock Creek	6	<1:2	29	16	85	1955
Rushlake Creek above Highfield	3	<1:2	5	5	46	2023
SOURIS RIVER BASIN						
Long Creek near Noonan	12	<1:2	12	19	183	2011
Yellow Grass Ditch near Yellow Grass	2	<1:2	8	7	79	2011
Souris River at Ralph	12	<1:2	11	25	118	1979
Jewel Creek Near Goodwater	0.6	<1:2	6	4	44	2011
Moose Mountain above Grant Devine	20	1:2	5	18	99	2011
Souris River near Sherwood	49	1:8	52	32	388	1976
OLD WIVES LAKE BASIN						
Notukeu Creek near Vanguard	5	<1:2	22	25	210	1952
Wood River near Lafleche	6	<1:2	28	45	292	1952

Basin and Location	March 2026 Forecast*		2025 Spring Peak Flow (m^3/s)**	Historical		
	Peak Flow (m^3/s)	Peak Flow Frequency		Normal Year Flow (m^3/s)	Recorded Maximum Spring Flow (m^3/s)	Recorded Maximum Spring Year
MISSOURI RIVER BASIN						
Battle Creek at Alberta Boundary	2	<1:2	6	5	20	1985
Battle Creek near Consul	2	<1:2	3	5	65	1967
Lodge Creek near Alberta Boundary	5	<1:2	6	14	110	1952
Frenchman River near Ravenscrag	4	<1:2	9	15	68	2018
Denniel Creek near Val Marie	3	<1:2	11	10	43	2011
East Poplar River above Cookson	1	<1:2	3	5	30	1982

* These forecast values are based on typical spring precipitation and typical rate of melt. Above normal precipitation and/or rapid melt may result in significantly higher flows.

** Provisional data, subject to change.

Fall Precipitation and Soil Moisture Conditions

Summary:

- 2025 was generally drier than normal across the province.
- Fall precipitation ranged from well below normal across southeast, southwest and some northern areas of Saskatchewan to above normal in west central areas. Other areas of the province received near normal precipitation.
- Two short November snowstorms brought light to moderate snowfall across Saskatchewan, with heaviest accumulations near North Battleford, Melville and the southwest.

The GRACE-Based root zone soil moisture is provided in Figure 2. The soil moisture map reflects root-zone conditions prior to freeze-up. Most of northern Saskatchewan shows well below-normal moisture, while the southeast is above normal. Across much of southern and central Saskatchewan, conditions remain below normal.

As outlined in the 2025 Conditions at Freeze-up Report, during October and November 2025, west central, central and east central areas received the highest precipitation amounts, with the area including Meadow Lake receiving up to 200 per cent of normal precipitation for that time of year. In contrast, the southwest, southeast and northeast areas of the province received lower than normal precipitation during this time.

Two short snowstorms occurred in November prior to freeze-up this year. The heaviest snowfall was near North Battleford and Melville. The second event was mainly across southern Saskatchewan where the greatest accumulation was in the southwestern corner of the province.

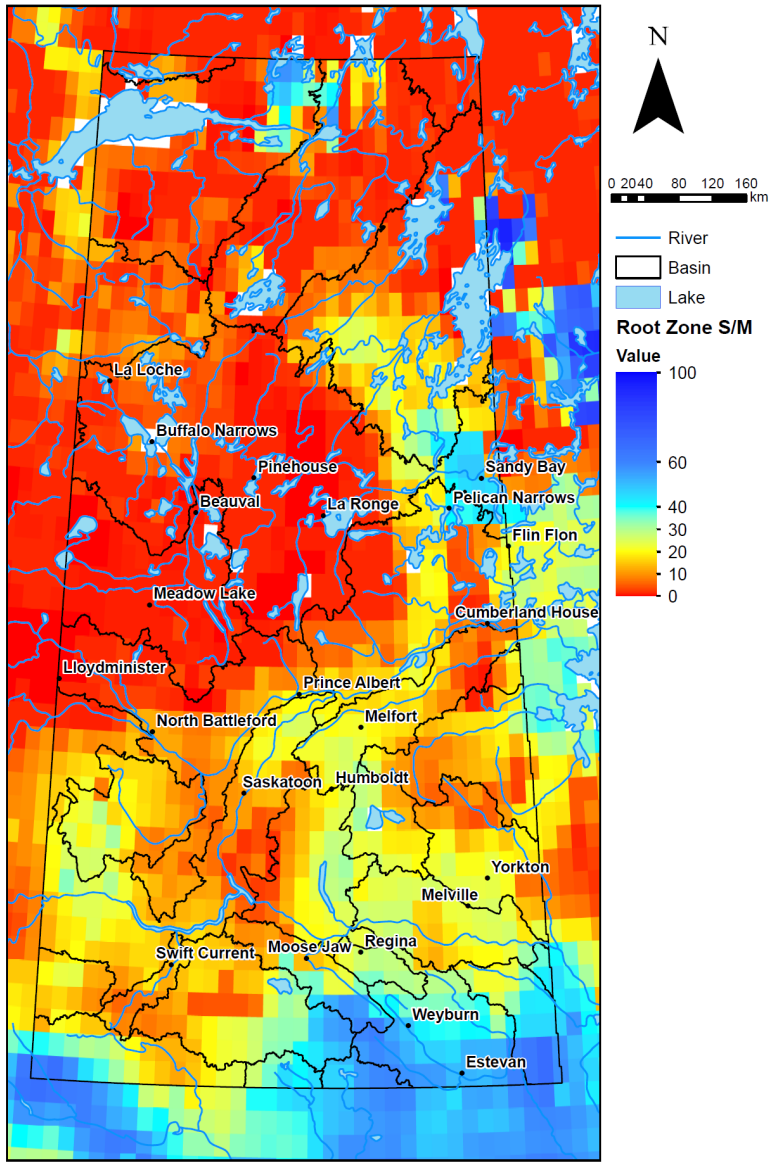

Figure 2: GRACE-Based Root Zone Soil Moisture Drought Indicator Nov. 24, 2025 (Map courtesy of NASA)

Winter Precipitation

Summary:

- Most of the province received near normal to above normal precipitation this winter, with some noticeable areas receiving below normal precipitation near the Saskatchewan-Manitoba border in the south.
- Significant mid-winter warming resulted in complete snowpack loss in the southwest and some areas in the southeast. A mid-February snowstorm resulted in a thin snowpack in these areas.
- The current snowpack ranges from being much below normal in the Southwest, South Saskatchewan River Basin upstream of Lake Diefenbaker, and some areas in the southeast, to much above normal in areas around Yorkton. Other areas of the province currently have a near normal snowpack.

Point precipitation data, mapped as percentile relative to the historical record, is provided in Figure 3. This map is based on a relatively small number of sites across Saskatchewan. Based on this information, winter precipitation has been near normal to slightly above normal in most southern areas. Some areas along the Manitoba border and pockets in the Souris River Basin, along the Alberta border north of Maple Creek and northwest of Saskatoon received below normal winter precipitation. North of Regina and north central areas of the province, particularly near Meadow Lake, have received very high precipitation amounts this winter.

The Water Security Agency conducted manual snow surveys at 130 sites across Saskatchewan from February 23 to 27, 2026. A representation of how the measured Snow Water Equivalent (SWE) at each site compares with historical manual snow survey data is shown in Figure 4. This figure shows that the snow water equivalent on the landscape is the lowest compared to normal in the Missouri River, Moose Jaw River and Souris River basins as well as in the Cypress Hills North Slope area and the Saskatchewan portion of the South Saskatchewan River Basin upstream of Lake Diefenbaker. Figure 4 also shows that areas around Yorkton and east of Saskatoon have above-normal snow water equivalent on the ground currently, while areas around Regina, Saskatoon, Prince Albert and Meadow Lake have near normal SWE for this time of year. Figure 5 provides the measured Total Water Equivalent (snow + observed ice layer at the soil surface) for each site, and Figure 6 shows the depth of ice layer observed at each site during the snow surveys. In areas where an ice layer has formed at the soil surface, the soil infiltration capacity may be reduced, which may result in more water running off during the spring thaw.

Figures 3 through 6 show that much of the precipitation received this winter is not currently reflected as Snow Water Equivalent on the landscape due to mid-winter melting events. Warm temperatures in early February led to an early snowmelt runoff response and a loss of much of the snowpack that existed throughout the southwest, and southeast, and the South Saskatchewan River Basin. A portion of the precipitation received in southern areas this winter has been in the form of rain, which had the effect of melting the snowpack that existed. More recent snowfall events, beginning on February 17 and followed by cooler temperatures, have resulted in the minimal snowpack that exists in southern areas at this time. North-central areas, where temperatures have remained mostly below zero this winter, have retained the snowpack that has accumulated throughout the winter.

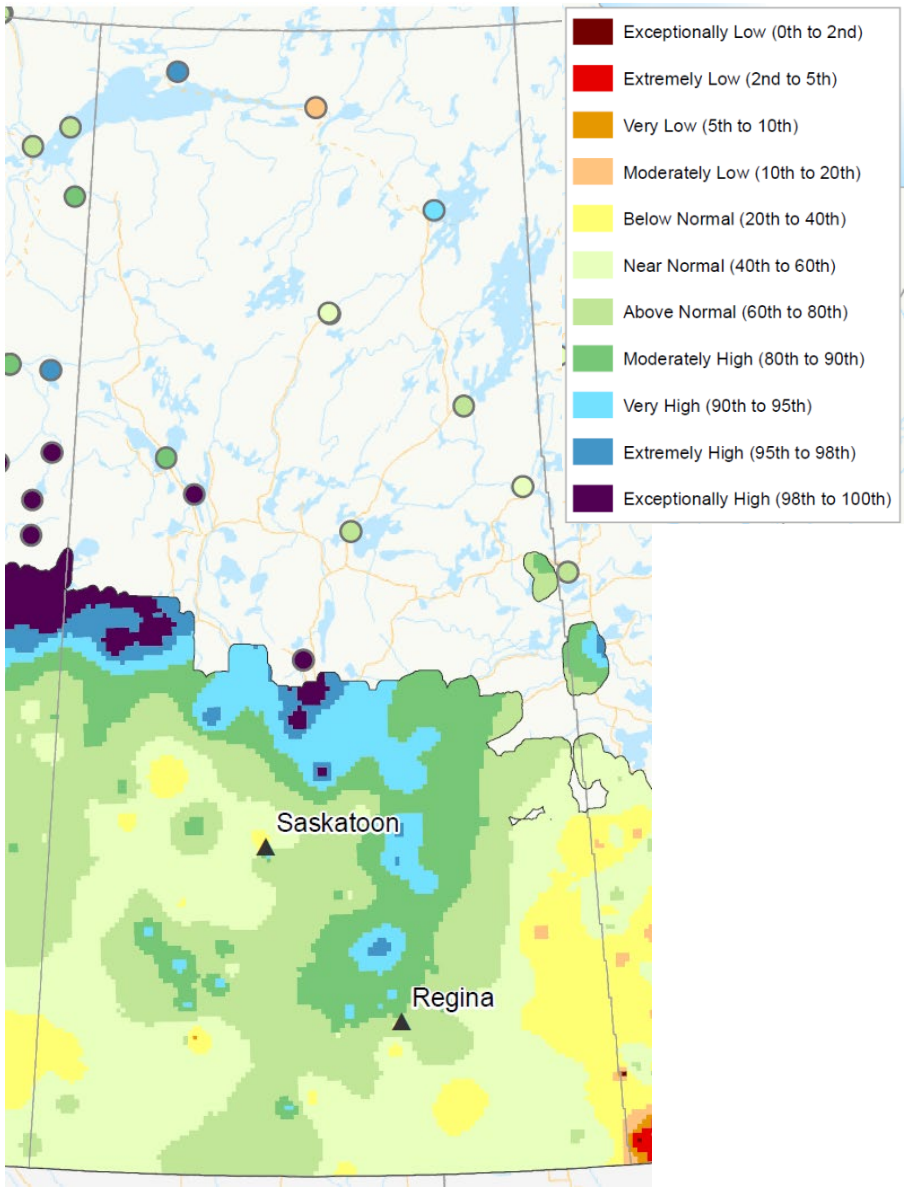

Figure 3: Precipitation Percentile
(Nov. 1, 2025 to March 1, 2026)
Map courtesy of Agriculture and Agri-food Canada

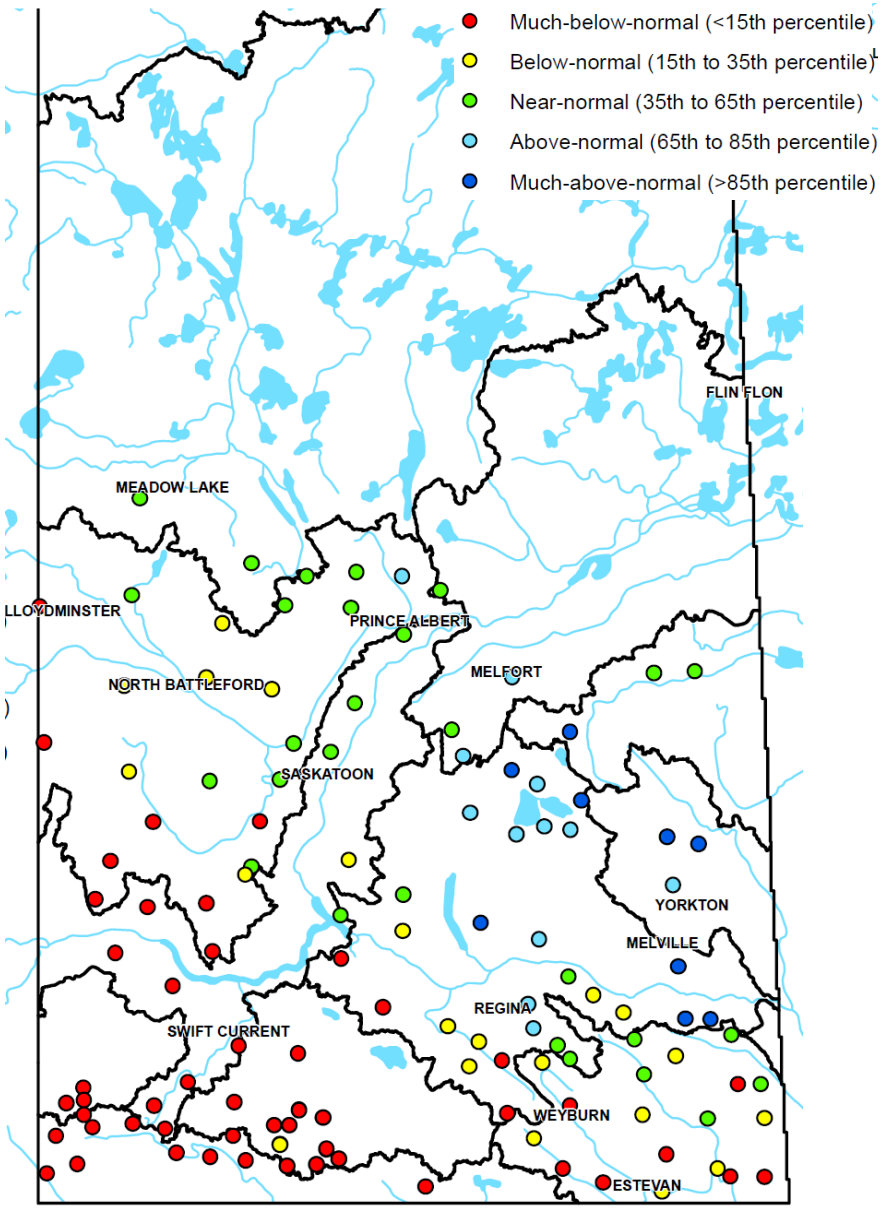

Figure 4: Feb. 23-27, 2026 WSA Snow Surveys
2026 SWE Compared with Historical Data

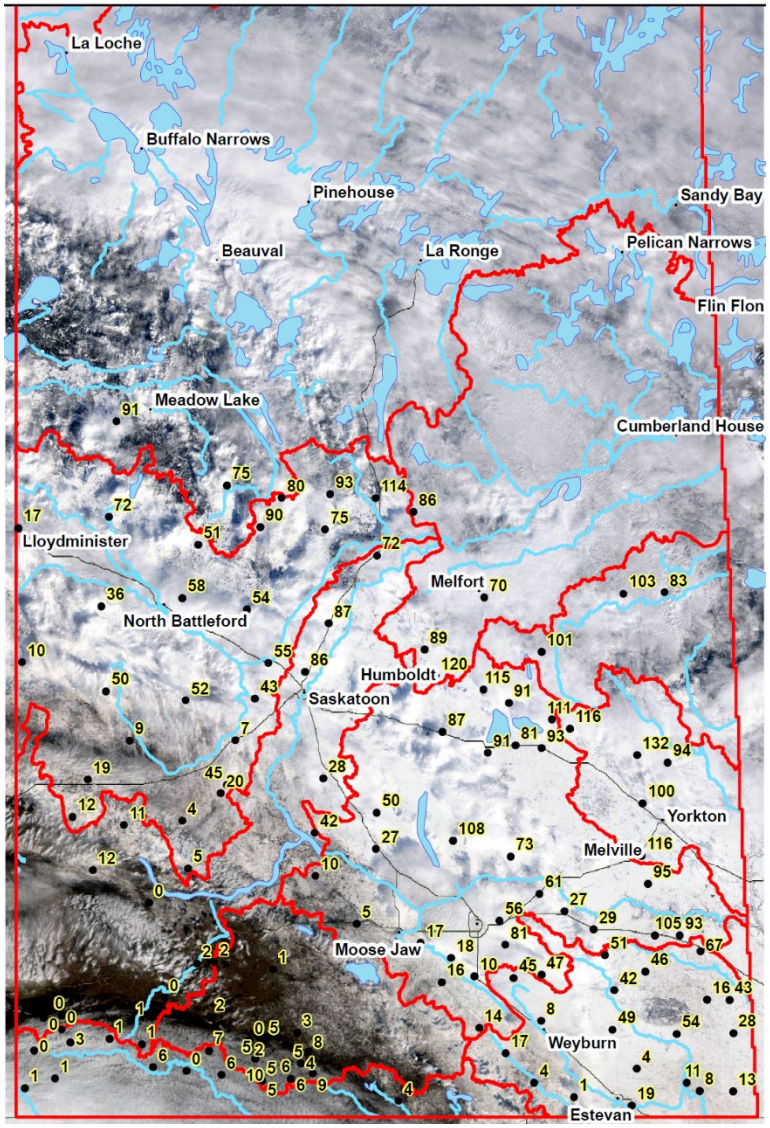

Figure 5: Feb. 23-27, 2026 Snow Survey Total Water Equivalent (snow + ice) (mm)
Background Image: Febr. 26, 2026

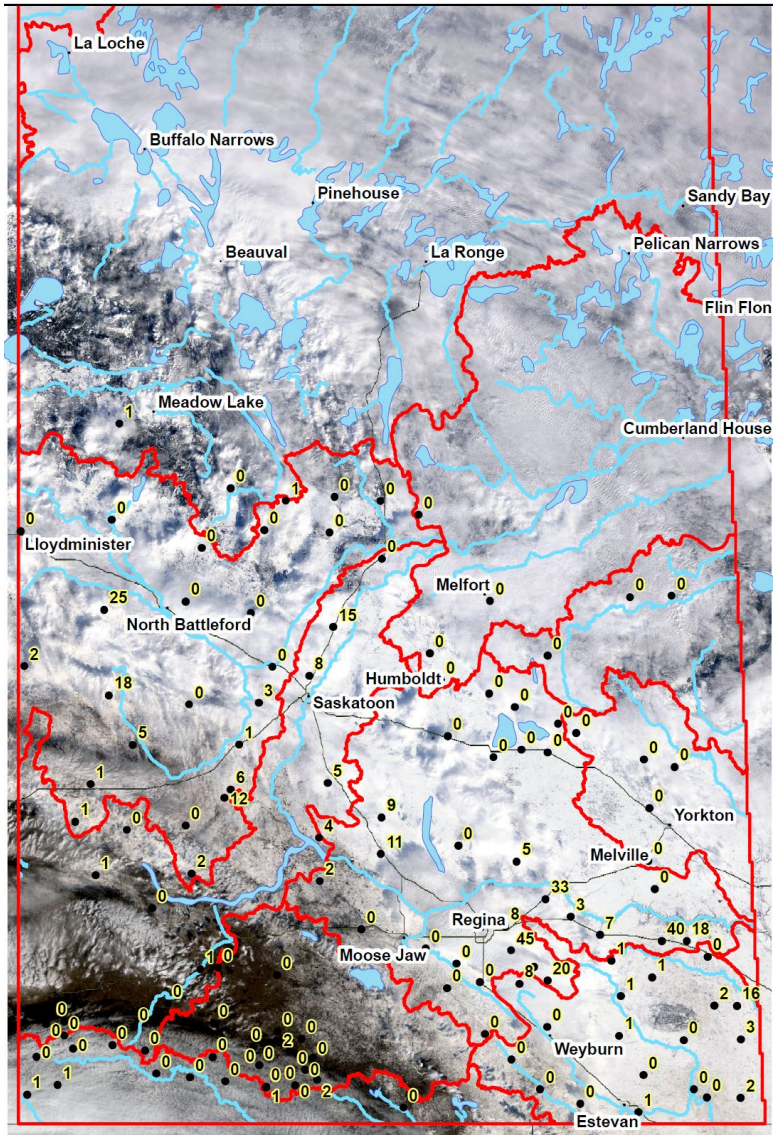

Figure 6: Feb. 23-27, 2026 Snow Survey Depth of Ice Layer Observed (mm)
Background Image: February 26, 2026

Drought Risk

Summary:

- The driest conditions remain in northern Saskatchewan, where the drought risk varies from being generally moderate to extreme in small areas.
- Southwest and west central Saskatchewan is abnormally dry.

WSA uses two different products to help identify areas at risk for drought. The first is the Canadian Drought Map from Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada (Figure 7). This product defines drought conditions based on several different data sources, including factors such as temperature and precipitation indicators. The categories in this product range from abnormally dry, which signifies conditions that historically occur about once every three years, to exceptional drought conditions, which historically only occur about once every 50 years. This product is not focused on the stream flows and water supply; therefore, Saskatchewan developed the Hydrological Drought Map.

The Hydrological Drought Map is the second product used to help identify risk of drought in the province (Figure 8). This product is an indicator of the water supply conditions across the province. It uses monthly stream flow averages, monthly reservoir elevation averages and the six-month Standardized Precipitation-Evapotranspiration Index (SPEI) to define hydrological drought in the province. The categories in this product range from near normal and above, to extreme and exceptional drought.

The Canadian Drought Map for January 31 (Figure 7) shows that drought conditions remain more pronounced in northern Saskatchewan, with areas generally ranging from abnormally dry to moderate drought. There is a small pocket of extreme drought northeast of Saskatoon. In southern Saskatchewan, conditions are generally less severe, with most areas classified as near normal to abnormally dry.

The Hydrological Drought Map for October 2025 is shown in Figure 8. This map shows that in the fall, most of northern Saskatchewan was experiencing moderate to severe hydrological drought conditions. The remainder of the province was generally showing mild drought conditions. This map is not updated in the winter as most streams are frozen. This figure will be updated again in spring but helps advise on fall drought conditions.

The six-month SPEI map is shown in Figure 9. SPEI is a normalized drought index that uses climate data to identify areas where drought conditions exist. The SPEI values are a relative measure of surface water surplus (positive values) or deficit (negative values) in an area. The values take the current precipitation minus the potential evapotranspiration and compares it to the average value at a location. The result is normalized, so the higher the negative number, the drier the conditions are. This map shows that over the past six months, conditions across much of Saskatchewan have generally ranged from near normal to moderately dry. The driest area is present in parts of southwestern Saskatchewan near Maple Creek, Swift Current and the Cypress Hills region, where moisture deficits have increased slightly compared to earlier in the winter. Central Saskatchewan, including areas near Saskatoon and Prince Albert, generally remains near normal, with localized pockets of wetter conditions in eastern parts of the province.

These figures show that the main drought-related water supply concerns in Saskatchewan remain in parts of northern Saskatchewan, particularly within the Beaver River and Churchill River basins. Drier-than-normal conditions are also present in parts of southwestern Saskatchewan. In these areas, favourable spring precipitation and soil moisture conditions will be important to help improve water supply conditions.

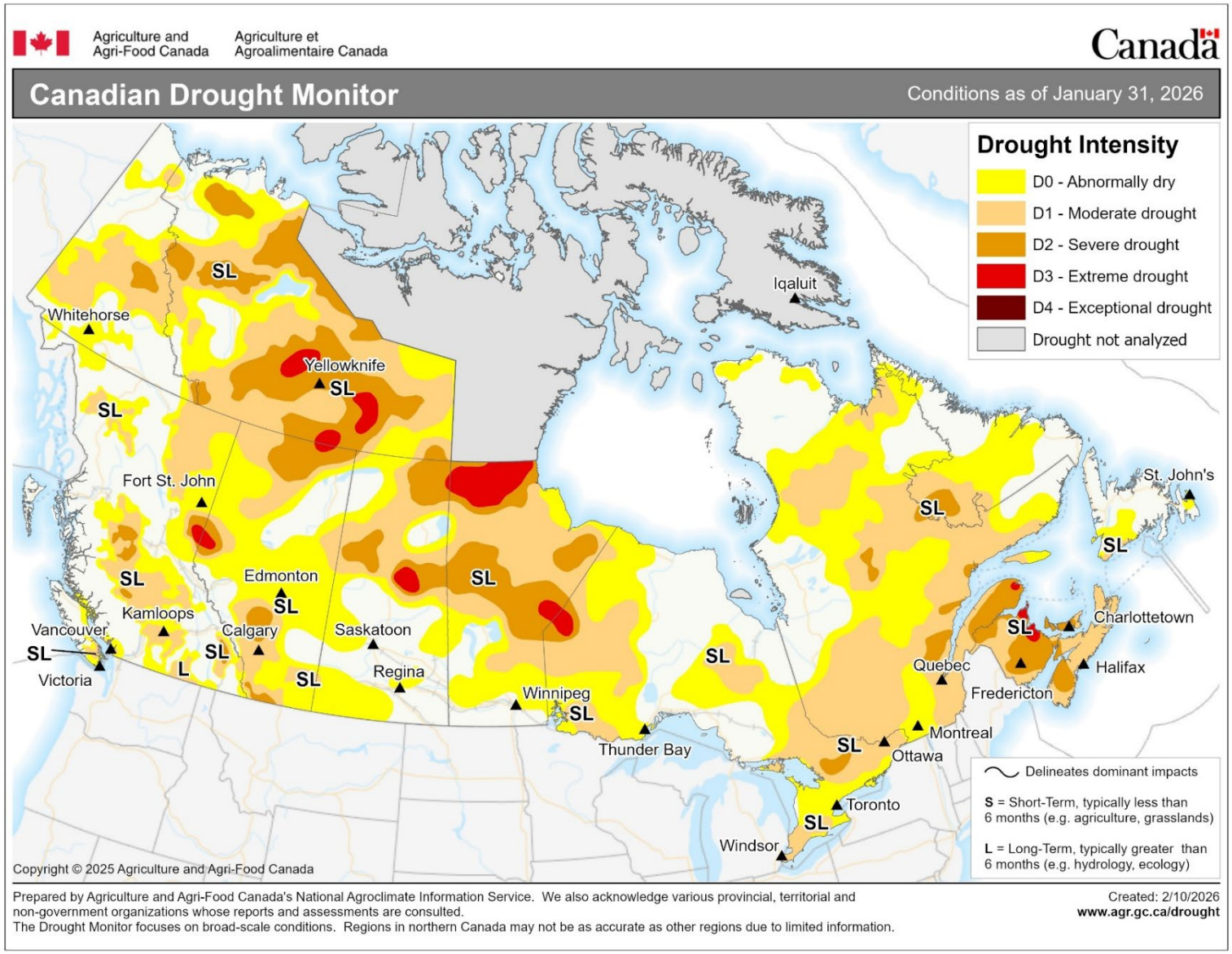

Figure 7: Canadian Drought Monitor – Jan. 31, 2026
(Map courtesy of Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada)

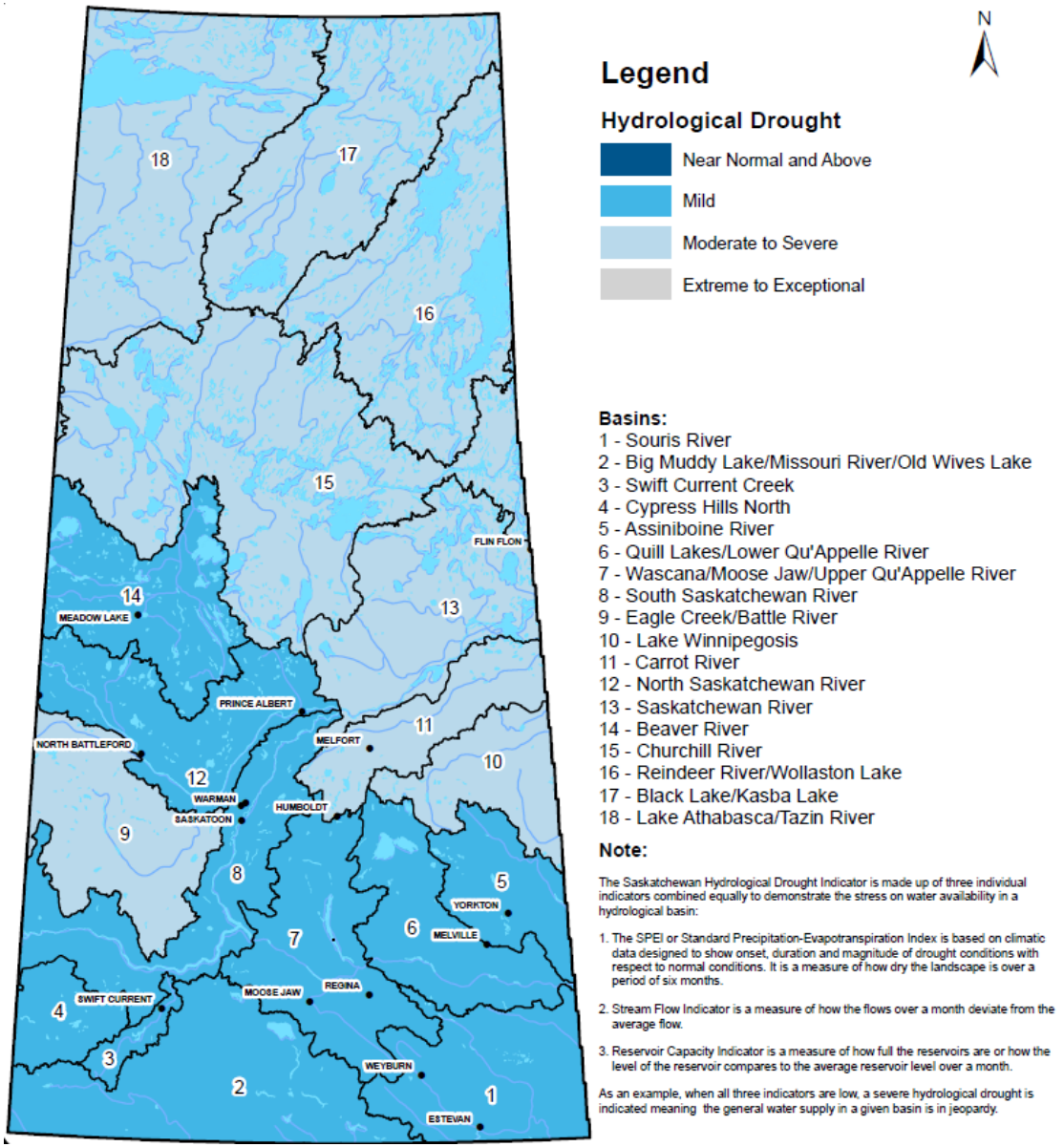

Figure 8: Hydrological Drought Map for October 2025

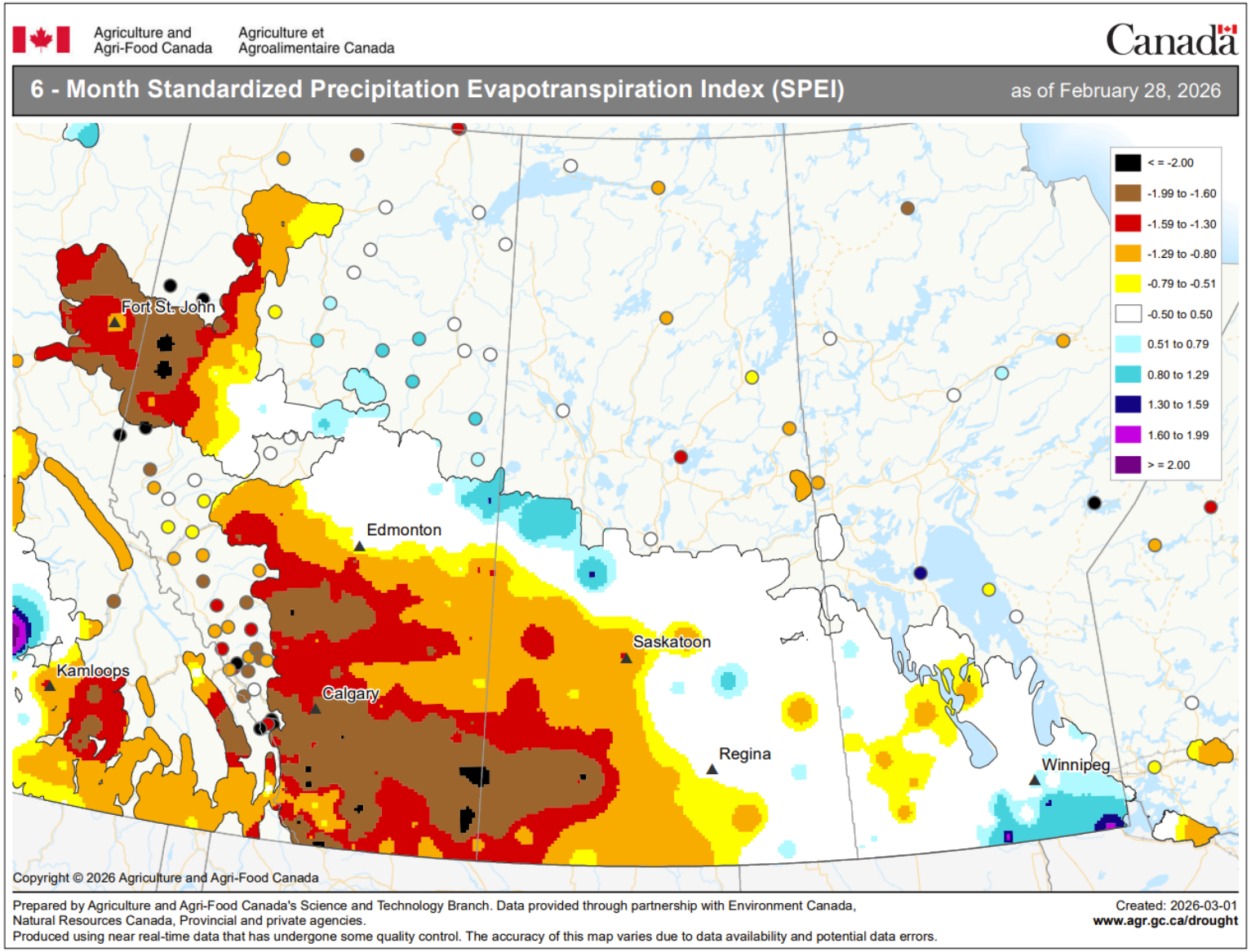

Figure 9: 6-month Standardized Precipitation-Evapotranspiration Index (SPEI) for Feb. 28, 2026
(Map courtesy of Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada)

Water Supply Conditions

Summary:

- Most major reservoirs are within their normal operating ranges for this time of year.
- Some reservoirs in the south, like McDougald and Harris, are below normal levels.

Major water supply reservoirs in southern Saskatchewan are near their normal, and historical, operating levels for this time of year, with the exception of McDougald and Harris reservoirs, which remain lower than normal. Figures 10 to 13 illustrate the status of various reservoirs in the southern region compared to their historical averages as of March 2.

With anticipated snowmelt inflows, most reservoirs in southeastern and central Saskatchewan are expected to remain within their desirable operating ranges post-snowmelt.

Lake Diefenbaker is currently about 0.3 m above its mid-March operating target range. WSA is currently drawing down Lake Diefenbaker in anticipation of the prairie spring runoff. This target is 552 m, reflecting the below normal expected prairie runoff this spring.

Photo Credit: Braddock Reservoir near Braddock, March 4, 2026
(Jenna Coates, Water Security Agency)

Central Saskatchewan Reservoir Levels

March 02, 2026

Water Security Agency

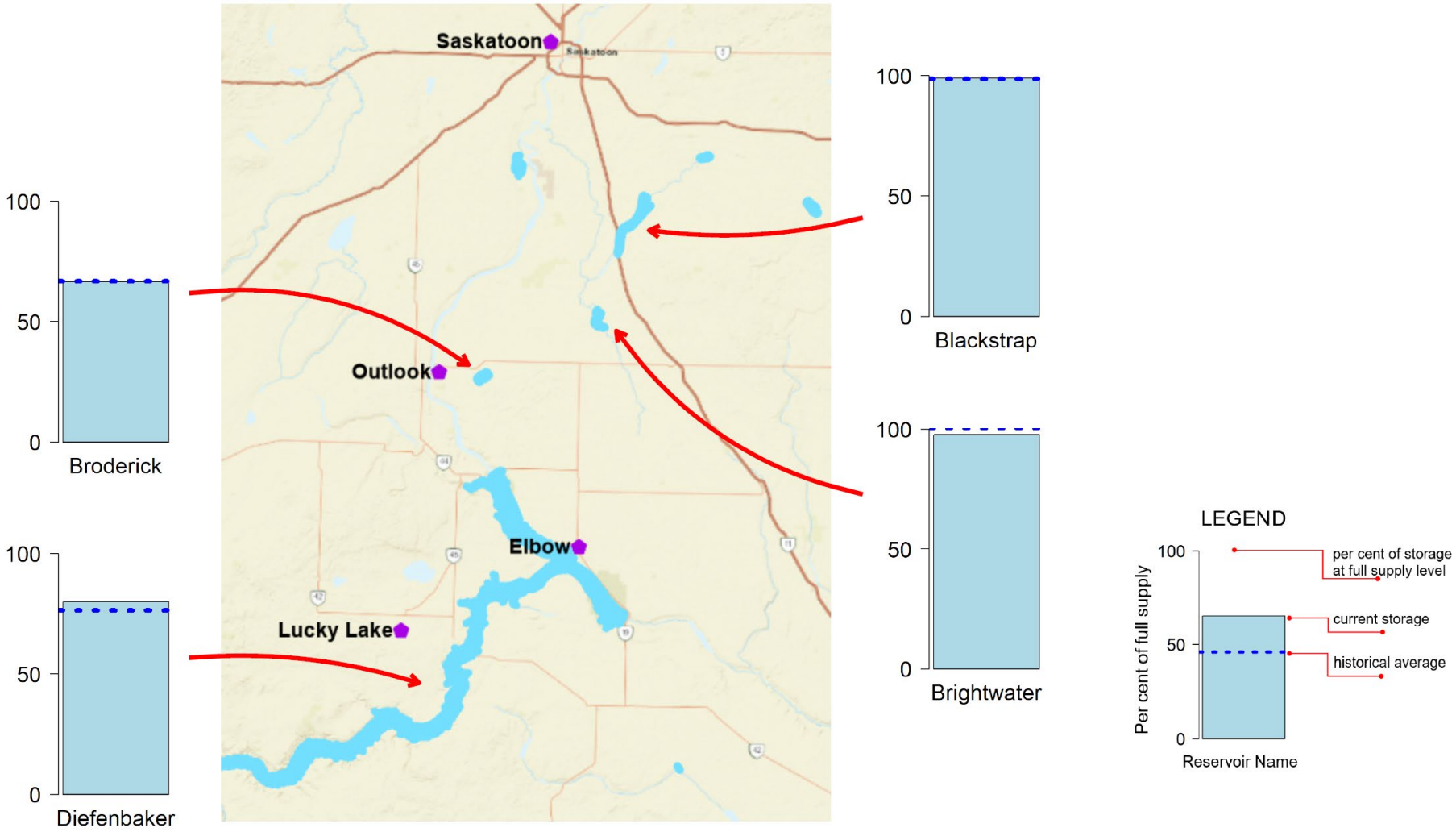

Figure 10: Reservoir Conditions in Central Saskatchewan as of Mar. 2, 2026

Southeastern Saskatchewan Reservoir Levels

March 02, 2026

Water Security Agency

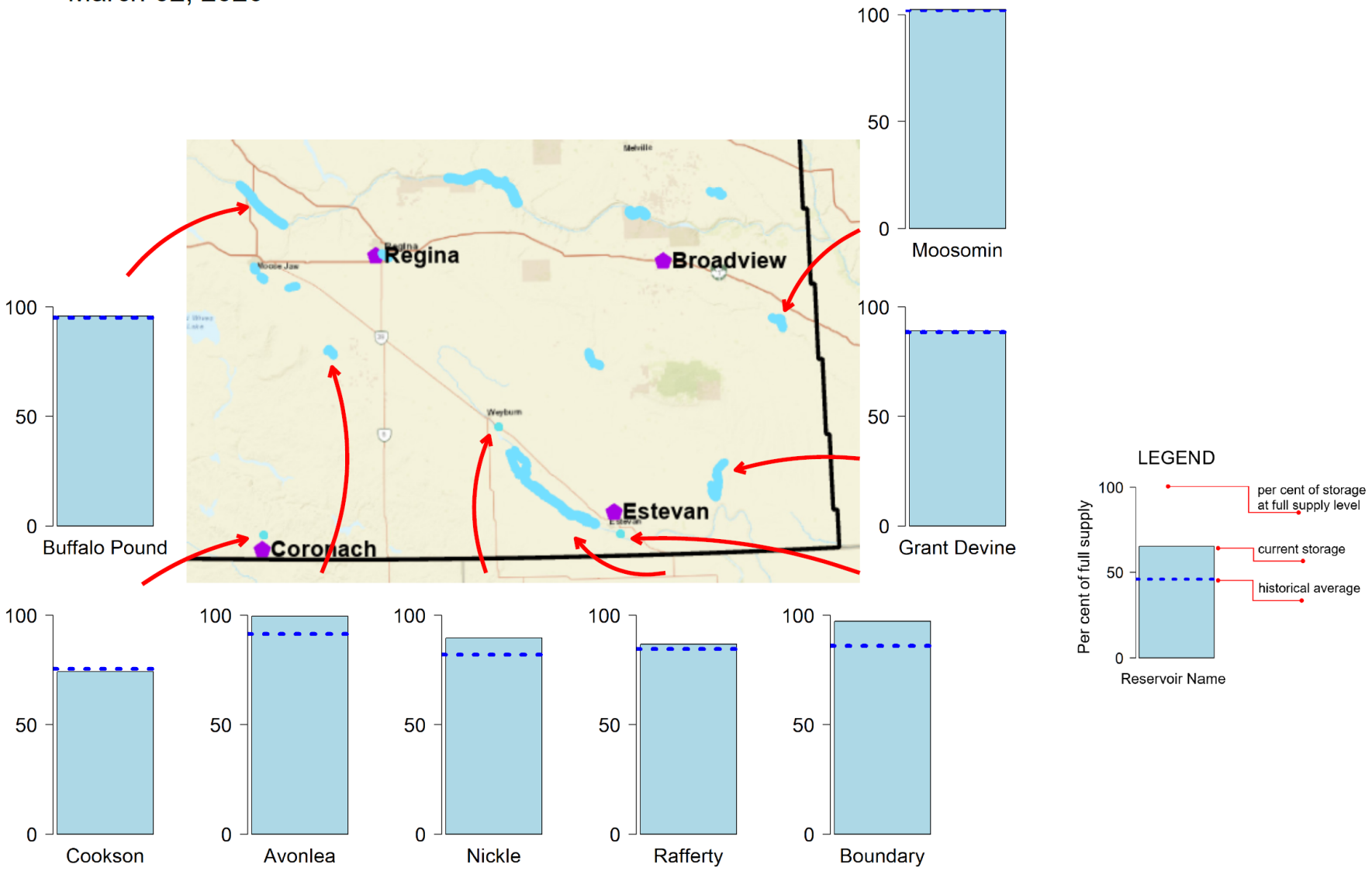

Figure 11: Reservoir Conditions in Southeastern Saskatchewan as of Mar. 2, 2026

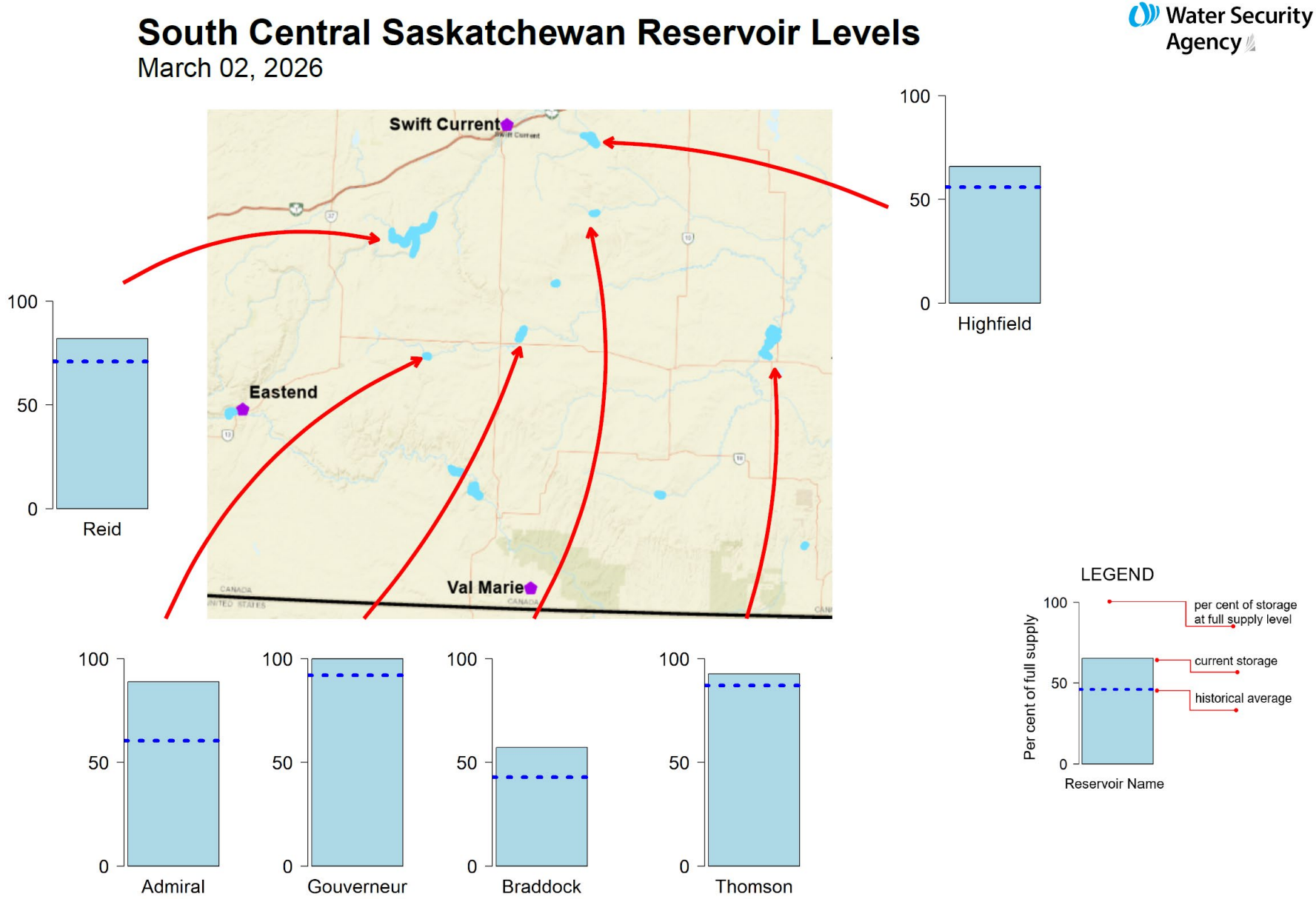

Figure 12: Reservoir Conditions in South Central Saskatchewan as of Mar. 2, 2026

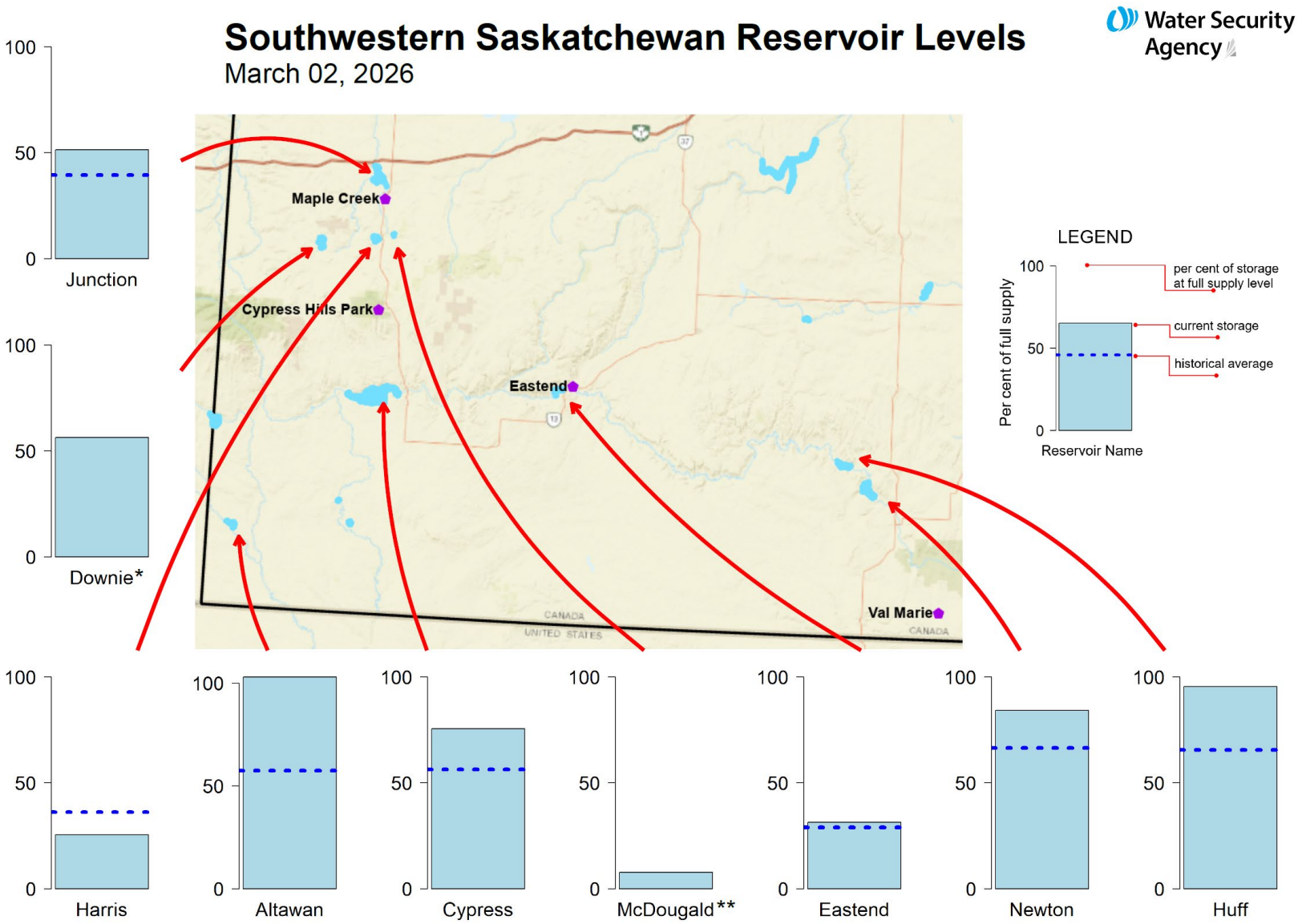

Figure 10: Reservoir Conditions in Southwestern Saskatchewan as of Mar. 2, 2026

*Insufficient historical data to create an average for Downie

**water levels are too low in McDougald to accurately measure.

Major River Systems

Summary:

- The South Saskatchewan River Basin is expected to see above normal mountain runoff this spring.
- Near normal to below normal inflows are currently forecast for the Souris River Basin.
- The lakes in the Qu'Appelle River Basin are expected to be in normal summer operating zones following the spring melt.
- Mid-February warming caused most of the southwest snowpack to melt, leaving only trace amounts in the headwaters of the Frenchman River, Swift Current Creek and Old Wives basin.
- Dry conditions in the north are expected to affect flows and lake levels this year in the Churchill River Basin.
- The Quill lakes are expected to see above normal runoff response this spring.

Saskatchewan River Basin

Inflows to Lake Diefenbaker were above normal at the beginning of February due to warm weather conditions but are now below normal. Releases were maintained slightly below normal in early winter because of ice constraints on the South Saskatchewan River near Moon Lake; however, releases have returned to near normal levels since January 22. Flows on the North Saskatchewan River have remained in between near to above normal for this time of year.

Prior to the snowstorm on February 17-18, snowpack across the Saskatchewan prairie portions of the basin was completely lost. The snowstorm improved conditions. However, overall prairie snowpack remains limited.

As of late February 2026, the snowpack in the Alberta prairie portion of the basin ranges from below normal in the Bow and Oldman River Basin to near normal in the Red Deer River Basin. The mountain snowpack, which contributes significantly to May and June flows in the Saskatchewan River Basin, is well above normal. If mountain snowpack remains above normal, snowmelt runoff into Lake Diefenbaker is expected to be above normal. Late spring and early summer rainfall in southern Alberta, which typically can account for a significant percentage of the annual precipitation, cannot yet be predicted, but will also play a critical role in reservoir inflows.

The current winter drawdown target is to reach a water level of 552 m by mid-March. This target falls within the normal winter drawdown range to maintain stable water supplies.

Souris River

A release from Grant Devine Lake took place from Aug. 28, 2025 to Jan. 12, 2026 to bring the lake level down to the February 1 drawdown target elevation. Rafferty Reservoir has remained below the February 1 drawdown target elevation since Aug. 1, 2025, as an early drawdown was completed to accommodate planned spillway maintenance work. So far this winter, the basin has received precipitation accumulations that are generally near normal. Warm temperatures in early February resulted in a near complete loss of the snowpack in the Long Creek Basin and the area above Rafferty Reservoir; limited snowmelt runoff inflow to Boundary and Rafferty reservoirs was observed. In the later half of February, minimal snowfall and generally cooler temperatures have resulted in the preservation of the snowpack in the Moose Mountain Creek basin above Grant Devine Lake and a light snowpack being observed in the areas above Boundary Reservoir and Rafferty Reservoir.

A below normal runoff response is forecast for inflows into Rafferty and Boundary reservoirs, and a near normal runoff response is forecast for inflow into Grant Devine Lake. Flows below the reservoirs are currently forecast to be above normal this spring. As of March 1, 2026, both Boundary and Grant Devine reservoirs are expected to fill this spring. Any excess water from Boundary will be diverted to Rafferty. Rafferty Reservoir is expected to be in the normal operating range but is not expected to fill.

Detailed forecasts for the Souris River Basin are developed on or near the first and fifteenth of each month, beginning in February, up until the snowmelt runoff event. These forecasts can be found on wsask.ca.

Qu'Appelle River

All lakes within the Qu'Appelle River Basin are at near normal levels for this time of year. The release from the Qu'Appelle River Dam has been maintained near 1 m^3/s throughout the winter. Above-seasonal temperatures in early February reduced the snowpack across much of the Moose Jaw River Watershed and in portions of the Wascana Creek and Last Mountain Lake watersheds.

A major snowstorm in mid-February brought approximately 5-15 mm of precipitation (SWE) to the basin. With generally drier soil moisture conditions at freeze-up and varied snowpack, the overall basin is expected to experience a below to near normal snowmelt runoff this spring. Specifically, below normal runoff is anticipated in the southwest portion of the basin, including the Moose Jaw River watershed and parts of the Wascana Creek and Last Mountain Lake watersheds. Near normal runoff is expected across most of the remaining Wascana Creek and Last Mountain Lake watersheds, as well as the Lower Qu'Appelle River Basin.

Fall operations throughout the Qu'Appelle River Basin were typical in 2025. The fishways at Buffalo Pound Dam and the Craven Control Structure were closed in late fall, and typical winter releases were established at these structures. The Echo Lake Control Structure is fully open, with all stoplogs removed. The Crooked Lake Control Structure is also fully open in the operable bays; four bays remain out of service, and all stoplogs were removed from the remaining five bays last fall. Stoplogs will be installed at these structures in late spring as required to raise lake levels to desirable summer operating ranges. The Craven Control Structure will also be operated to manage upstream water levels on the Qu'Appelle River and to assist in bringing Last Mountain Lake to its desirable summer operating level.

Buffalo Pound, Echo and Katepwa lakes are expected to remain within their normal summer operating ranges this year. Last Mountain Lake is anticipated to be near the middle of its summer operating range. Due to four bays being out of service at the Crooked Lake Control Structure and the associated operational constraints, the lower end of the operating range will be targeted for Crooked Lake this summer. Round Lake is expected to remain low during summer due to ongoing maintenance issues.

At this time, flooding within the system due to snowmelt runoff is not anticipated. However, conditions may change depending on spring precipitation and the rate of melt.

Southwest

As of March 2, water levels for most lakes in the southwest region are near normal for this time of the year, except for McDougald and Harris, which are below normal.

This winter, the precipitation accumulation map for the southwest shows a mixed pattern. The Maple Creek area and near the City of Swift Current received below normal precipitation, while the heaviest amounts are found in the southwestern corner of the province, along the headwaters of Battle and Lodge creeks, as well as the southern parts of the Frenchman River and Old Wives Lake basins.

The snowpack began melting early in the second week of February following several abnormal warming spells. Only a few millimetres of snow remain, with current conditions below the 15th percentile across the Frenchman River, Swift Current Creek, and Old Wives Lake headwaters — effectively snow-free for this time of year.

Churchill River Basin

Snowpack in the Churchill River Basin has been near normal. With the dry fall, the runoff response across the basin is expected to be below normal. Flows throughout the Churchill River Basin are below normal for this time of year. With a below normal runoff response expected, flows are expected to remain below normal into the summer months.

Lac La Ronge is currently near the lower end of its operating range and is currently near 364.05 m. Above normal inflows are needed this spring to bring the lake up to near normal elevations.

Quill Lakes

The Quill lakes are currently at an elevation of 519.55 m, which is 4 cm higher than last year at this time (519.51 m). The snowpack measured in the Quill Lakes Basin during the February snow surveys was above normal. Assuming normal melt conditions, an above normal snowmelt inflow is expected in the basin.

Long Range Forecasts

Summary:

- Near normal precipitation is forecast for the next three months.
- Near normal temperatures are expected over the next three months.

The three-month spatial anomalies maps for precipitation (Figure 14) and temperature (Figure 15) covering the March 1 to May 31 forecast period show the expected long-range precipitation and temperature trends in relation to 30-year climate normals.

Most long-range precipitation forecasts are predicting normal precipitation accumulations across the province for March through May. All long-range models are predicting warmer than normal temperatures across the southern part of province during this period and near normal temperatures in the northern part.

It is important to note that seasonal weather forecasts are statistically unreliable, and their skill is particularly poor for predicting precipitation. However, good agreement among various long-range products indicates a higher degree of confidence.

Next Forecast

WSA will issue another Spring Outlook Forecast in early April unless runoff is underway.

Spring Runoff Outlooks will be released on wsask.ca.

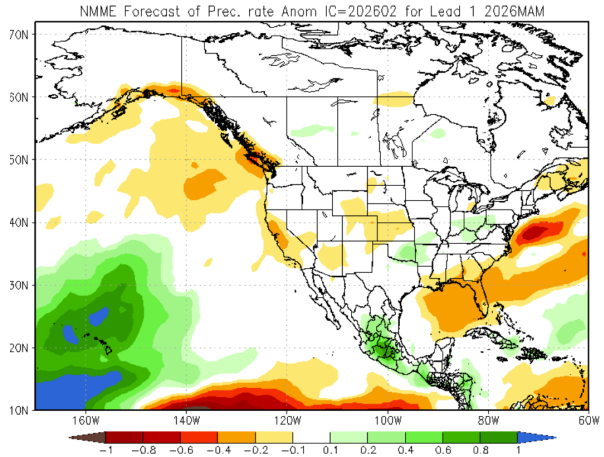

Figure 11: North American Multi-Model Ensemble Precipitation Anomaly Outlook for March 1 to May 31, 2026
(Map courtesy of the US National Weather Service)

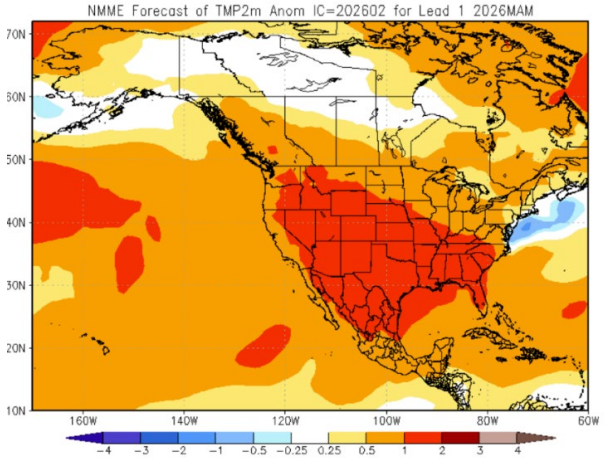

Figure 12: North American Multi-Model Ensemble Temperature Anomaly Outlook for March 1 to May 31, 2026
(Map Courtesy of the US National Weather Service)