Arrow Lakes Reservoir in Nakusp

Columbia River Basin Operations Summary

Summer/Fall 2026

This bi-annual publication provides an overview of BC Hydro's operations in the Columbia Basin, which includes Kinbasket Reservoir, Revelstoke Reservoir, Arrow Lakes Reservoir, Duncan Reservoir, and the Columbia River. This publication also includes information about the current operating conditions in the Basin as well as the Columbia River Treaty.

SNOWPACK AND RUNOFF

This year's peak snowpack accumulation varied from well above average in the northern portion of the basin to below average in the mid to lower Columbia. As of August 12, 2026, the forecast runoff for April to September for the Canadian portion of the Columbia River Basin is 94% of normal, and 83% of normal for the entire Columbia River Basin (Canada and the U.S. combined). Last year, the observed runoff in the Canadian portion of the Columbia River Basin was 79% of normal, and the overall runoff in the entire Columbia River Basin was 77% of normal.

KINBASKET RESERVOIR

Kinbasket Reservoir is created by Mica Dam and provides 12 million-acre-feet of storage over a possible operating range, up to ~47 metres (155 feet). This reservoir regulates discharges and generation for both Mica and Revelstoke generation stations. Combined, Mica and Revelstoke provide ~26% of BC Hydro's annual average generation.

Kinbasket Reservoir levels have been above average for the operating year primarily due to above average snowpack and inflows. The reservoir reached a minimum of 728.5 metres (2,390.2 feet) on April 30, 2026, about three metres (10 feet) above average for this date. Since then, the reservoir has been refilling. As of August 12, 2026, Kinbasket Reservoir is at 753.9 metres (2473.4 feet), about 13 feet above average for this date.

Spillway at Mica Dam

BC Hydro
Power smart

The official August water supply forecast for Kinbasket Reservoir from February to September is 110% of normal. Based on this water supply forecast, the reservoir is expected to reach full pool this summer. BC Hydro has also received permission from the Comptroller of Water Rights to store an additional one foot of water in Kinbasket, if required to reduce spill, which would bring the elevation to 754.68 metres (2,476 feet). This additional storage request is common during high water conditions and last happened in 2020. With elevated levels, there is a chance Kinbasket may have to safely spill in addition to turbine generation discharge to manage the reservoir within its licence limit. Actual levels will depend on actual inflows and electricity demand.

The licensed range for Kinbasket Reservoir is between 754.4 metres (2,475 feet) and 706.96 metres (2,319.42 feet), respectively. The Reservoir can be operated up to two feet above its licensed maximum level, if approved by the Comptroller of Water Rights. Kinbasket Reservoir provides seven million-acre feet of Treaty storage and five million-acre feet of non-Treaty storage.

REVELSTOKE RESERVOIR

Revelstoke Reservoir is created by Revelstoke Dam and provides 1.5 million acre-feet of storage. Unlike Arrow Lakes Reservoir and Kinbasket Reservoir, Revelstoke Reservoir has limited storage and is usually operated within the top 1.5 metres (five feet) of full pool. Revelstoke Reservoir water levels may fluctuate in response to weather patterns, inflow levels, and electricity demand. It is common to have daily fluctuations of the reservoir within 1.5 metres (five feet) of full pool during the spring freshet and winter peak load periods. Periodically, the reservoir is drafted[1] below its normal minimum level of 571.5 metres (1,875 feet)* to meet increasing system needs for short-term generating capacity. The reservoir may fill to nearly full pool during periods of high reservoir inflows. Water is occasionally released over the Revelstoke Dam spillway during low demand and high inflow periods to maintain minimum flows or to maintain the reservoir water level.

Revelstoke Reservoir

*The licensed range for Revelstoke Reservoir is between 573 metres (1,880 feet) and 554.7 metres (1,820 feet). Most of the time, Revelstoke Reservoir is maintained at or above 571.5 metres (1,875 feet).

ARROW LAKES RESERVOIR

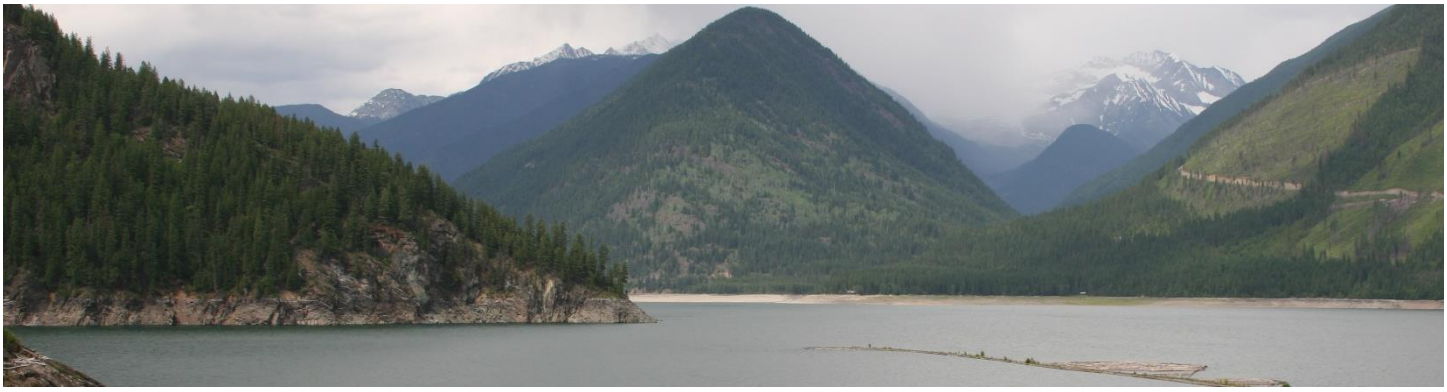
Arrow Lakes Reservoir is created by the Hugh L. Keenleyside Dam and provides 7.1 million acre-feet of storage over a possible operating range of approximately 20 metres (66 feet). Water releases from Arrow Lakes Reservoir are regulated under the Treaty and its supplemental operating agreements. The Treaty requires Canada to hold back water during wet years and release more water during dry years.

As usual, Arrow Lakes Reservoir drafted during the fall and winter. The reservoir reached a minimum level of 425.38 metres (1,395.6 feet) on February 27, 2026, and a maximum level of 437.5 metres (1435.4 feet) on July 25, 2026. In comparison, the reservoir reached a minimum level of 423.03 metres (1,387.9 feet) on January 31, 2025, and a maximum level of 436.2 metres (1431.0 feet) on June 19, 2025. Arrow Lakes Reservoir is currently about five feet above average, thirteen feet above this time last year.

[1] "Draft" refers to the lowering of the water level in reservoirs for various purposes, including hydroelectric generation, downstream flow management, and other water-related needs. Draft is usually expressed as a change in elevation (in metres or feet) of water in the reservoir compared to the previous level.

The August official water supply forecast for Arrow Lakes Reservoir from February to September is 100% of normal, and the Dalles at 83% of normal. Based on the latest water supply forecast and the required Treaty releases, Arrow Lakes Reservoir is expected to refill to above average and levels observed in the past several years.

The licensed range for Arrow Lakes Reservoir is between 440.1 metres (1,444 feet) and 419.9 metres (1,377.9 feet). The reservoir can be operated up to two feet above its licensed maximum level (to 440.7 metres or 1,446 feet) if approved by the Comptroller of Water Rights. Arrow Lakes Reservoir provides 7.1 million acre-feet of Treaty storage.



Duncan Reservoir

DUNCAN RESERVOIR

Duncan Reservoir is created by Duncan Dam and provides 1.4 million acre-feet of storage. This dam helps meet Treaty flood control requirements, helps minimize flood risk on Kootenay Lake, and provides fish passage year-round according to the Duncan Dam Water Use Plan.

Duncan Reservoir reached a minimum level of 547.9 metres (1,797.5 feet) on April 7, 2026. In comparison, the minimum level reached last year was 549.0 metres (1,801.3 feet) on April 25, 2025.

Duncan Dam has been refilling since it reached its minimum level in early April. As of August 12, 2026, the reservoir is currently within one foot from full. The August official water supply forecast for Duncan Reservoir from February to September is 109% of normal. Based on the current water supply forecast, the reservoir is expected to reach levels similar to the levels observed in 2025.

The licensed operating range for Duncan Reservoir is between 576.7 metres (1,892 feet) and 546.9 metres (1,794.2 feet). Duncan Reservoir can be operated up to 1.2 feet above its licensed maximum level (577 metres or 1,893.2 feet) if approved by the Comptroller of Water Rights. Duncan Reservoir provides 1.4 million acre-feet of Treaty storage

COLUMBIA RIVER FLOWS

Columbia River flows, downstream of the Kootenay River confluence at Castlegar, are the result of flow regulation at Hugh L. Keenleyside Dam and other dams on the Columbia River, as well as dams on the Kootenay River system. Actual discharges depend on many factors, including upstream runoff, storage operations, and Treaty discharge requirements.

The latest peak level at Birchbank was 3341 m^3/s (118,000 $ft^{3/}s$) on June 7, 2026. This flow rate is well below the peak regulated flow experienced in 2012 of 6,090 m^3/s (215,000 $ft^{3/}s$), and the pre-dam peak flow of 10,590 m^3/s (374,000 $ft^{3/}s$) in 1961. By comparison, in 2026, the peak flow was 2803 m^3/s (99,000 $ft^{3/}s$) on June 15. Columbia River flows are measured at the Birchbank flow measuring station downstream of the Kootenay River confluence between Castlegar and Trail. Flooding conditions on the Columbia River are not anticipated this year based on the current forecast conditions.

BC Hydro's water licence has no minimum discharge requirements for the Columbia River downstream of the Hugh L. Keenleyside Dam. However, BC Hydro can be obliged (per the Treaty) to reduce flows to a minimum weekly average flow of 141.5 m^3/s or 5,000 ft^3/s under certain water conditions. Please note that although this is the lowest possible flow rate under the Treaty, the required weekly discharges are largely based on inflows. The Treaty requires Canada to hold back water during wet conditions and release more water during dry conditions.

KOOCANUSA RESERVOIR

Koocanusa Reservoir on the Kootenay River is controlled by Libby Dam in Libby, Montana, and is operated by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE). The reservoir backs into Canada and provides approximately 5 MILLION ACRE-FEET of storage.

Koocanusa Reservoir is typically drafted during the winter for Treaty flood risk management. Libby Dam continues to be operated under VarQ[2] procedures for U.S. fisheries interests and flood control. The forecast runoff for Koocanusa Reservoir from April to August 2026 is 108% of average. The reservoir reached a minimum level of 722.19 metres (2,369.4 feet) on April 22, 2026, slightly below average for this date. In comparison, the reservoir reached a minimum of 733.17 metres (2,405.4 feet) on March 25, 2025, which is about 10.4 metres (34 feet) above average for this date. Koocanusa Reservoir has been refilling since late April and reached a maximum of 746.46 metres (2449.0 feet) on 31 July 2026, near average for this date.

Information regarding the operation of Libby Dam and Koocanusa Reservoir water levels is available from USACE at **nwd-wc.usace.army.mil** or by calling **206 764 6702.**

Koocanusa Reservoir

The licensed operating range for Koocanusa Reservoir is between 749.5 metres (2,459 feet) and 697.1 metres (2,287 feet). During periods of high downstream flood risk, the Treaty Entities may coordinate additional storage in Koocanusa Reservoir

[2] VarQ was developed to improve the multi-purpose operation of Libby and Hungry Horse while maintaining the current level of system flood control protection in the Columbia River. VarQ reduces the contribution of reservoir space at Libby and Hungry Horse for system flood control of spring runoff in the Columbia River in years with low to moderate potential for flooding. For more information, please visit:**https://www.nwd-wc.usace.army.mil/cafe/forecast/VARQ/varq.htm**.

KOOTENAY LAKE

Information regarding Kootenay Lake is available from FortisBC at **fortisbc.com** or by calling **1 866 436 7847**.

The 4.5-kilometre Kootenay Canal

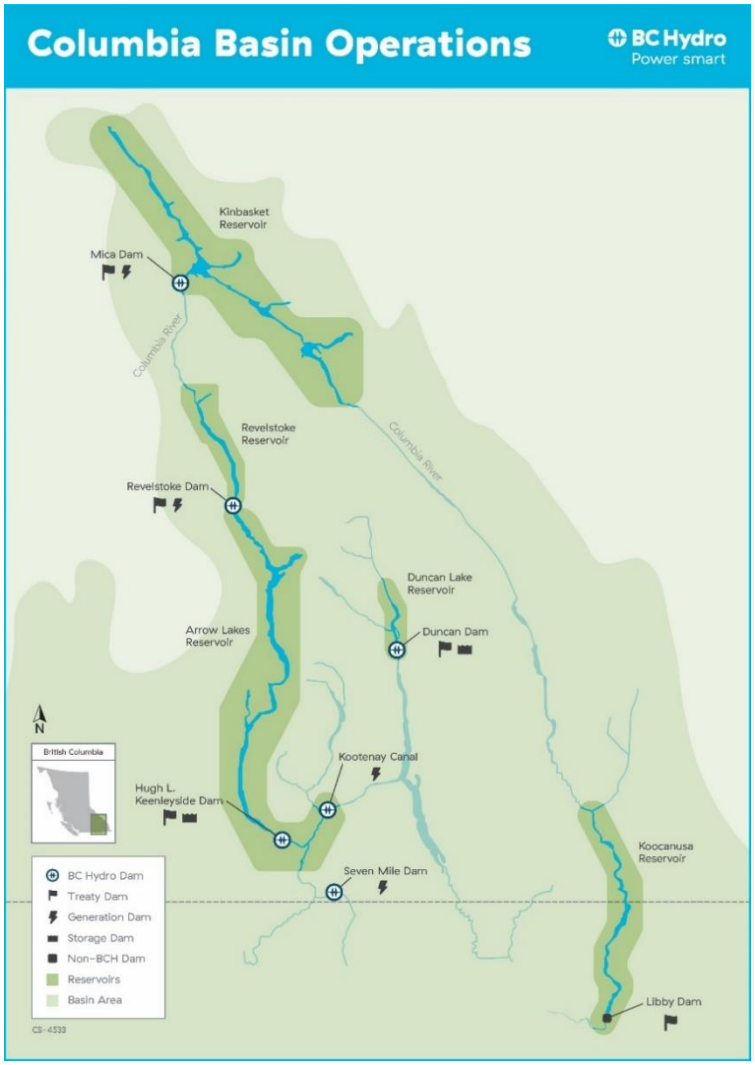
About the Columbia River Basin

At 2,000 km long, the Columbia River is the fourth largest river in North America. The headwaters of the Columbia River are in Canal Flats, B.C. The river then flows northwest through the Rocky Mountain trench before heading south through B.C. and Washington, emptying into the Pacific Ocean at Astoria, Oregon. Other major tributaries of the Columbia River in Canada include the Kootenay River and Pend d'Oreille River.

Only 15% of the Columbia River basin lies in Canada. The Canadian portion of the basin is mountainous, accumulates a lot of snow, and produces an average of 30% to 35% of total the runoff in the Columbia Basin. The river's large annual discharge and relatively steep gradient gives it tremendous potential for generating electricity. Hydroelectric dams on the Columbia's mainstem and its many tributaries produce more hydroelectric power than on any other North American river.

BC Hydro's facilities in the Columbia basin include thirteen hydroelectric dams, two water storage dams, and a system of reservoirs. Four of the larger reservoirs within Canada are operated according to the Treaty and other agreements signed between Canada and the U.S.

For more information, visit **bchydro.com/energy-in-bc/operations/our-facilities/columbia.html**.



BC Hydro's Operating Agreements

COLUMBIA RIVER TREATY

Ratified in 1964, the Treaty agreement between Canada in the US resulted in the construction of the Duncan, Hugh L. Keenleyside, and Mica dams in BC, the Libby Dam in the US, and the Koocanusa reservoir, which crosses the Canada-US border. The dams were constructed for flood control and to increase power-generating potential in both countries.

In July 2024, Canada and the United States reached an agreement-in-principle (AIP) to modernize the Columbia River Treaty. Under the AIP, the countries have agreed that a modernized Treaty will provide a level of assured pre-planned flood control and continued co-operation on hydropower management for the Columbia River. The countries have also agreed to incorporate new provisions not considered in the original agreement, including those for increased unilateral flexibility for how B.C. operates its Treaty dams, ecosystem health, restoring and strengthening salmon populations, Indigenous cultural values, adaptive management, and new collaborative engagement on Libby Dam operations.

Treaty negotiations between the two countries are currently paused. Until a new Treaty is finalized, operations are subject to current Treaty requirements. The Non-Treaty Storage Agreement, an agreement between BC Hydro and the Bonneville Power Administration, ended in June 2024.

For more information about the AIP and future engagement opportunities, visit **https://engage.gov.bc.ca/columbiarivertreaty/agreement-in-principle/**.

Stay Informed

SPRING OPERATIONS UPDATE MEETINGS

BC Hydro hosted 11 meetings and open houses throughout the Columbia Basin this spring, online and in Cranbrook, Jaffray, Revelstoke, Nakusp, Meadow Creek, and Castlegar. These engagement opportunities allow us to:

- listen to and learn from local residents, stakeholders, First Nations, and community representatives who have an interest in the operation of the Treaty facilities and BC Hydro facilities in the Southern Interior; and
- provide information on BC Hydro's activities and facility operations in the Columbia River Basin.

Email **southern-interior.info@bchydro.com** to request a copy of the presentation.

RESERVOIR LEVEL UPDATES

You can receive regular updates about BC Hydro reservoir levels in a variety of ways:

- Go online to view near **real-time water level information** for various locations around our reservoirs.
- Sign up to receive weekly water level forecasts by emailing **southern-interior.info@bchydro.com**.
- Listen to river flow and reservoir level information by phoning our toll-free reservoir information line at **1 877 924 2444**. These recorded messages are updated every Monday, Wednesday, and Friday, and include:
    - Current elevation levels: Arrow Lakes Reservoir, Duncan Dam Reservoir, Kinbasket Reservoir, Koocanusa Reservoir, Kootenay Lake, Revelstoke Reservoir, Sugar Lake Reservoir, and Whatshan Lake Reservoir.
    - Current flows: Columbia River at Birchbank, Duncan River at the Lardeau Confluence, Shuswap River, and the flow downstream from Wilsey Dam at Shuswap Falls.

VISIT BCHYDRO.COM

- **Real-time water level information** for various locations around our reservoirs.
- Details about our **Columbia River Basin facilities** and **Revelstoke Dam Visitor Centre**.
- Information and updates on the **Columbia River Water Use Plan** and **Duncan Dam Water Use Plan**.
- Report an outage, find current and planned outages, and tips on how to prepare for outages at **bchydro.com/outages**.

REACH OUT TO THE SOUTHERN INTERIOR COMMUNITY RELATIONS TEAM

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