Government of
Northwest Territories

NWT Water Monitoring Bulletin – March 13th, 2026

Bulletin sur la surveillance des eaux des TNO du 13 Mars 2026

NWT Water Monitoring Bulletins are posted monthly. These bulletins are intended to provide an update of water flow and level data at select NWT Hydrometric Network gauge stations across the Northwest Territories.

Where available, data from river sites are presented as flow (discharge) or water level and data from lake sites are presented as level. The figures in this report represent current conditions for this year, relative to historic minimum and maximum values, extreme values (10th to 90th percentiles) and the average range, which is calculated as the interquartile range.

The NWT Hydrometric Network is a partnership between Government of Northwest Territories – Environment and Climate Change (ECC) and Environment and Climate Change Canada (ECCC) and is operated by the Water Survey of Canada (ECCC). Both historic and real-time data for all stations are available at https://wateroffice.ec.gc.ca/index_e.html. All 2025 and 2026 data are considered provisional and may contain values that are later corrected.

Any questions regarding information contained in this Bulletin can be directed to NWTWaters@gov.nt.ca.

Les Bulletins sur la surveillance des eaux aux TNO sont publiés mensuellement. Ces bulletins visent à fournir des mises à jour sur les données concernant l'écoulement et le niveau de l'eau à certaines stations de jaugeage du Réseau hydrométrique des TNO.

Si elles sont disponibles, les données sur les rivières et les fleuves sont présentées sous forme d'écoulement (débit) et celles des lacs sont présentées sous forme de niveau. Dans le présent rapport, les données font état des conditions de cette année et sont comparées aux valeurs minimales, maximales et extrêmes (du 10^{e} au 90^{e} centile) ainsi qu'à la moyenne (calculée en tant qu'écart interquartile).

Le Réseau hydrométrique des TNO est le fruit d'un partenariat entre le ministère de l'Environnement et du Changement climatique (MECC) du gouvernement des Territoires du Nord-Ouest et Environnement et Changement climatique Canada (ECCC) et est exploité par la Division des relevés hydrologiques du Canada. Vous pouvez consulter les données historiques et les données en temps réel de toutes les stations au https://eau.ec.gc.ca/index_f.html. Toutes les données de 2025 et de 2026 sont considérées comme provisoires et peuvent contenir des valeurs qui seront ultérieurement corrigées.

Pour toute question sur le contenu du présent document, écrivez un courriel à l'adresse NWTWaters@gov.nt.ca.

Current status

- This report is our **Monthly Water Monitoring Bulletin**, which provides regular updates on water levels and precipitation in the NWT;

- Water levels and flow rates are very low across most of the NWT.
    - Great Slave Lake water level is currently well below average and lower than the level observed at this time last year, which was also below average.
    - Slave River water level is below average for this time of year.
    - Hay River water level is well below average for this time of year.
    - Liard River water level is below average for this time of year.
    - Mackenzie River water level, recorded at several stations along the river, is well below average for this time of year.
    - Great Bear Lake remains at its lowest water level for this time of year and is similar to the level recorded at this time last year.
    - Peel River is average for this time of year.
    - Notable exceptions to low water levels include the South Nahanni River (well above average) and the Coppermine River (average)
    - Some smaller rivers in the Great Slave Lake basin are closer to normal, including the Lockhart River (average), Hoarfrost River (above average), Taltson River (average)
- Water level sensors may be affected by ice during this time of year, and readings should be interpreted with caution.

- Low water levels are the result of extreme drought conditions that began in the summer of 2022 and have persisted through 2023, 2024 and 2025. Water levels have shown limited recovery since 2022.

- February temperatures were generally average across the NWT, with below-average temperatures observed in Yellowknife and Norman Wells. Precipitation was mostly average to above average, with above-average precipitation recorded in Fort Smith, Yellowknife, and Norman Wells

- Water levels on the Slave River, Great Slave Lake and the Mackenzie River this coming spring/summer will be impacted by snowpack volumes and spring rainfall amounts in northern Alberta and British Columbia.

- Snow water equivalent (SWE)[1] is above normal across much of the western and southern Mackenzie River Basin, particularly in the headwaters of the Slave, Liard, and Hay Rivers in northern Alberta and British Columbia.

[1] Snow water equivalent (SWE) is the amount of water that remains when snow is melted. The accumulated amount of SWE over a winter provides a strong indication of how much water will be available to flow to rivers and lakes in the spring. SWE values account for the density of the snowpack and are therefore not the same as snow depth values. For example, heavy and wet snow has a higher SWE than light and fluffy snow.

- Neighboring jurisdictions are responsible for snow survey measurements in their provinces/territories. ECC works collaboratively with these jurisdictions to compile snow survey results across the Mackenze River basin. These results will also be published in the Spring Water Level Outlook.

- Climate forecasts from ECCC indicate that cooler-than-average conditions will continue through March, particularly in the Dehcho, North Slave, and South Slave regions. Cooler-than-average temperatures are expected to persist into April, before transitioning back to near-normal conditions in May. Precipitation is forecast to be above average in the Dehcho region.

Situation actuelle

- Le présent rapport est notre **Bulletin mensuel sur la surveillance des eaux** qui fournit des mises à jour régulières sur les niveaux d'eau et les précipitations aux TNO.

- Les niveaux d'eau et les débits sont très bas dans la majeure partie des TNO :

  - Le niveau d'eau du Grand lac des Esclaves est bien inférieur à la moyenne et est inférieur au niveau observé à la même période l'année dernière, qui était également inférieur à la moyenne.
  - Le niveau d'eau de la rivière des Esclaves est inférieur à la moyenne pour cette période de l'année.
  - Le niveau d'eau de la rivière Hay est bien inférieur à la moyenne pour cette période de l'année.
  - Le niveau d'eau de la rivière Liard est inférieur à la moyenne pour cette période de l'année.
  - Le niveau d'eau du fleuve Mackenzie, relevé à plusieurs stations le long de son cours, est bien inférieur à la moyenne pour cette période de l'année.
  - Le niveau d'eau du Grand lac de l'Ours reste le plus bas enregistré à cette période de l'année, et il est similaire au niveau enregistré à la même période l'année dernière.
  - Le niveau d'eau de la rivière Peel est près de la normale pour cette période de l'année.
  - Parmi les exceptions notables aux faibles niveaux d'eau, mentionnons la rivière Nahanni Sud (niveau nettement supérieur à la moyenne) et la rivière Coppermine (dans la moyenne).
  - Certaines plus petites rivières du bassin du Grand lac des Esclaves présentent un niveau d'eau plus près de la normale, notamment la rivière Lockhart (dans la moyenne), la rivière Hoarfrost (niveau supérieur à la moyenne) et la rivière Taltson (dans la moyenne).
- Comme les capteurs de niveau d'eau peuvent être perturbés par la glace à cette période de l'année, les données doivent être interprétées avec prudence.

- Les faibles niveaux d'eau sont attribuables à une sécheresse extrême qui a commencé à l'été 2022, et qui s'est poursuivie en 2023, 2024 et 2025. Les niveaux d'eau se sont peu rétablis depuis 2022.

- Dans l'ensemble, aux TNO, les températures de février ont été proches de la moyenne, sauf à Yellowknife et à Norman Wells, où les températures observées ont été inférieures à la moyenne. Les précipitations se sont situées surtout dans la moyenne ou dans une tranche supérieure à la moyenne, tandis que des précipitations au-dessus de la moyenne ont été enregistrées pour Fort Smith, Yellowknife et Norman Wells.

- Pour le printemps et l'été à venir, les niveaux d'eau de la rivière des Esclaves, du Grand lac des Esclaves et du fleuve Mackenzie dépendront des accumulations de neige et des précipitations printanières tombées dans le nord de l'Alberta et de la Colombie-Britannique.

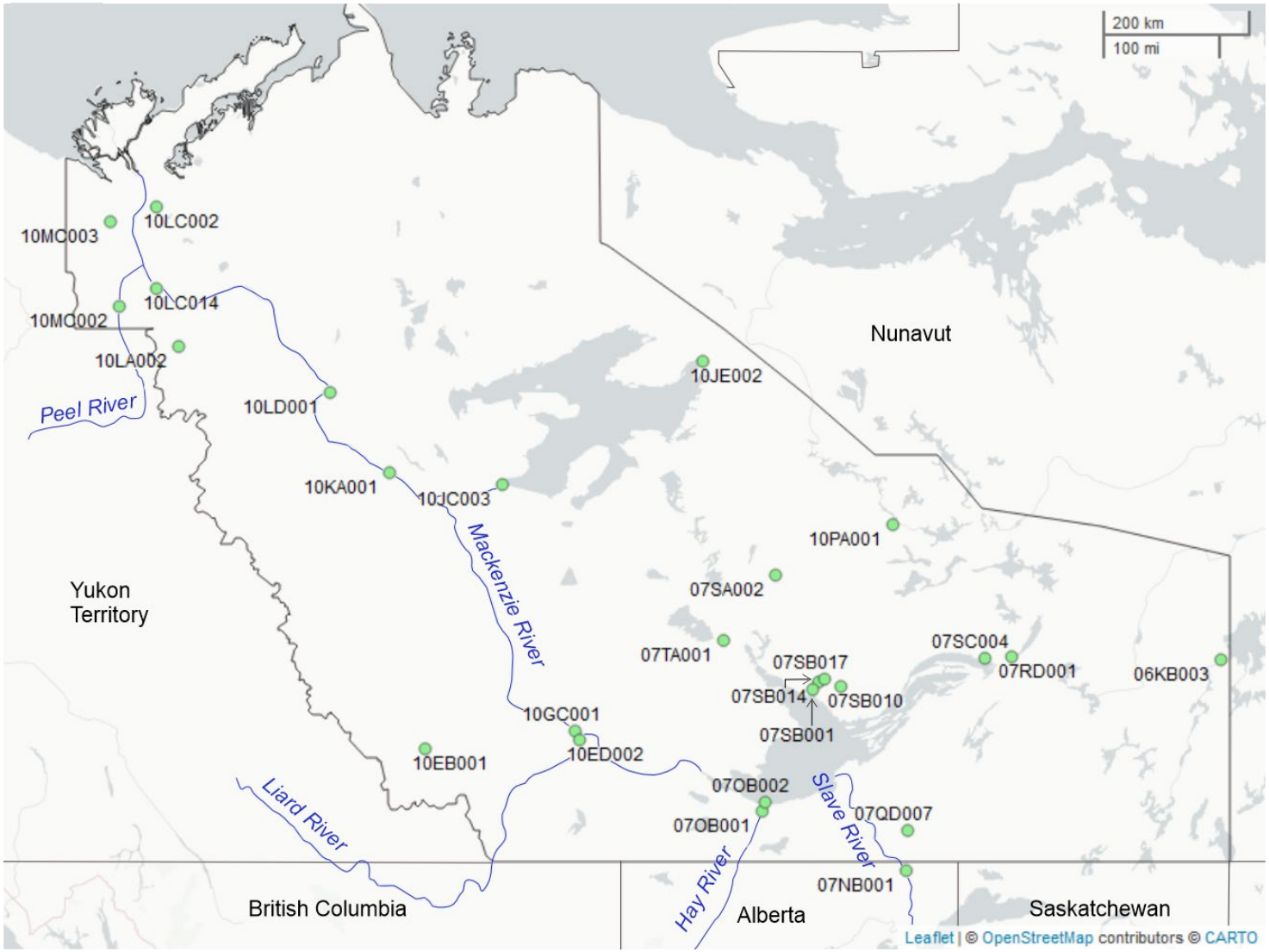
- L'équivalent en eau de la neige (EEN)[2] est supérieur à la moyenne dans la majeure partie de l'ouest et du sud du bassin du fleuve Mackenzie, particulièrement dans les eaux d'amont des rivières Slave, Liard et Hay (dans le nord de l'Alberta et de la Colombie-Britannique).
    - Les provinces et territoires voisins sont chargés d'effectuer leurs propres relevés nivométriques. Le MECC collabore avec ces administrations pour compiler les données issues des relevés nivométriques du bassin du fleuve Mackenzie. Ces données seront également publiées dans l'aperçu des niveaux d'eau printaniers.

- Pour le mois de mars, les prévisions climatiques d'ECCC indiquent des températures inférieures à la moyenne, particulièrement dans les régions du Dehcho, du Slave Nord et du Slave Sud. Ces températures devraient se maintenir en avril avant de revenir proches de la normale en mai. Les précipitations devraient être supérieures à la moyenne dans la région du Dehcho.

[1] L'équivalent en eau de la neige (EEN) correspond à la quantité d'eau qui demeure une fois la neige fondue. La quantité d'EEN accumulée tout au long d'un hiver donne une bonne indication de la quantité d'eau qui pourra se déverser dans les rivières et les lacs au printemps. Les données relatives à l'EEN tiennent compte de la densité des accumulations de neige et ne sont donc pas les mêmes que celles relatives l'épaisseur de la neige. Par exemple, la neige lourde et humide a un EEN plus élevé que la neige légère et floconneuse.

Contents

Hydrometric station map



Above – A map of the hydrometric stations included in this report.

Information on interpreting figures

Water level and flow figures

The light blue line shows water levels/flows from last year (2025), while the dark blue line shows current water levels/flows in 2026. The darkest grey band represents the average range (calculated as the interquartile range, which is the 25th to 75th percentile), the next lightest grey bands represent a wider range of values (10th to 90th percentiles), and the lightest grey bands represent the highest and lowest levels or flows on record. If the dark blue line is within the dark grey band, current conditions can be assumed to be normal.

The terms used to describe water level or flow conditions are defined as follows:

- ***Average:*** within the interquartile range (25th-75th percentile range).
- ***Above average / Below average:*** within the 75th-90th percentile range or 10th-25th percentile range, respectively.
- ***Well above average / Well below average:*** above the 90th percentile or below the 10th percentile, respectively.

The grey bands are calculated for data prior to 2025. If the line from 2025 or 2026 is above (or below) the grey band, it means that the water level or flow from that year was the highest (or lowest) on record.

Climate figures

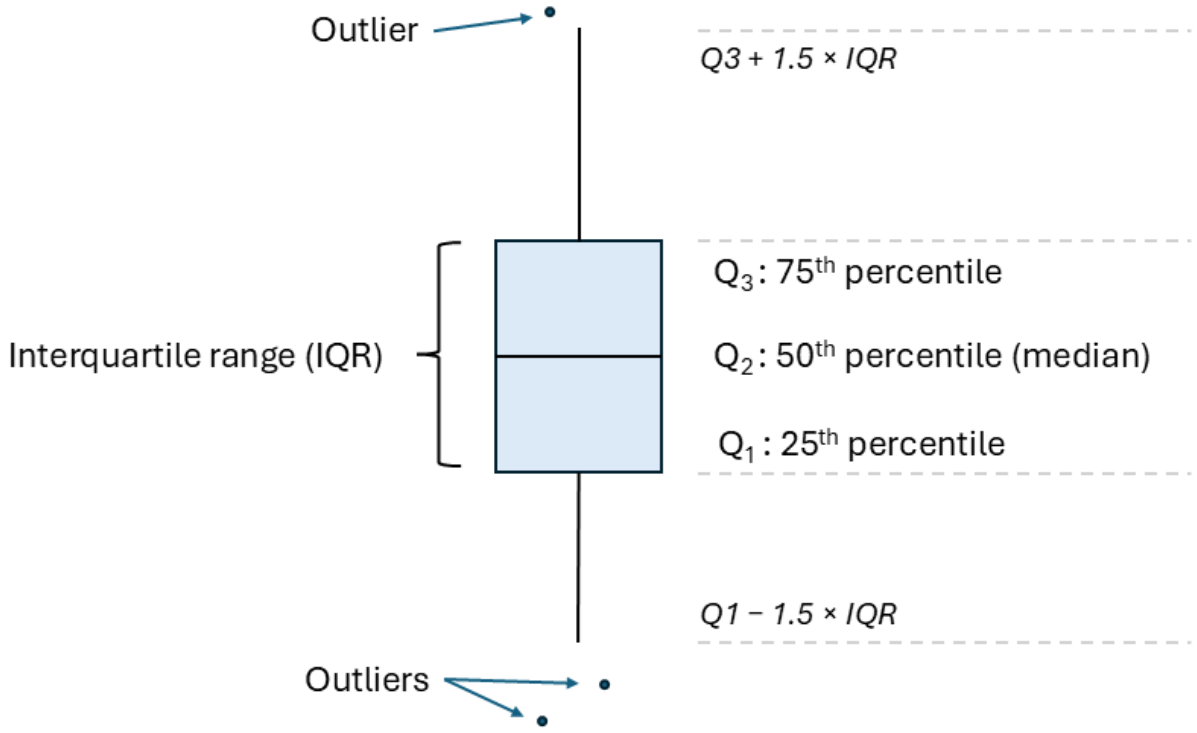
Monthly air temperature and precipitation data are displayed for six communities in the NWT (Fort Smith, Hay River, Yellowknife, Fort Simpson, Norman Wells, and Inuvik) and presented as box and whisker plots.

As shown in the schematic below, box and whisker plots show how data are spread out. The horizontal line inside the box shows the median (50th percentile) value. The box itself shows the interquartile range (IQR) between the 25th and 75th percentiles (the average range), where the typical values are found. The whiskers (the vertical lines extending from the box) show how far the rest of the data stretch, excluding outliers (unusually high or low values).

Each grey dot in the climate figures is the value from a previous year, beginning in 1950. The red or blue dots represent the values for the current year. Any dots beyond the whiskers are considered outliers, or unusually high or low values compared to the rest of the data.

The terms used to describe temperature or precipitation conditions are defined as follows:

- ***Average:*** within the interquartile range (25th-75th percentile range).
- ***Above average / Below average:*** higher or lower than the interquartile range (average range), but excluding unusually high or low values.
- ***Well above average / Well below average:*** unusually high or low values.

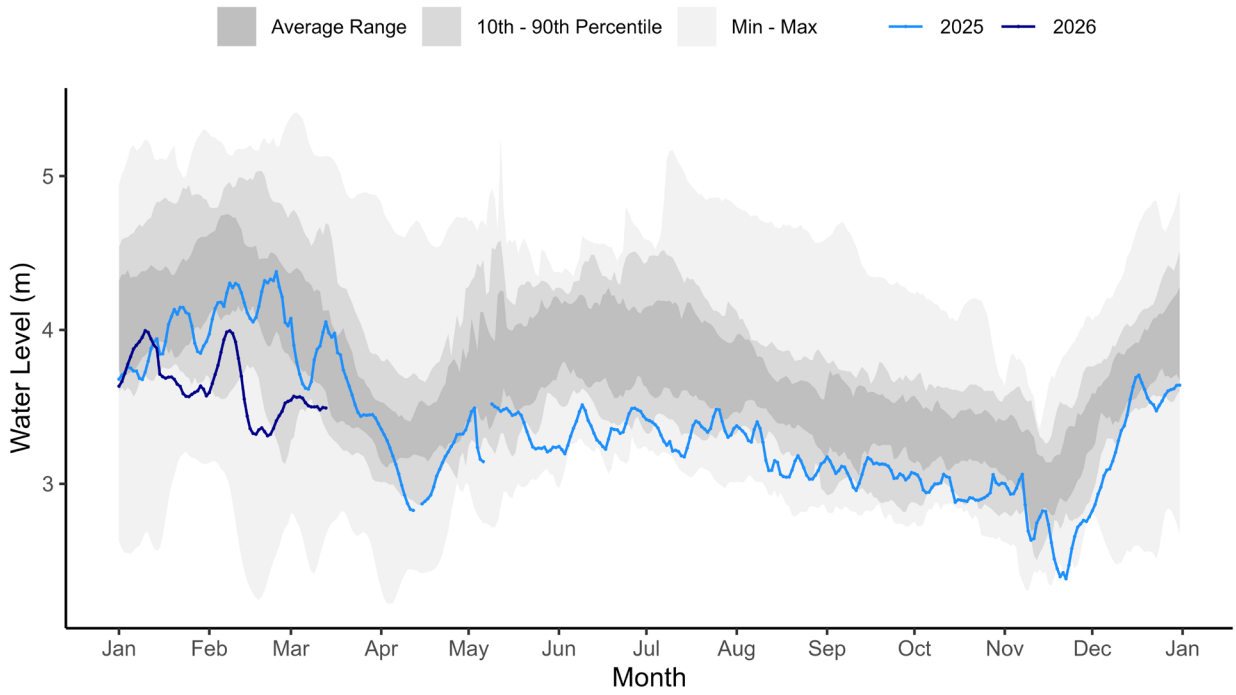


These data are primarily acquired and managed by Environment and Climate Change Canada, but in some cases values have been infilled with GNWT climate station data when ECCC data are unavailable.

Water level and flow data

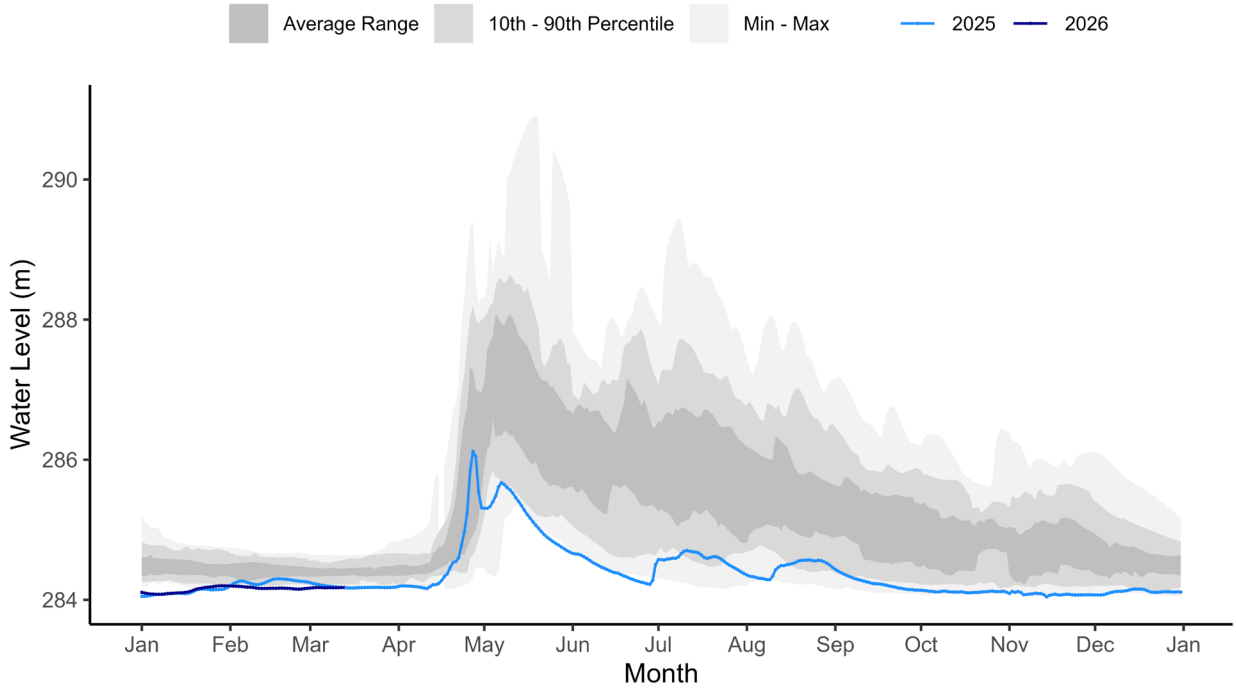
Slave River at Fitzgerald [07NB001]

Record Length: 25 years | Period of Record: 2002-2026



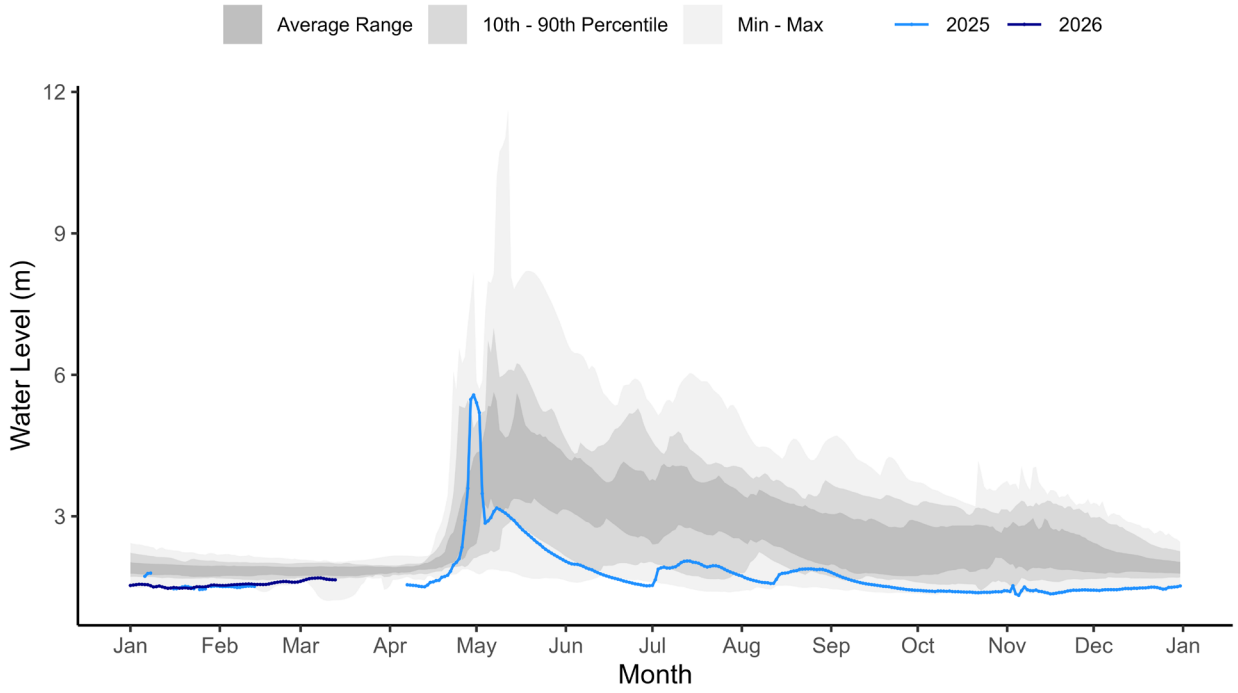
Hay River near Alberta/NWT Boundary [07OB008]

Record Length: 36 years | Period of Record: 1986-1998; 2004-2026



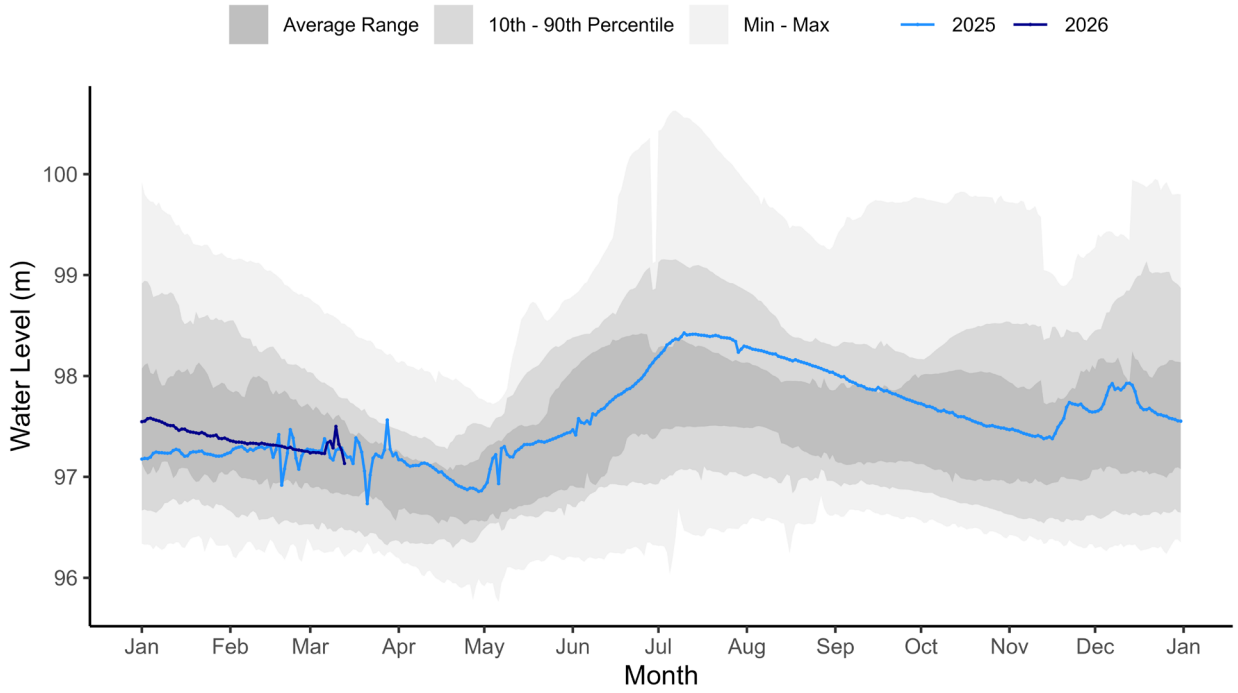
Hay River near Hay River [07OB001]

Record Length: 25 years | Period of Record: 2002-2026



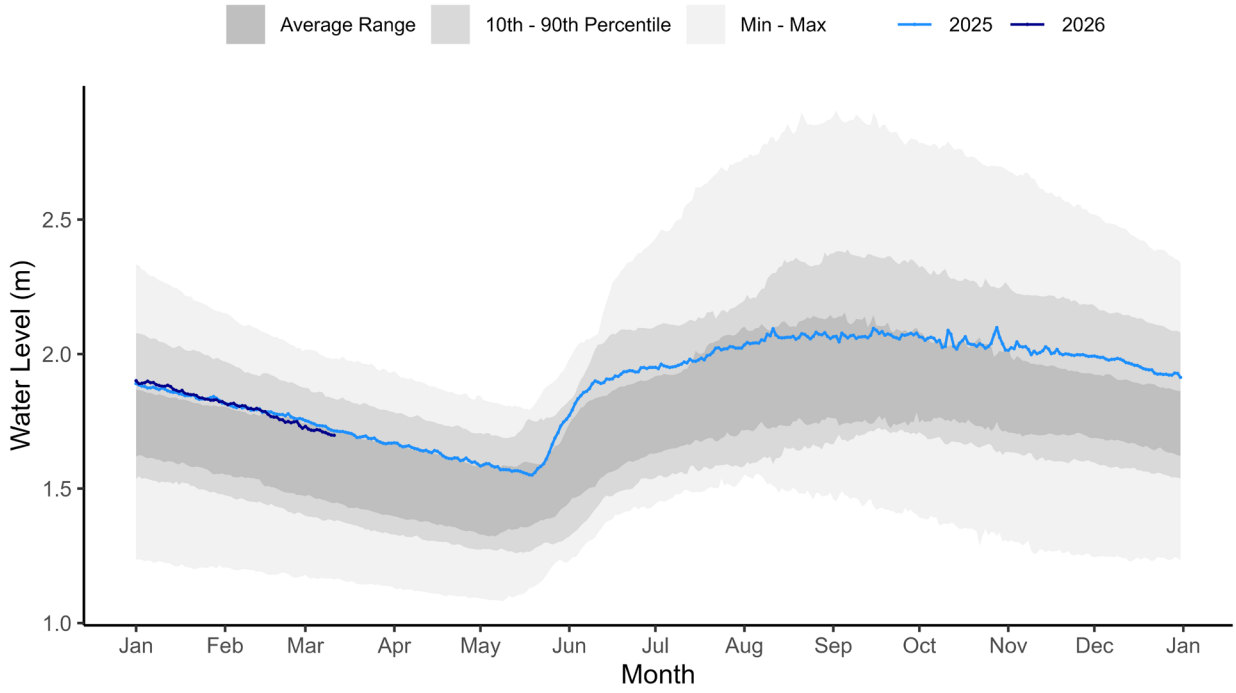
Taltson River below Hydro Dam [07QD007]

Record Length: 24 years | Period of Record: 2002-2008; 2010-2026



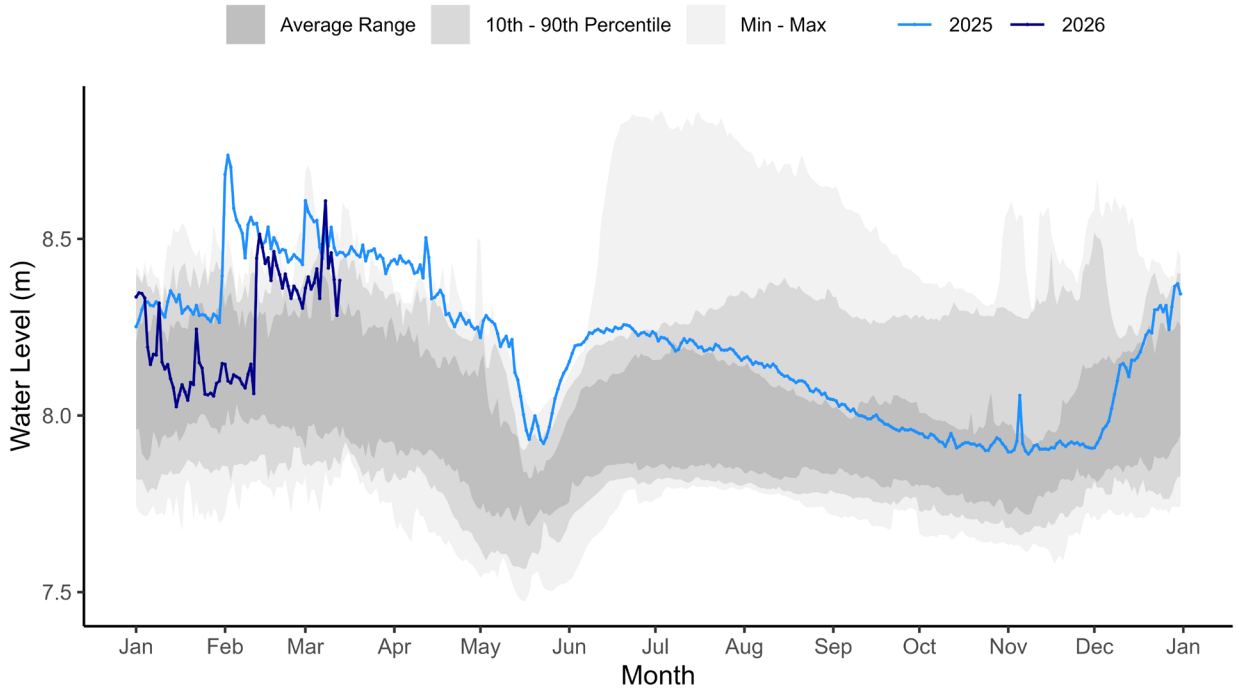
Lockhart River at outlet of Artillery Lake [07RD001]

Record Length: 25 years | Period of Record: 2002-2026



Hoarfrost River near the mouth [07SC004]*

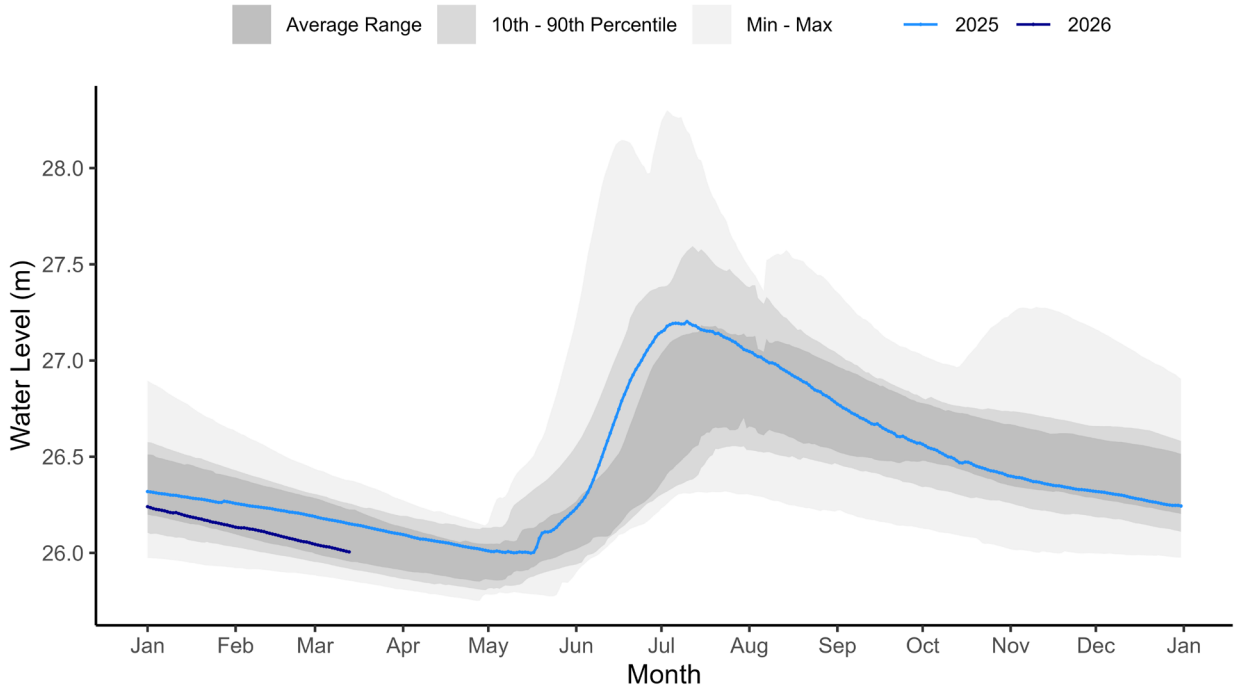
Record Length: 17 years | Period of Record: 2010-2026



**The rapid spike in water level observed in mid-winter (January-February) is likely due to ice affects and should be interpreted with caution*

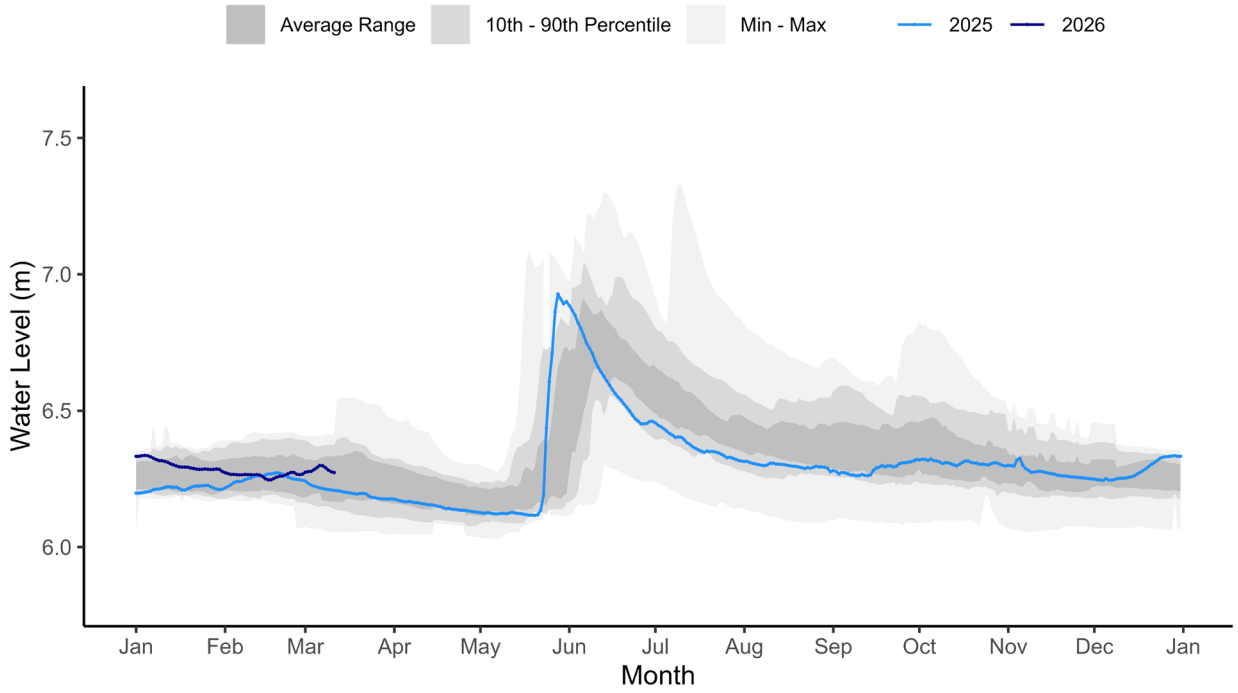
Snare River below Ghost Lake [07SA002]

Record Length: 25 years | Period of Record: 2002-2026



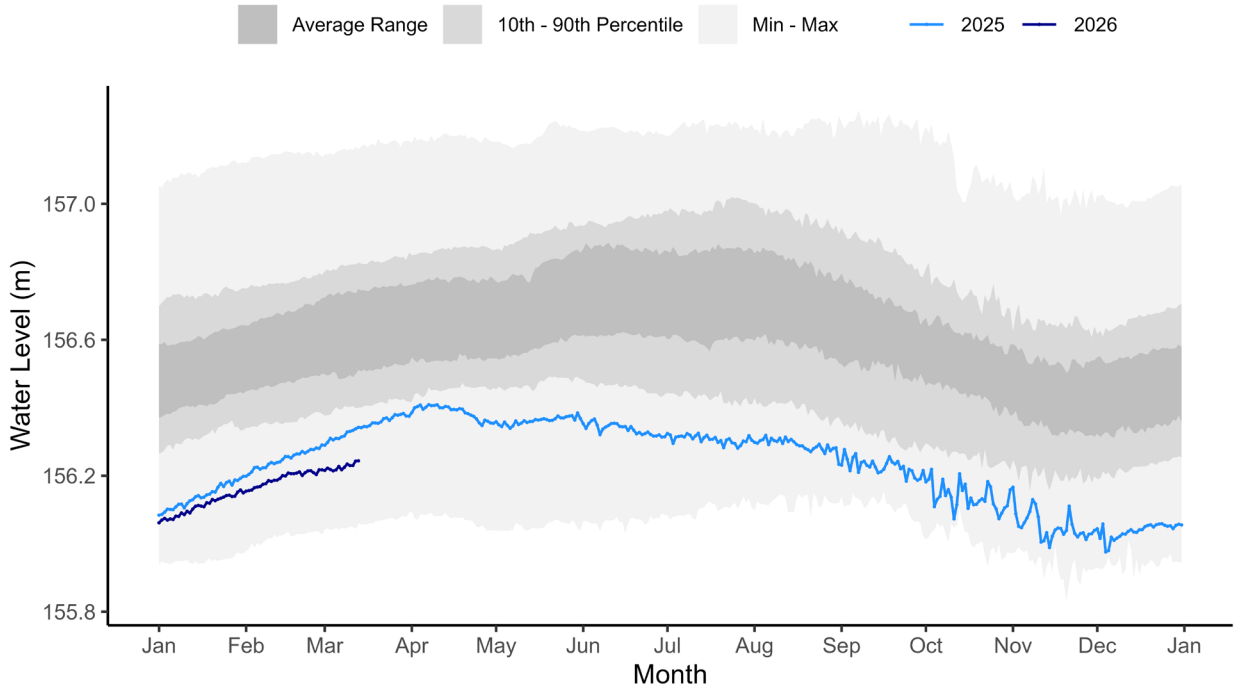
Coppermine River below Desteffany Lake [10PA001]

Record Length: 25 years | Period of Record: 2002-2026



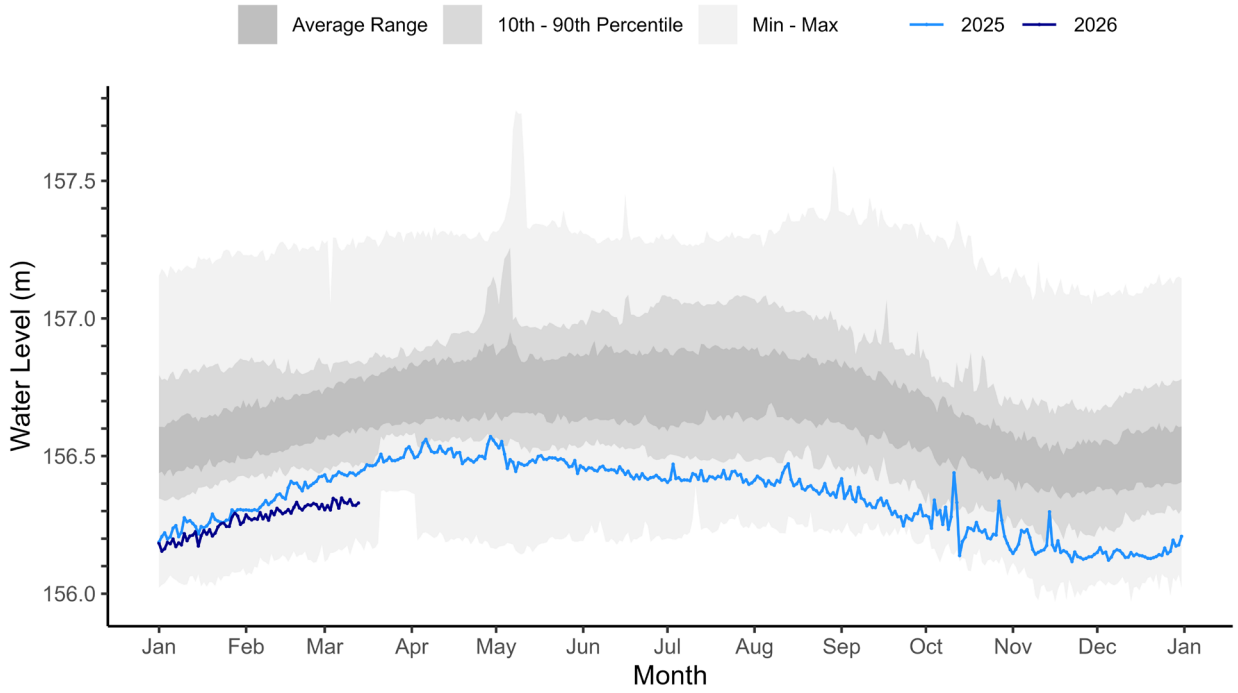
Great Slave Lake at Yellowknife Bay [07SB001]

Record Length: 91 years | Period of Record: 1934-1935; 1938-2026



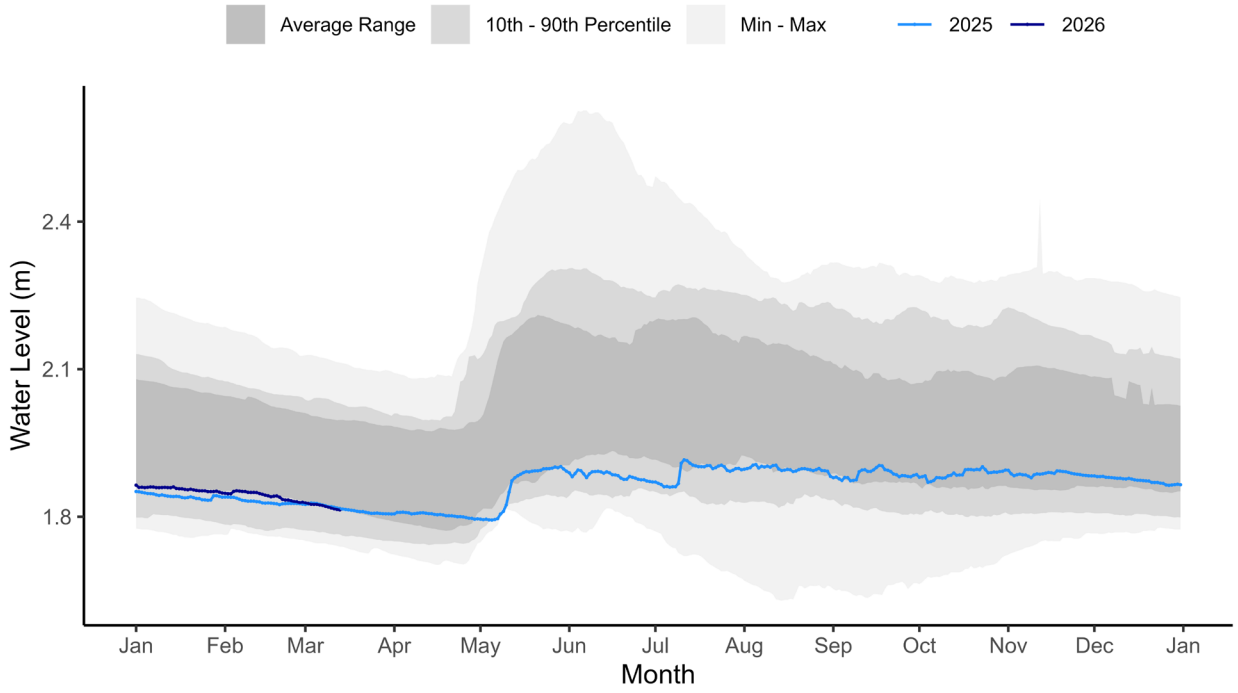
Great Slave Lake at Hay River [07OB002]

Record Length: 56 years | Period of Record: 1959-1970; 1983-2026



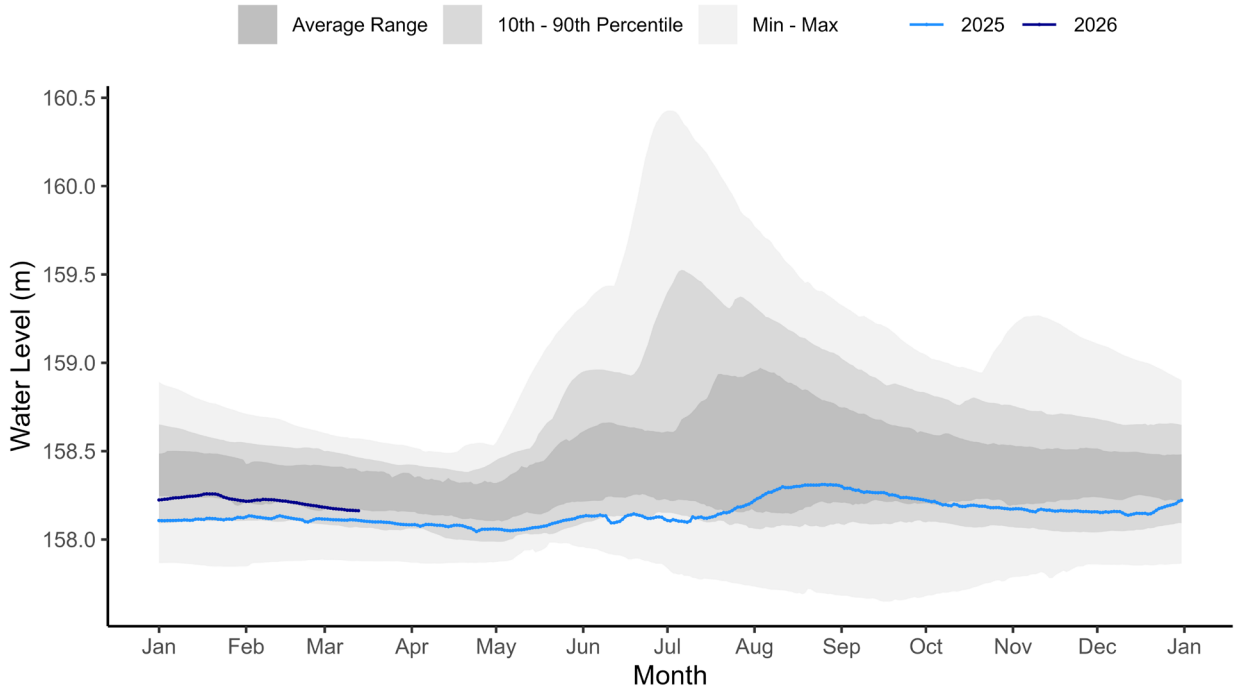
Cameron River below Reid Lake [07SB010]

Record Length: 25 years | Period of Record: 2002-2026



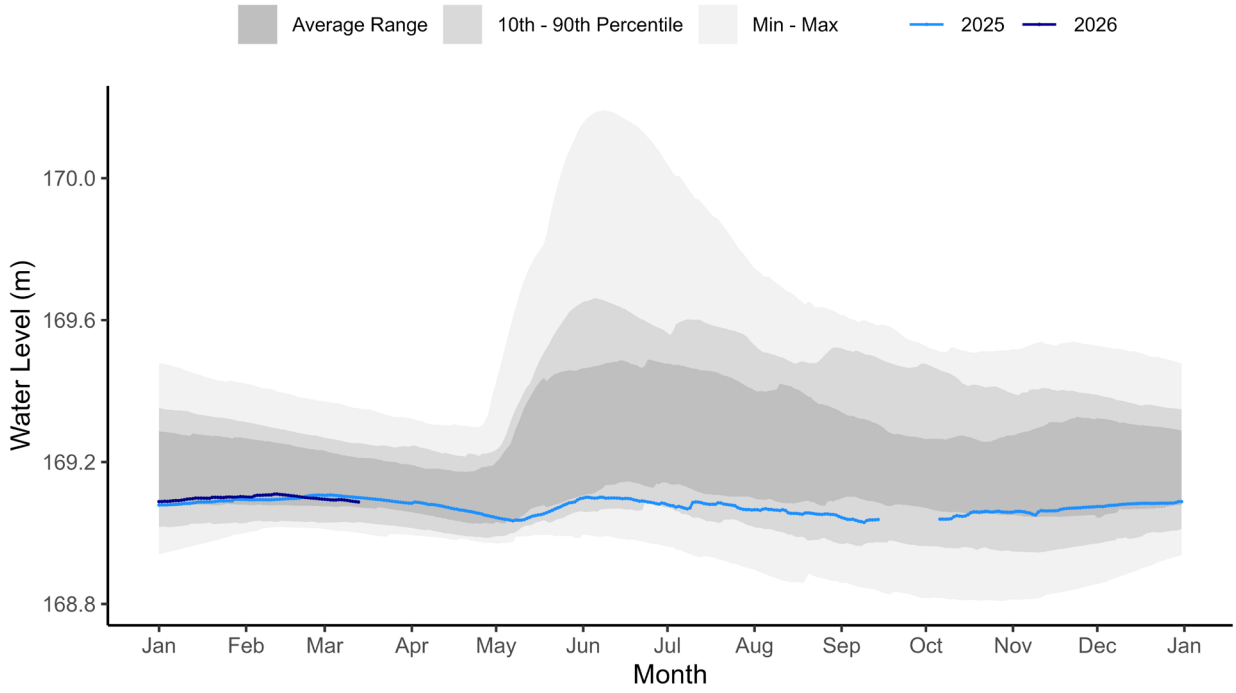
Prosperous Lake near McMeekan Bay [07SB014]

Record Length: 40 years | Period of Record: 1987-2026



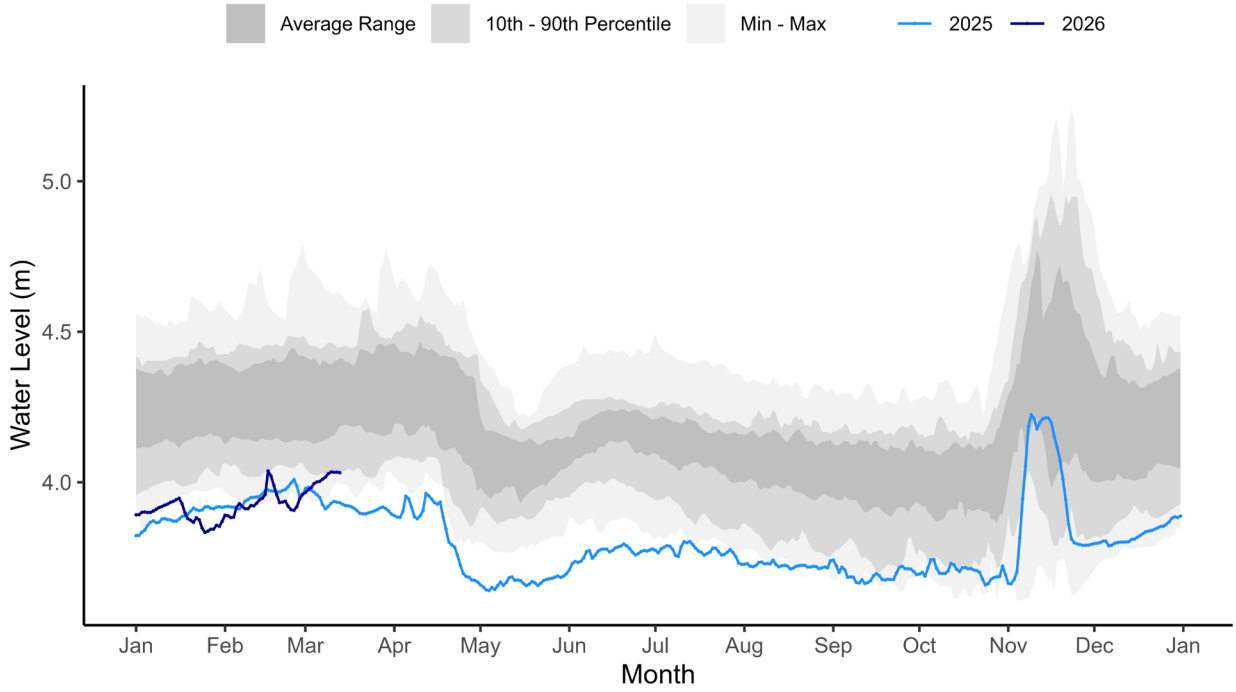
Prelude Lake near Yellowknife [07SB017]

Record Length: 32 years | Period of Record: 1995-2026



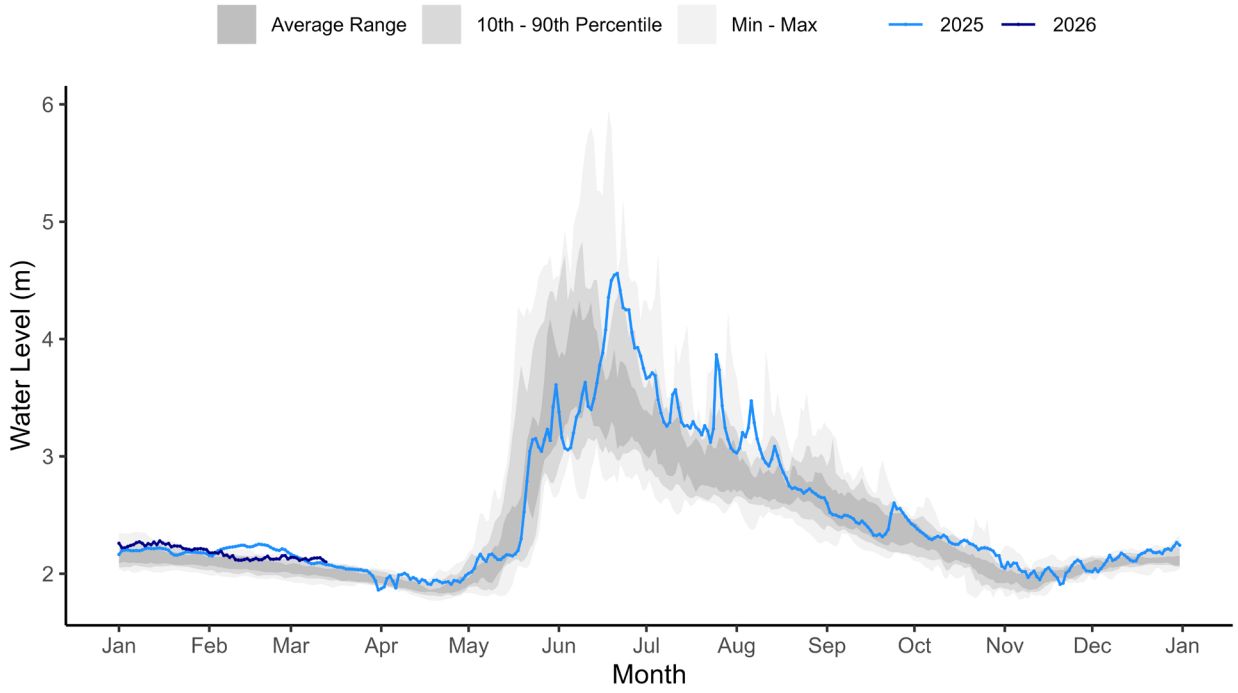
La Martre River below outlet of Lac La Martre [07TA001]

Record Length: 25 years | Period of Record: 2002-2026



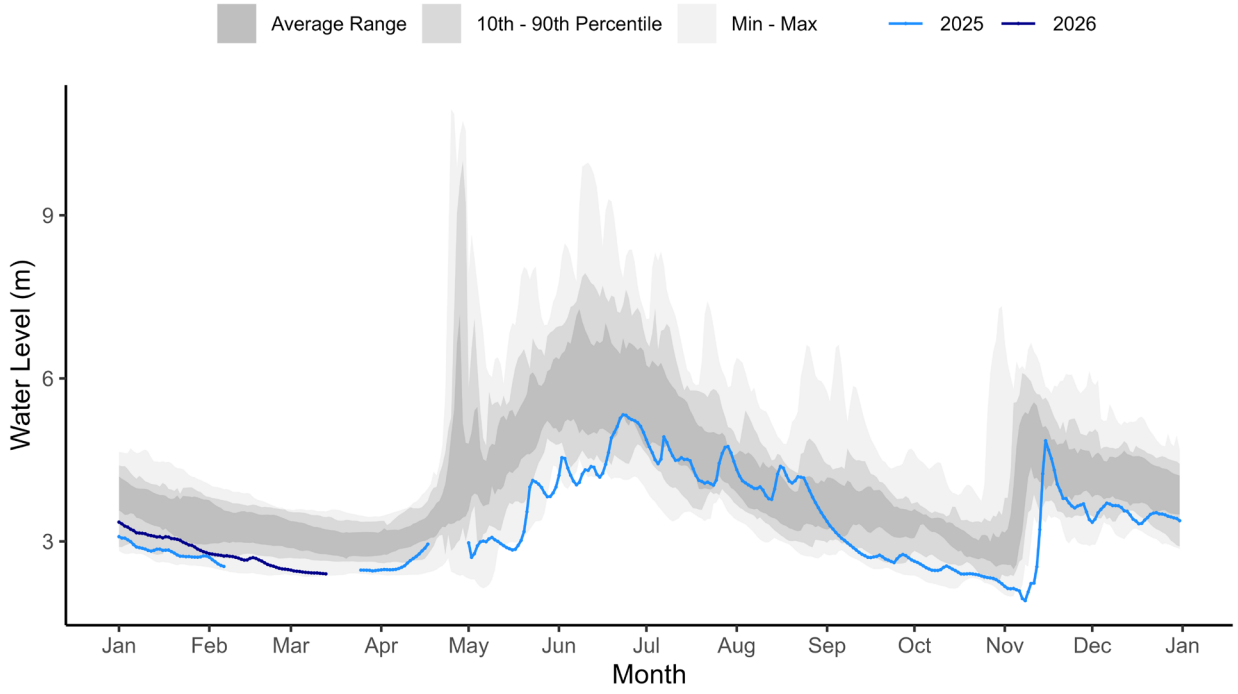
South Nahanni River above Virginia Falls [10EB001]

Record Length: 21 years | Period of Record: 2002-2019; 2024-2026



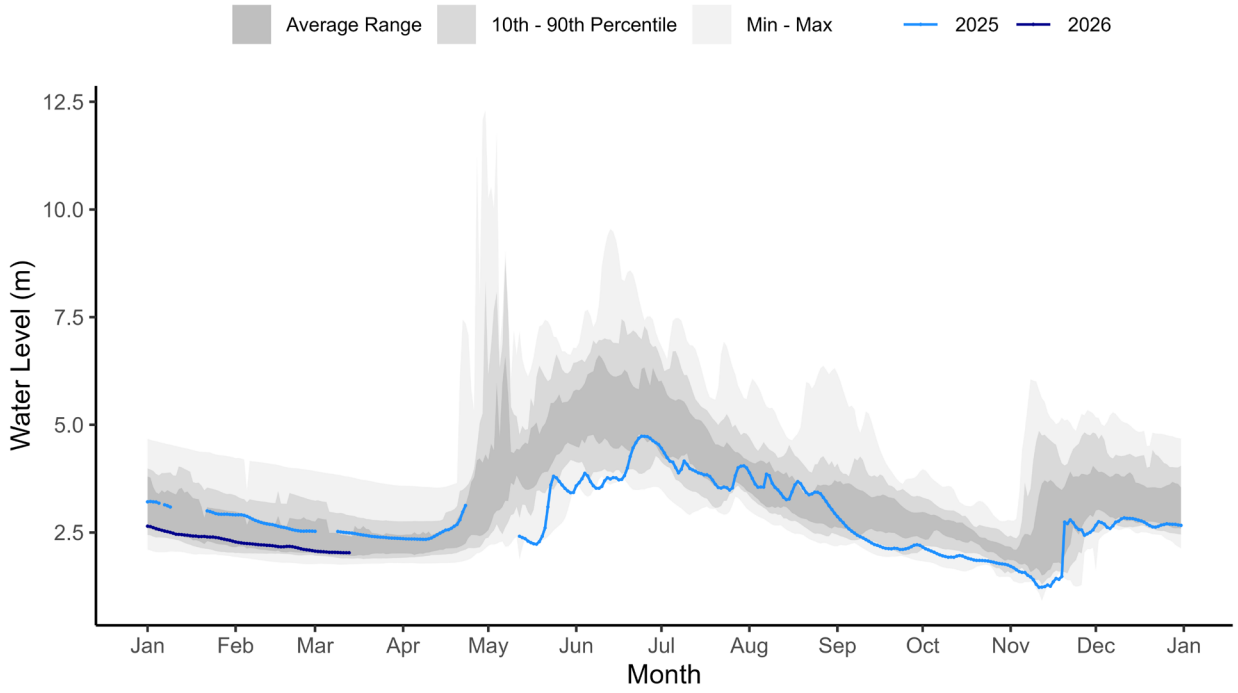
Liard River at Fort Liard [10ED001]

Record Length: 25 years | Period of Record: 2002-2026



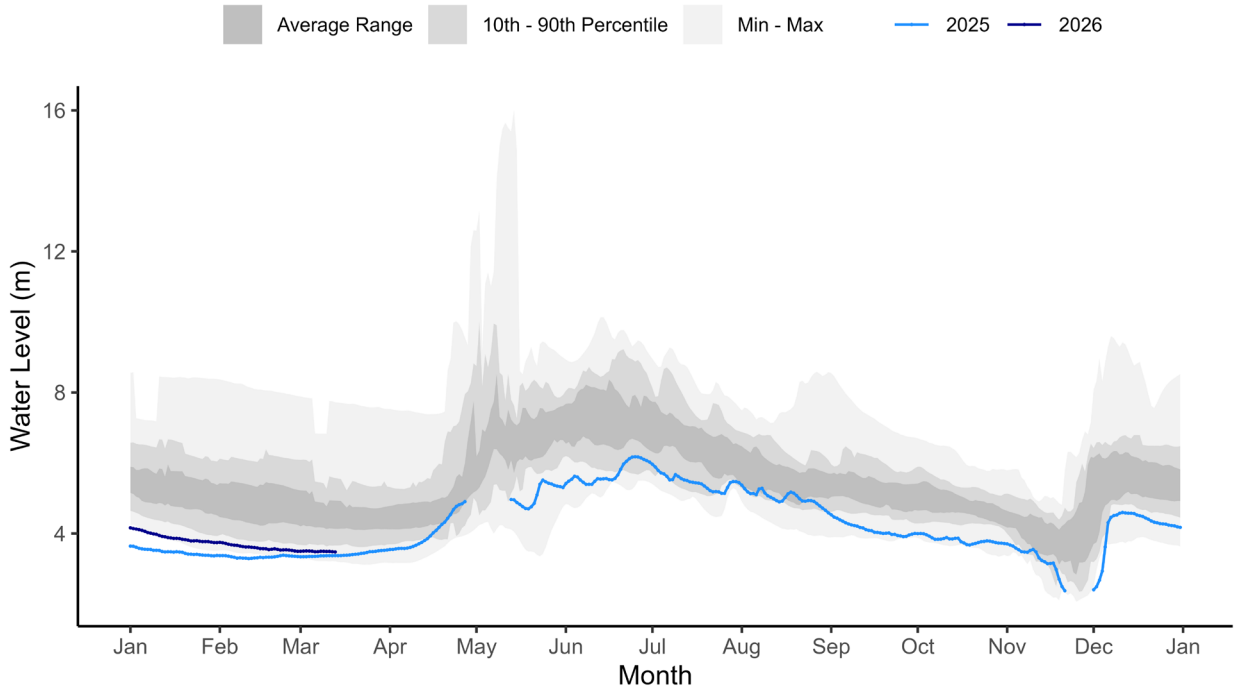
Liard River near the mouth [10ED002]

Record Length: 25 years | Period of Record: 2002-2026



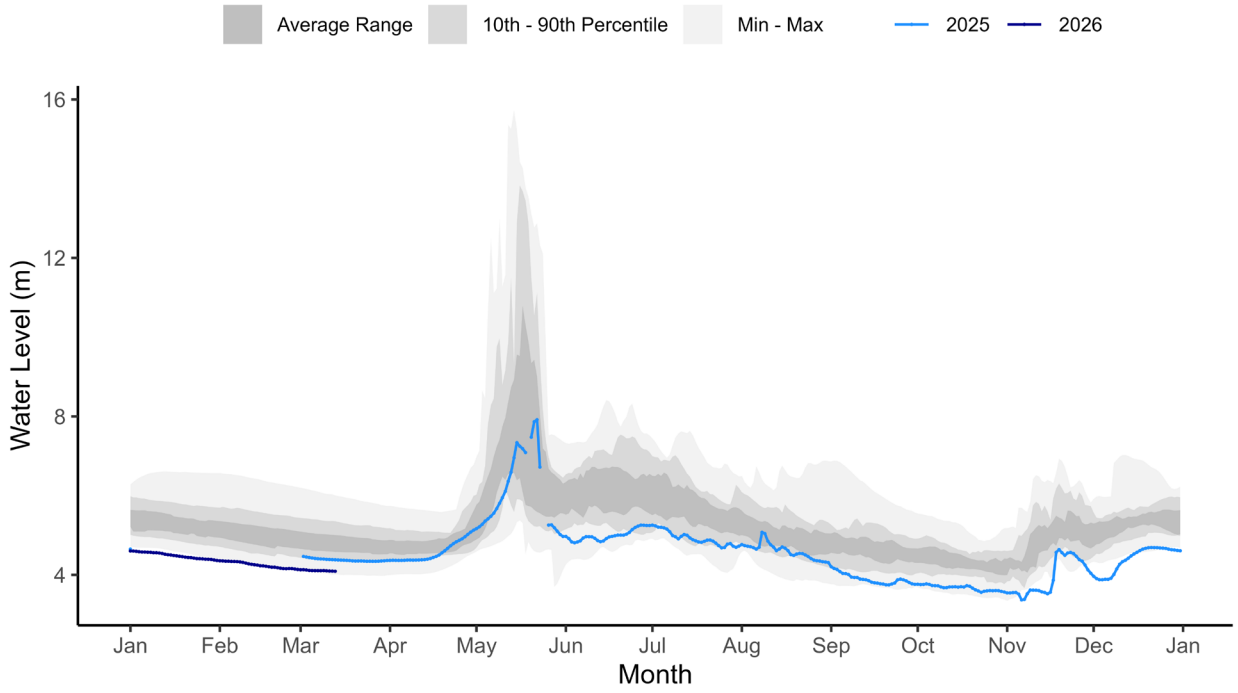
Mackenzie River at Fort Simpson [10GC001]

Record Length: 26 years | Period of Record: 2001-2026



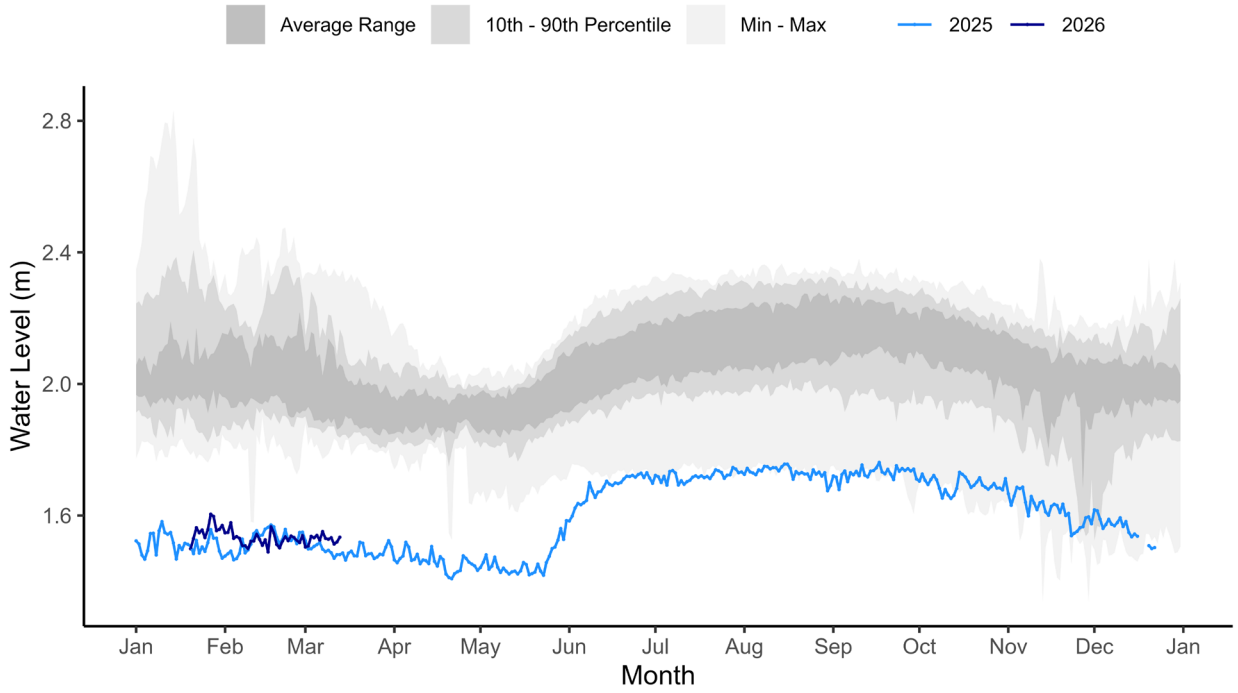
Mackenzie River at Norman Wells [10KA001]

Record Length: 25 years | Period of Record: 2002-2026



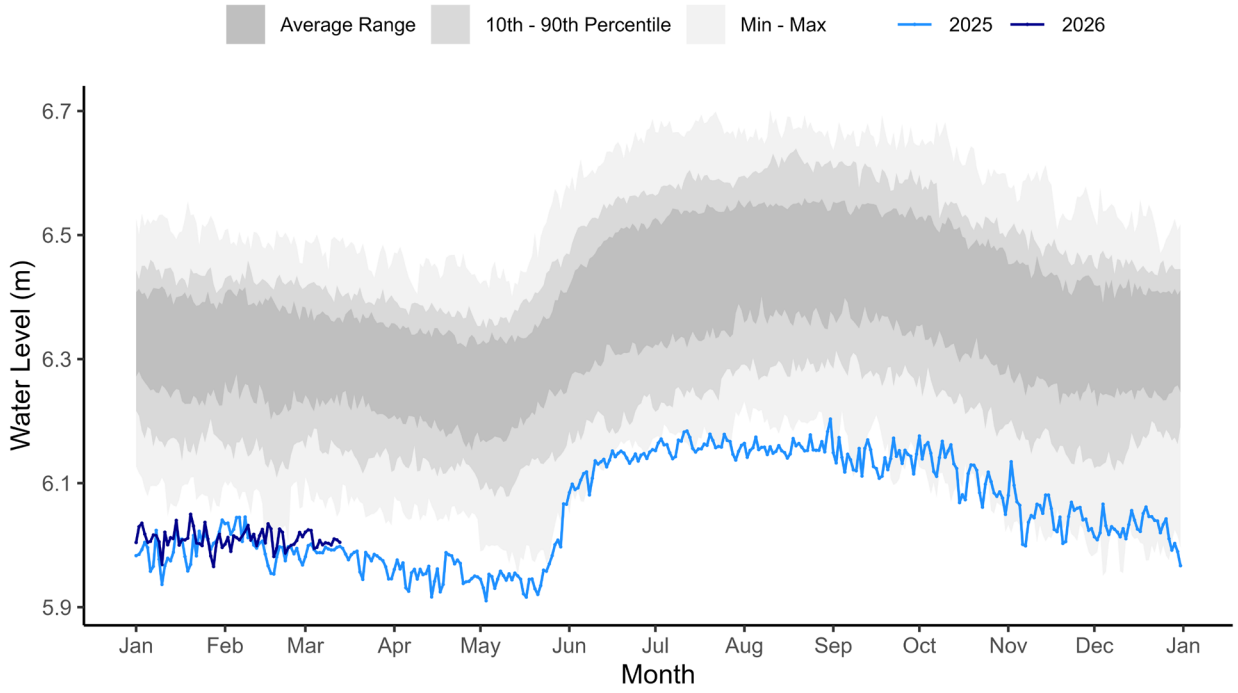
Great Bear River at outlet of Great Bear Lake [10JC003]

Record Length: 25 years | Period of Record: 2002-2026



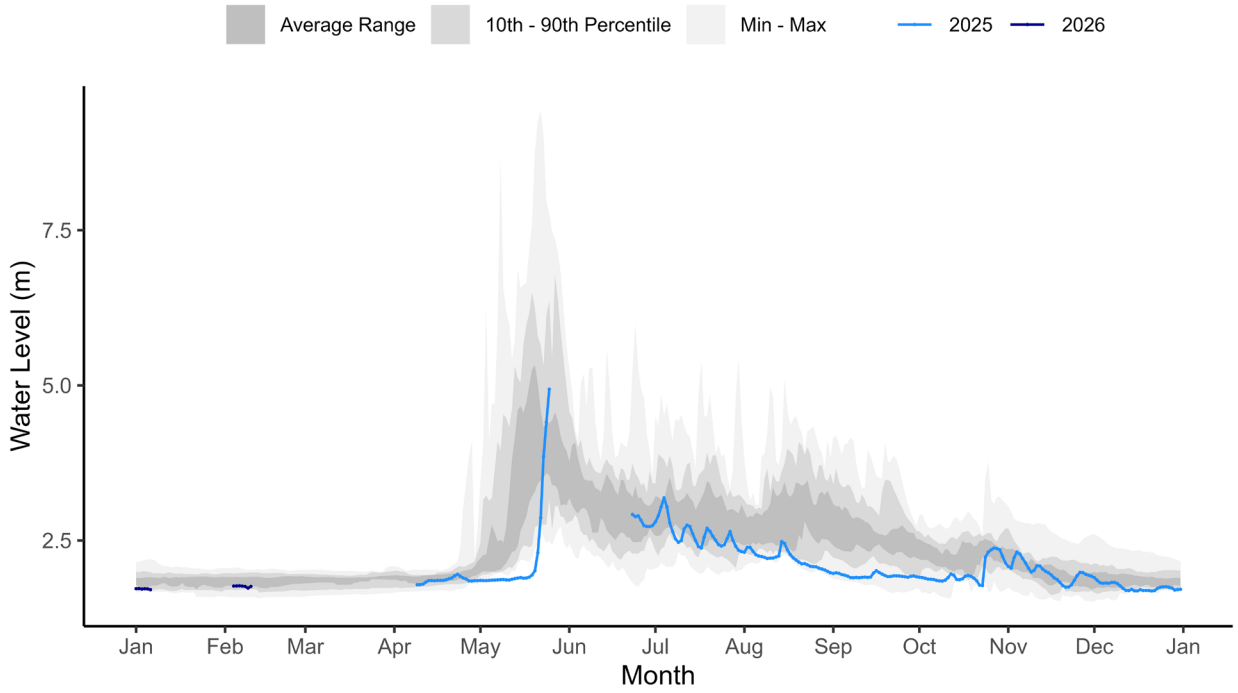
Great Bear Lake at Hornby Bay [10JE002]

Record Length: 43 years | Period of Record: 1984-2026



Arctic Red River near the mouth [10LA002]*

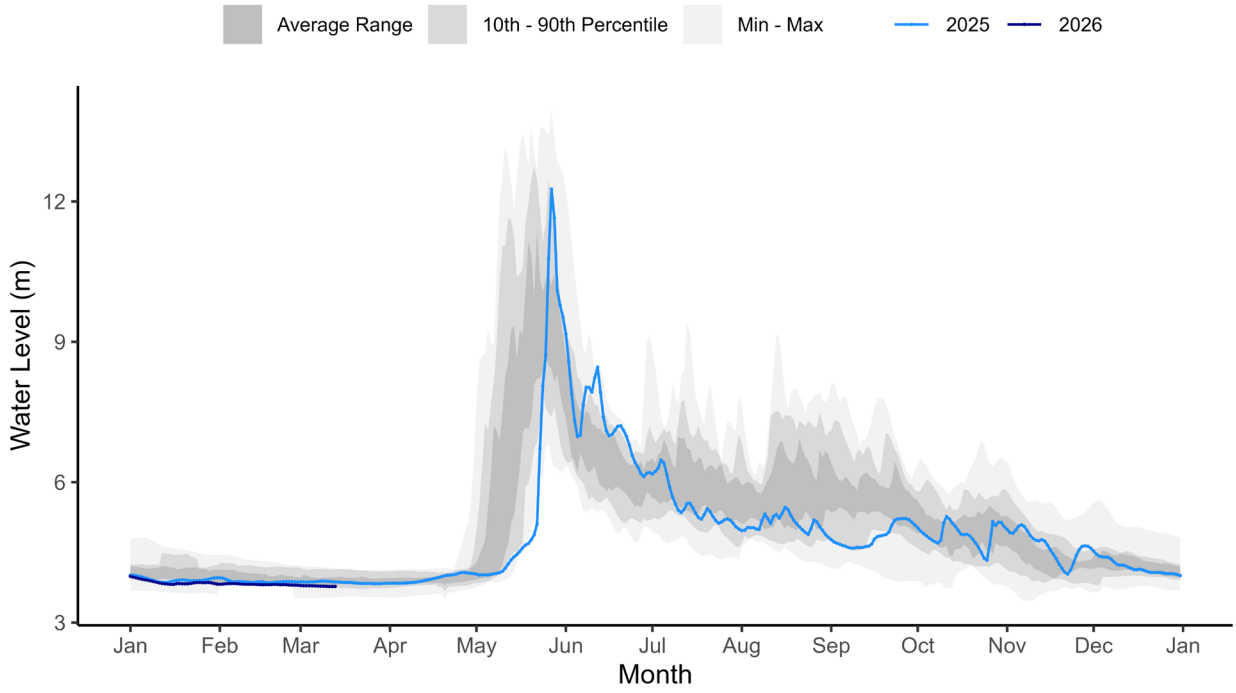
Record Length: 23 years | Period of Record: 2002-2021; 2024-2026



**There is currently an issue with the water level sensor.*

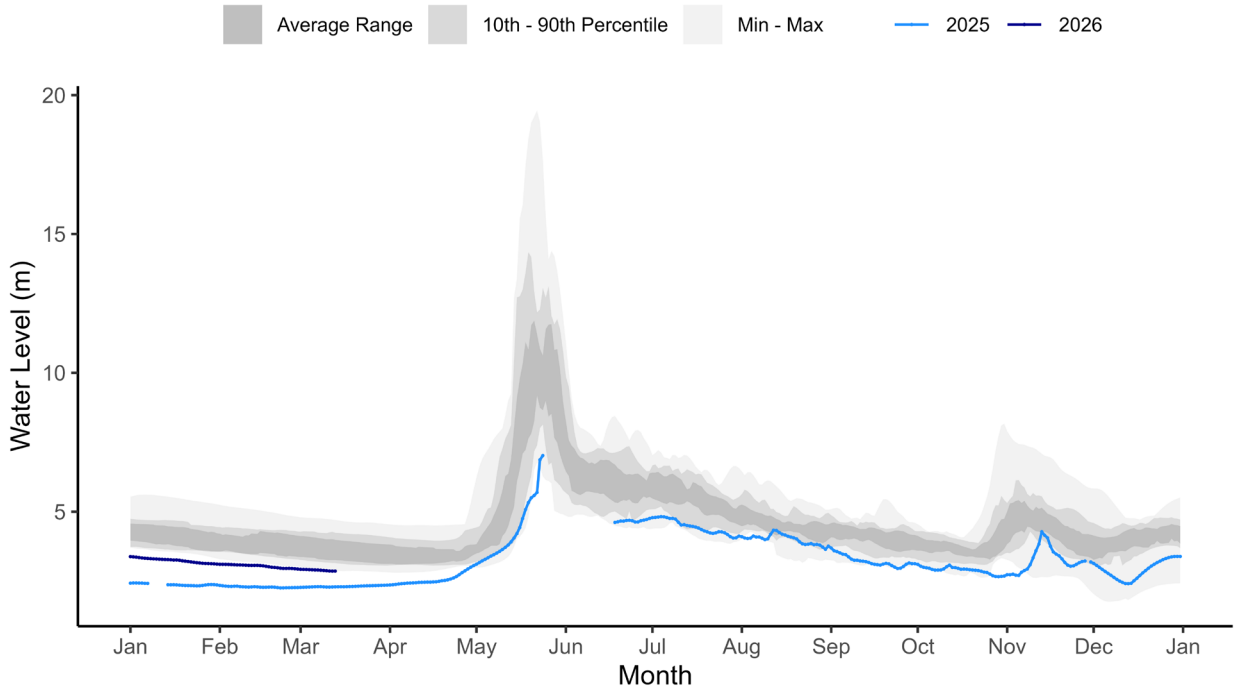
Peel River above Fort McPherson [10MC002]

Record Length: 20 years | Period of Record: 2002-2018; 2024-2026



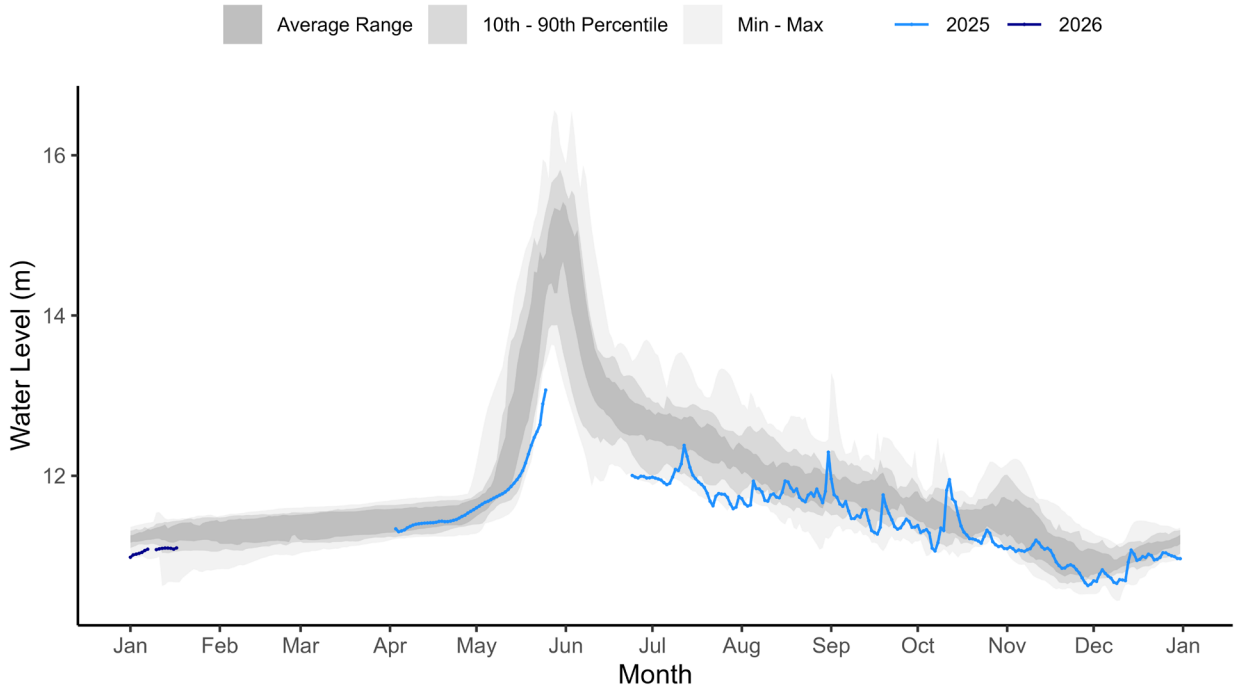
Mackenzie River at Arctic Red River [10LC014]

Record Length: 21 years | Period of Record: 2002-2019; 2024-2026



Mackenzie River (East Channel) at Inuvik [10LC002]*

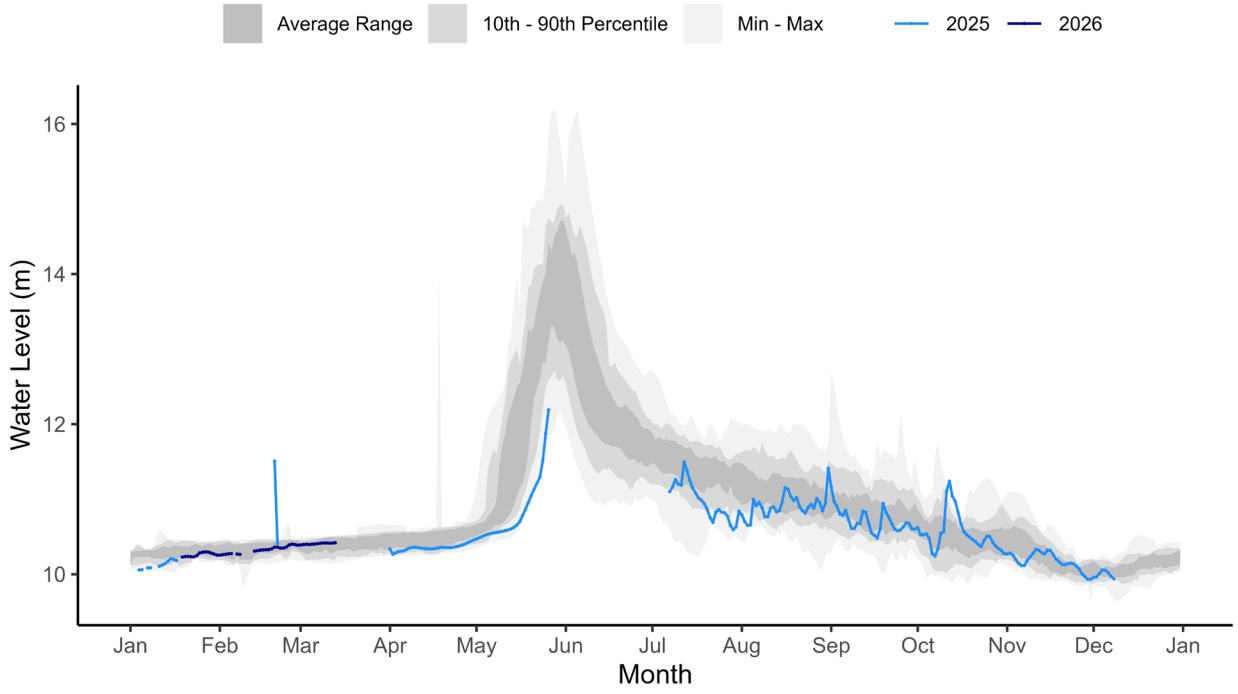
Record Length: 26 years | Period of Record: 1984-1990; 2002-2017; 2024-2026



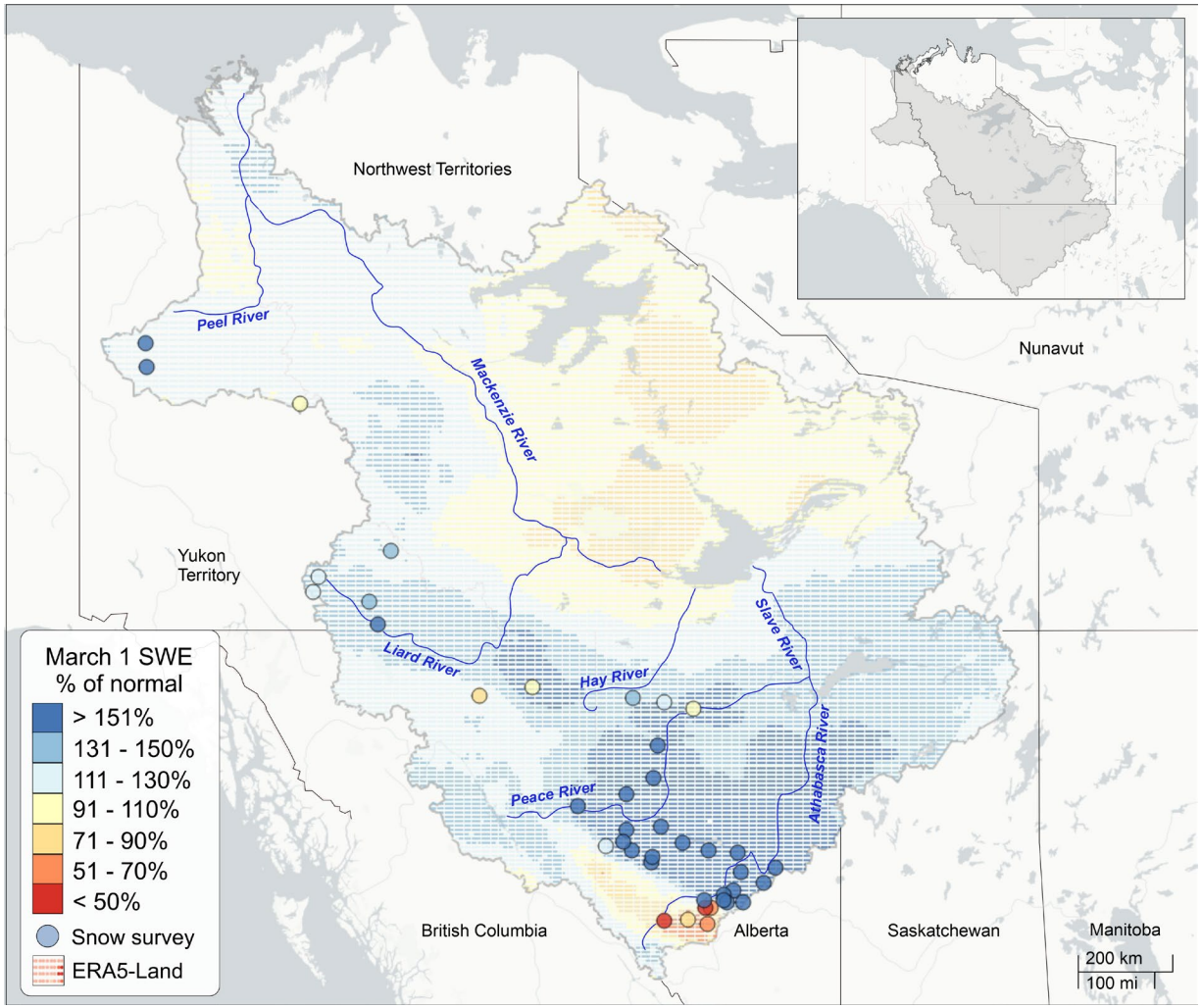
**There is currently an issue with the water level sensor.*

Mackenzie River (Peel Channel) above Aklavik [10MC003]

Record Length: 37 years | Period of Record: 1982-1986; 1991-2019; 2024-2026



Snowpack Data

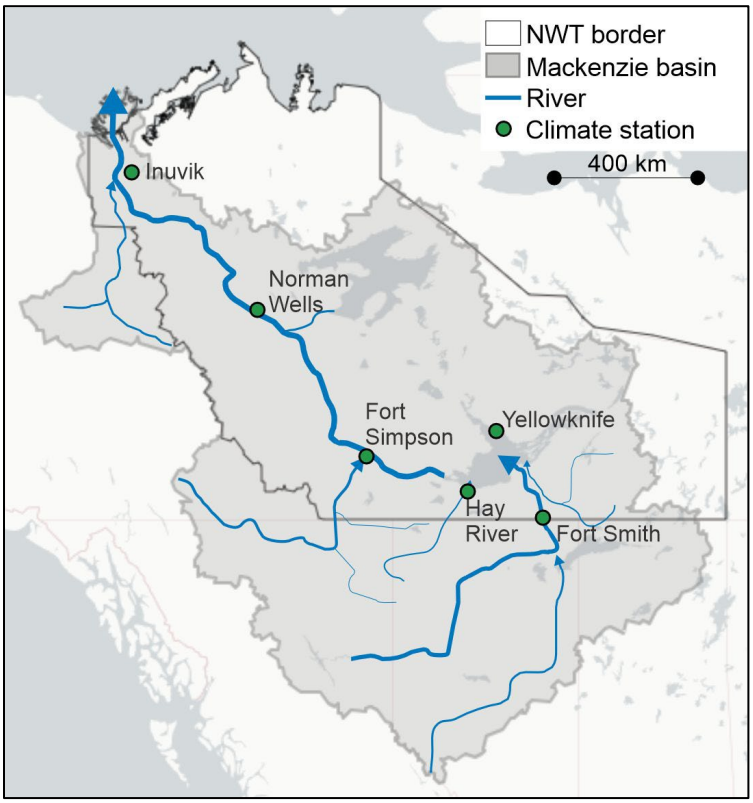


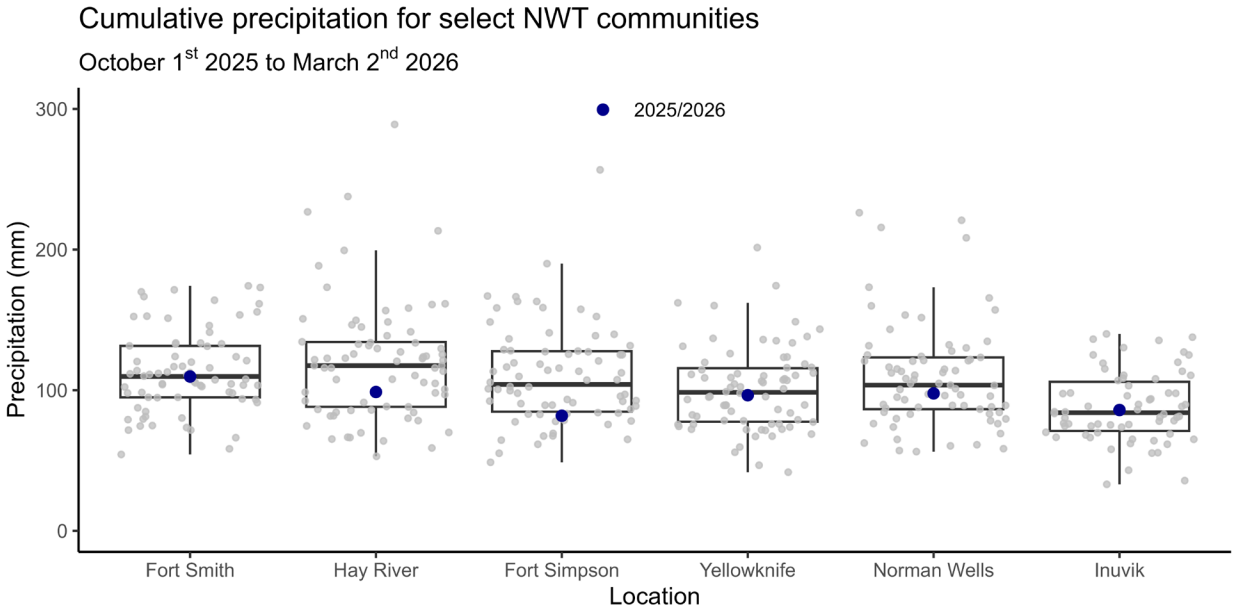
March 1st snow water equivalent (SWE, percent of normal) distribution in the Mackenzie River basin (grey). Data are sourced from ERA5-Land[1] and snow surveys from neighbouring jurisdictions. Data are not perfectly representative of on-the-ground conditions and only general patterns should be interpreted.

(1) Muñoz Sabater, J. (2019): ERA5-Land hourly data from 1950 to present. Copernicus Climate Change Service (C3S) Climate Data Store (CDS). DOI: 10.24381/cds.e2161bac (Accessed on 03-10-2026)

Climate Data

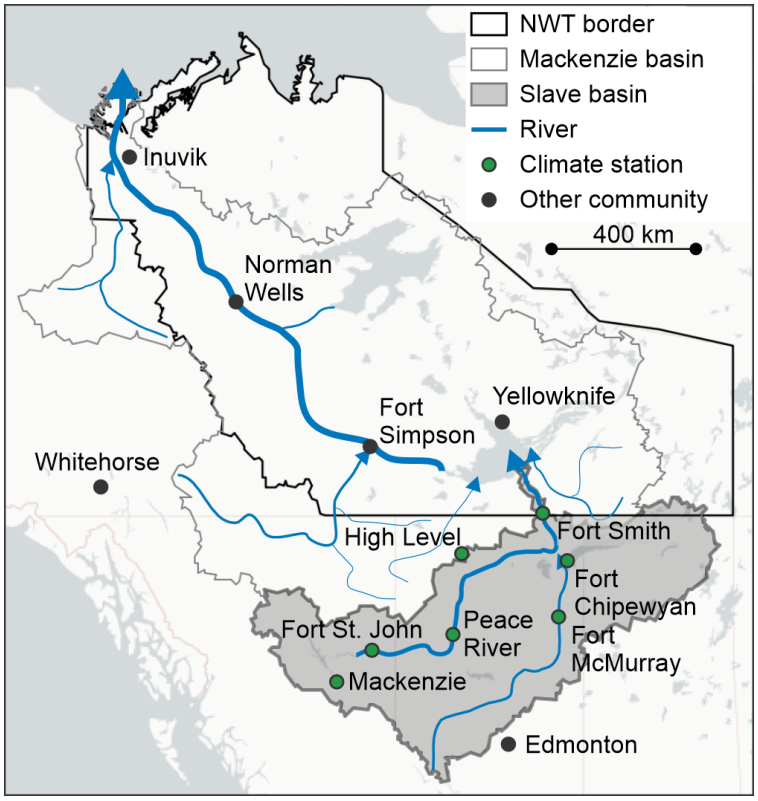
NWT communities

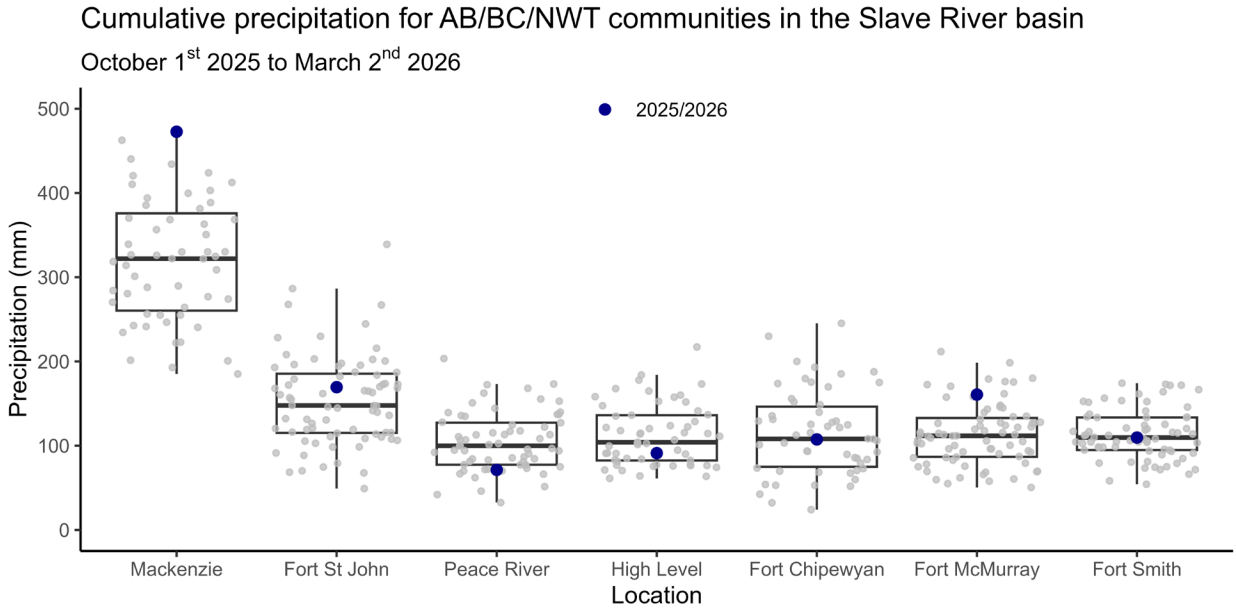




This figure shows total precipitation (rain and snow) that has fallen in select communities across the NWT from October 1st until March 2nd. The blue dot is the current year, and the grey dots are all previous years from 1950 to present. See the map above for geographical context.

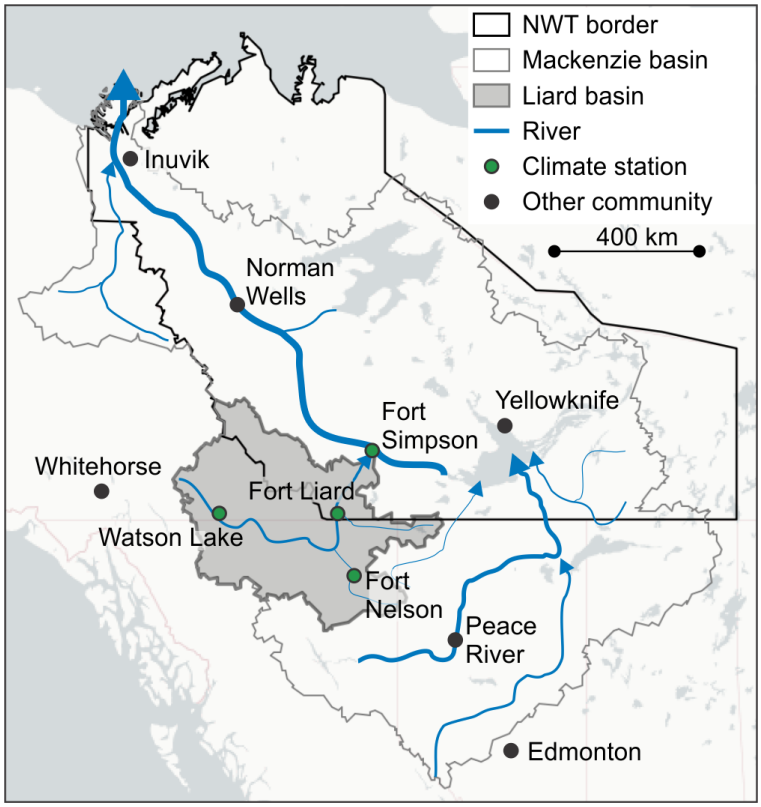
Slave River basin communities

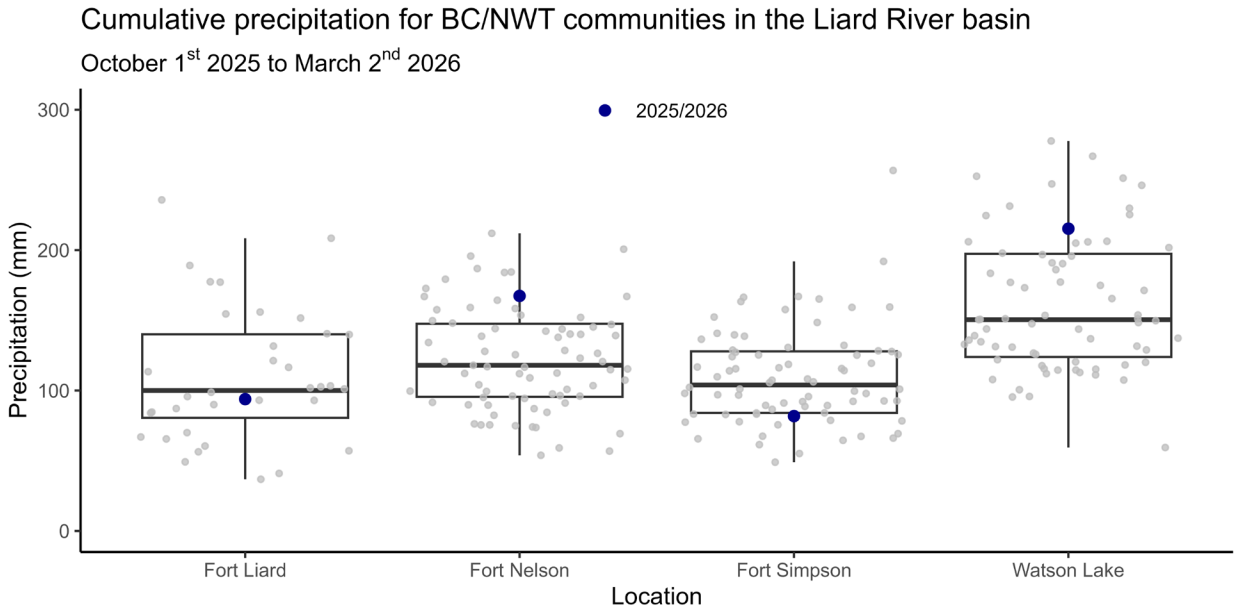




This figure shows total precipitation (rain and snow) that has fallen in select communities in the Slave River basin from October 1st until March 2nd. The blue dot is the current year, and the grey dots are all previous years from 1950 to present. See the map above for geographical context.

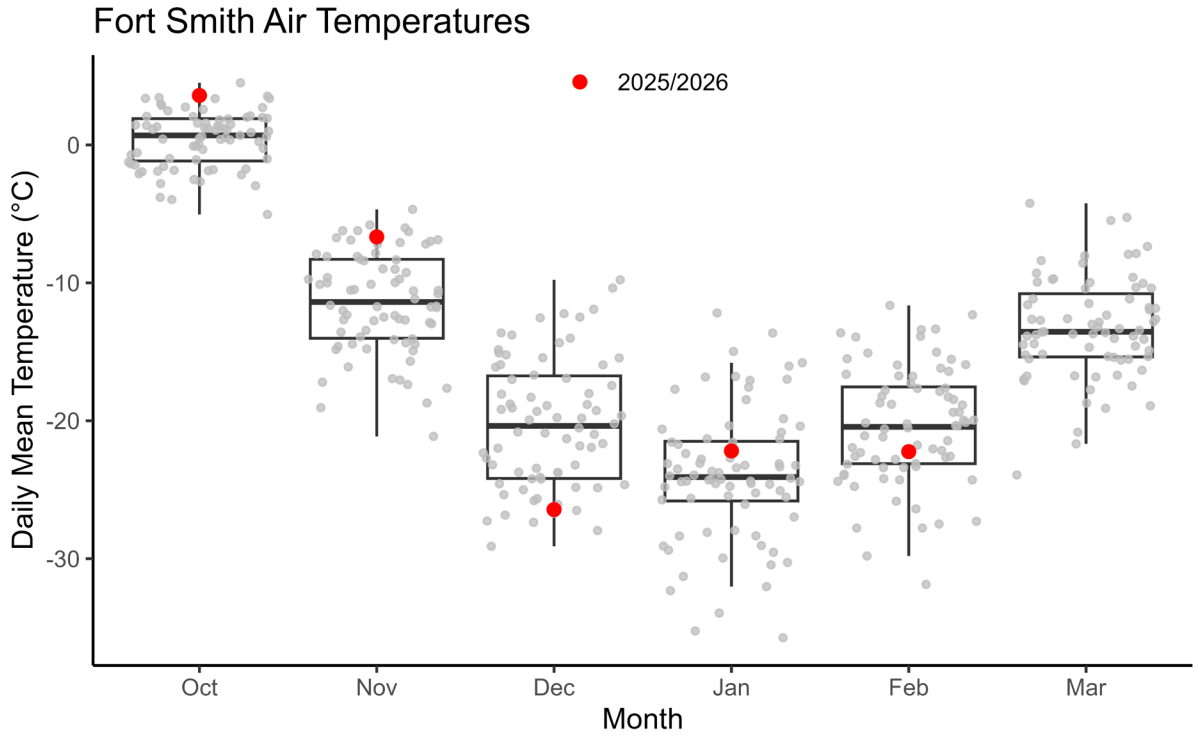
Liard River basin communities

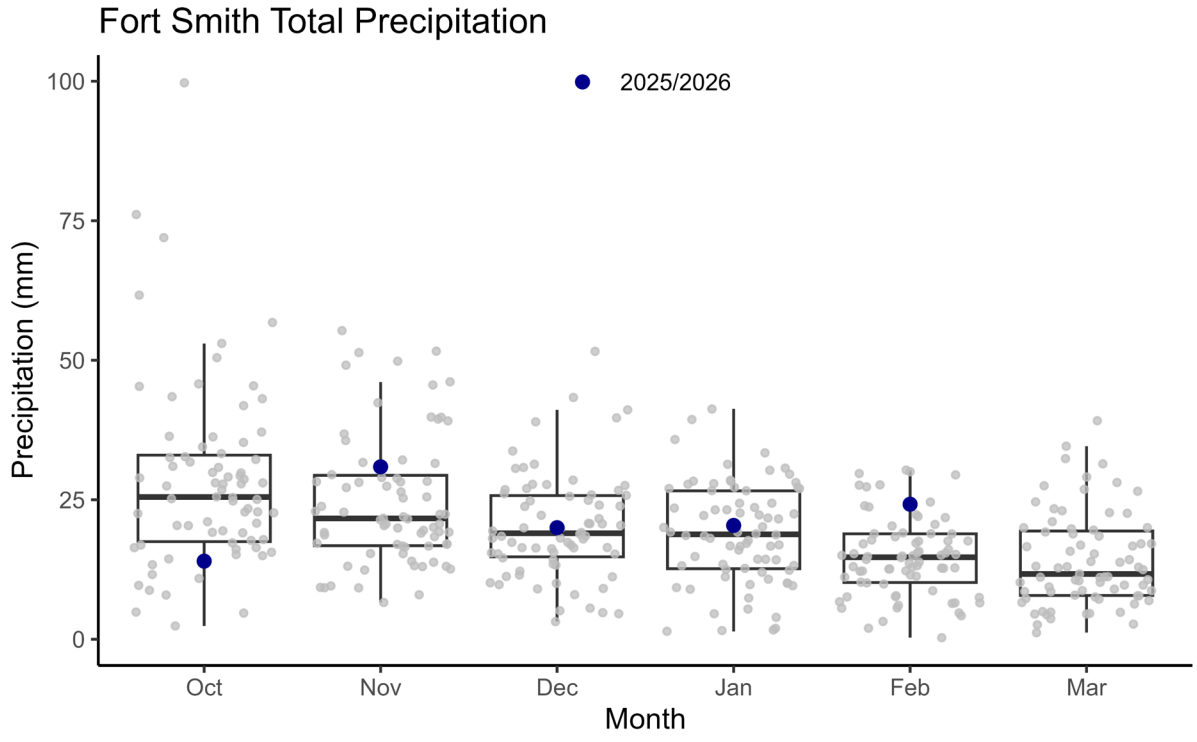




This figure shows total precipitation (rain and snow) that has fallen in select communities in the Liard River basin from October 1st until March 2nd. The blue dot is the current year, and the grey dots are all previous years from 1950 to present. See the map above for geographical context.

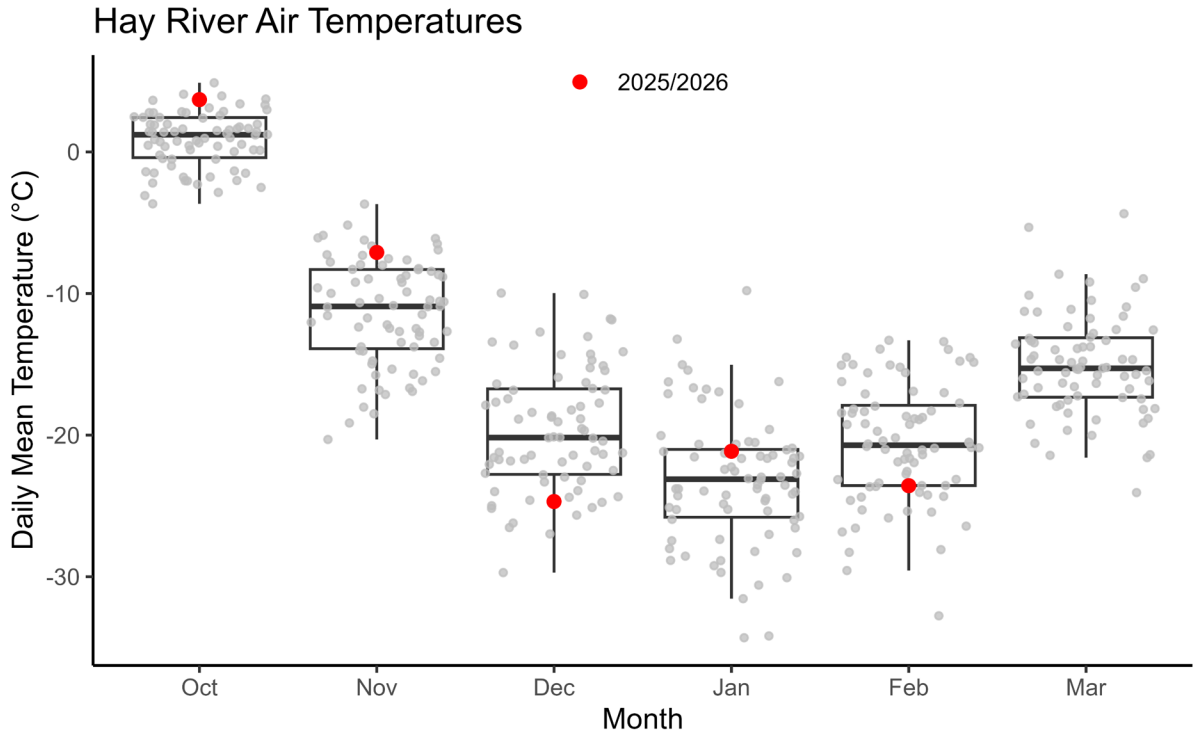
Fort Smith

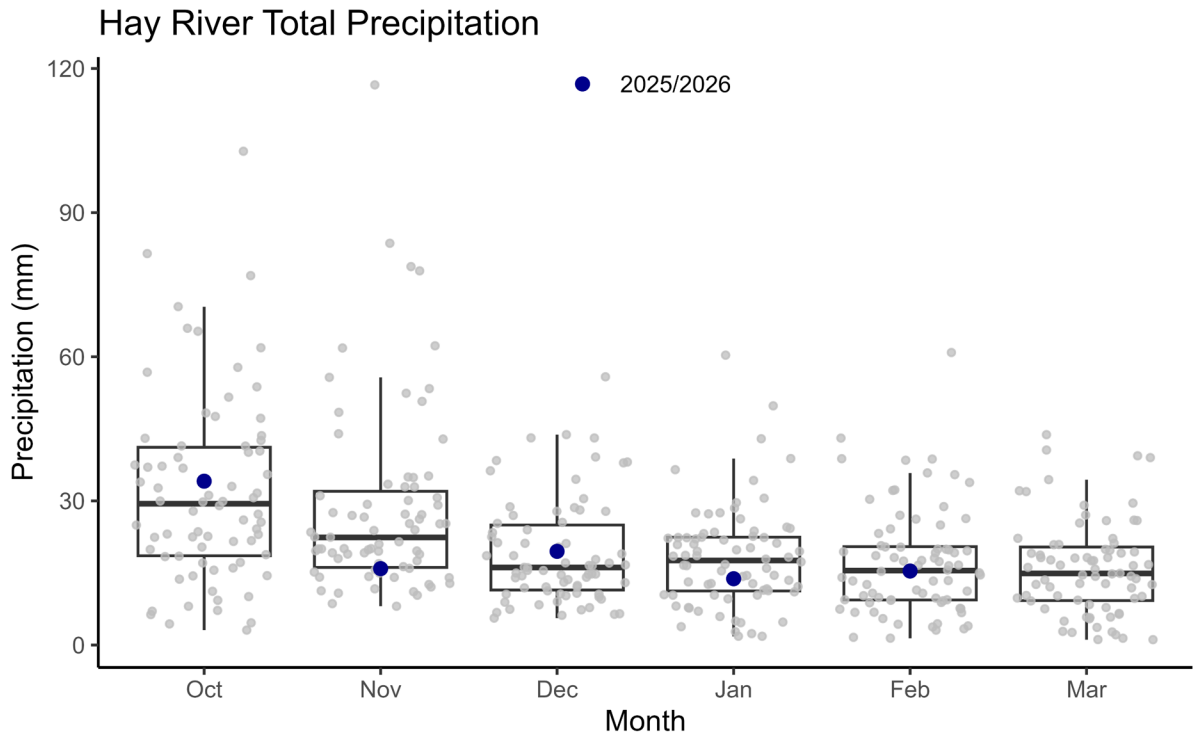




These figures shown above represent mean monthly air temperature and total monthly precipitation for winter 2025/2026 beginning October 2025. The red or blue dot is the current year, and the grey dots are all previous years from 1950 to present.

Hay River





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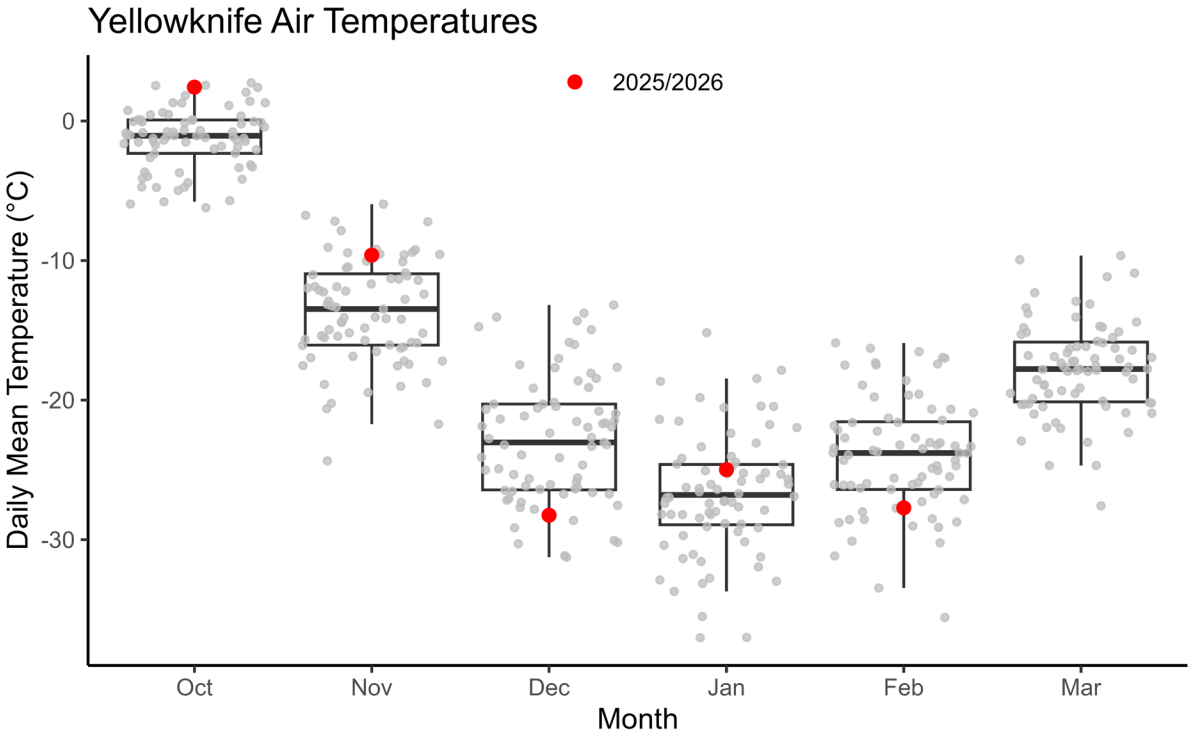
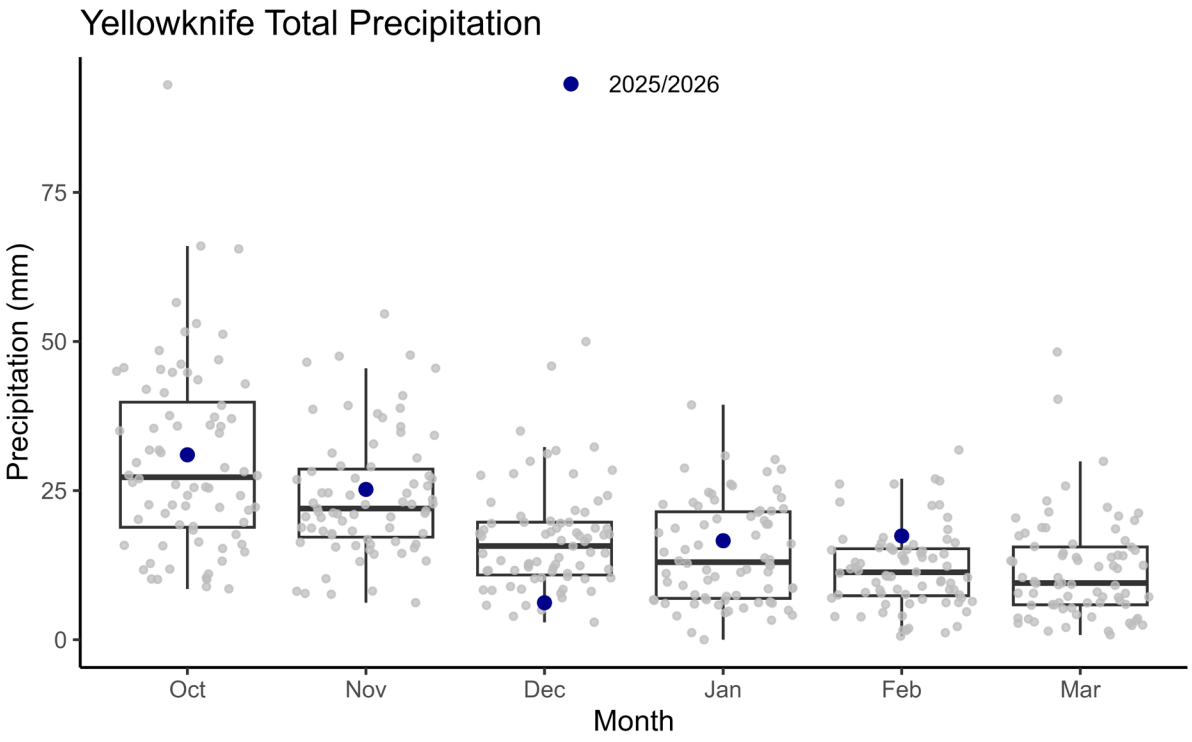
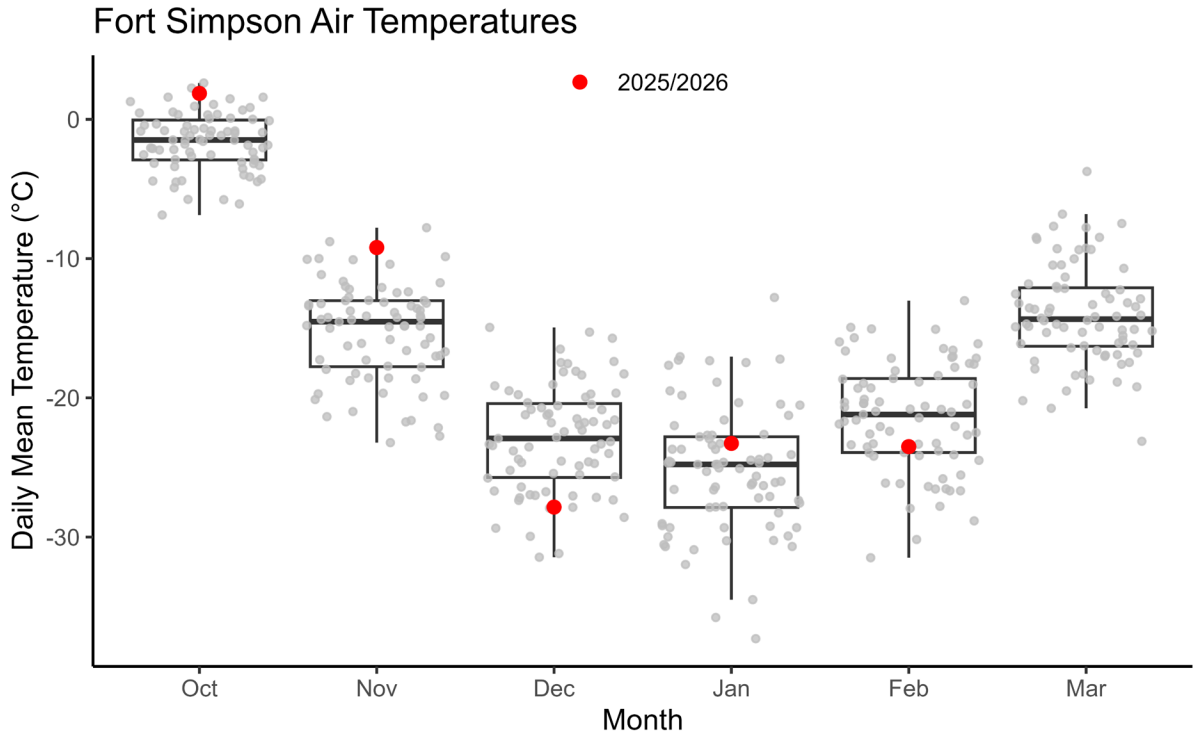
Yellowknife

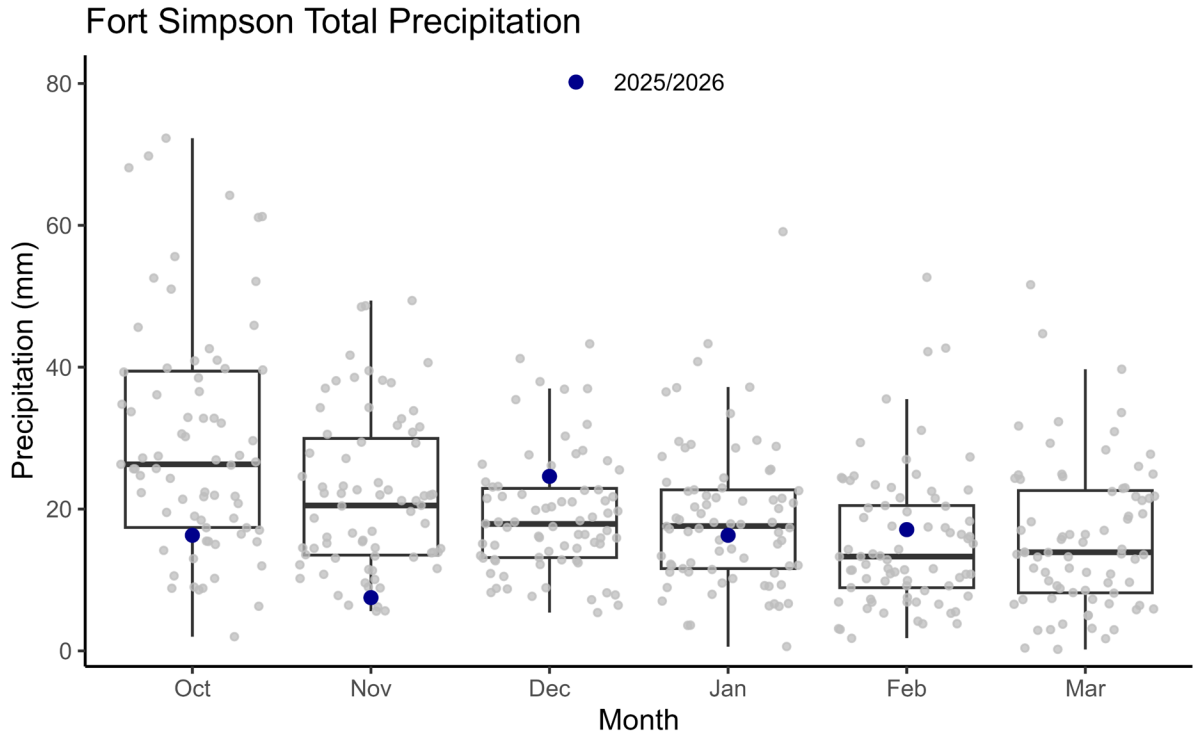




These figures shown above represent mean monthly air temperature and total monthly precipitation for the winter 2025/2026 beginning October 2025. The red or blue dot is the current year, and the grey dots are all previous years from 1950 to present.

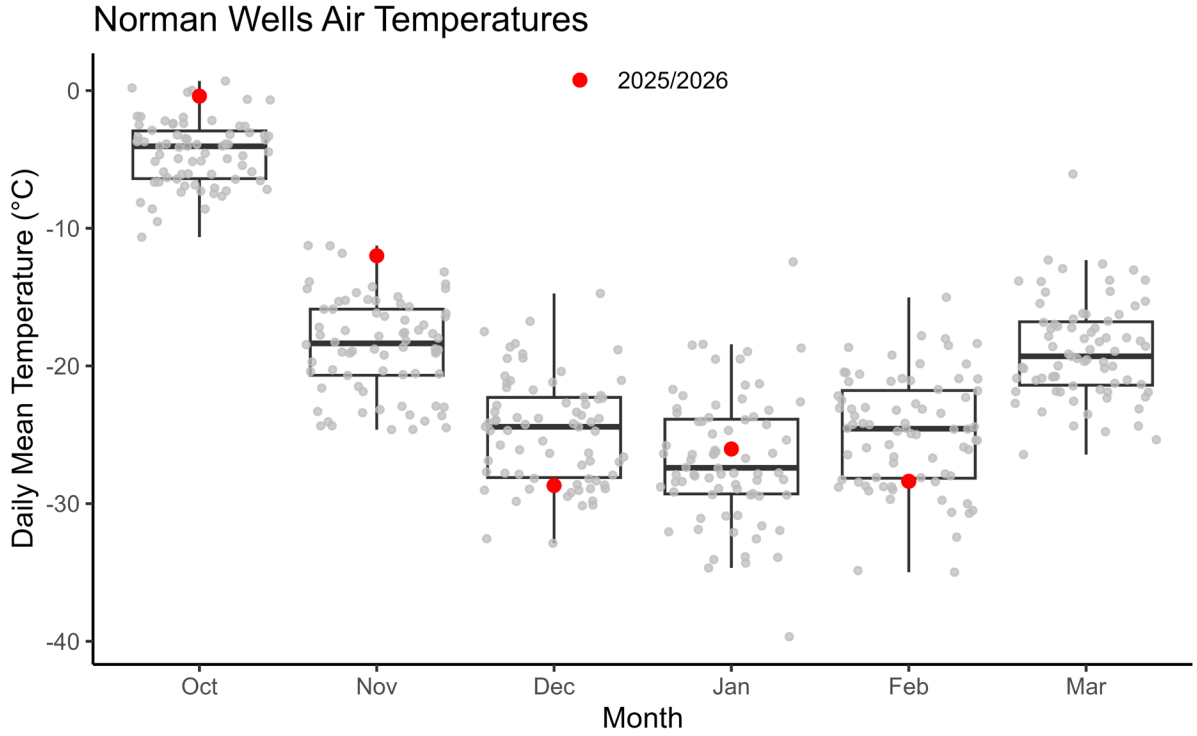
Fort Simpson

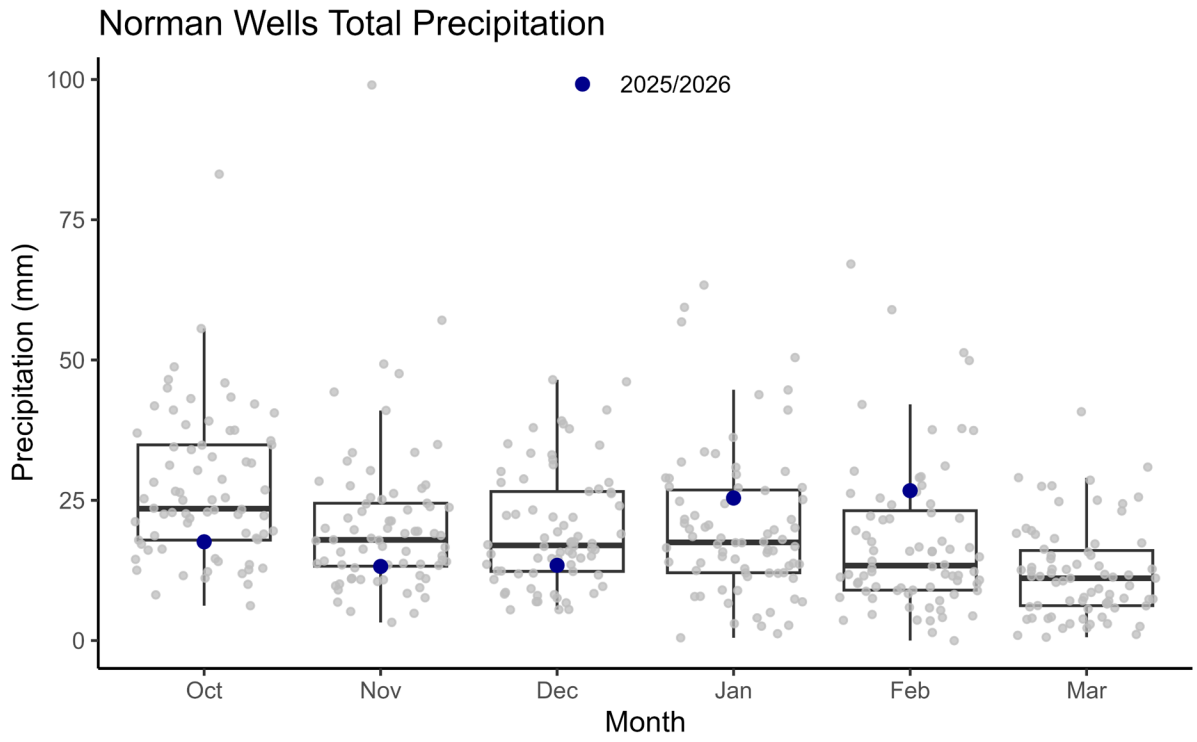




These figures shown above represent mean monthly air temperature and total monthly precipitation for winter 2025/2026 beginning October 2025.

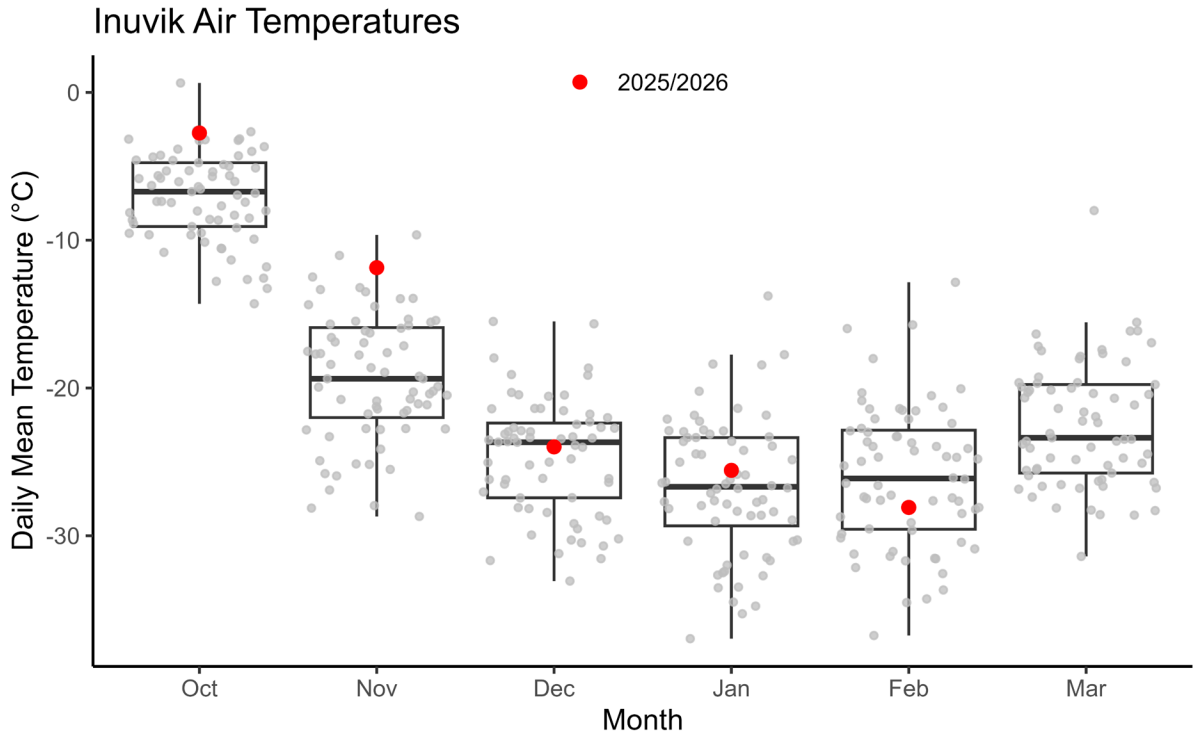
Norman Wells

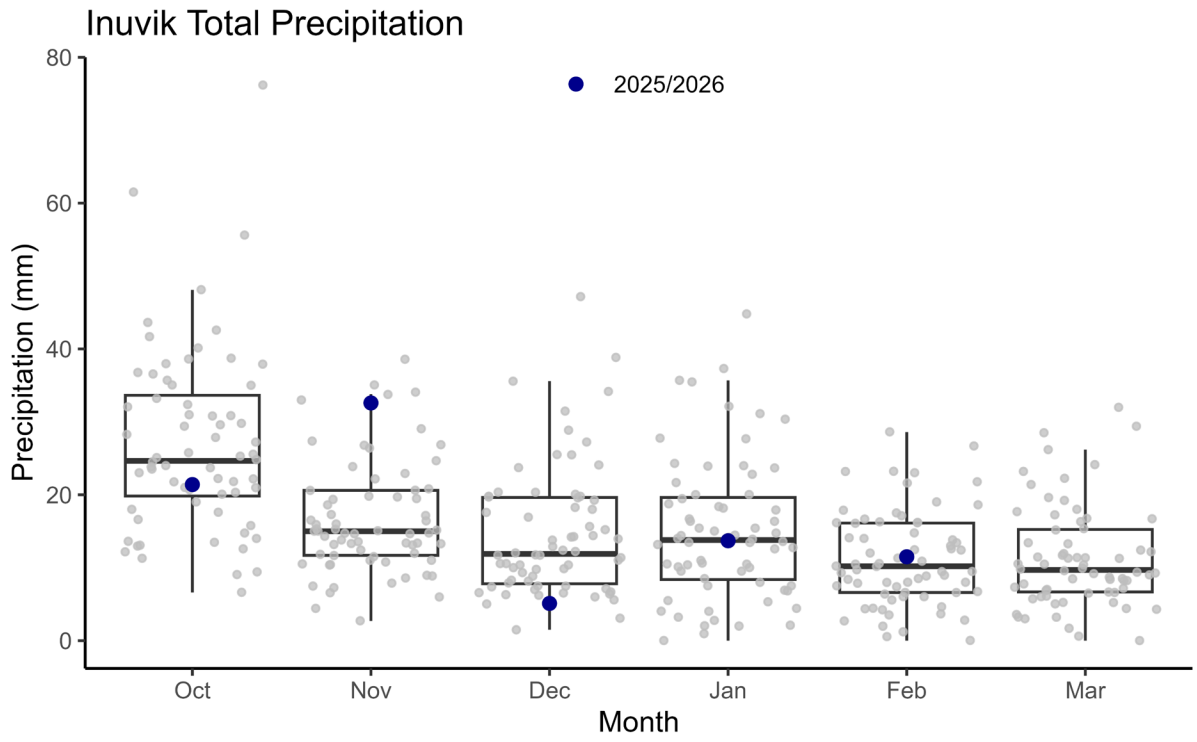




These figures shown above represent mean monthly air temperature and total monthly precipitation for winter 2025/2026 beginning October 2025.

Inuvik





These figures shown above represent mean monthly air temperature and total monthly precipitation for winter 2025/2026 beginning October 2025.