Government of
Northwest Territories

NWT Water Monitoring Bulletin – January 8th, 2026

Bulletin sur la surveillance des eaux des TNO du 8 janvier 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 2024 and 2025 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 Territoires du Nord-Ouest.

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 (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 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 2024 et de 2025 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 similar to the level recorded at this time last 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.
    - Notable exceptions to low water levels include:
        - Slave River (average)
        - South Nahanni River (above average)
        - Coppermine River (above average)
        - Some smaller rivers in the Great Slave Lake basin, including:
            - Lockhart River (above average)
            - Hoarfrost River (average)
            - Taltson River (average)

- Water level sensors can often be damaged or transmit incorrect readings this time of year due to interactions with ice. Water level graphs 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.

- **December precipitation** was variable across the NWT:
    - Well below average: Yellowknife and Inuvik.
    - Below average: Norman Wells.
    - Average: Hay River and Fort Smith.
    - Above average: Fort Simpson.

- **December temperatures** were much cooler than normal across the NWT, except for in Inuvik where temperatures were average.

- Water levels on Great Slave Lake and the Mackenzie River are strongly influenced by precipitation received in northern British Columbia and Alberta.
    - So far this early winter, precipitation in these areas has been average to well above average, and the headwaters of the Peace River have received record high cumulative precipitation (see data for the community of Mackenzie on pg 24).

- Climate forecasts from ECCC for January to March 2026 indicate cooler than average temperatures for southern regions of the NWT, approximately average temperatures for central NWT, and warmer than average temperatures for the northern regions. Precipitation is forecast to be approximately average across the NWT.

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 semblable au relevé effectué l'année dernière, à la même époque.
    - 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.
    - Exceptions notables aux faibles niveaux d'eau :
        - Rivière des Esclaves (dans la moyenne)
        - Rivière Nahanni Sud (supérieurs à la normale)
        - Rivière Coppermine (supérieurs à la normale)
        - Plus petites rivières dans le bassin du Grand lac des Esclaves :
            - Rivière Lockhart (supérieurs à la moyenne)
            - Rivière Hoarfrost (dans la moyenne)
            - Rivière Taltson (dans la moyenne)

- Les capteurs de niveau d'eau peuvent souvent être endommagés ou transmettre des données erronées en raison des interactions avec la glace. Les données doivent donc 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.

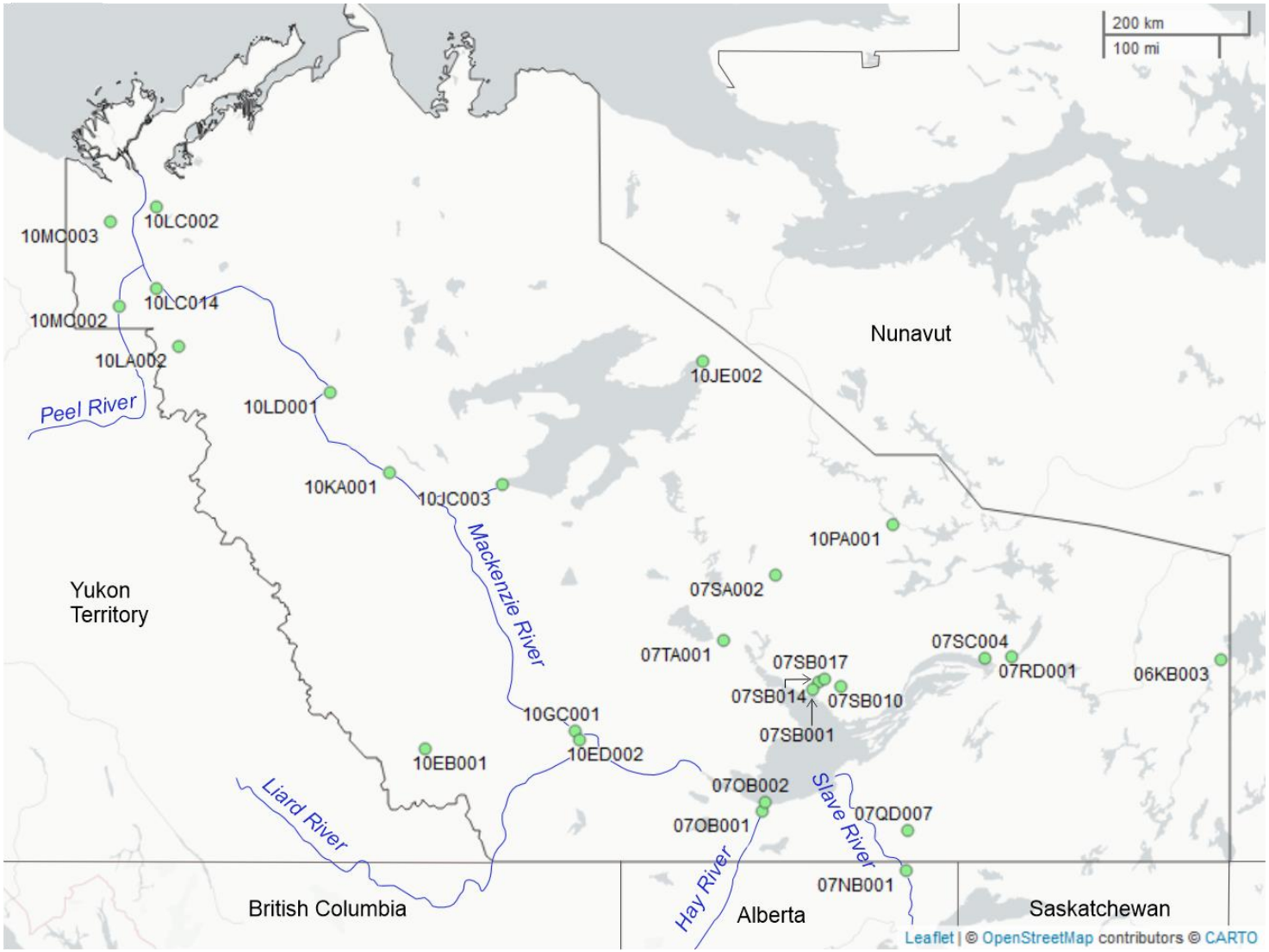
- **En décembre, les précipitations** ont été variables aux TNO :
    - Précipitations nettement inférieures à la normale à Yellowknife et Inuvik
    - Précipitations inférieures à la normale à Norman Wells
    - Précipitations dans la moyenne à Hay River et Fort Smith
    - Précipitations supérieures à la normale à Fort Simpson

- **En décembre, les températures** étaient nettement inférieures à la moyenne à l'échelle des TNO, sauf à Inuvik, où les températures étaient dans la moyenne.

- Le niveau d'eau du Grand lac des Esclaves et du fleuve Mackenzie est fortement influencé par les précipitations reçues dans le nord de la Colombie-Britannique et de l'Alberta.
    - En ce début d'hiver, les précipitations dans ces régions ont été dans la moyenne ou nettement supérieures à la normale, et le cours supérieur de la rivière de la Paix a reçu les plus importantes précipitations cumulatives jamais enregistrées (voir les données relatives à la municipalité de Mackenzie à la page 24).
    - Les prévisions climatiques d'ECCC pour la période allant de janvier à mars 2026 indiquent des températures inférieures à la moyenne dans les régions septentrionales des TNO, des températures dans la moyenne pour le centre des TNO et des températures supérieures à la moyenne dans les régions les plus au nord. Les précipitations devraient osciller plus ou moins dans la moyenne dans l'ensemble des TNO.

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. The box in each plot represents the average range (calculated as the interquartile range, which is the 25th to 75th percentile) for each month, and the whiskers are the vertical black lines that represent the extreme values (10th to 90th percentiles). Each grey dot is the value from a previous year, beginning in 1950. The red or blue dots represent the values for the current year.

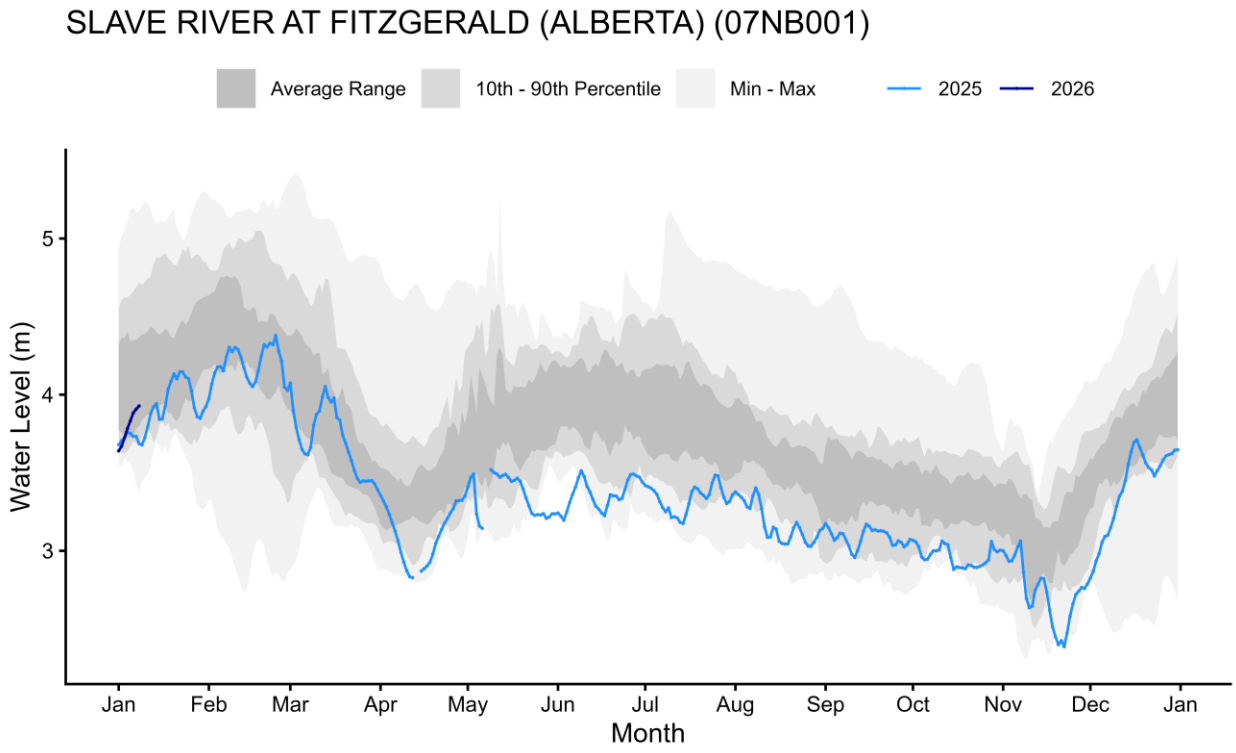
The terms used to describe temperature or precipitation conditions are defined as follows:

- ***Average:*** within the interquartile range (25th-75th percentile range).
- ***Above average / Below average:*** 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.

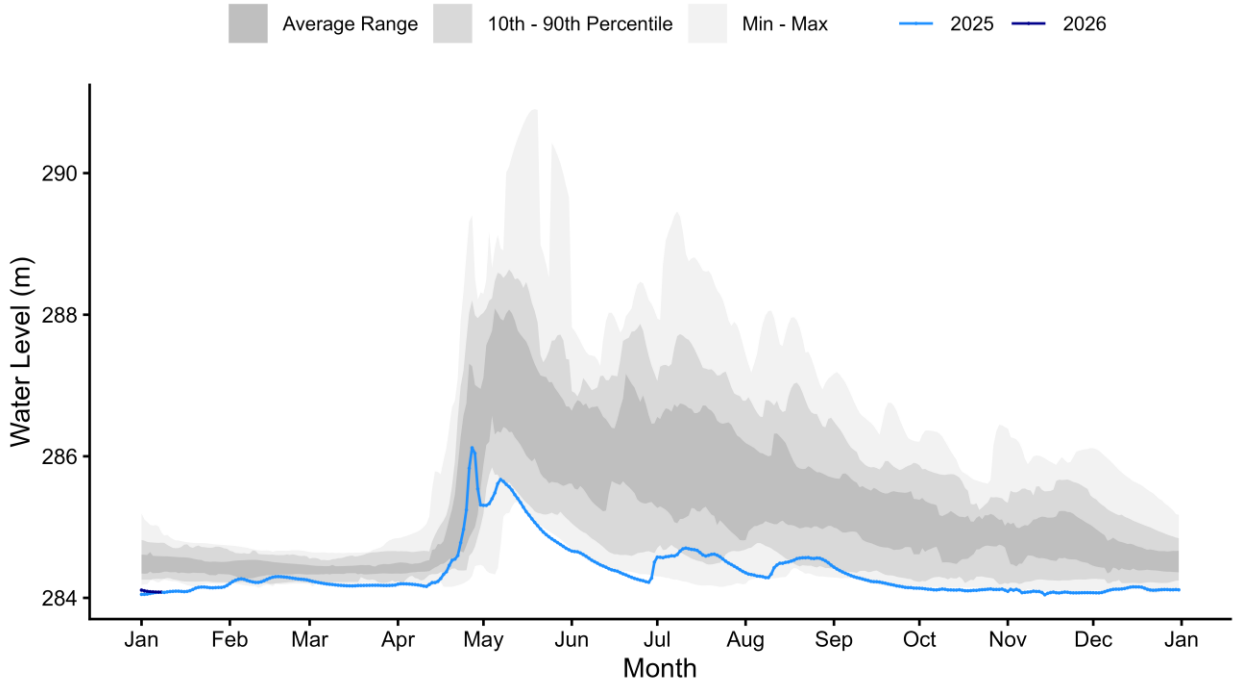
These data are primarily acquired and managed by Environment and Climate Change Canada, but in some cases values have been infilled with GNWT climate station data when ECCC data are unavailable.

Water level and flow data

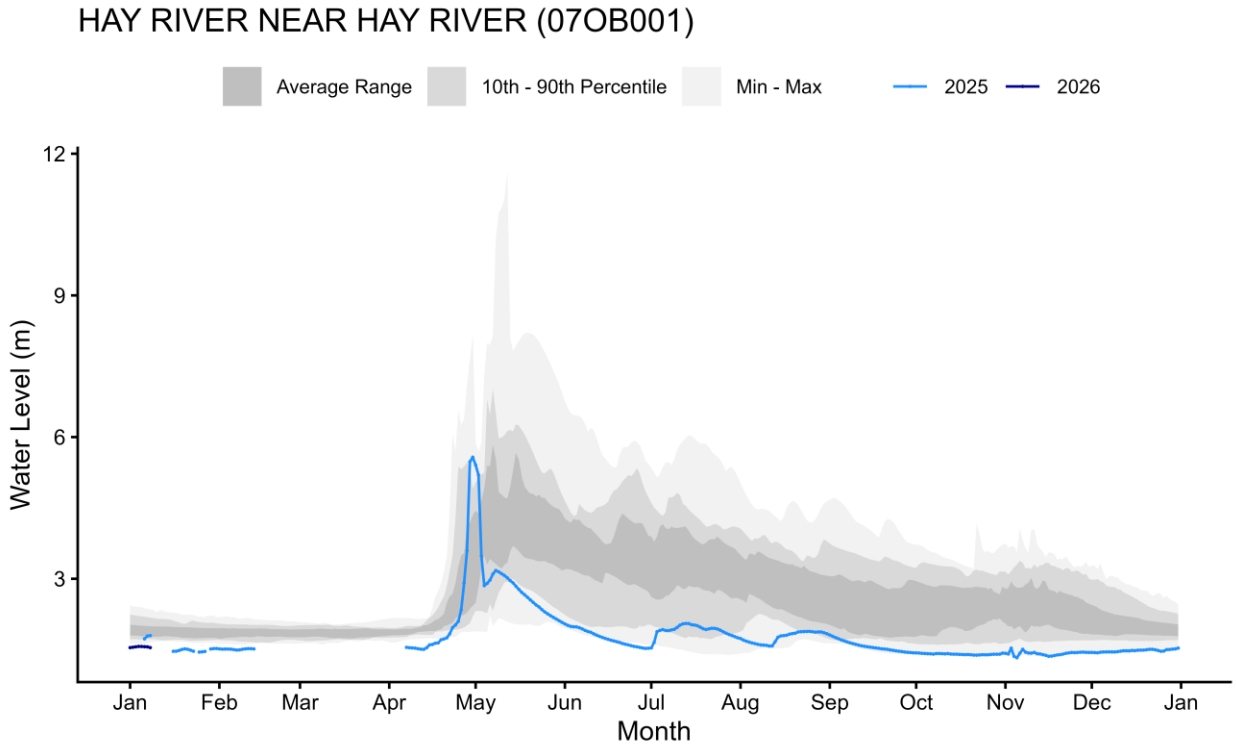
Slave River at Fitzgerald [07NB001]



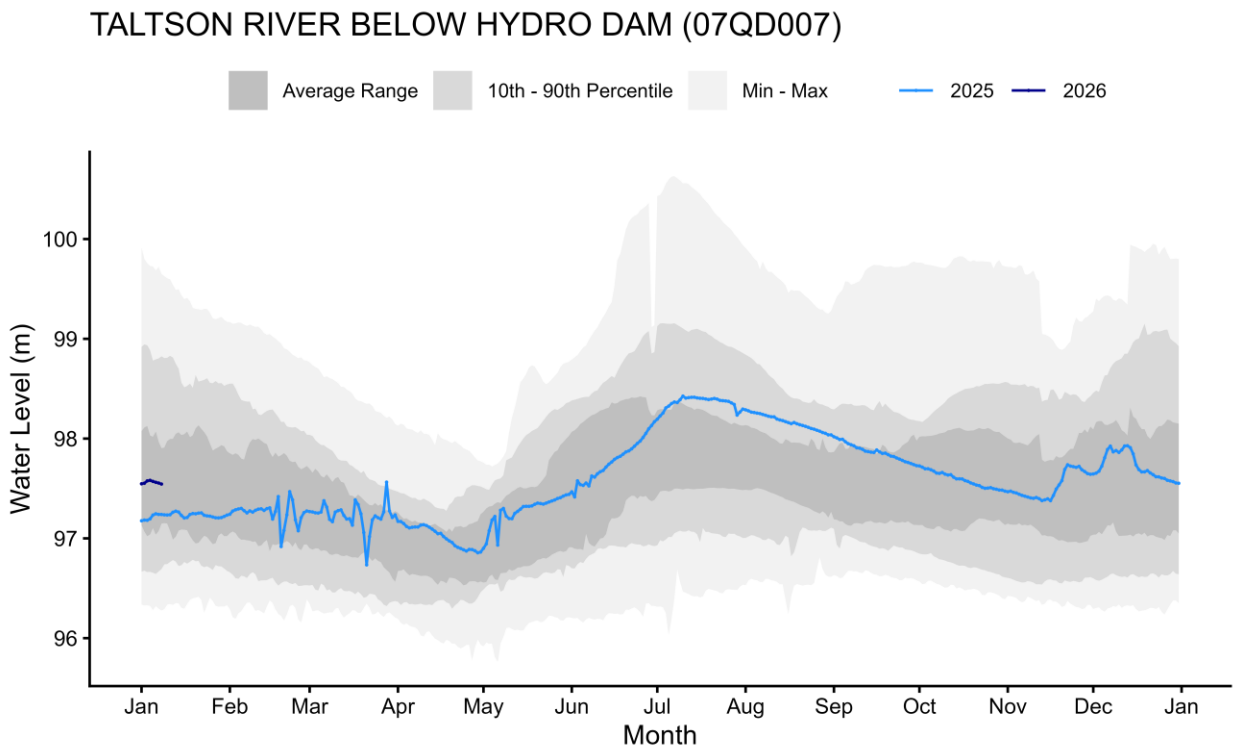
Hay River near Alberta/NWT Boundary [07OB008]



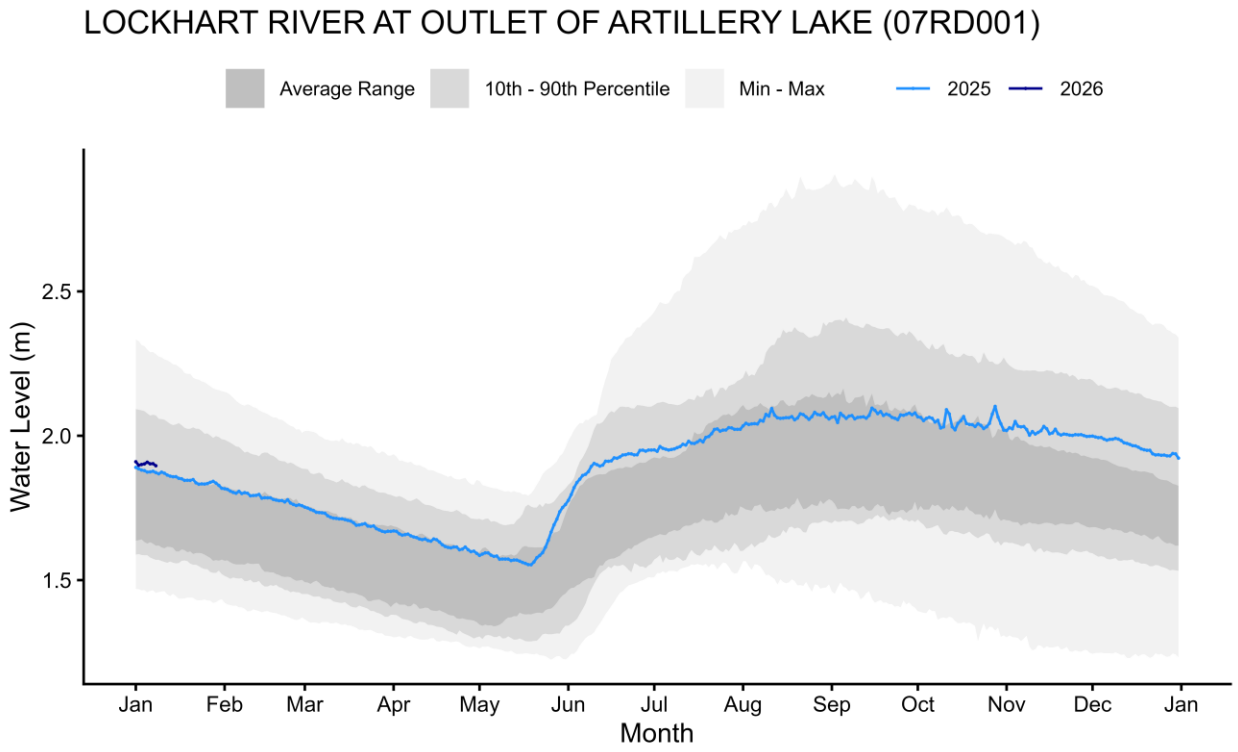
Hay River near Hay River [07OB001]



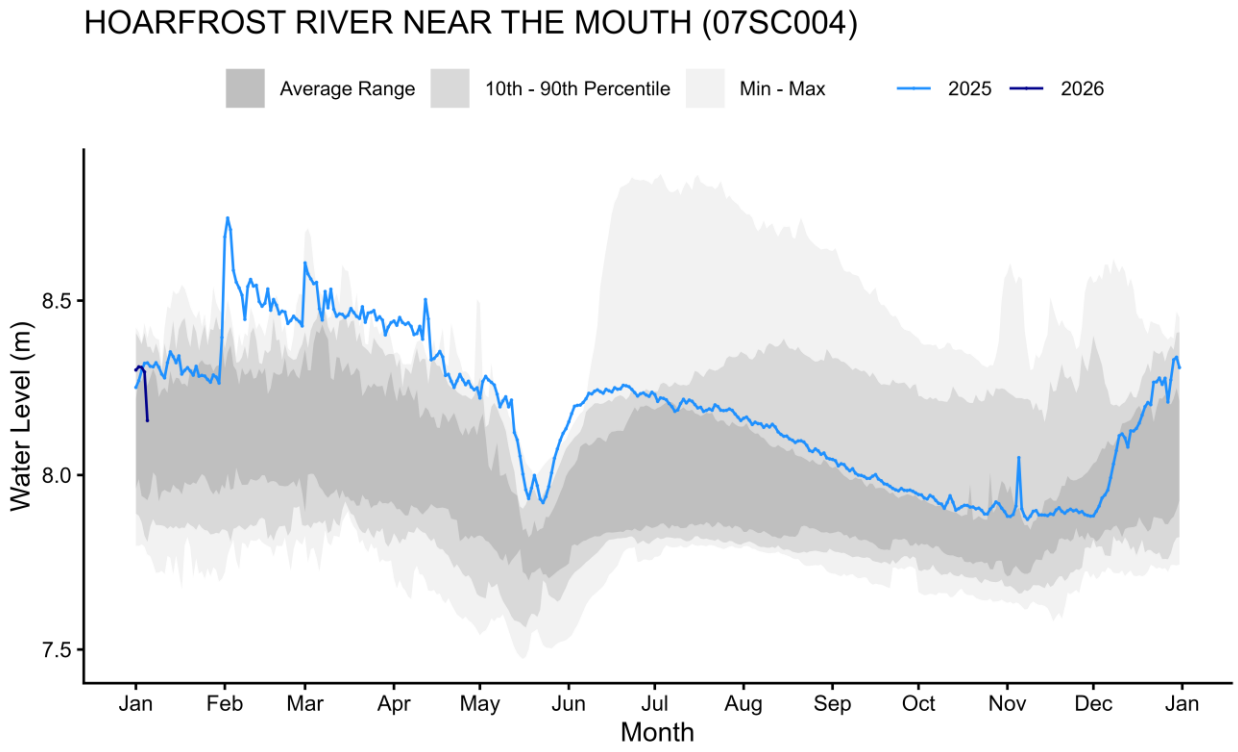
Taltson River below Hydro Dam [07QD007]



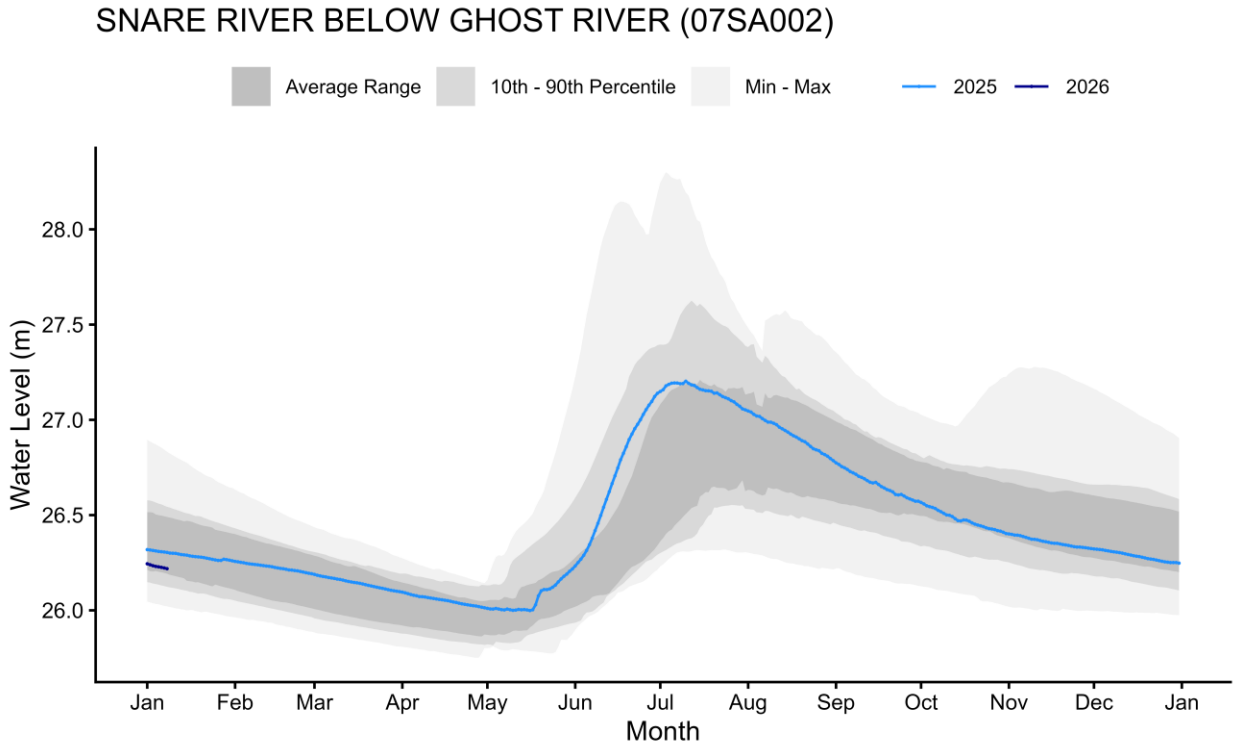
Lockhart River at outlet of Artillery Lake [07RD001]



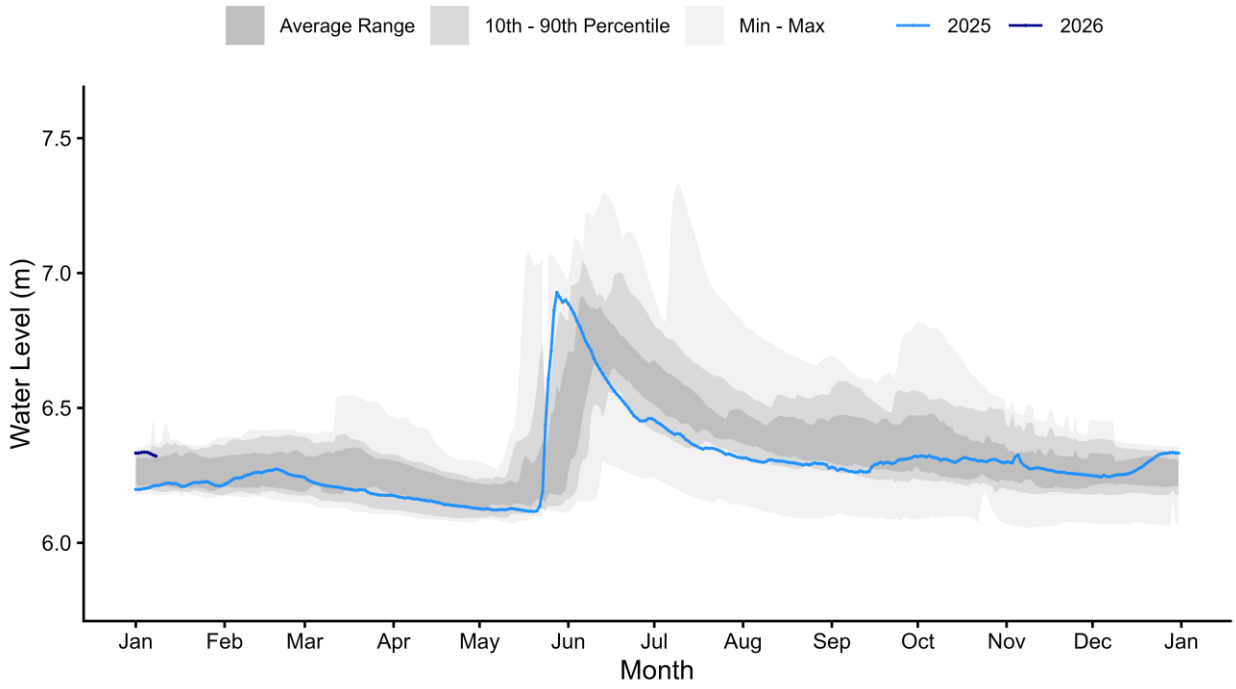
Hoarfrost River near the mouth [07SC004]



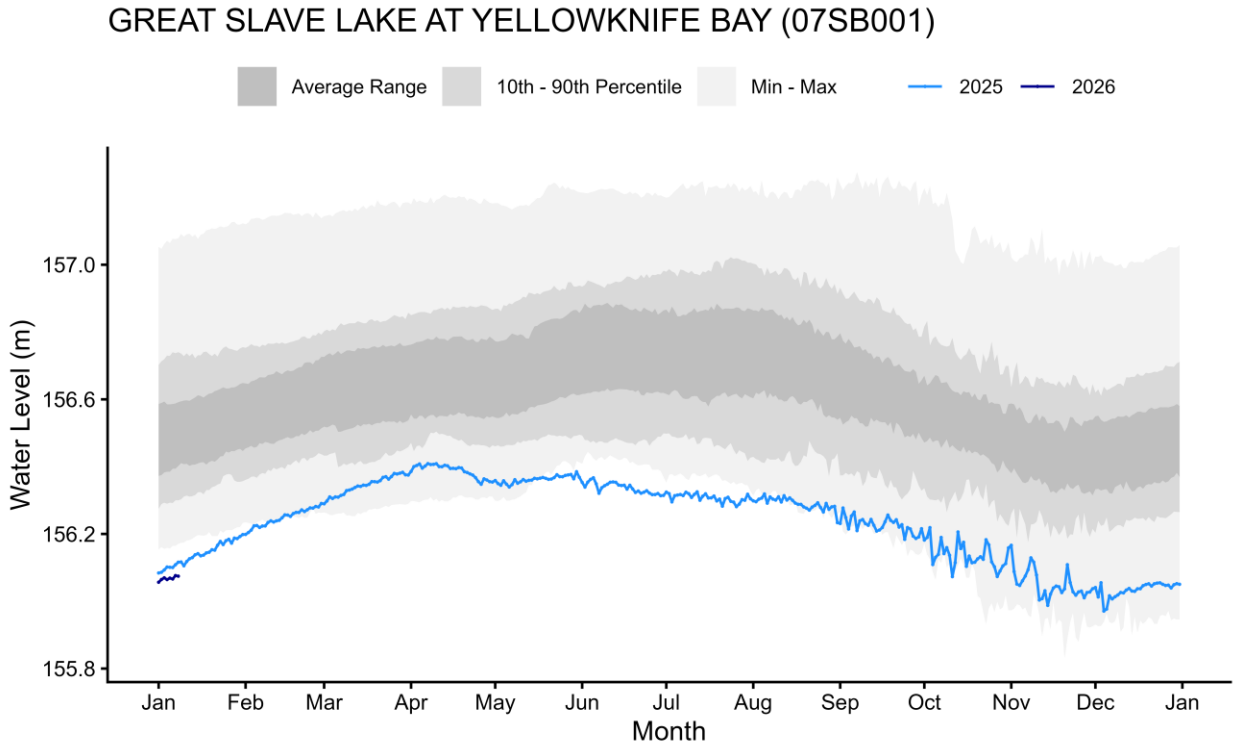
Snare River below Ghost Lake [07SA002]



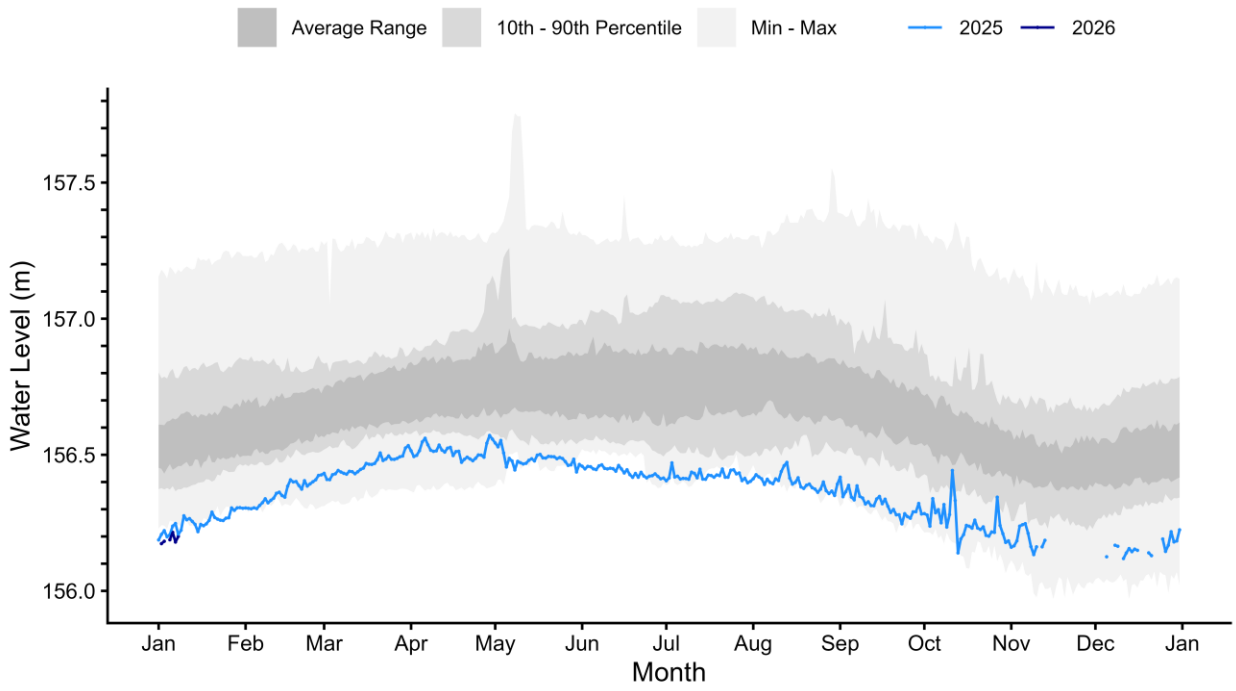
Coppermine River below Desteffany Lake [10PA001]



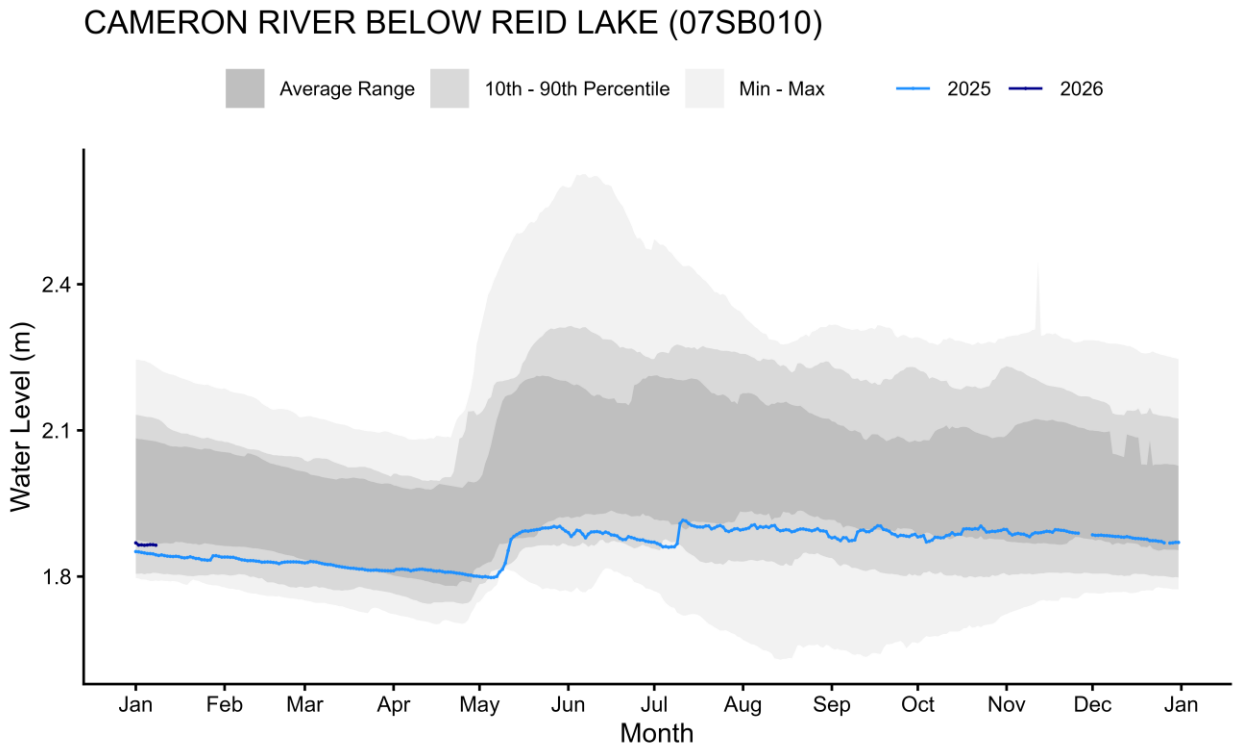
Great Slave Lake at Yellowknife Bay [07SB001]



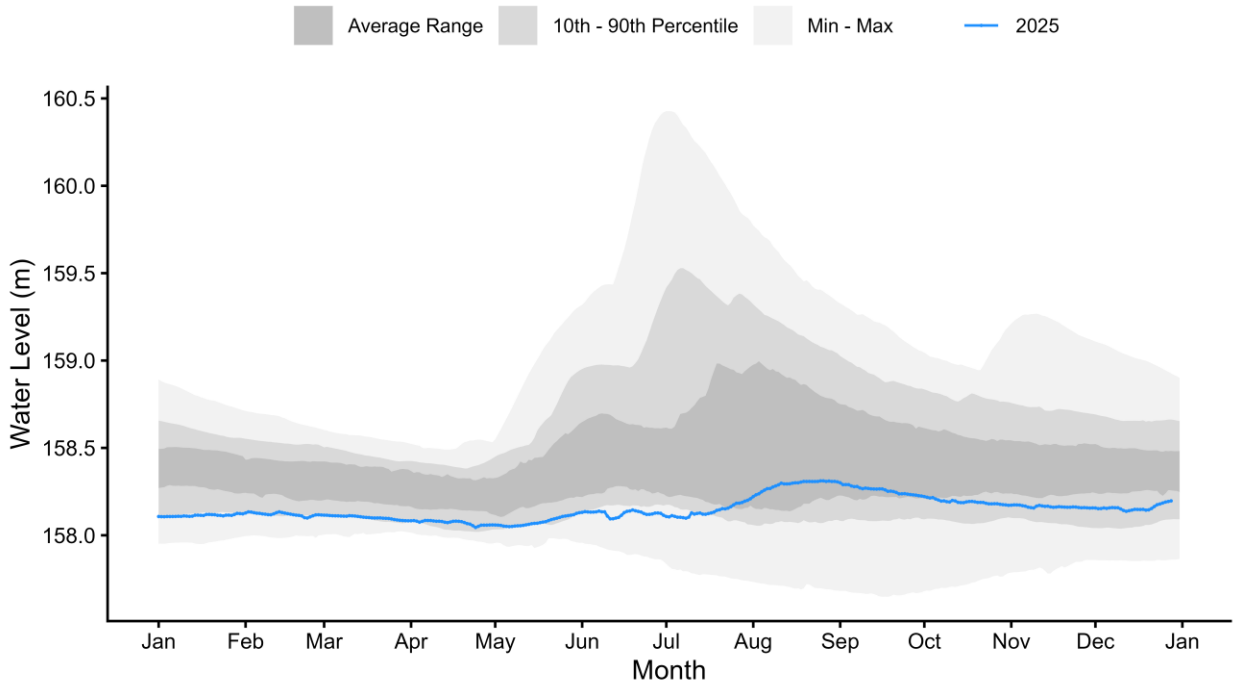
Great Slave Lake at Hay River [07OB002]



Cameron River below Reid Lake [07SB010]

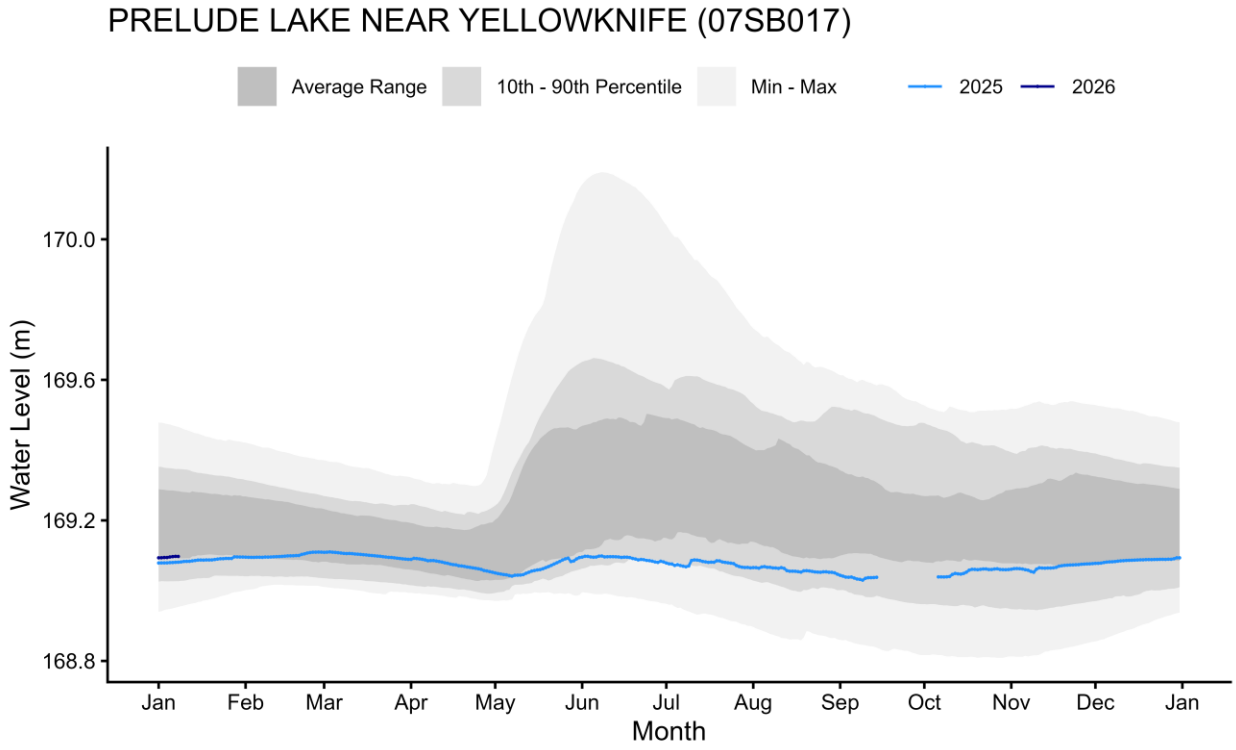


Prosperous Lake near McMeekan Bay [07SB014]*

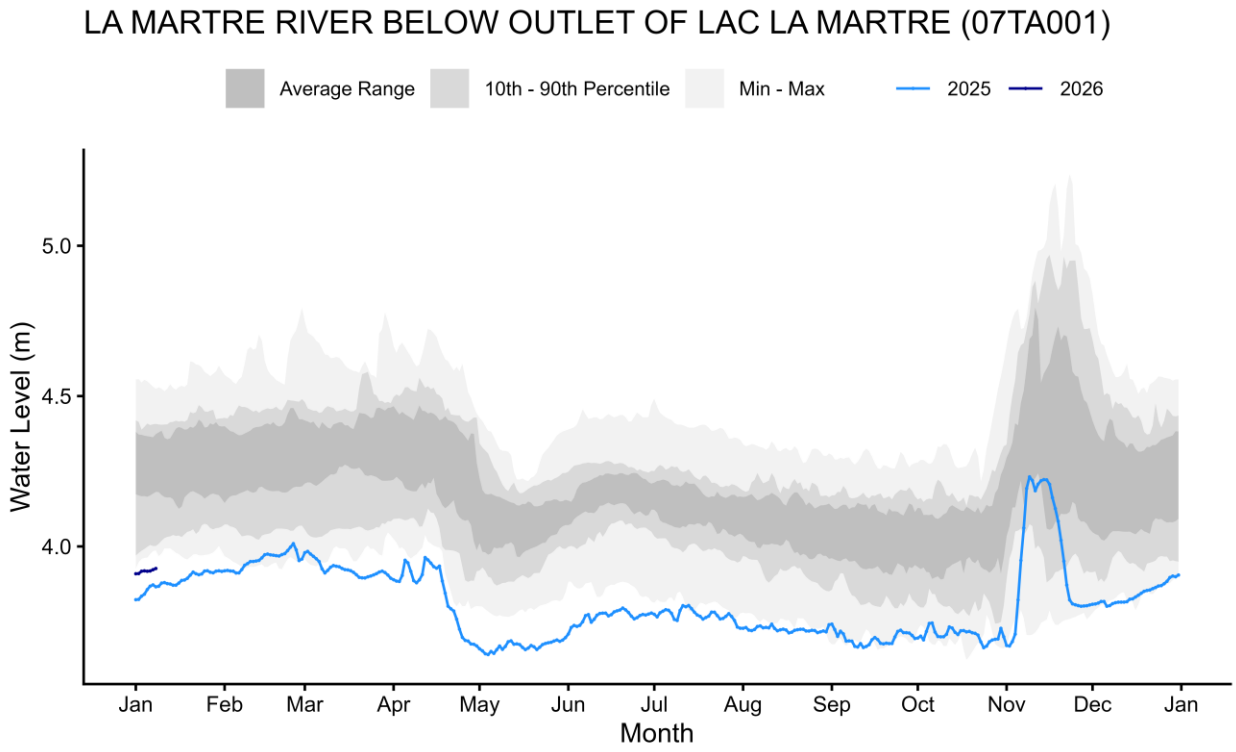


**There is currently an issue with the water level sensor.*

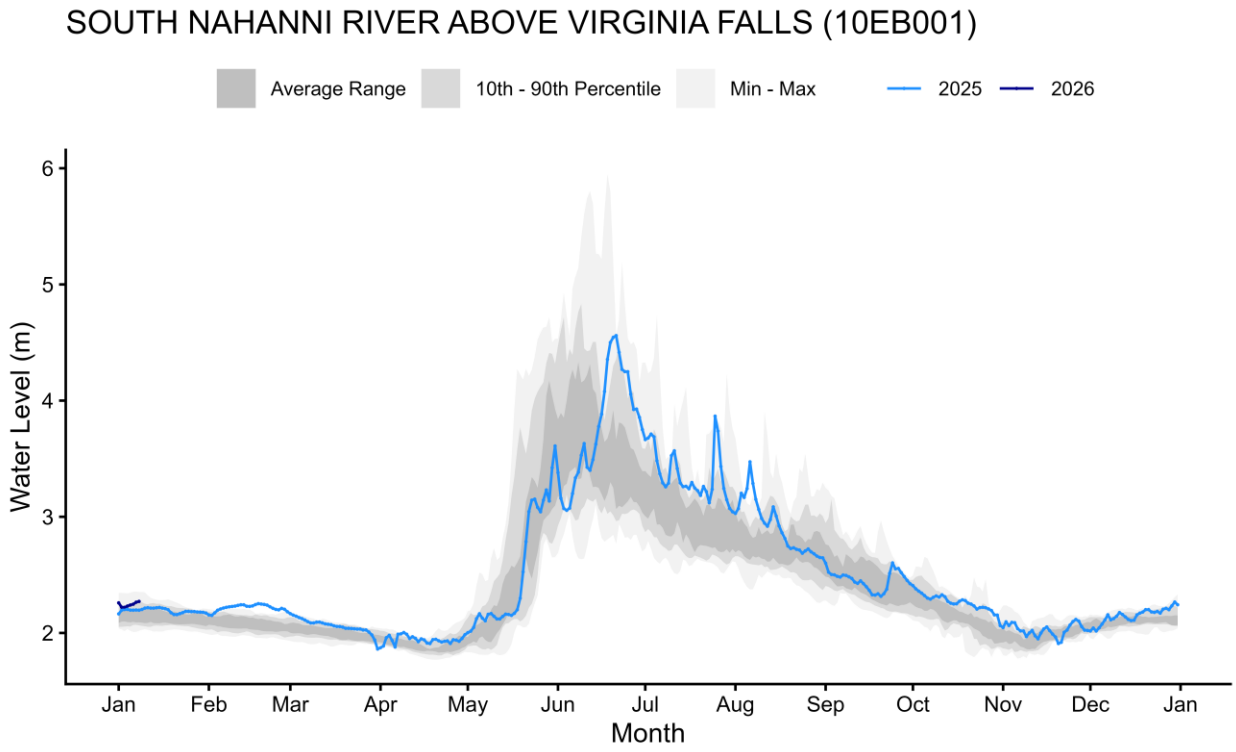
Prelude Lake near Yellowknife [07SB017]



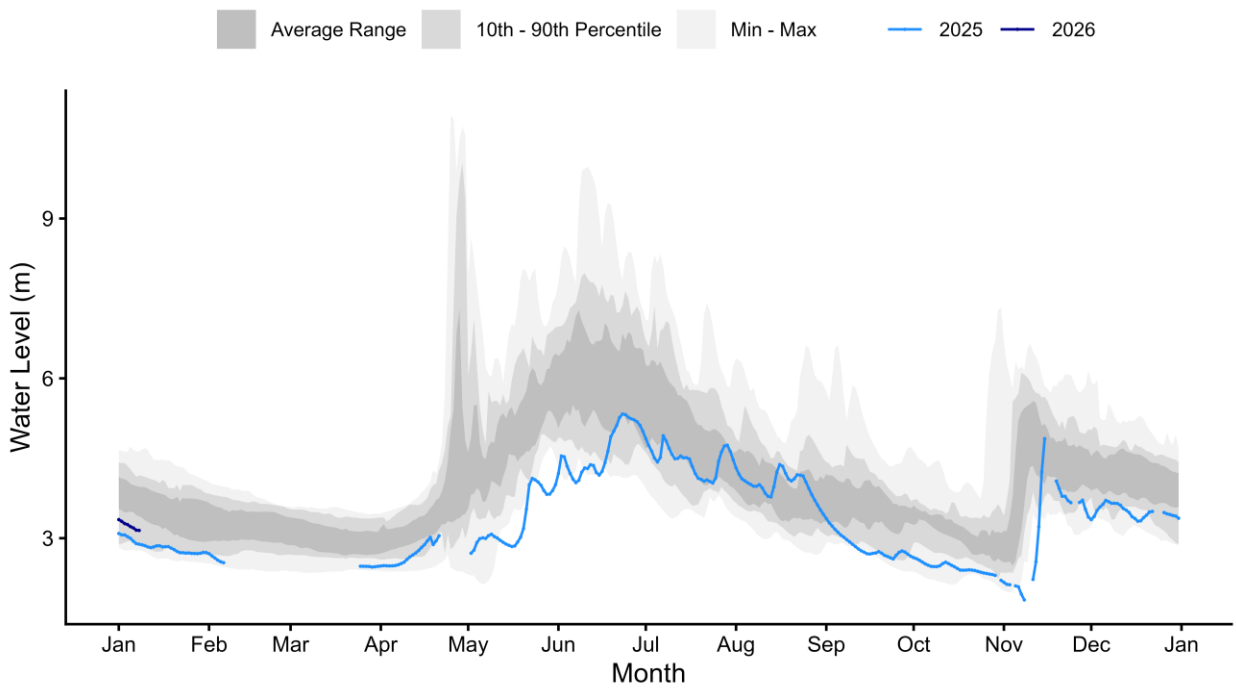
La Martre River below outlet of Lac La Martre [07TA001]



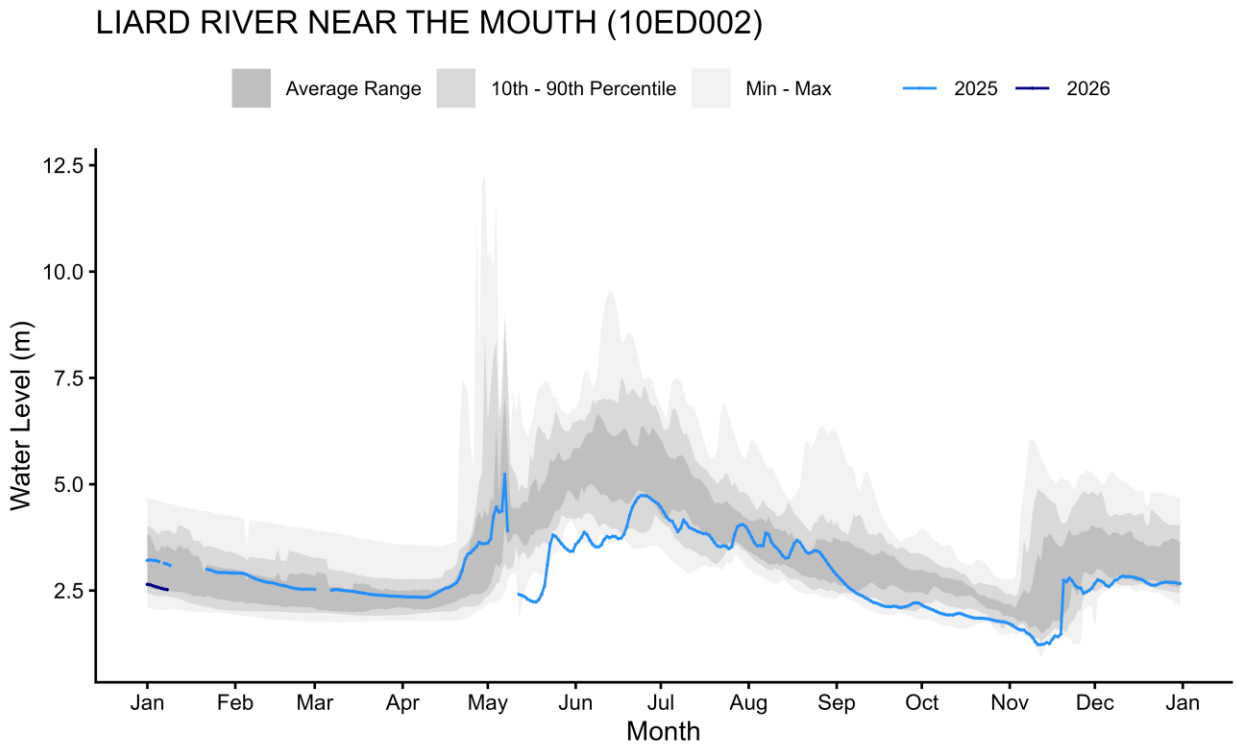
South Nahanni River above Virginia Falls [10EB001]



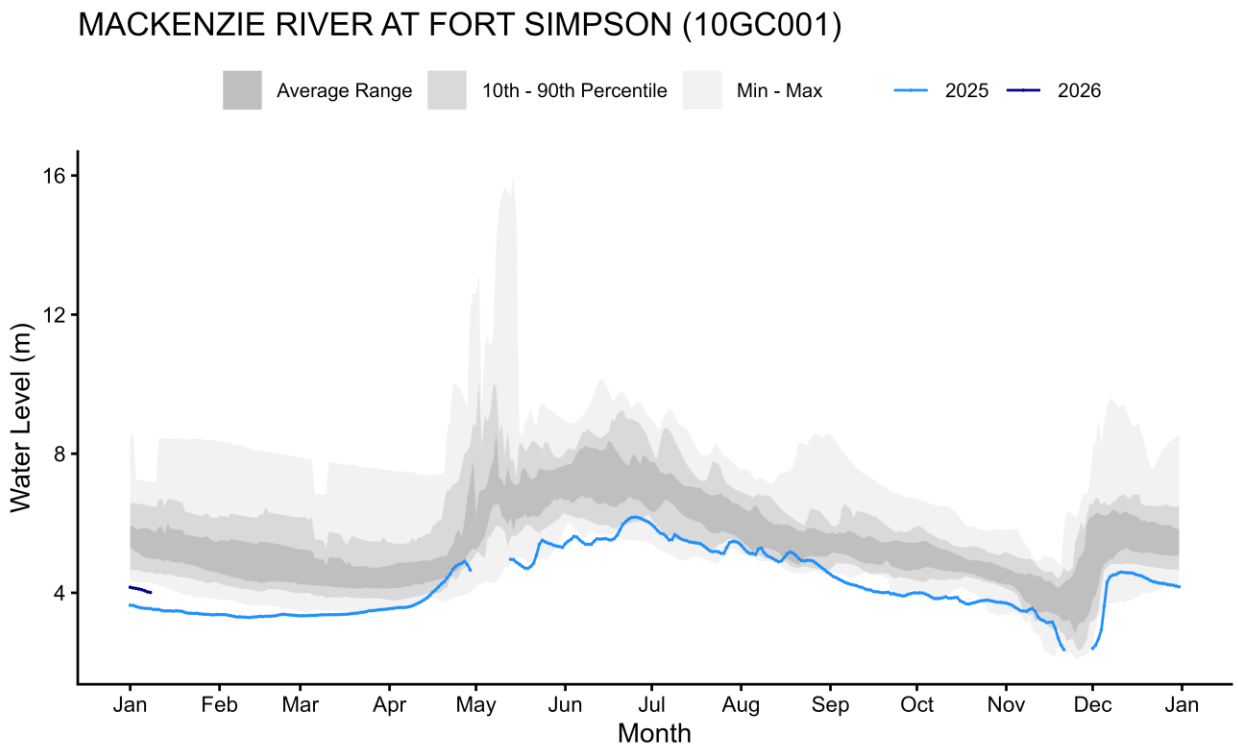
Liard River at Fort Liard [10ED001]



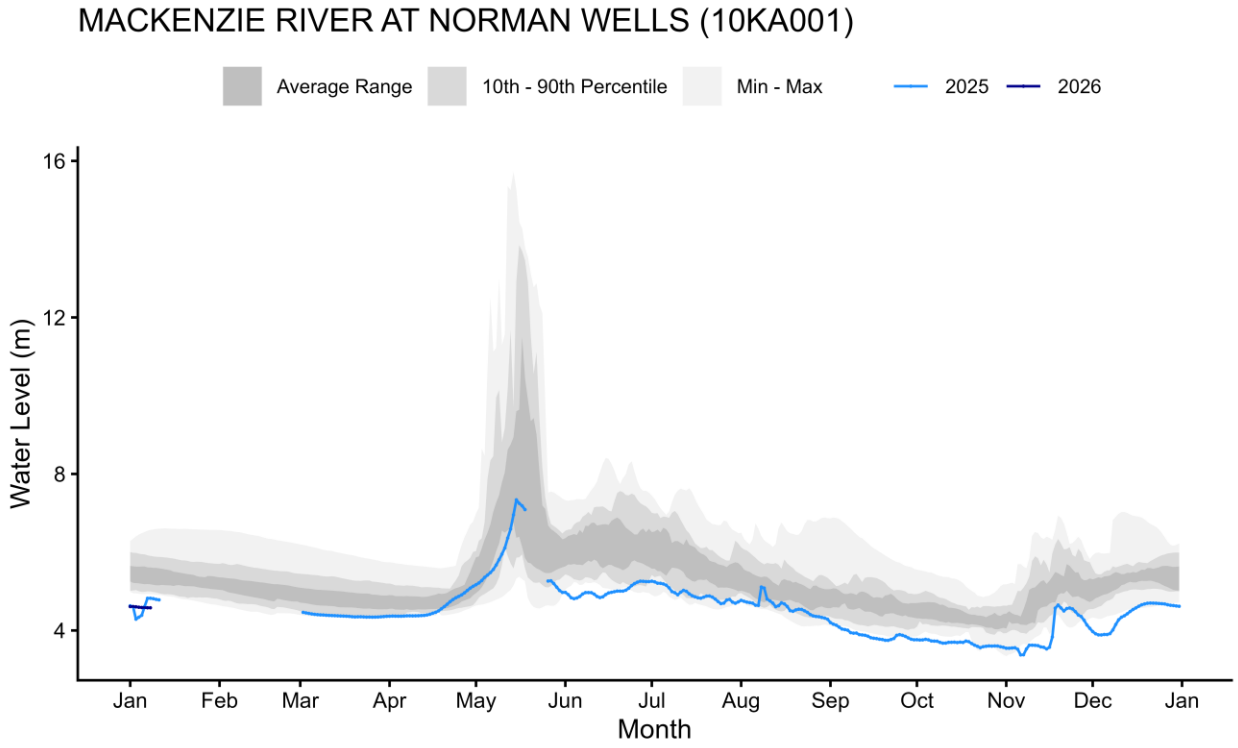
Liard River near the mouth [10ED002]



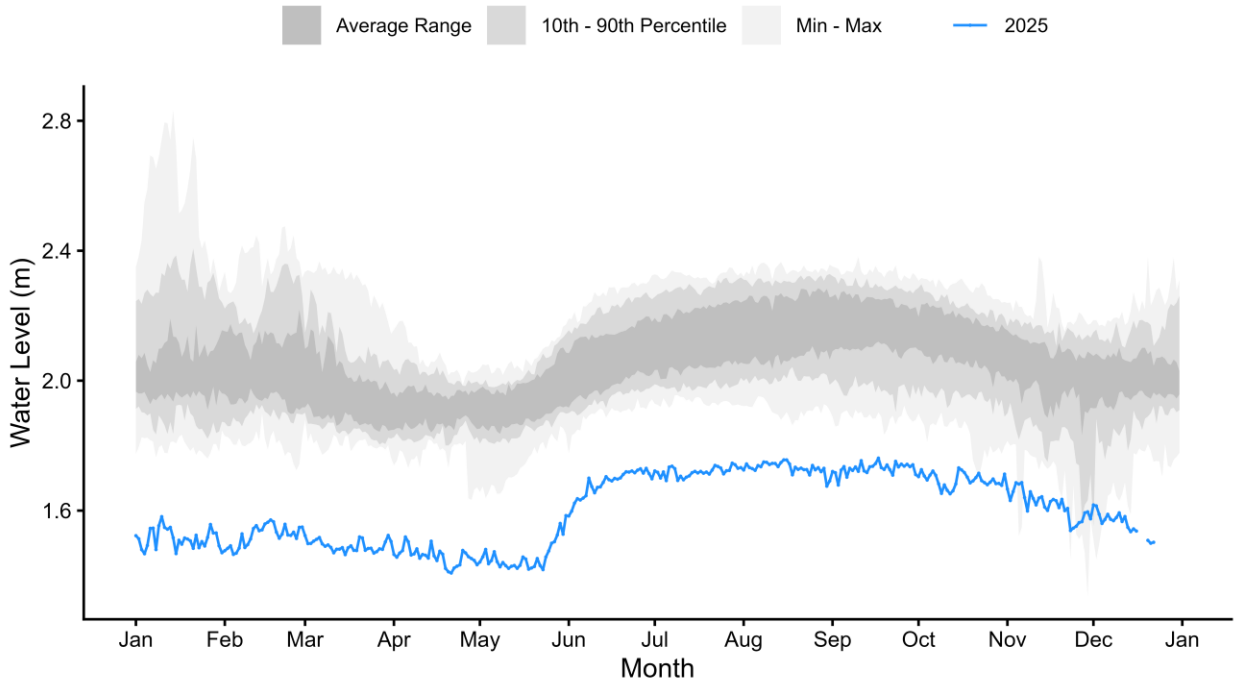
Mackenzie River at Fort Simpson [10GC001]



Mackenzie River at Norman Wells [10KA001]

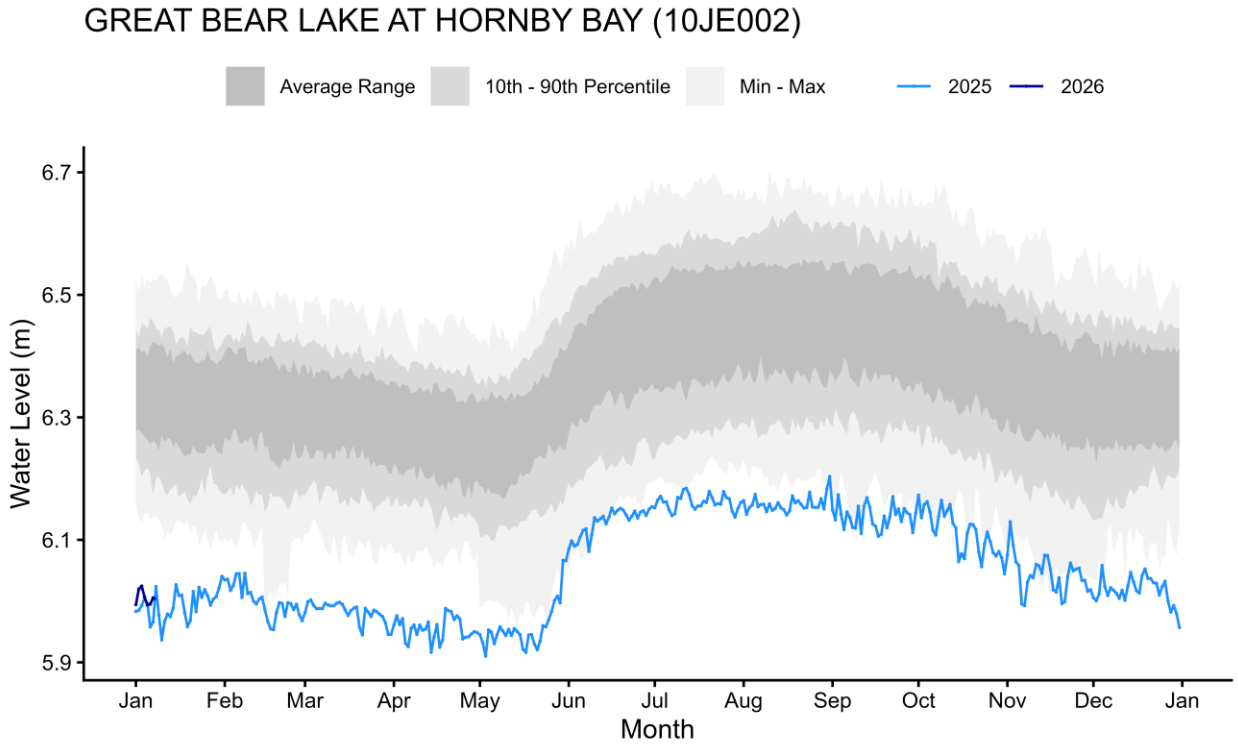


Great Bear River at outlet of Great Bear Lake [10JC003]*

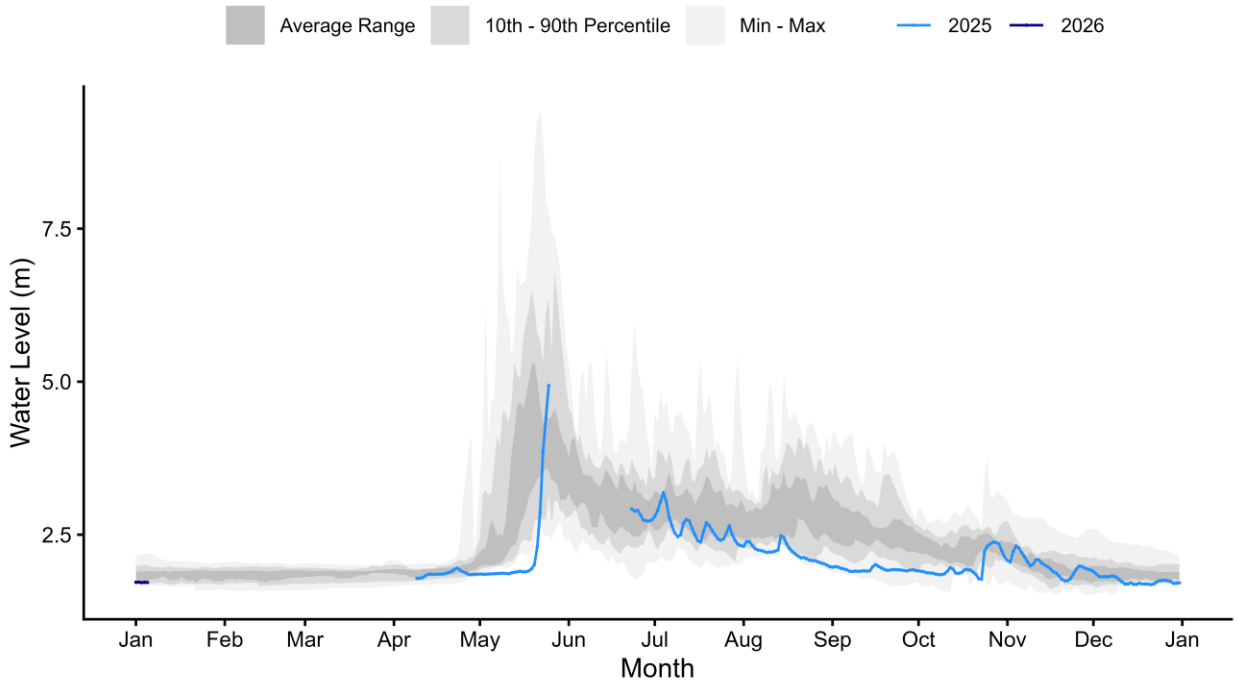


**There is currently an issue with the water level sensor.*

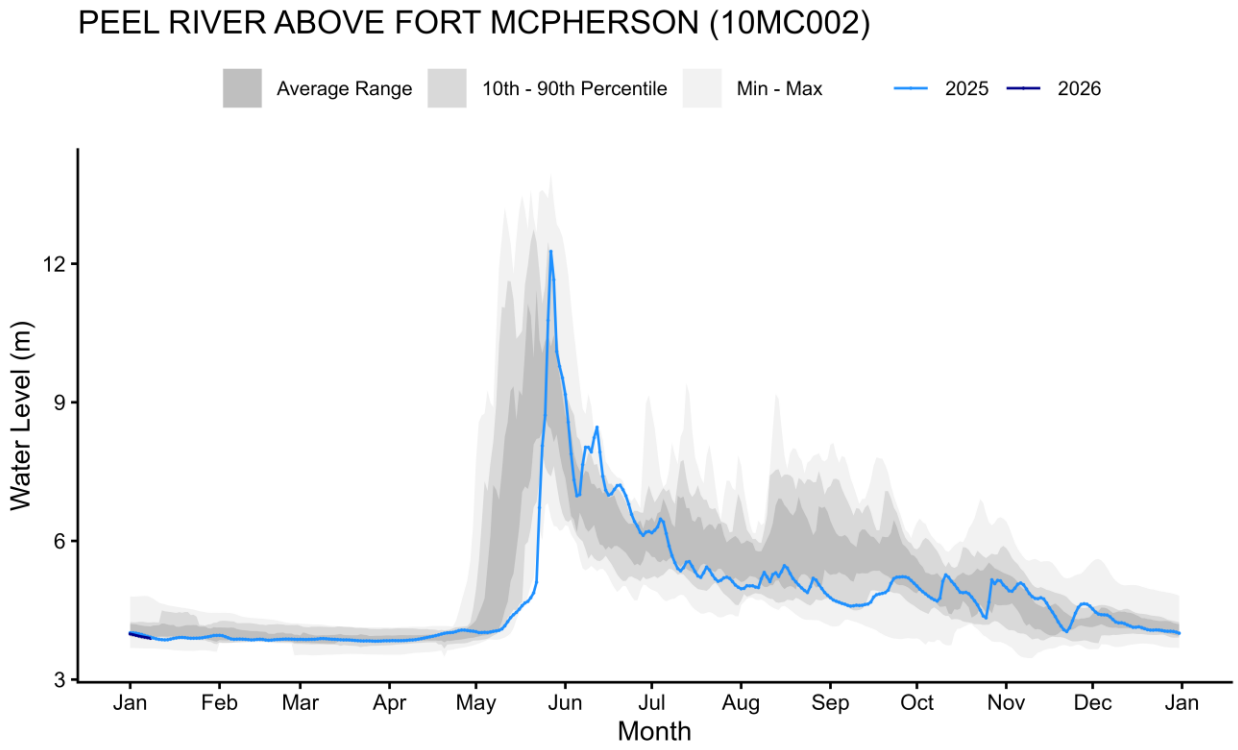
Great Bear Lake at Hornby Bay [10JE002]



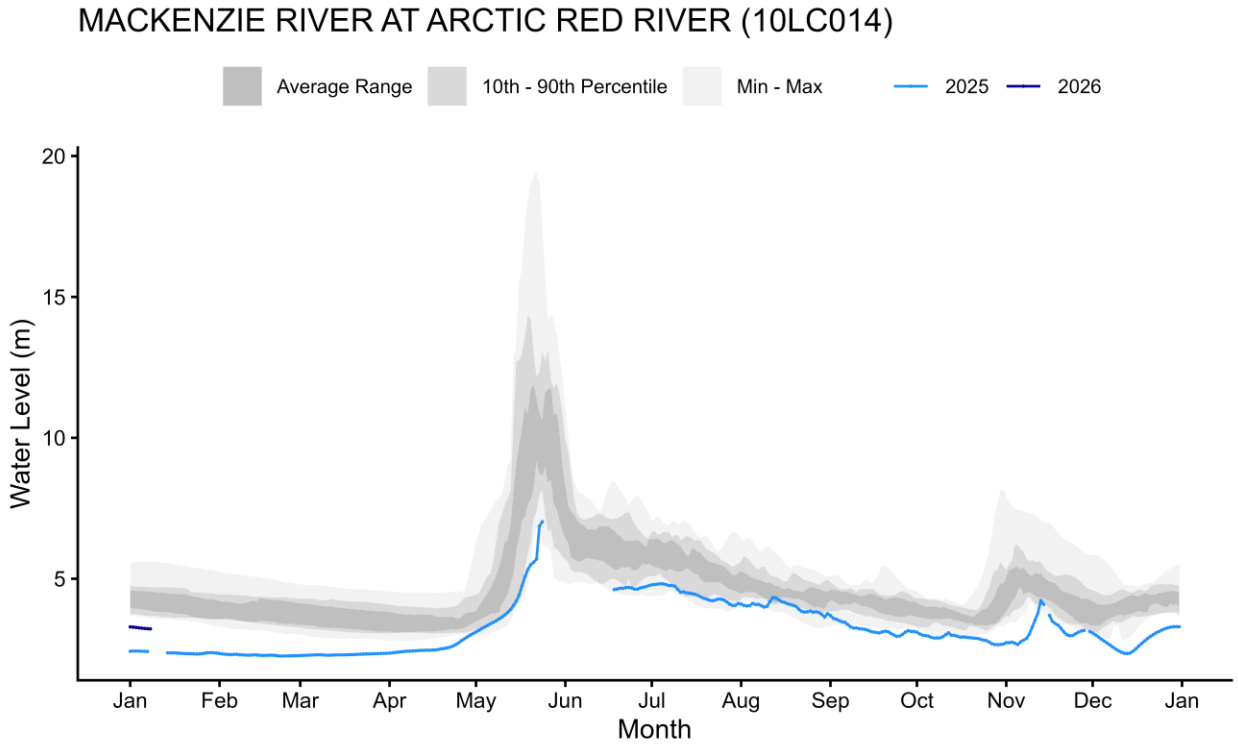
Arctic Red River near the mouth [10LA002]



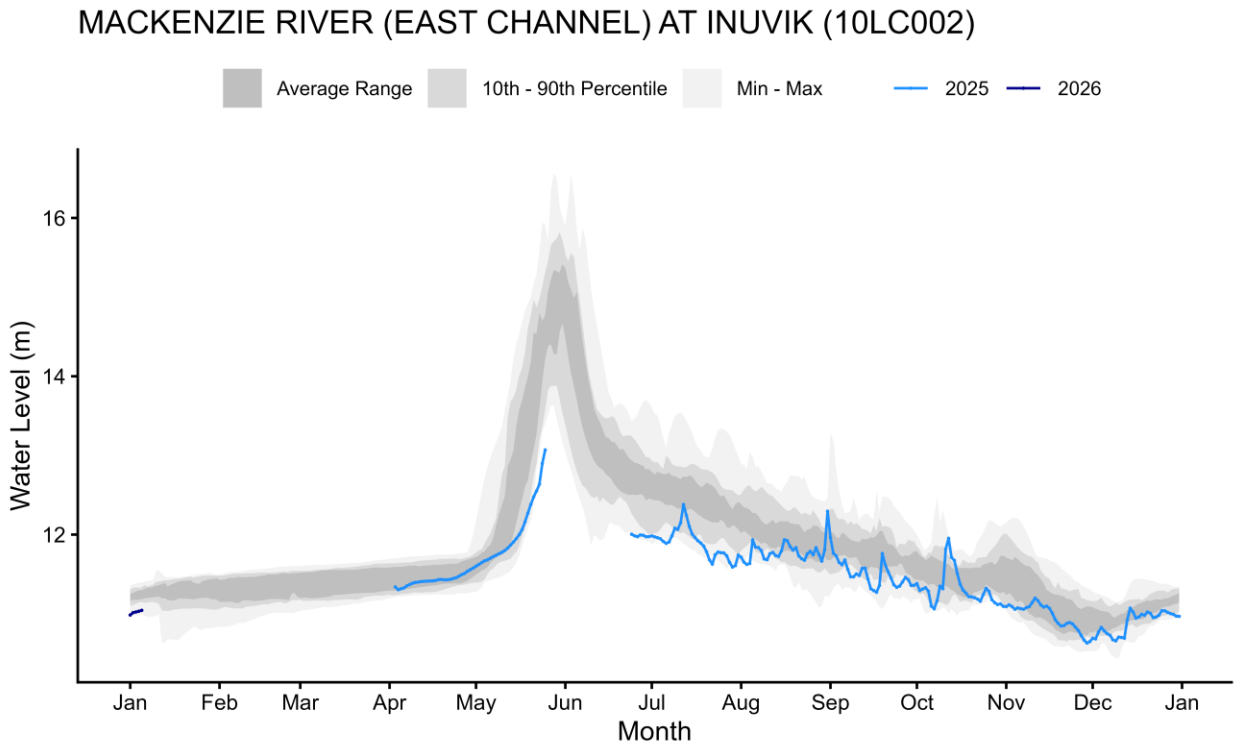
Peel River above Fort McPherson [10MC002]



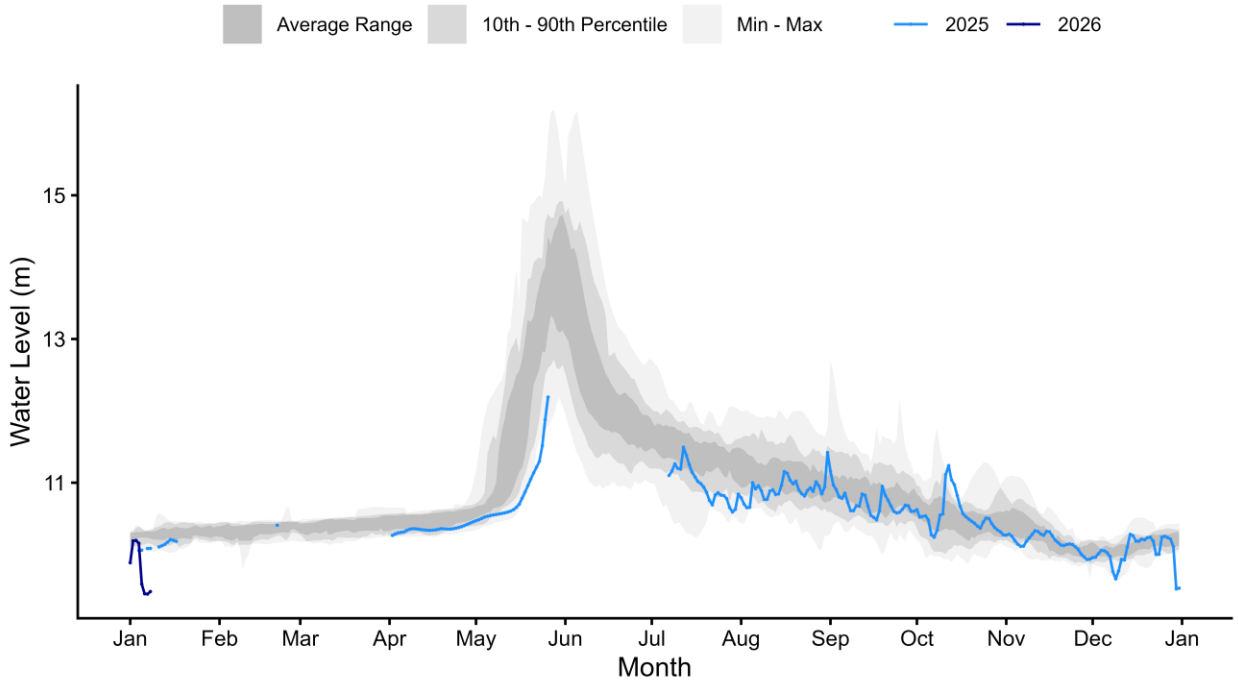
Mackenzie River at Arctic Red River [10LC014]



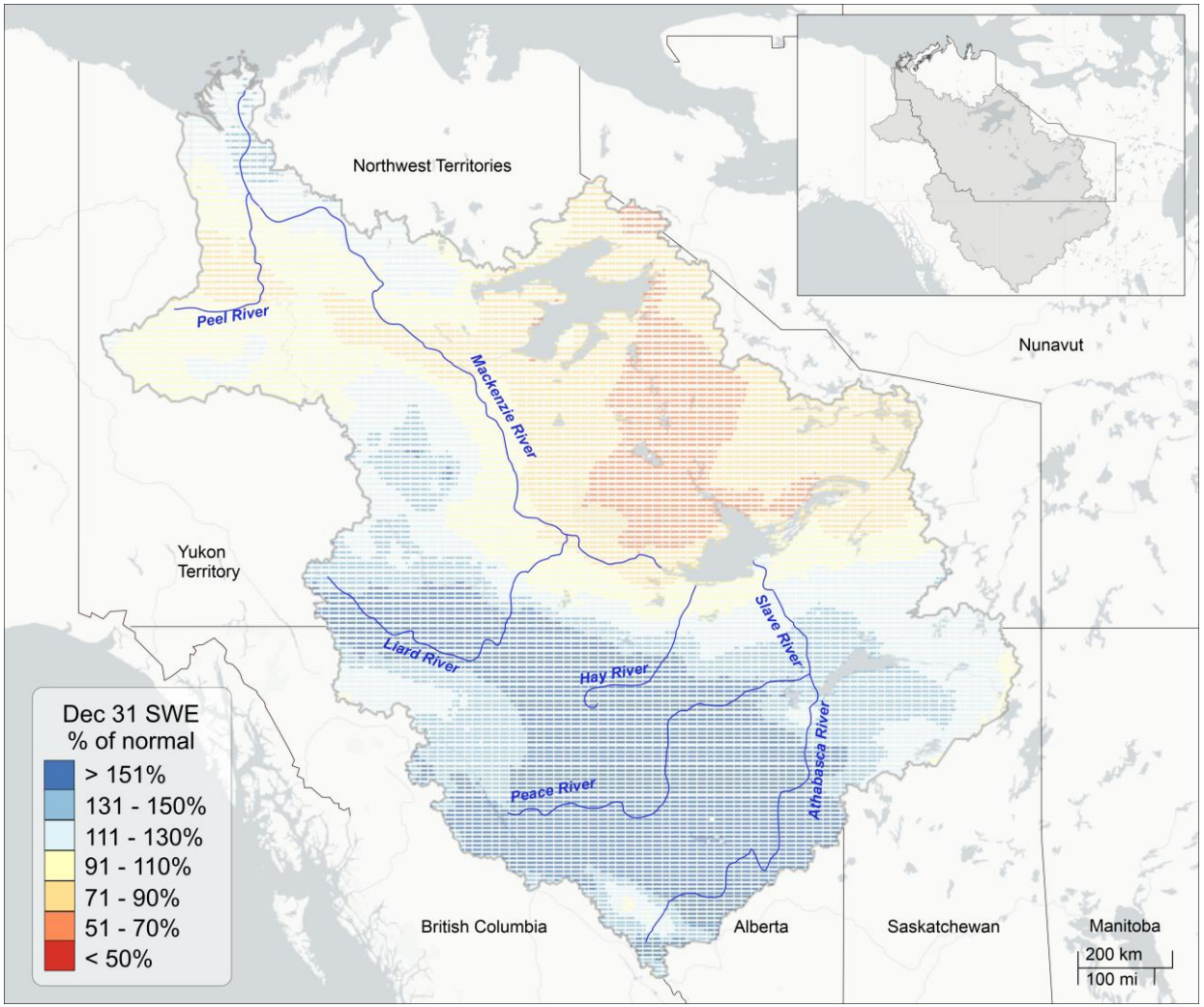
Mackenzie River (East Channel) at Inuvik [10LC002]



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



Snowpack Data

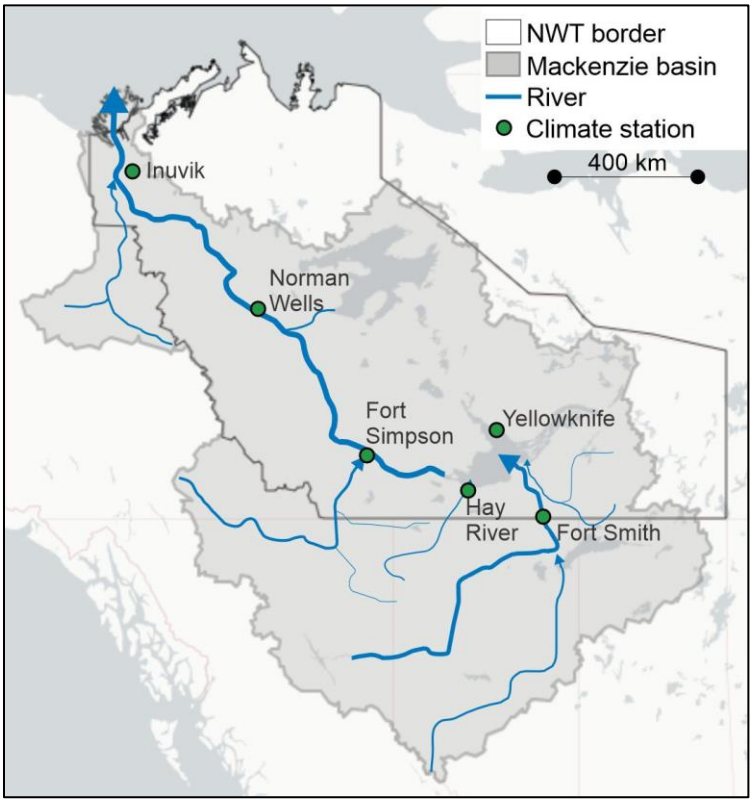


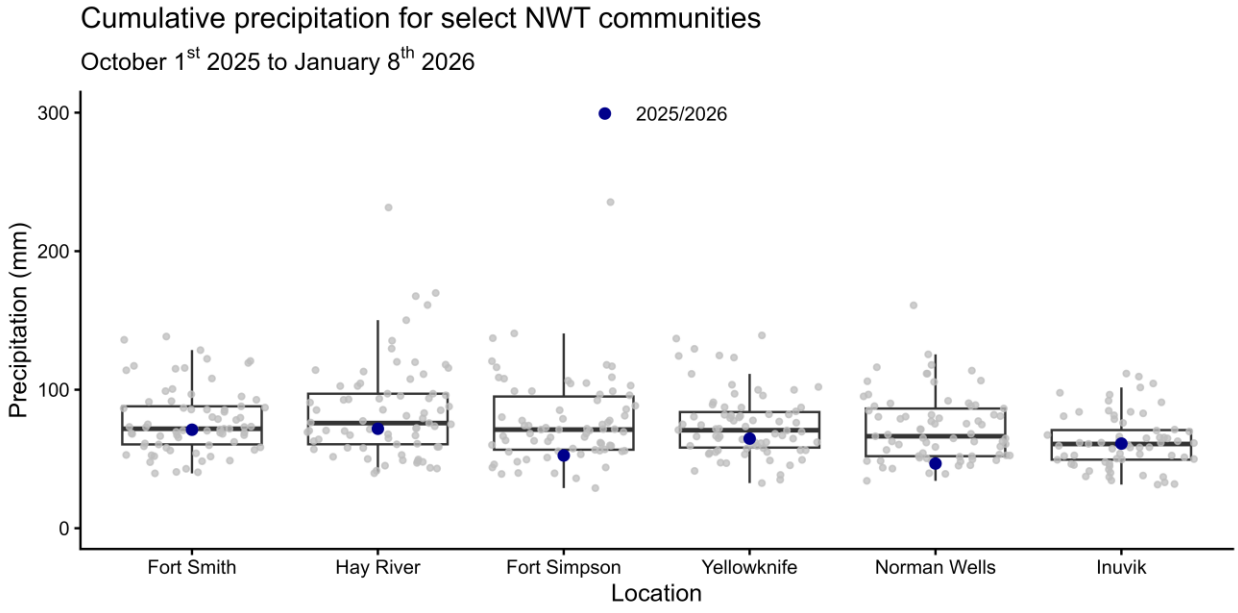
December 31st snow water equivalent (SWE, percent of normal) distribution in the Mackenzie River basin. Data are sourced from ERA5-Land[1] and are cropped to the Mackenzie River basin. Data are not perfectly representative of on-the-ground conditions and only general patterns should be interpreted.

(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 01-06-2026)

Climate Data

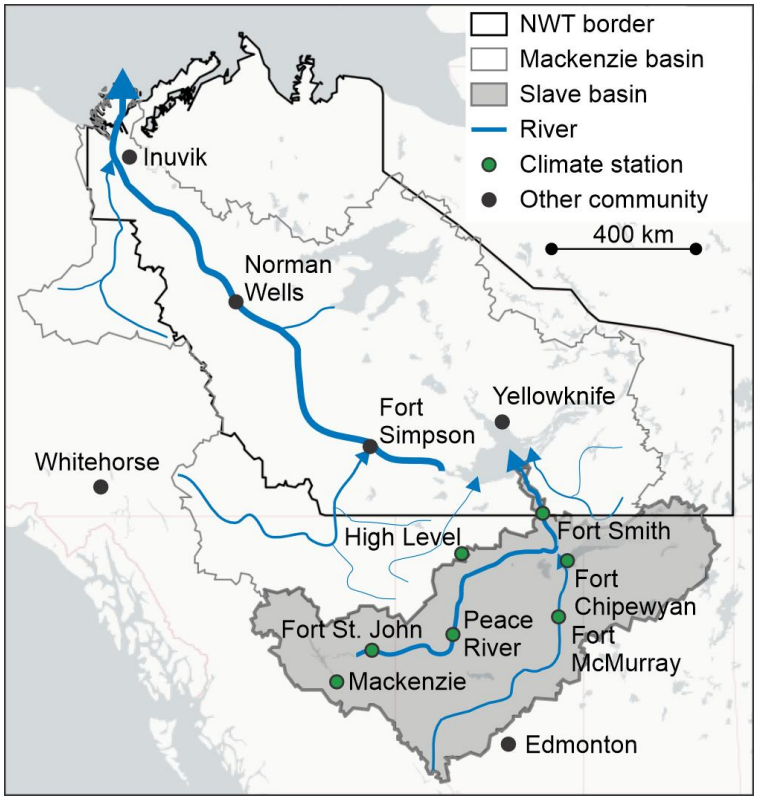
NWT communities

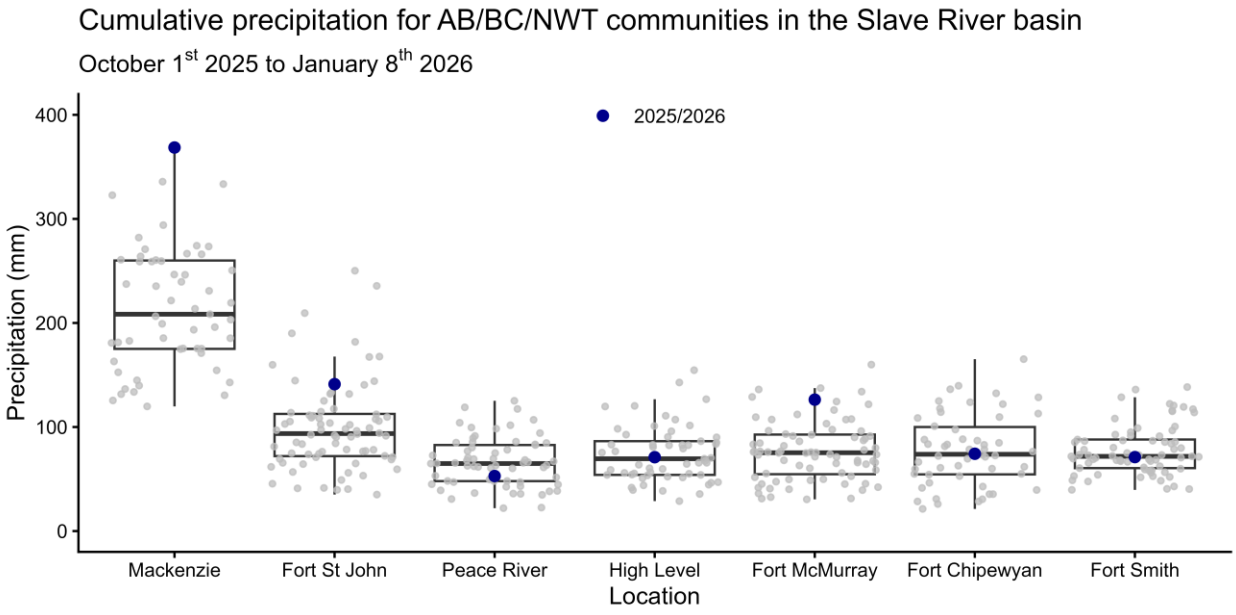




This figure shows total precipitation (rain and snow) that has fallen in select communities across the NWT from October 1st until January 8th. The blue dot is the current year, and the grey dots are all previous years from 1950 to present. See the map above for geographical context.

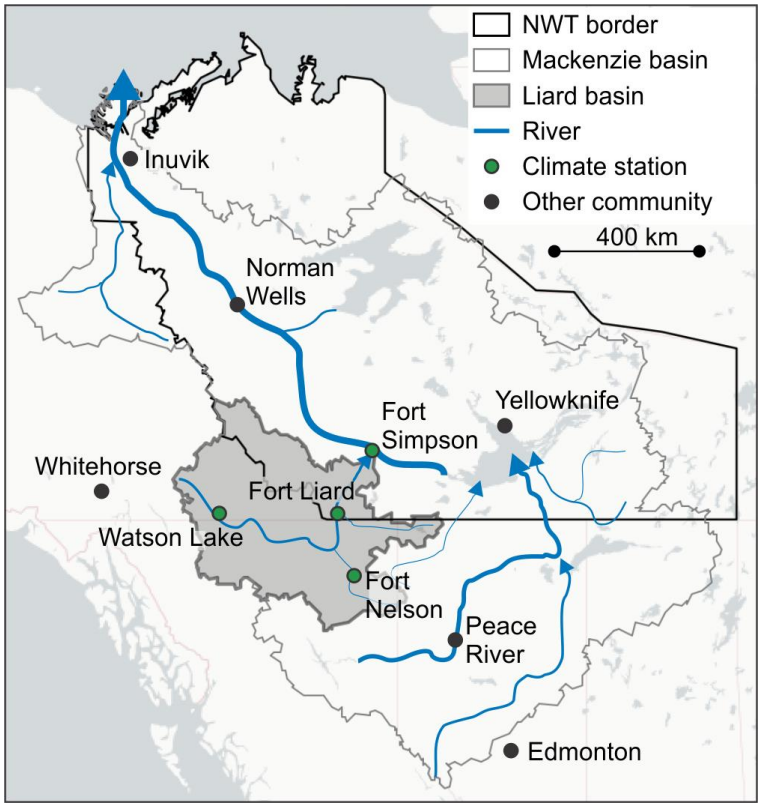
Slave River basin communities

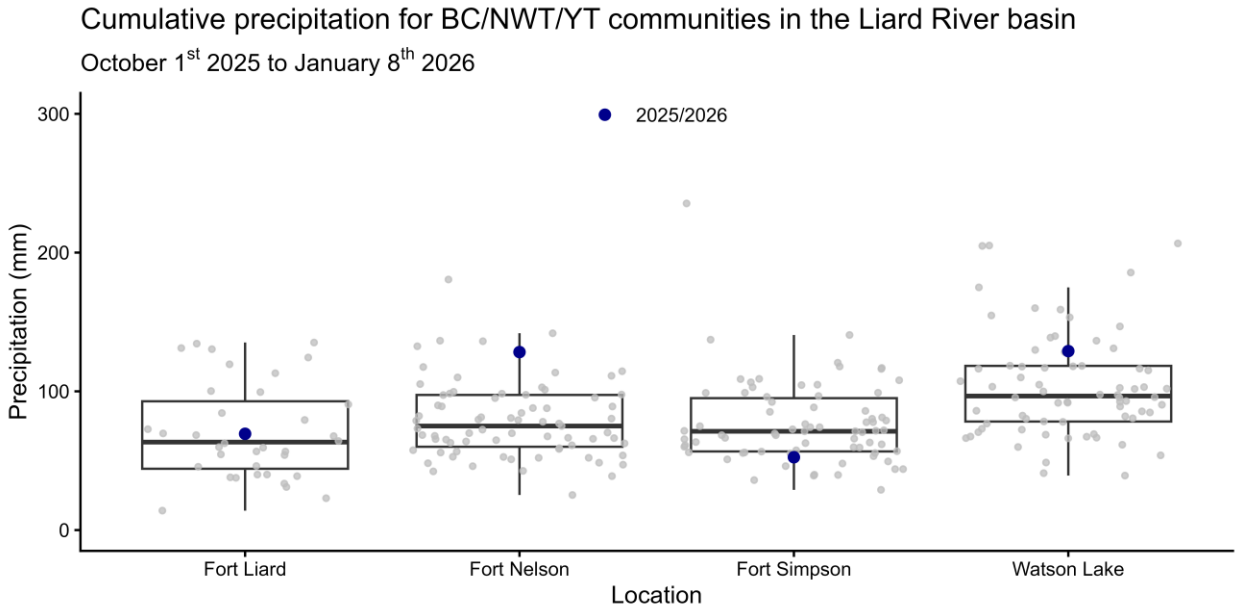




This figure shows total precipitation (rain and snow) that has fallen in select communities in the Slave River basin from October 1st until January 8th. The blue dot is the current year, and the grey dots are all previous years from 1950 to present. See the map above for geographical context.

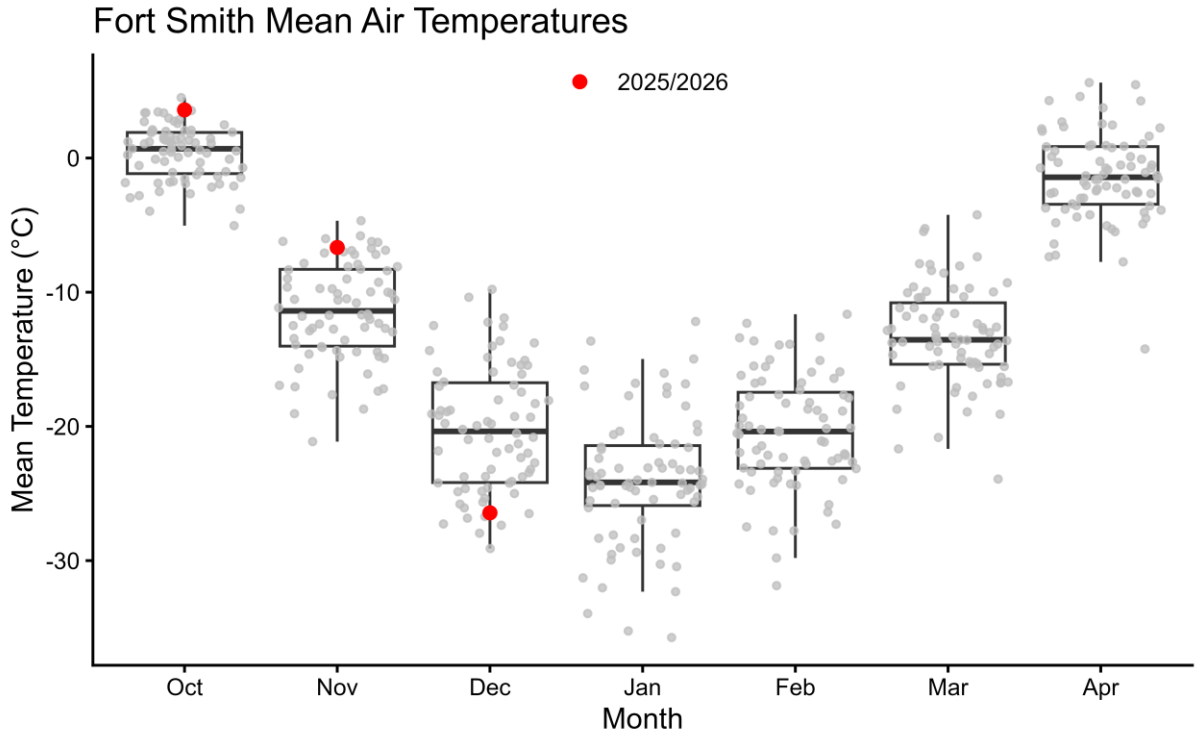
Liard River basin communities

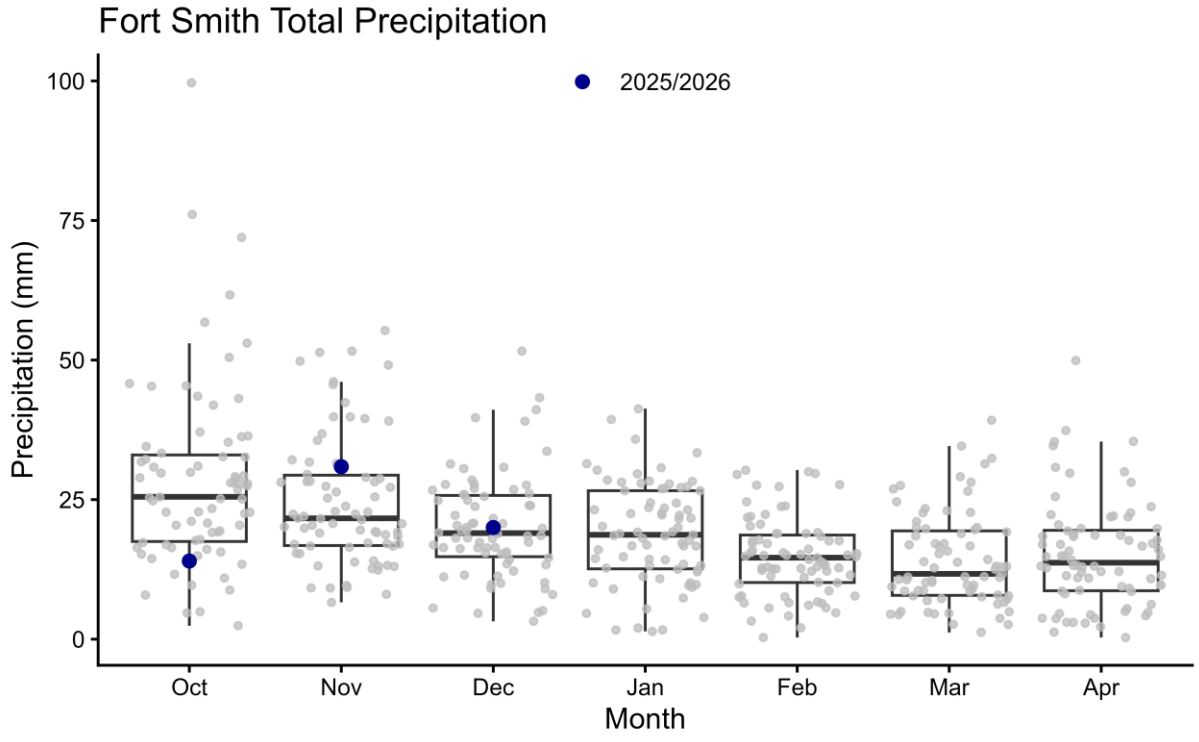




This figure shows total precipitation (rain and snow) that has fallen in select communities in the Liard River basin from October 1st until January 8th. The blue dot is the current year, and the grey dots are all previous years from 1950 to present. See the map above for geographical context.

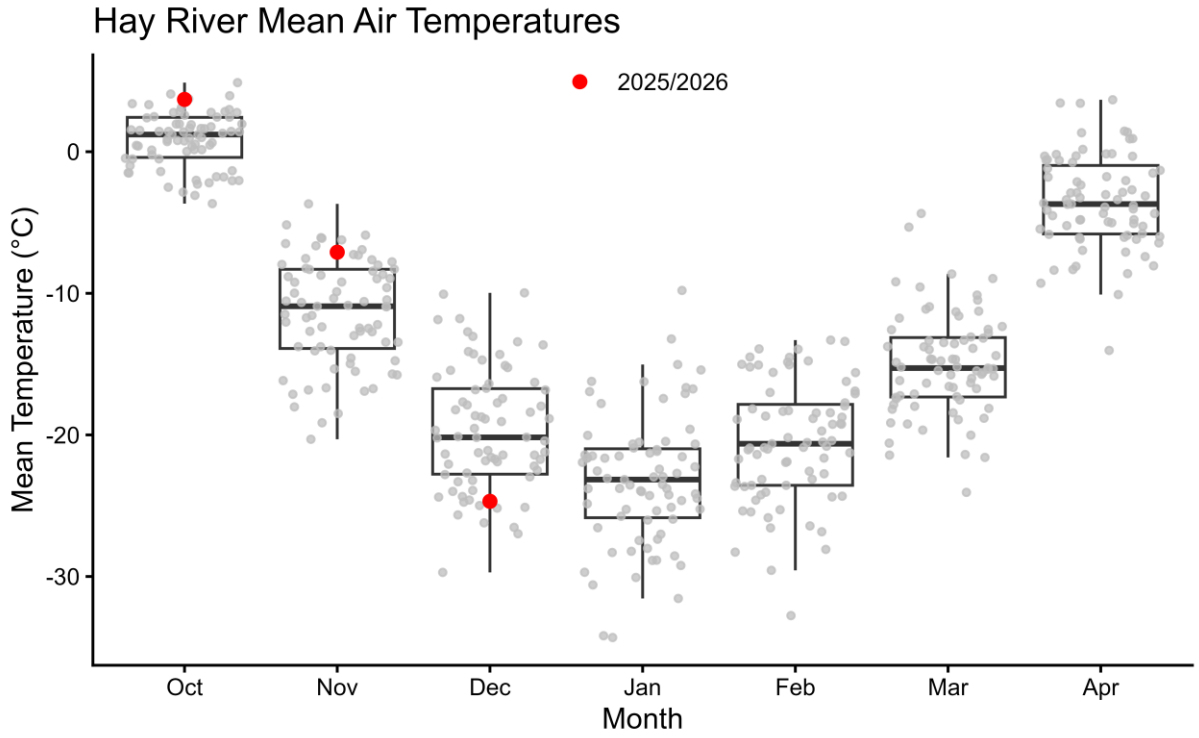
Fort Smith

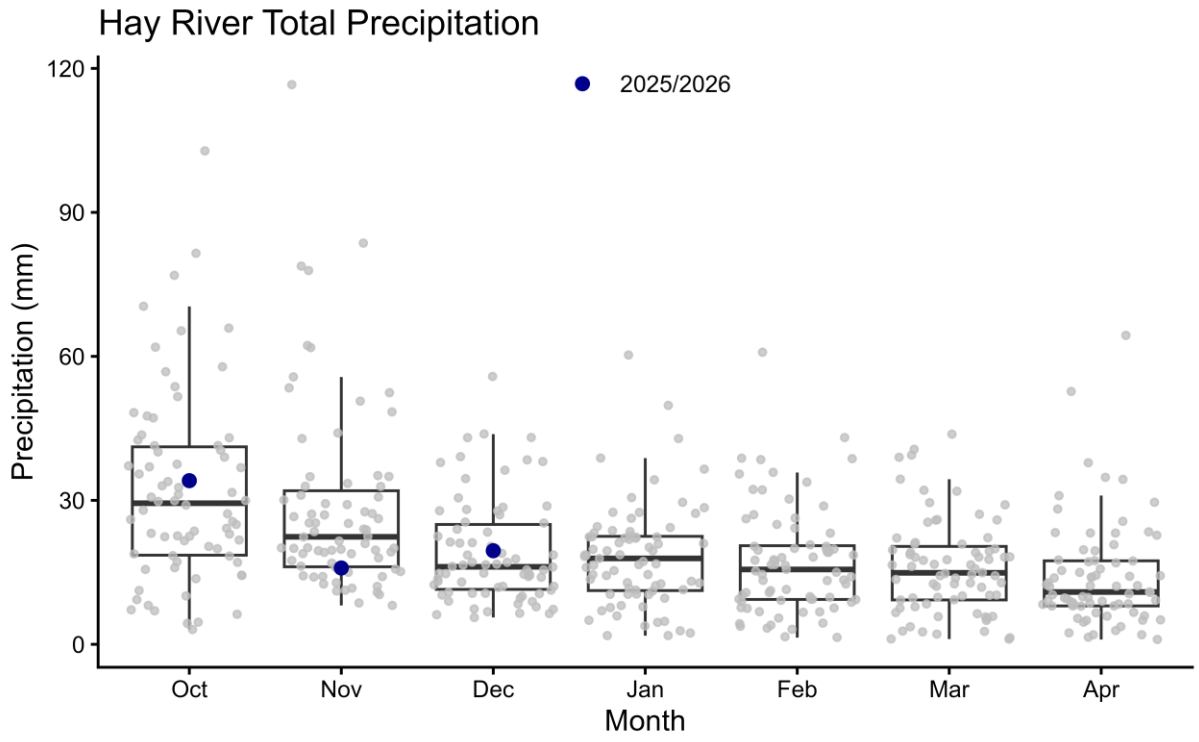




These figures shown above represent mean monthly air temperature and total monthly precipitation for winter 2025/2026 beginning October 2025.

Hay River





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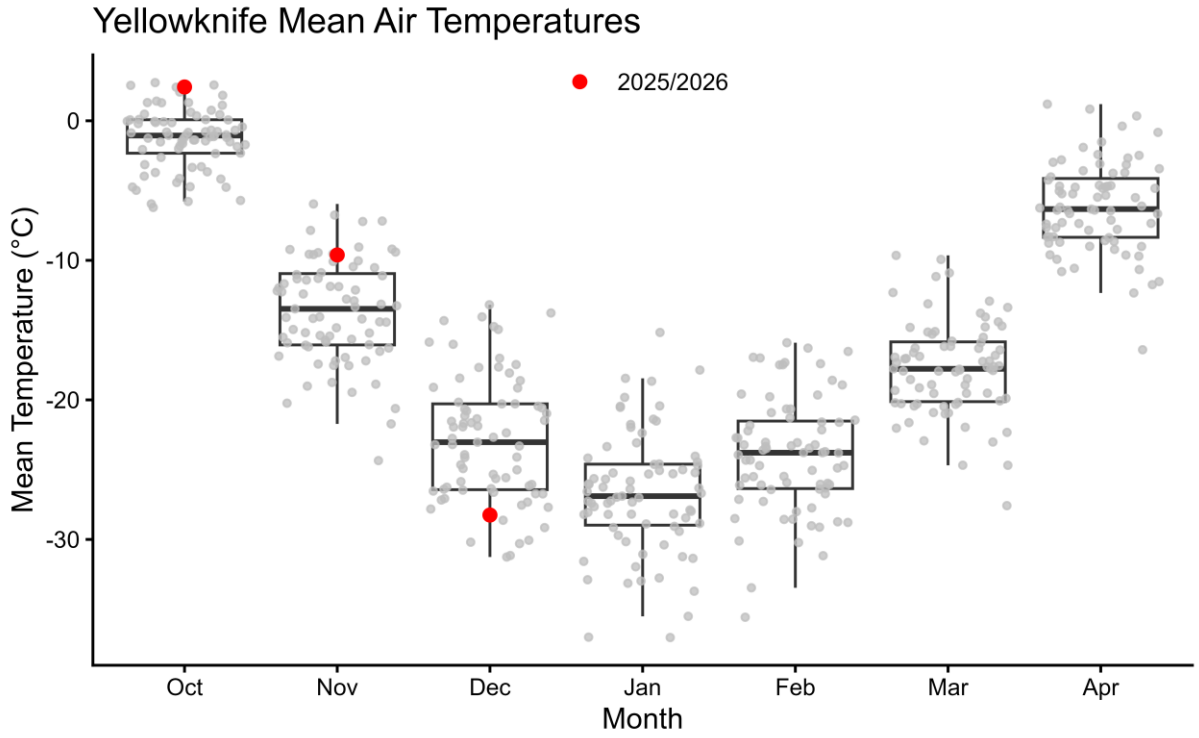
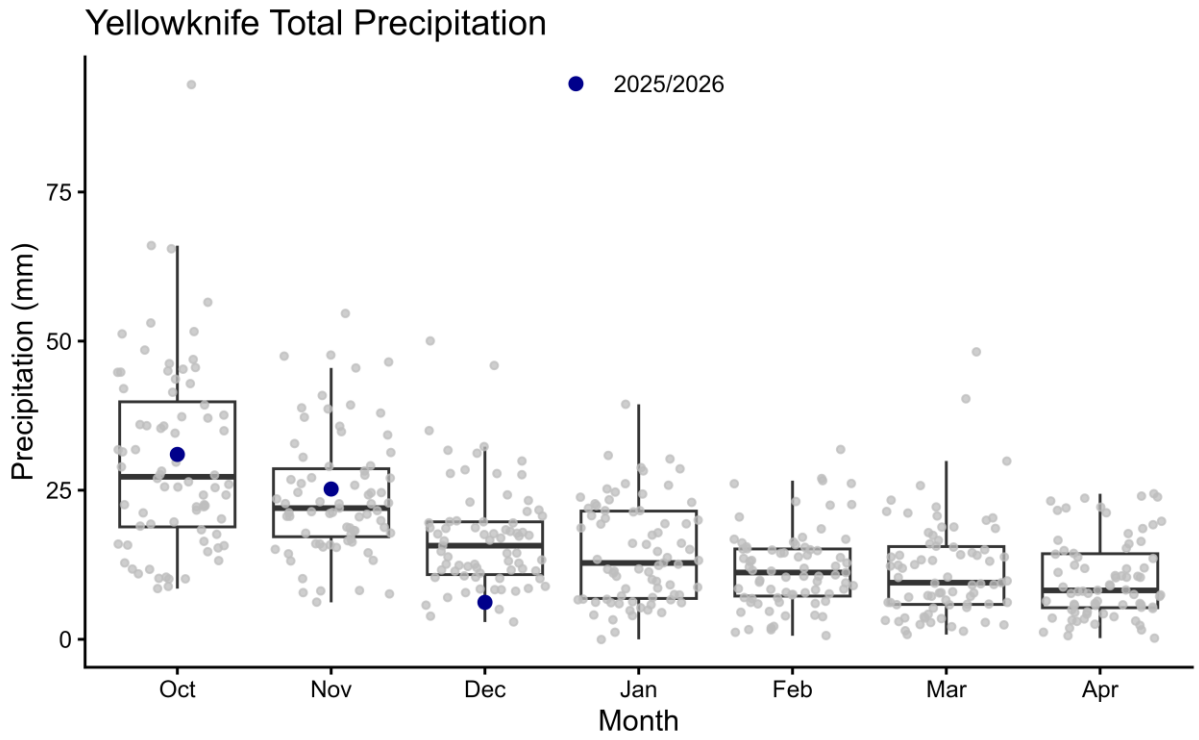
Yellowknife





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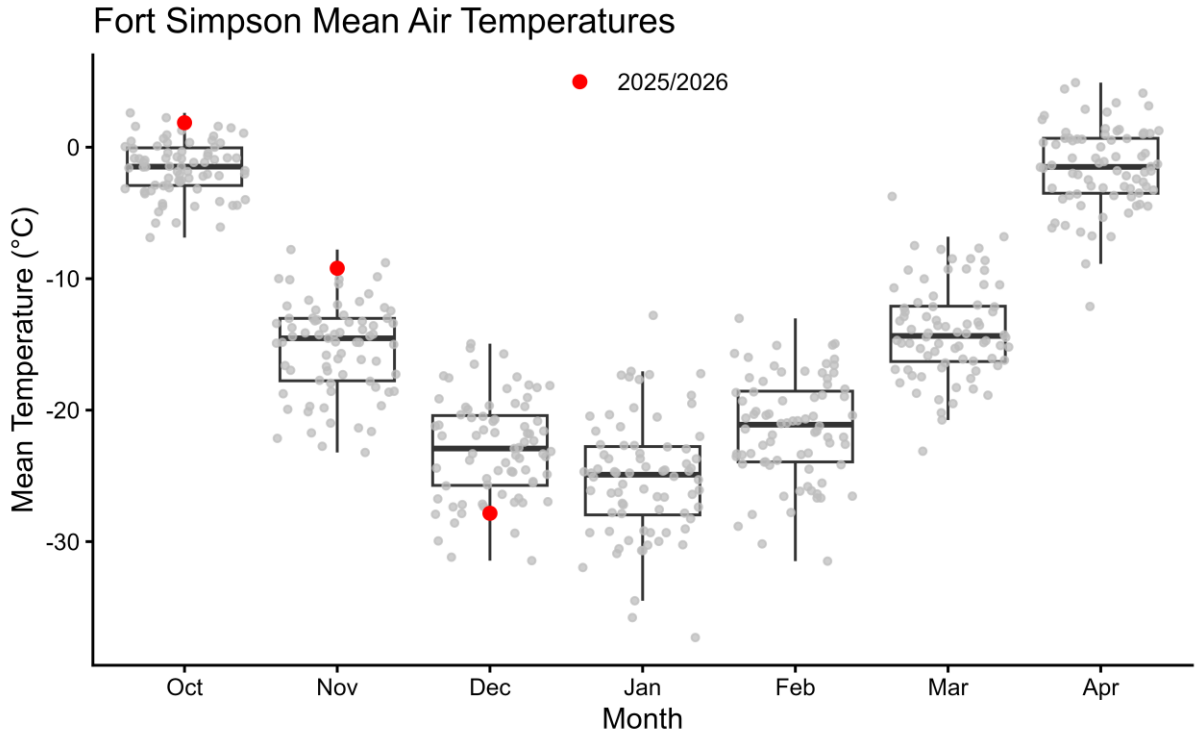
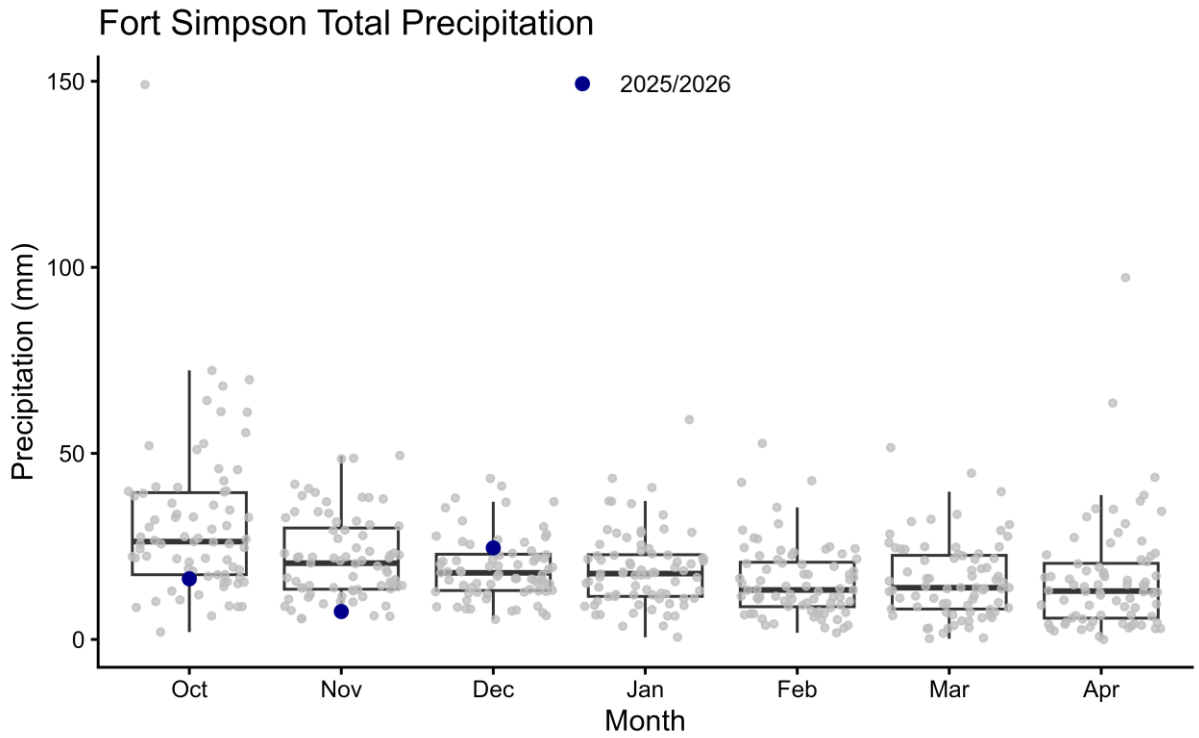
Fort Simpson





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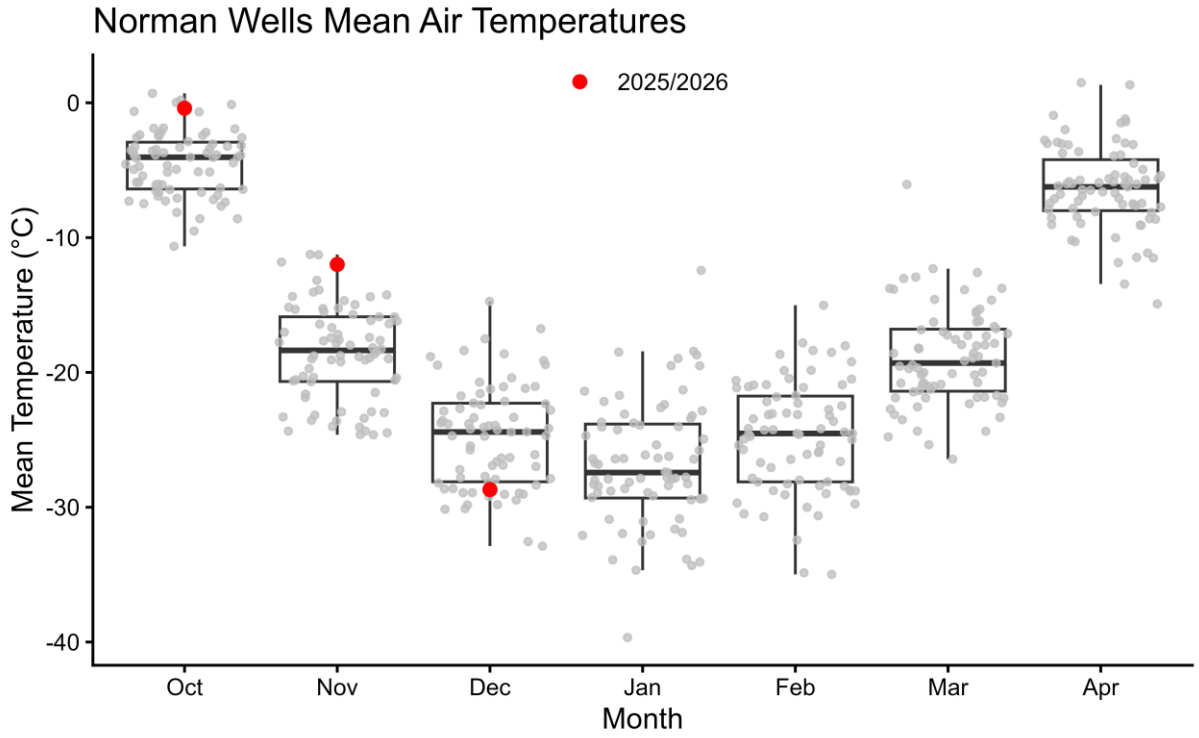
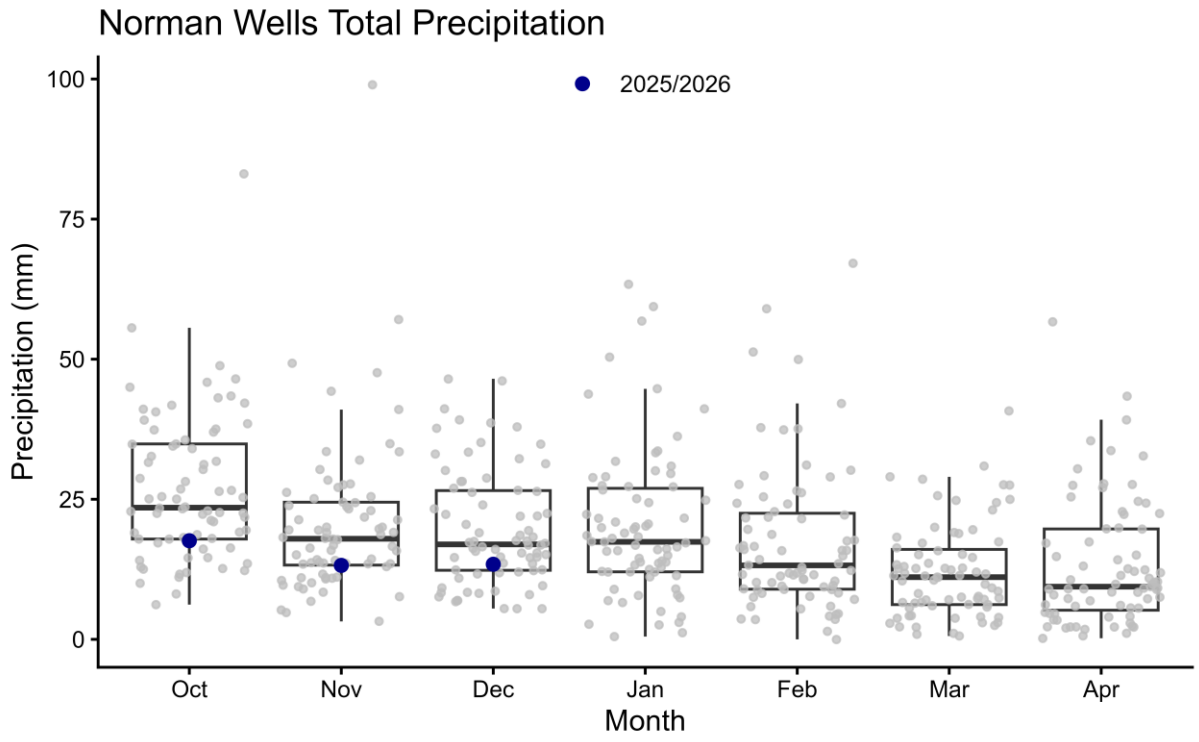
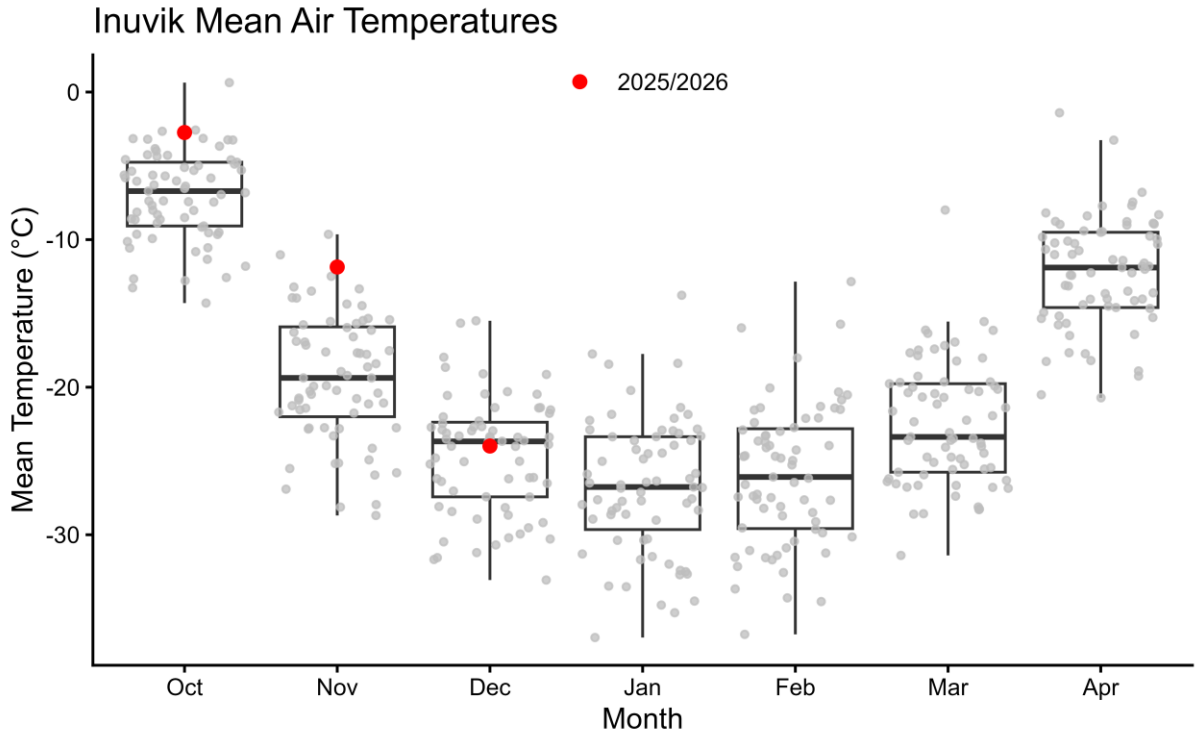
Norman Wells

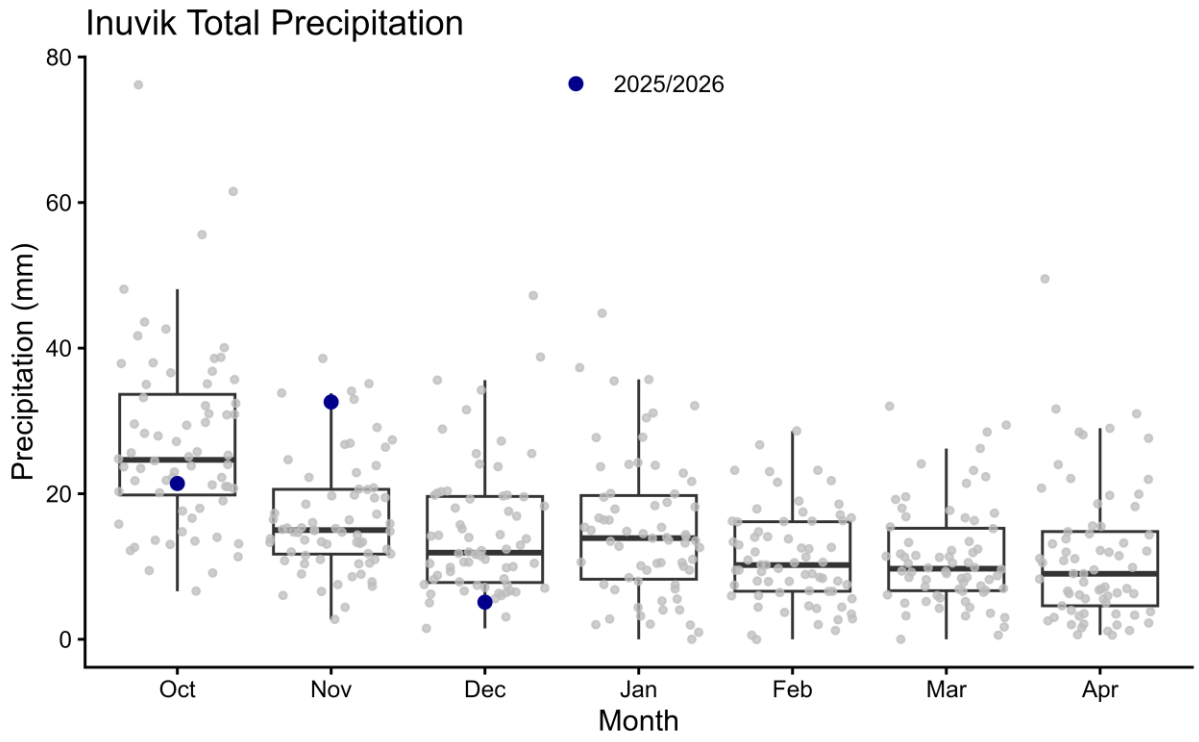




These figures shown above represent mean monthly air temperature and total monthly precipitation for winter 2025/2026 beginning October 2025.

Inuvik





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