

Moisture Situation Update – May 20, 2014

Synopsis:

Spring-like weather finally arrived in Alberta on or about the 8th of May, with temperatures over the past 10-days generally hovering near normal for this time of year. Over the past 30-days, precipitation accumulations have been at least near normal across most of the province, with some stations across the northern Peace Region and through the Camrose area still reporting dryer than average conditions.

Several widely scattered locations around the province have well below average soil moisture reserves. They include the northern and south-central Peace Region, as well as northeastern and east-central Alberta. While currently these areas are albeit quite dry, seeding is a time of year when dryer weather is generally favorable, particularly given the late spring. At minimum, near normal June rains will be required through those dryer areas to help alleviate this situation. As it stands, in the absence of additional moisture, these areas currently have a reduced capacity to withstand drought like conditions, should they develop later in the season.

Precipitation accumulations over the past 30-days, as of May 20, 2014 –see map

- Most areas south of the TransCanada Highway have seen at least normal to above normal accumulations over the last 30-days, with most agricultural areas receiving at least adequate moisture for this time of year.
- Parts of south-western Alberta and areas through the mountains and foot hills west of High River and Calgary have seen well above normal accumulations with many stations recording well over 100 mm.
- Parts of Camrose County and the extreme northern Peace Region have been quite dry, with stations recording less than 20 mm, which is about 50% of normal.

Soil moisture reserves relative to long term normal as of May 20, 2014 –see map

- Soil moisture reserves are extremely variable across Alberta's Agricultural areas, ranging from one in 6 to 12 year highs, north and southwest of Red Deer to less than one in 50-year lows through small pockets just east of Camrose, and east of La Crete in the northern Peace Region.
- In general, soil moisture reserves are at least near normal throughout the west-half of the province and areas south of the TransCanada highway. It is noteworthy, that reserves are estimated to be at one in 6 to 12 years highs through large areas west of Highway 2 lying between Calgary and Red Deer.
- In contrast, the east-half of the province tends to be below normal, as well as through much of the central and northern Peace Region.

Perspective

- It is too early to gauge the effects of delayed seeding and low soil moisture reserves on the success of this year's crops. Temperature regimes along with June and July rains as well as the timing and severity of the first fall frost will play a key role in determining crop yields.

Interesting Facts

- Over the past 30-days, the greatest amounts of precipitation were measured at Freeman Auto station, located in the Swan Hills, reporting nearly 186 mm. In comparison, the average for the same period is about 40 to 45 mm.
- 30-day precipitation runners ups include: South Ghost Headwaters and Limestone Mountain, both reporting upwards of 165 mm. This is almost 2.5 times the long-term average. Both of these stations lie in the front ranges, west of Calgary and Olds, respectively.

Moisture Situation Update – May 20, 2014

Additional maps can be found at www.agriculture.alberta.ca/maps

Near-real-time hourly station data can be viewed/downloaded at www.agriculture.alberta.ca/stations

Note: Data has about a two hour lag and is displayed in MST (add one hour for daylight savings time)

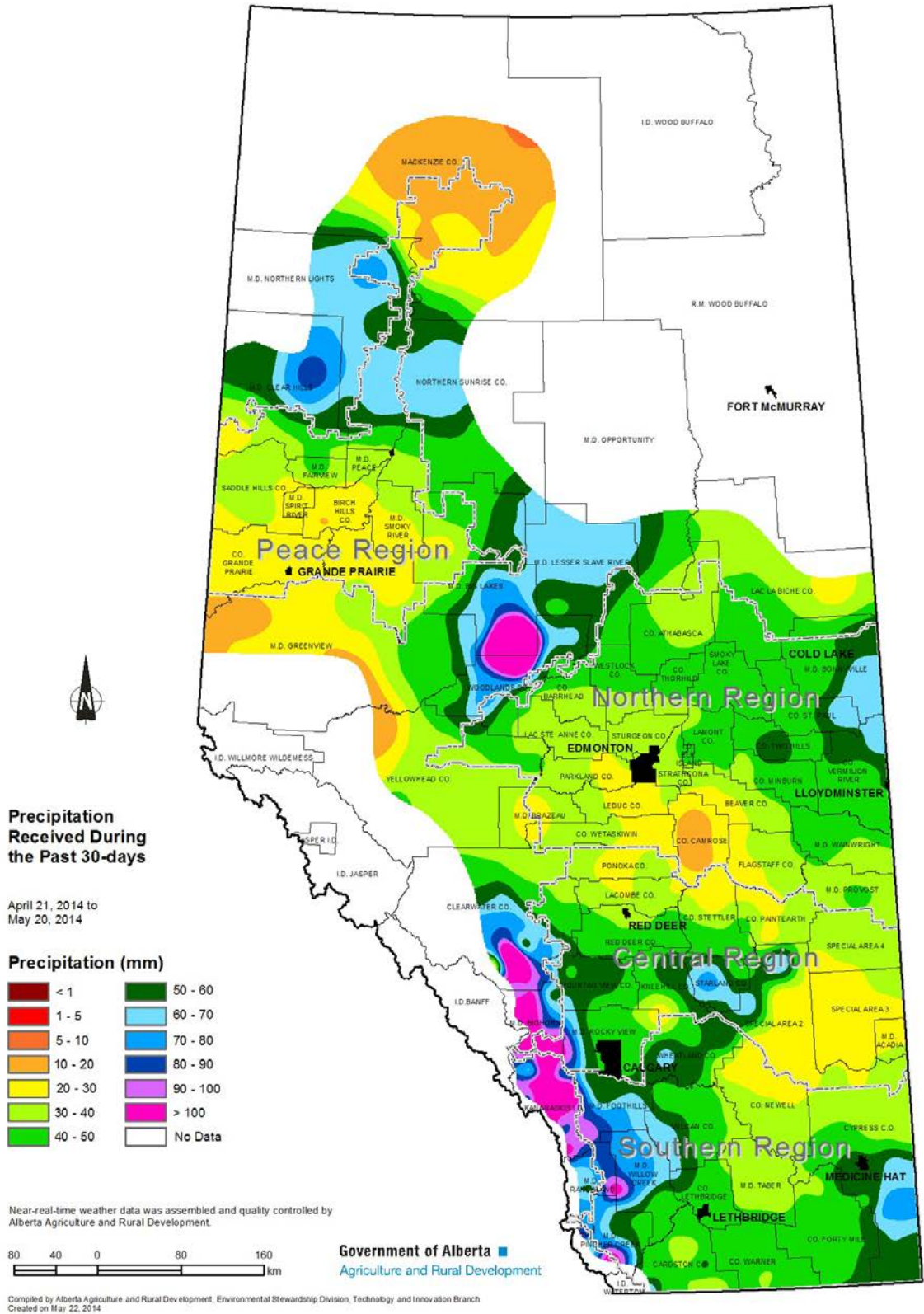
Ralph Wright, M. Sc.

Manager: Agro-meteorological Applications and Modelling Section

Work: 780-427-3556

Cell: 780-446-6831

Moisture Situation Update – May 20, 2014



Moisture Situation Update – May 20, 2014

