

Moisture Situation Update – April 25, 2014

Synopsis:

Over the past four days April 22 to April 25, a large system moved through the northern-half of the province. The majority of rain fell north of the TransCanada highway, most areas seeing upwards of 20 mm, with the greatest amounts (> 55 mm) recorded across parts of the north-central Peace Region.

Across east-central parts of the province, soil moisture reserves, estimated as of April 22, prior to the arrival of this system are classified as being very low to extremely low. The driest areas are currently located through the County of Settler and Paintearth, where less than 10 mm of precipitation was recorded. This is at best a good start, but clearly not enough to replenish reserves to normal levels for this time of year.

Precipitation accumulations over the past four days, as of April 25, 2014 –see map

- Generally, south of Red Deer less than 10 mm of precipitation was recorded, with the agricultural areas along Highway 2 between Calgary and Lethbridge seeing only trace accumulations.
- At least a third of the province saw upwards of 15 mm in a broad band stretching from Lloydminster to Manning and west, with central parts of the Peace Region receiving more than 55 mm, and areas in and around the Swan Hills reporting upwards of 40 mm.

Soil Moisture Reserves Relative to Long Term normal as of April 22, 2014 –see map

- Note: soil moisture reserves represented here were estimated prior to the large precipitation event of April 22 to April 25. As such, conditions in many areas will be better than what is depicted in this map.
- East Central Alberta, remains relatively dry for this time of year, with reserves across parts of the county of Settler and Paintearth, this low seen on average less than once in 12 to 25 years.
- Elsewhere, soil moisture reserves are generally at near normal to moderately low ahead of spring planting; but there is yet ample time ahead of seeding to further replenish soil moisture.
- Following the retreat of well above normal snow packs in the west, soil moisture reserves are estimated to be high to extremely high across a large area west of Highway 2 between Calgary and Edmonton and west of Highway 43 between Edmonton and Grande Prairie.

Perspective:

- It's far too early to gauge moisture reserves going into the spring planting season as emergence in many areas is weeks away. As usual, it's very much a wait and see game, but the weather of late has been cool and wet, which comes as a "mixed blessing" to many, as producers are heading for the 2014 growing season.
- Toward the beginning of next week Environment Canada is forecasting above average temperatures across most of the province, which along recent rains will serve to jump start pasture growth in many areas.
- Those areas in the west with well above normal soil moisture reserves will benefit from below average precipitation over the next 6-weeks, while those areas across the east-central parts of the province require at least near normal precipitation accumulations over this same time frame.

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)

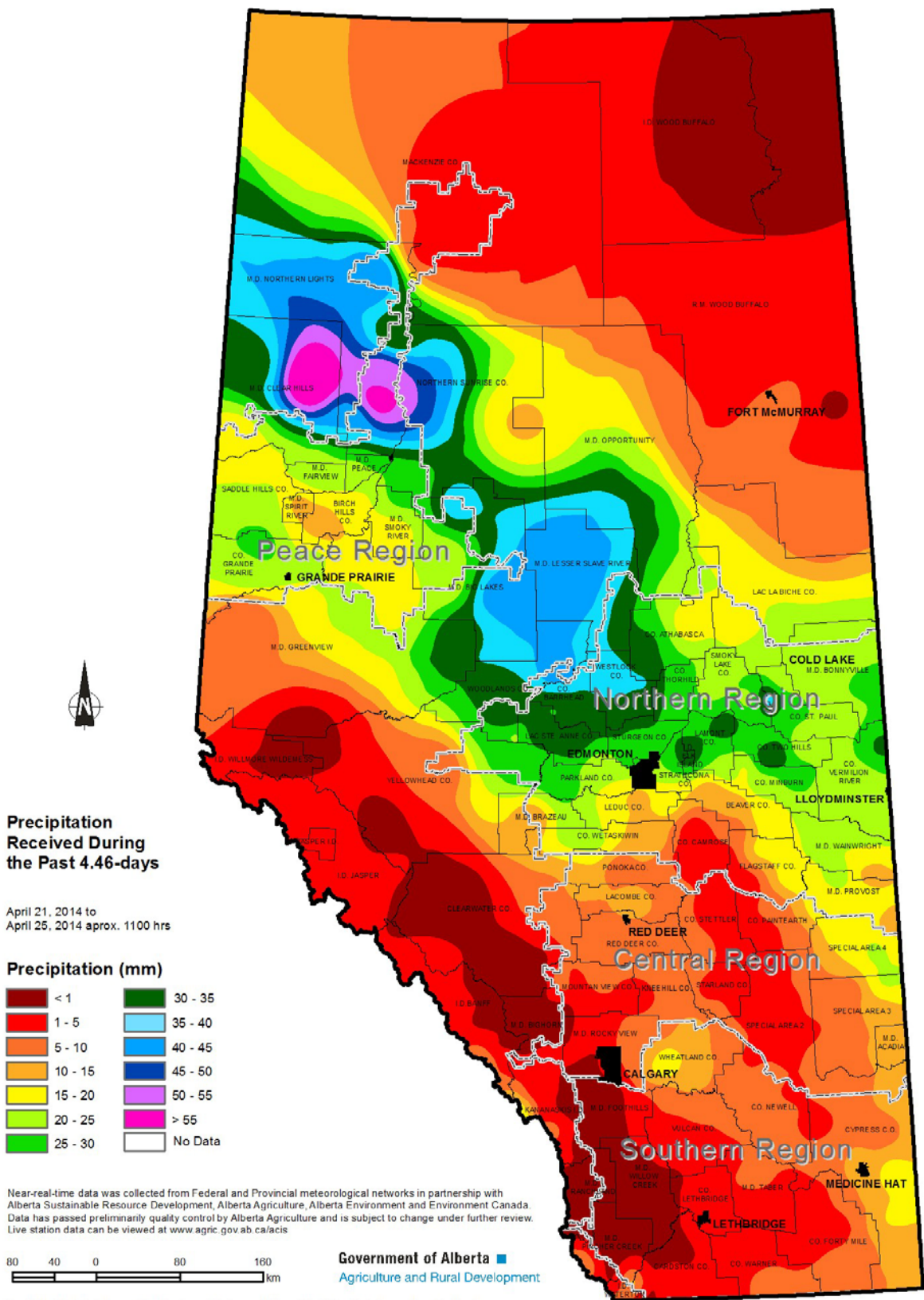
Ralph Wright, M. Sc.

Manager: Agro-meteorological Applications and Modelling Section

Work: 780-427-3556

Cell: 780-446-6831

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