

Moisture Situation Update – January 31, 2017

Synopsis

So far, the dry winter of 2016-2017 stands in stark contrast to the cool and wet conditions experienced this fall, across most of the province. Again this should serve as a strong reminder that Alberta's weather patterns are highly unpredictable and that abrupt transitions from periods of wet to dry and dry to wet are not uncommon.

As of January 31st, snow pack accumulations were generally below normal throughout most of the agricultural areas, with the exception of much of southern Alberta, where very light to no accumulations of snow are normal for this time of year (**see map 1**). Well below normal snowpack's are prevalent throughout much of east central Alberta, and most areas north of the Yellowhead highway, including much of the Peace Region. Most of these areas see snowpack this low on average less than once in 12 to 25 years, with many locals within this area seeing snowpack this low, on average less than once in 25 to 50 years.

For those areas that received excessive fall moisture, from a cropping perspective, this year's below normal snowpack may very well prove to be beneficial and may allow the land dry out quicker, ahead of this spring's planting activities. This is particularly true for areas lying west of Highway 2 from about Olds to the Swan Hills (**see map 2**). In contrast, parts of southcentral Alberta and the northern tip of the Peace Region are overall relatively dry. However, winter is far from over and one or two major snow storms could change the overall moisture situation.

Interesting Fact

The days (daylight hours) are getting longer. In fact, starting on or about February 1st across central Alberta daylight increases by about 3½-4 minutes a day, almost 30 minutes a week. This lasts all the way through to the first week of May. In comparison, back on January 7th, we were only gaining about two minutes of daylight per day (14 minutes per week). By June 1st, daily daylight increases are back down to about two minutes per day (14 minutes per week) and by the summer solstice on July 21st, they reach zero. This of course marks the point when daylight hours slowly start to decrease in the inexorable march towards winter.

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

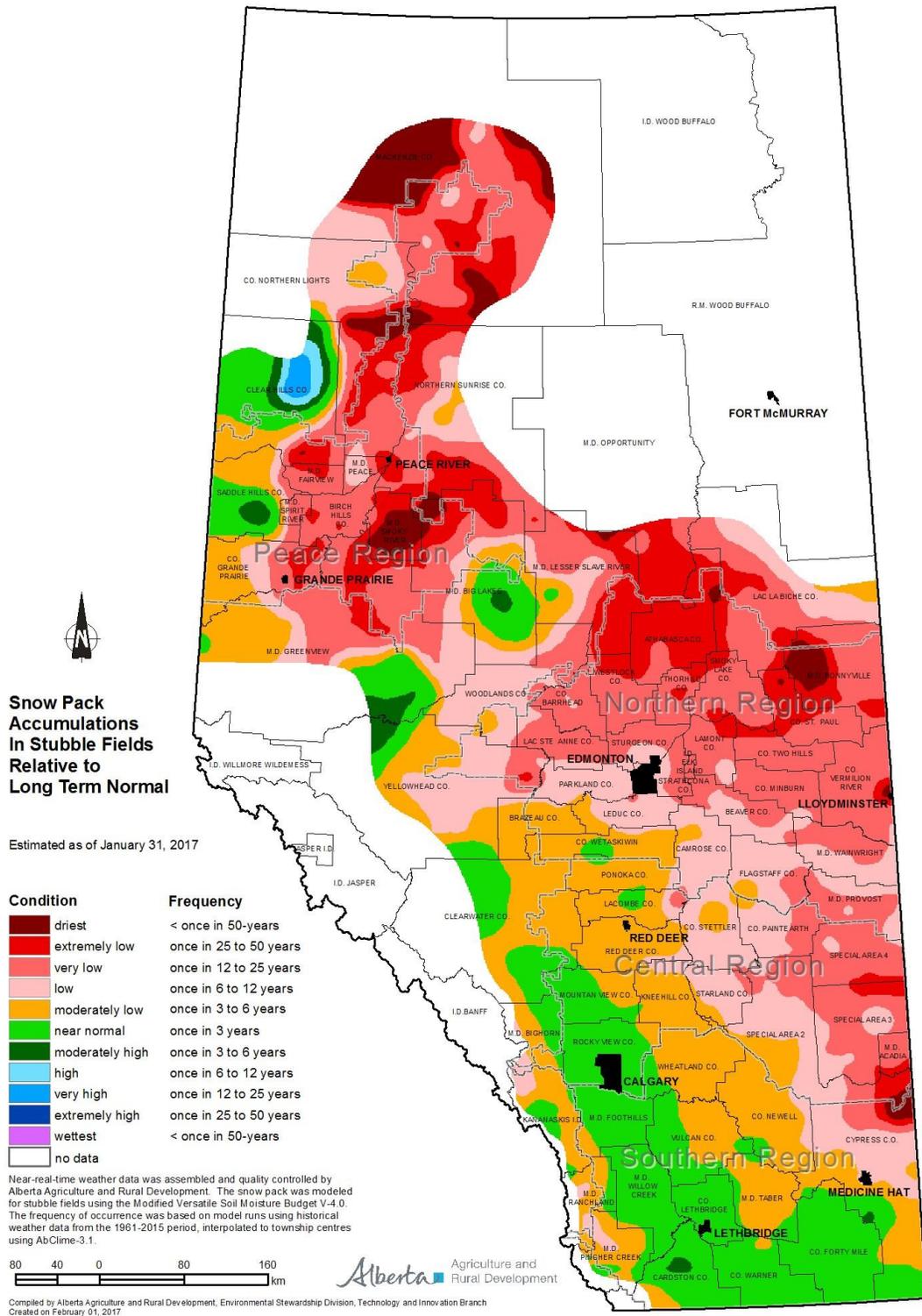
Near-real-time hourly station data can be viewed/downloaded at www.agriculture.alberta.ca/stations

Note: Data has about a two hour lag and is displayed in MST.

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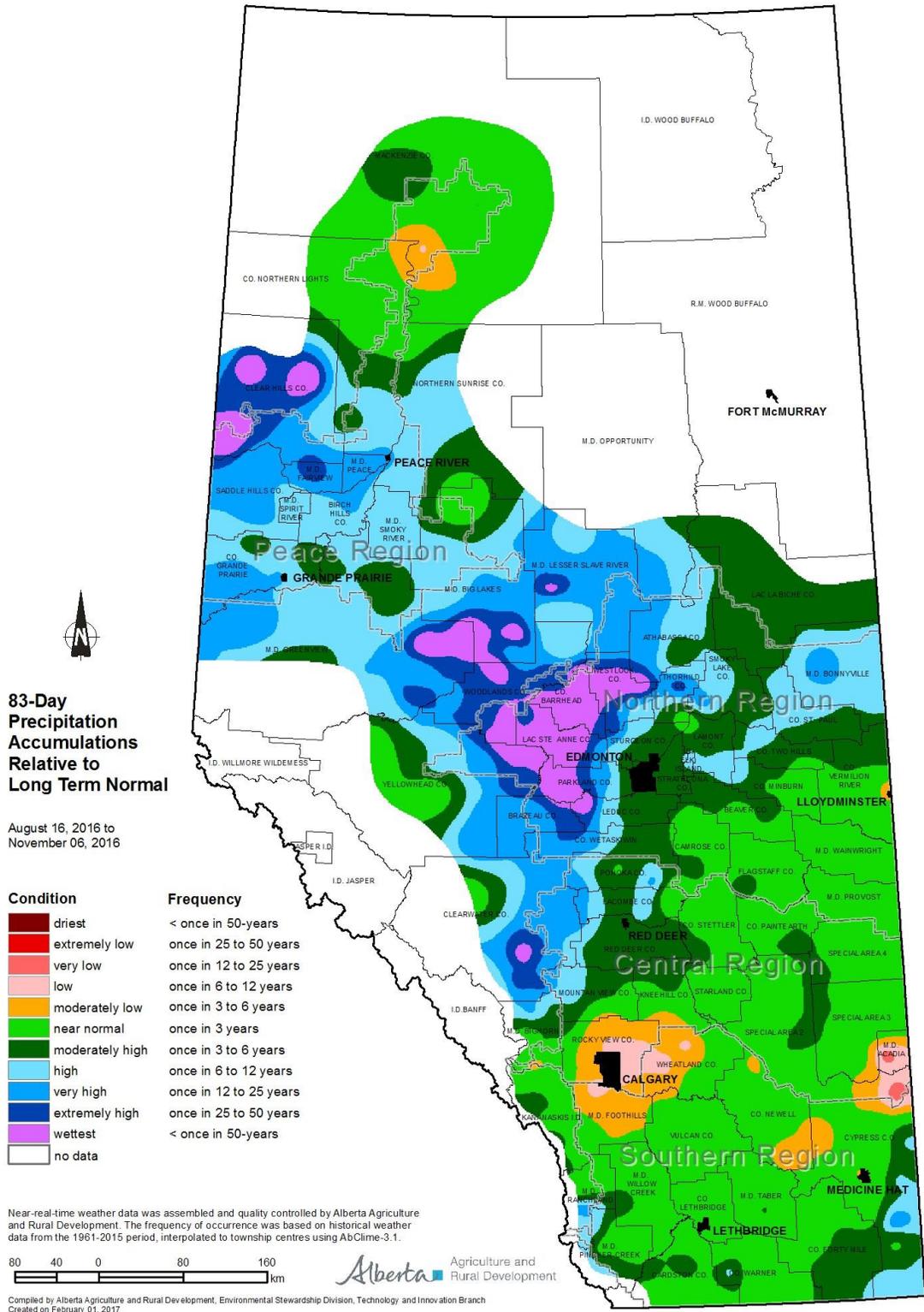
Map 1



Visit weatherdata.ca for additional maps and meteorological data

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Map 2



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