

# Upper Bow River Hazard Study

## Study update notice

---

We would like to provide an update on the status of the Upper Bow River Hazard Study.

The multi-year study started in fall 2015 and technical work on all components is now complete.

We recognize there is tremendous interest in the study and new flood mapping products. We are currently seeking public feedback on major study components as part of our study finalization process, including flood inundation maps that support local emergency response. We are planning future municipal and First Nation review and public engagement opportunities for other study components, including flood hazard maps used to inform long-term planning, and will provide an update when more information becomes available.

Participate in the engagement process and submit feedback by **Friday, January 15, 2021 at 4:30 pm**.

- <https://www.alberta.ca/upper-bow-river-flood-study-engagement.aspx>

The Upper Bow River Hazard Study is being completed under the provincial Flood Hazard Identification Program, the goals of which include enhancement of public safety and reduction of future flood damages through the identification of river and flood hazards.

More information about the Alberta Flood Hazard Identification Program can be found at:

- [www.floodhazard.alberta.ca](http://www.floodhazard.alberta.ca)

If you have any questions regarding this work, the project engagement and education specialist, Julia Frohlich, can be contacted at:

- Email: [julia.frohlich@gov.ab.ca](mailto:julia.frohlich@gov.ab.ca)
- Telephone: 403 355-2494

## Project background and study progress

The Upper Bow River Hazard Study assesses and identifies river-related hazards along 118 km of the Bow River, as well as 7 km of Policeman Creek, 1 km of Exshaw Creek, 5 km of Bighill Creek, and 5 km of Jumpingpound Creek. The study area extends from Banff National Park to Bears paw Dam, including through Canmore, Cochrane, Exshaw, Kananaskis Improvement District, Lac des Arcs, Municipal District of Bighorn, Rocky View County, and Stoney Nakoda First Nation.

The main study components outlined below include new hydraulic modelling and flood mapping, but all deliverables support local emergency response and land-use planning needs.

- **Survey and base data collection** – Under public engagement  
Hydraulic models and flood maps require high-accuracy base data. Field surveys and LiDAR remote sensing were used to collect river and floodplain elevations, channel cross section data, bridge and culvert information, and dedicated flood control structure details.
- **Hydrology assessment** – Under public engagement  
The hydrology assessment estimates flows for a wide range of possible floods along the Bow River and its tributaries, including the 1:2, 1:5, 1:10, 1:20, 1:35, 1:50, 1:75, 1:100, 1:200, 1:350, 1:500, 1:750, and 1:1000 floods. The analysis includes data from the 2013 flood.
- **Hydraulic river modelling** – Under public engagement  
A new hydraulic computer model of the river system was created using new survey data and modern tools. The model was calibrated using surveyed highwater marks from past floods to ensure that results for different floods are reasonable.
- **Flood inundation mapping** – Under public engagement  
Flood maps for thirteen different sized floods, based on the hydraulic model results and the hydrology assessment, have been produced. Flood inundation maps can be used for emergency response planning and to inform local infrastructure design. These maps identify areas of direct flooding and areas that could be flooded if local berms fail.
- **Ice jam assessment** – Under public engagement  
Ice conditions are known to have caused significant historical flooding along the Bow River through Cochrane. This assessment includes an analysis of the ice jam flood history along this reach and flood inundation maps for the 1:50, 1:100, and 1:200 ice jam floods.
- **Flood hazard mapping** – Under internal review  
Flood hazard mapping divides the 1:100 floodplain into floodway and flood fringe zones, to identify where flooding is deepest and most destructive. The flood hazard mapping reflects the worst-case flood hazard of the open water and ice jam scenarios. These maps can be used to help guide long-term development planning.
- **Flood risk assessment and inventory** – Under internal review  
An inventory of structures at risk of flooding for all of the mapped flood scenarios can support future flood damage assessments.
- **Channel stability investigation** – Under public engagement  
This investigation provides insight into general channel stability along the Bow River, and compares current and historic riverbank locations and channel cross sections as far back as 1949 using historic aerial photos.