

# Athabasca Flood Hazard Study

## Study update notice

---

We would like to provide an update on the status of the Athabasca Flood Hazard Study.

The study started in spring 2019 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 assessing municipal feedback on a number of study components as part of our study finalization process, including flood inundation maps that support local emergency response. We are exploring opportunities for public engagement on these components in fall 2020. We are also exploring future municipal 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.

The Athabasca Flood 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. The provincial study was co-funded through the federal National Disaster Mitigation Program.

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 Athabasca Flood Hazard Study assesses and identifies flood hazards along 8 km of the Athabasca River, 8 km of Muskeg Creek, and 6 km of the Tawatinaw River, through Athabasca and Athabasca County.

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** – Municipal review complete, assessing feedback  
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** – Municipal review complete, assessing feedback  
The hydrology assessment estimates flows for a wide range of possible floods along the Athabasca River, Muskeg Creek, and the Tawatinaw River, 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.
- **Hydraulic river modelling** – Municipal review complete, assessing feedback  
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** – Municipal review complete, assessing feedback  
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** – Municipal review complete, assessing feedback  
Ice conditions are known to have caused significant historical flooding in Athabasca. This assessment includes an analysis of the ice jam flood history in the area 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.