

Hydro and FRIENDS unplugged

Why the spring instream flow release cannot be delayed

Spring has sprung, the geese are back and the spring instream flow will soon be released into the Rupert. In March, record high temperatures were felt throughout Québec. The spring instream flow will probably be released as of May 8th; this means that the river's flow will be increased from 127 m³/s to 416 m³/s over a five-day period and then maintained at 416 m³/s for 45 days, to allow for spawning.



The Rupert Spillway

In 2011, the release of the spring instream flow, combined with the effects of record precipitation the previous fall and winter, caused problems for a number of land-users along the Rupert, particularly for Nemaska residents who regularly hunt goose along the river's shores. According to the hunters, the water levels rose so quickly upstream of the weirs that it became difficult—if not impossible—to hunt goose there. Other areas, now permanently submerged, can no longer be used as hunting grounds.

Spawning comes first

At the request of Nemaska land users, HQ/SEBJ considered the possibility of delaying the release of the spring instream flow by a week. The issue was looked at from all sides: disrupted hunting sites were identified, the results

of the follow-up studies on spawning were examined and flood-recurrence probabilities were analyzed. A joint decision was made in concert with the members of the Monitoring Committee that no changes could be made to the instream flow regime without several more years' worth of spawning data, especially given the positive results obtained since the partial Rupert diversion.

Solutions based on needs

The land users were not left high and dry, however. Meetings were held with the tallymen and their families who had lost hunting grounds due to high water levels, to explain the situation and to encourage them to propose solutions based on their individual needs.

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