

1. Why is the Nechako River so low right now?

BC Works is maintaining the minimum ecological flow from Skins Lake Spillway at 33 m³/s since September 1st, which is the typical release during Fall and Winter seasons. The total flow that comes through to Vanderhoof also includes flow from unregulated streams, such as Nautley and Stellako. Because of the record drought BC is facing, these streams are providing lower than average water into the system. Currently, the flow is at 44 m³/s which is 12% lower than the median of 50 m³/s seen at this time of the year. Even though we are releasing the same amount of water as we typically do during this time of the year, unregulated streams are not adding the same volume as they would normally.

2. Is Rio Tinto still selling power to BC Hydro through this drought condition?

BC Works is adjusting our power generation operations to support the health of the Nechako River through this severe drought, and we are working with BC Hydro to ensure residents and businesses in the region receive the power they need.

3. What is the current intake of water in Kemano?

The current intake of water currently in Kemano is approximately 100 cubic metres per second. This is approximately 23 percent lower than our average intake of approximately 130 cubic metres per second during this time of the year. We have reduced our intake in Kemano due to the record drought conditions.

4. What is the current state of the Nechako Reservoir?

The Nechako Reservoir is 48 percent full, which is lower than our historical average of 60 – 65 percent for this time of the year.

5. Is the current drought impacting BC Works' smelter operations?

The proactive reduction in energy production at Kemano has allowed us to reduce the risk to the newly restarted smelter from a sudden and unexpected power reduction. At this stage energy generation is supporting smelter needs, but this will be constantly re-evaluated as the situation and winter progresses.

6. Does the low level of the river present safety risks?

Low water represents increased navigational challenges for boats, floatplanes and all river users. As always, community members should use caution when navigating on the river.

7. Does Rio Tinto take community input into account when planning its power operations?

Yes. We are in the middle of broad-based engagement through the Water Engagement Initiative (WEI), where we are working with leaders and community members to understand concerns about the current drought and our operations, while finding shared solutions to benefit the health of the Nechako watershed. In addition to the WEI, we also host regular Community Leaders meetings during which we discuss flows, current operations and answer questions from leaders across the watershed.

8. Who do we contact if we have more questions?

We are here to answer any questions you may have. Please visit us at the Rio Tinto BC Works community office located at 158 Stewart Street West, Vanderhoof, BC. You can also reach out directly to Aman Parhar, Community Advisor via phone at 250-407-3514 or email aman.parhar@riotinto.com