



Spring Breakup Outlook for Alaska

Valid May 8, 2026

[Alaska-Pacific River Forecast Center](https://www.weather.gov/aprfc)

Next Product Issuance: May 15, 2026

www.weather.gov/aprfc

2026 Spring Breakup Outlook for Alaska

Updates from the previous Spring Breakup Outlook

We are at the midpoint of the spring breakup season. Mild temperatures and greater overall cloud cover have worked to delay breakup and reduce flood impacts so far by slowing ice and snow melt. The overall breakup flood threat is trending towards normal. As we look into the next few weeks, temperatures are expected to remain mild. The things to watch:

- Middle and Lower Yukon River - Breakup has progressed to Ft Yukon. The temperatures so far have been below-to-near normal, but this week they are expected to have lows above freezing for the first time this spring. Temperatures on the Lower Yukon are forecast to be cooler. Hydrologists will be watching to see how the breakup front from the Upper Yukon impacts the in place ice on the middle and lower river.
- Lower Kuskokwim River - The breakup front is at Aniak, and hydrologists will monitor how the breakup front from the upper river will impact the yet untested ice on the lower Kusko.
- Breakup and snowmelt have not yet begun on the North Slope. Snowpack is normal to above normal.

Flooding and ice jams have occurred this spring on the Black River at Chalkyitsik, the lower Chatanika River north of Murphy Dome, and the Kuskokwim River at Aniak; snowmelt flooding was also reported near Anderson due to a blocked culvert.

The breakup outlook contains an updated analysis of the snowpack, short and long term temperature predictions and revised breakup timing for individual communities.

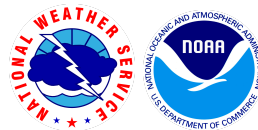
This outlook is based on observed snowpack, ice thickness reports, and seasonal temperature outlooks. The term 'normal' is defined as being at or near the climatological average, which is typically defined over a 30-year period of record.

Statewide Flood Potential Overview

The breakup flooding potential is normal across most of mainland Alaska. With the Upper Yukon and Kuskokwim Rivers broken up, the remaining areas of concern are the Lower Yukon, Lower Kuskokwim, and North Slope. The increased threat in these areas is driven by a combination of above-average snowpack, average to above-average ice thickness, high river levels at freeze-up, rough ice or freeze-up ice jams reported in several Interior locations, and the delayed snowmelt from below-average April temperatures. In contrast, the Koyukuk, Kobuk, as well as

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ivers across Southcentral Alaska, have a lower breakup flood threat due to below-average snowpack. Communities are encouraged to review their flood response plans and preparedness actions in advance of breakup.

Beyond main river ice effects during breakup, snowmelt flooding in small channels and ponding on frozen ground during warm days is possible. Ice may block these channels, causing rapid rises, strong currents, and localized flooding. Use caution when traveling off main rivers and stay aware of recent weather and river conditions.

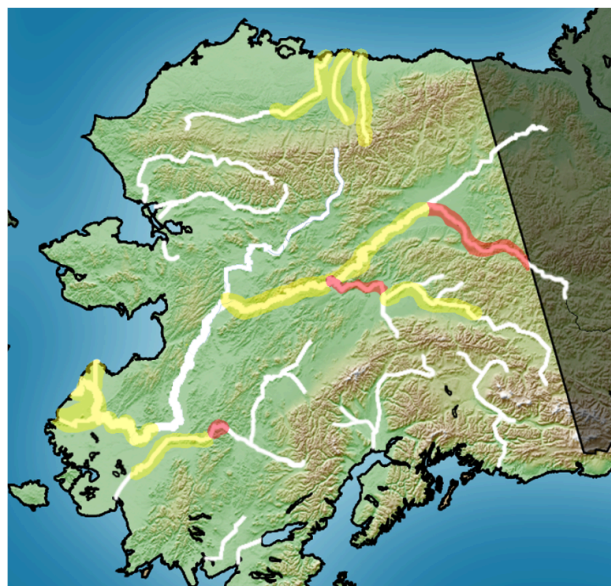
2026 Breakup Flooding Potential

Areas of Greatest Concern:

- Upper Yukon River
- Lower Tanana River
- Kuskokwim at Crooked Creek

Other Areas with Elevated Concern:

- Middle and Lower Yukon River
- Middle Tanana River
- Middle and Lower Kuskokwim River
- North Slope



Snowpack

Both the [May 1 snowpack analysis](#) from the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), along with the updated ERA5 snow water equivalent estimates (below), indicated a highly variable snowpack across Alaska. The Upper Yukon and Tanana Regions have an above average for May 1 primarily from a late melt onset, but also a snowy winter. There has been notable low-elevation snowmelt across a large portion of the interior and southwest, but the mid-to-high elevation snowpack continues to be robust. However, low elevation snowpack persists near the Yukon River delta.

River Ice Observations

Interior Alaska experienced its coldest winter in approximately 30 to 50 years, resulting in generally above-average river ice thickness based on measurements from late February through mid April.

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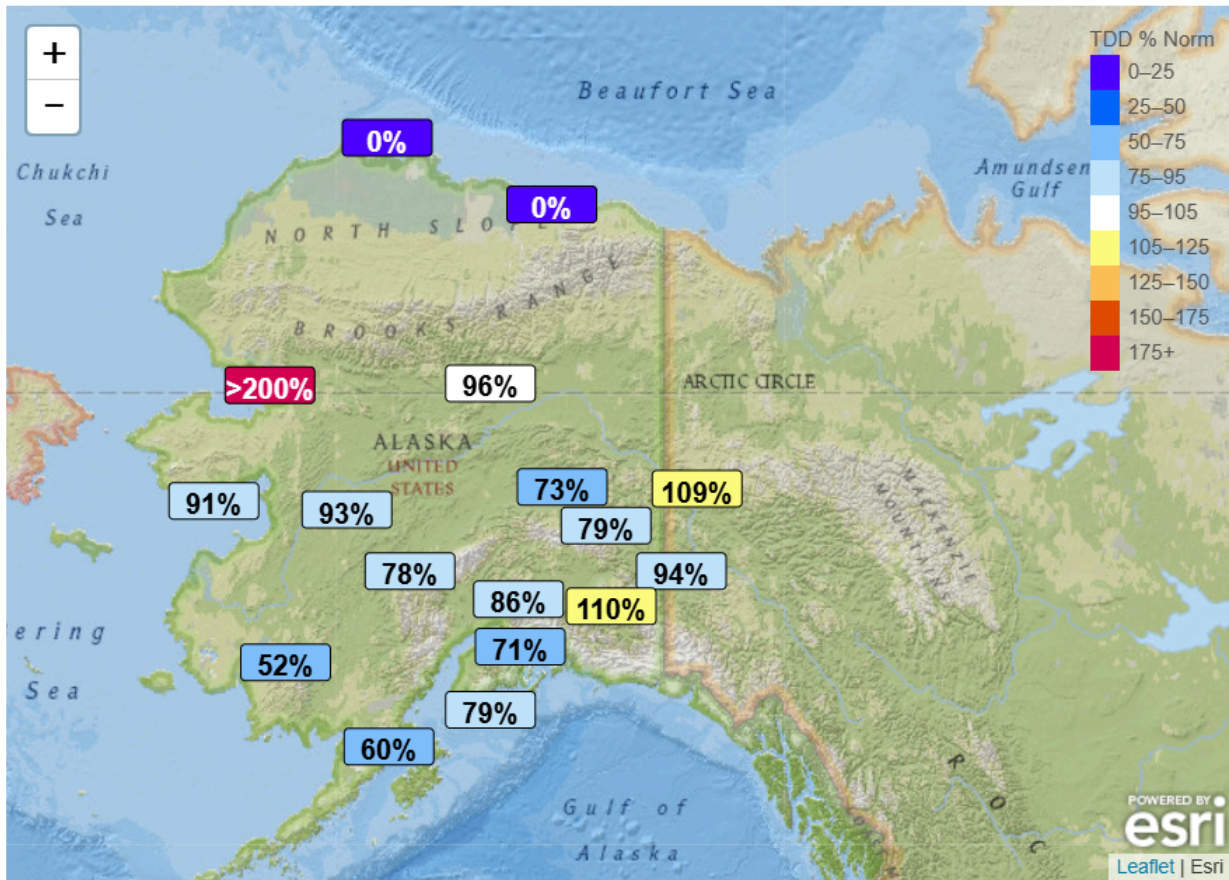
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Many Interior rivers also saw high freeze-up stages and jumbled ice conditions due to freeze-up ice jams. Notably, on the Lower Yukon River, the USGS gage at Pilot Station recorded its highest freeze-up stage on record. Farther downstream, residents in Emmonak and Alakanuk reported rough ice conditions and strong, well-established shorefast sea ice at the river mouth. Although a midwinter ice jam below Crooked Creek caused no flooding this year, the stretch of rough, broken ice between Aniak and Bethel now demands attention. On the lower Kuskokwim, the ice in the Tuluksak River is shifting, and the Kwethluk River, and Napaskiak Slough have been open for more than a week. Based on these observations the likelihood of ice jam formation is increased and the risk of flooding is elevated during spring breakup.

Thawing degree days (TDD) are used to measure the accumulation of warmth over time. As TDDs increase in spring, they reflect the progressive melting of snowpack and weakening of river ice. The current TDD map points to a notably delayed spring warm-up over much of Alaska. Across most of the Southwest and Interior Alaska, values generally range from about 50%–100% of normal, suggesting below-normal thaw progression and a slower weakening of ice cover. These conditions continue to favor a later breakup timing, though conditions could still shift quickly with sustained warming.

Thawing Degree Days - Percent of Normal



[Link to thawing degree day map](#)

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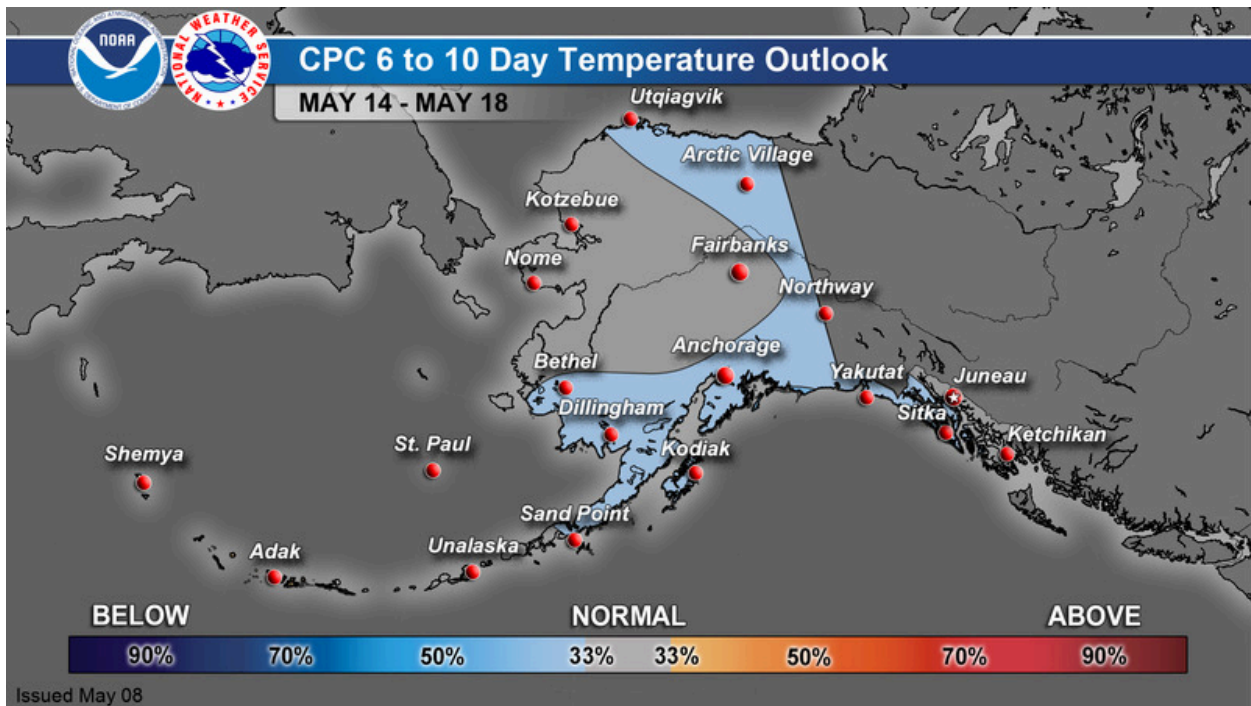
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Climate Outlook

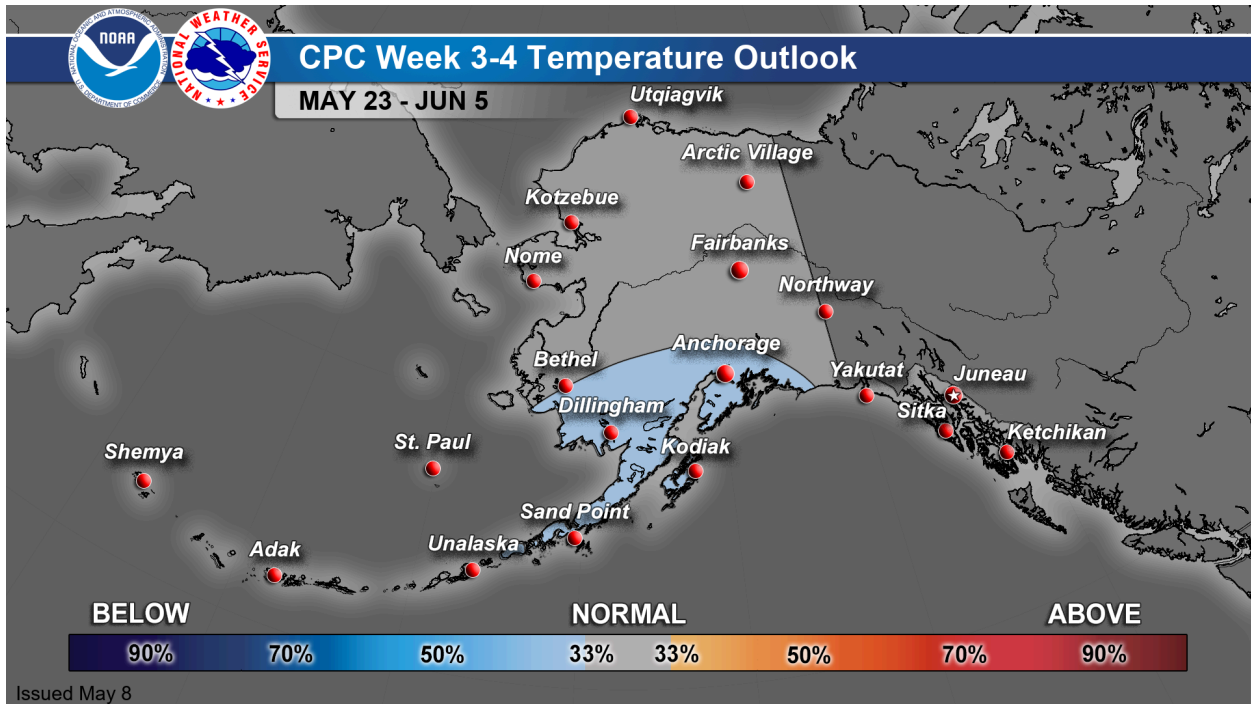
The climate outlook favors a modulation in flood potential. Currently, the near-term forecast indicates a gradual warm-up, with temperatures remaining near or slightly below seasonal averages. Additionally, above-average cloud cover is slowing the melt rate of both ice and snow. The Climate Prediction Center's (CPC) latest outlook favors near-normal to below-normal temperatures across most of Alaska through early to mid-May. Extended-range guidance suggests a continuation of this pattern, moving towards increased likelihood of climate normal temperatures in late May and early June, though forecast uncertainty increases during this later period.

Spring temperatures in April and May are the most critical factors in determining the severity of river ice breakups. Dynamic breakups, which carry a higher risk of ice jam flooding, typically require cooler-than-average temperatures in early April followed by a rapid transition to summer-like heat in late April or early May.



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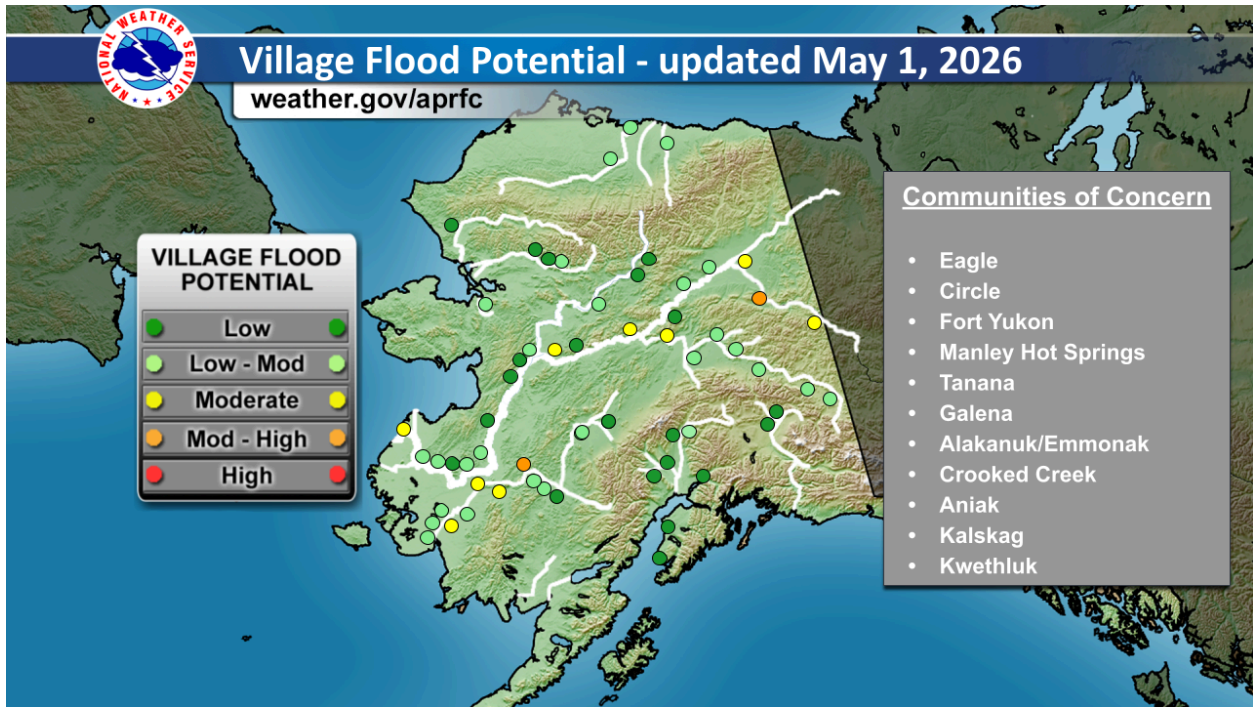
[Link to CPC Outlooks](#)

Breakup Flood Potential and Timing

The likelihood of flooding from snowmelt and/or ice jams is initially based on flood frequency within the 2000–2021 historical record and then adjusted to reflect current conditions. The remaining communities which have an elevated flood threat are along the Lower Yukon, Lower Kuskokwim, and North Slope.

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For more detail and to see the Flood Potential Map refer to the APRFC website at:

<https://www.weather.gov/aprfc/floodpotential>

The current outlook indicates a later-than-normal breakup, with most rivers across the interior and southwest Alaska forecasted to break up several days later than normal. Breakup timing across all other areas is expected to be near normal.

The following tables give an estimation of snowmelt runoff volume, flood potential, and forecast breakup date range for various locations across the state. Median breakup dates are for the period 1980 through 2023 and are calculated for locations with at least 5 years of data. Forecast breakup timing is expressed as a range based on snowmelt runoff volume and flood potential. Locations where breakup has already occurred are identified with two asterisks following a single date; for example, Kuskokwim River at Nikolai breakup occurred on April 25, 2026 (4/25**).

Tanana-Fairbanks						
River-Reach	Location	Snowmelt Runoff Volume	Village Flood Potential	Median Breakup Date (1980-2025)	Years of Record (1980-2025)	Forecast Breakup Date Range
Chena River		Above				
	Chena Lakes		Broken Up			5/2**

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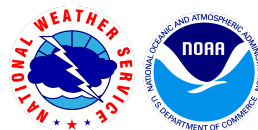


	Project					
Tanana River		Above				
	Northway		Broken Up	4/26	32	5/2**
	Salcha		Broken Up	4/26	5	5/2**
	Fairbanks		Broken Up	4/30	23	5/4**
	Nenana		Broken Up	4/30	46	5/4**
	Manley HS		Broken Up	5/3	33	5/6**

Yukon River						
River-Reach	Location	Snowmelt Runoff Volume	Village Flood Potential	Median Breakup Date (1980-2025)	Years of Record (1980-2025)	Forecast Breakup Date Range
Yukon River (Upper)		Above				
	Dawson, YT		Broken Up	5/4	46	5/5**
	Eagle		Broken Up	5/4	46	5/5**
	Circle		Broken Up	5/9	42	5/7**
	Fort Yukon		Broken Up	5/11	42	5/8**
	Beaver		Low-Moderate	5/11	30	5/8-5/10
	Stevens Village		Low-Moderate	5/11	28	5/9-5/11
	Rampart		Low	5/12	29	5/9-5/11
Yukon River (Mid)		Above				
	Tanana		Moderate	5/8	41	5/9-5/12
	Ruby		Low	5/9	40	5/11-5/13
	Galena		Moderate	5/11	45	5/13-5/15
	Koyukuk		Low-Moderate	5/10	19	5/13-5/15
	Nulato		Low	5/12	27	5/13-5/15
	Kaltag		Low	5/12	40	5/15-5/17
Yukon River (Lower)		Above				
	Grayling		Low	5/12	17	5/17-5/19
	Anvik		Low	5/14	37	5/17-5/19

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	Holy Cross		Low-Moderate	5/14	39	5/17-5/19
	Russian Mission		Low-Moderate	5/15	39	5/18-5/20
	Marshall		Low	5/15	34	5/18-5/20
	Pilot Station		Low-Moderate	5/13	29	5/18-5/20
	Mountain Village		Low-Moderate	5/15	39	5/20-5/22
	Alakanuk/Emmonak		Moderate	5/20	41	5/23-5/25

Kuskokwim River						
River-Reach	Location	Snowmelt Runoff Volume	Village Flood Potential	Median Breakup Date (1980-2025)	Years of Record (1980-2025)	Forecast Breakup Date Range
Kuskokwim River		Below				
	Nikolai		Broken Up	4/23	40	4/25**
	McGrath		Low	5/4	46	5/8-5/10
	Stony River		Broken Up	5/2	38	5/7**
	Sleetmute		Broken Up	5/2	37	5/6**
	Red Devil		Broken Up	5/3	40	5/3**
	Crooked Creek		Broken Up	5/4	40	5/4**
	Napaimute		Broken Up	5/1	13	5/3**
	Chuathbaluk		Broken Up	5/3	15	5/6**
	Aniak		Broken Up	5/5	43	5/6**
	Kalskag		Moderate	5/5	37	5/9-5/10
	Tuluksak		Low-Moderate	5/7	34	5/10-5/11
	Akiak		Low-Moderate	5/8	40	5/10-5/11
	Akiakchak		Low	5/15	11	5/10-5/11
	Kwethluk		Moderate	5/5	13	5/10-5/11
	Bethel		Low-Moderate	5/9	46	5/11-5/12
	Napaskiak		Low-Moderate	5/8	6	5/12-5/13
	Napakiak		Low-Moderate	5/10	31	5/12-5/13

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Southeast-Southcentral						
River-Reach	Location	Snowmelt Runoff Volume	Village Flood Potential	Median Breakup Date (1980-2025)	Years of Record (1980-2025)	Forecast Breakup Date Range
Southeast		Average				
Kenai River		Below				
Anchor River		Below				4/19**
Matanuska River		Below				
Susitna River		Below				
	Gold Creek		Broken Up	5/2	10	5/6**
	Sunshine		Broken Up	5/2	37	5/6**
Talkeetna		Below				
	Talkeetna		Broken Up	4/28	5	5/6**
Yentna River		Below				
	Lake Creek		Broken Up	5/1	34	5/6**
Skwentna River		Below				
	Skwentna		Broken Up	4/30	31	5/6**
Copper River		Average				
	Gakona		Broken Up	5/1	36	5/6**
	Gulkana		Broken Up	5/1	34	5/6**

North Slope-Northwest						
River-Reach	Location	Snowmelt Runoff Volume	Village Flood Potential	Median Breakup Date (1980-2025)	Years of Record (1980-2025)	Forecast Breakup Date Range
Koyukuk River		Below				
	Bettles		Low	5/10	44	5/9-5/15
	Allakaket		Low	5/11	40	5/10-5/16
	Hughes		Low-Moderate	5/11	39	5/10-5/16
Seward		Below				

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Peninsula						
	Buckland		Low-Moderate	5/18	36	5/16-5/22
Kobuk River		Below				
	Kobuk		Low-Moderate	5/14	42	5/12-5/18
	Shungnak		Low	5/16	34	5/14-5/20
	Ambler		Low	5/16	40	5/14-5/20
Noatak River		Average				
	Noatak		Low	5/19	27	5/16-5/22
Brooks Range		Above				
	Colville at Umiat		Low-Moderate	5/25	25	5/22-5/28
	Colville at Colville Village		Low-Moderate	6/3	23	5/31-6/6
Sagavanirktok River		Above				
	Dalton Highway		Low-Moderate			

The next Spring Breakup Outlook will be issued on May 15, 2026.

For more information and to submit comments, please contact:

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