LEVEL news

Great Lakes - St. Lawrence River Water Levels

Volume 18 Number 4 **April 23, 2010**

Water Levels Expected to Rise on All Lakes during April

Daily water levels fell by 2 cm on Lake Superior during the month of March, twice its long-term average decline of 1 cm experienced during this month of year. The level of Lakes Michigan-Huron fell by 1 cm in March, instead of beginning its annual seasonal rise by increasing a few centimetres. The level of Lake St. Clair recovered in early March from the effects of a major ice jam in the St. Clair River in February, but then its level fell again when ice in the river once again restricted its main in-flow late in the month. By the end of March, with the ice in the river gone, Lake St. Clair's level had risen once again. Meanwhile, Lake Erie's level rose by 16 cm in March, which is a few centimetres more than its average rise of 13 cm for the month of March. On the other hand, Lake Ontario's level rose a few centimetres less than its average March rise of 15 cm, increasing by 12 cm.

As indicated in the water level information table provided below, levels on each of the Great Lakes and Lake St. Clair are below their respective long-term averages for this time of year and lower than they were at the same time last year. The level of Lake Superior is expected to rise gradually in April as it begins its annual seasonal rise, which it typically does during the month. Lakes Michigan-Huron is also expected to begin its annual seasonal rise, albeit one month later than previous years. Water levels on lakes Erie and Ontario are expected to continue their annual seasonal rise during April.

Winter Precipitation

According to preliminary data, the Great Lakes basin precipitation for March was 43 per cent of its long term average (1900-2009 period-of-record average) for this time of year. The 2010 winter total accumulated precipitation (the sum of January through March) set new record low

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Great Lakes Water Level Information

Lake	March 2010 Monthly Mean Level		Beginning-of-April 2010 Level	
	Compared to Monthly Average (1918-2009)	Compared to One Year Ago	Compared to Beginning-of-Month Average (1918-2009)	Compared to One Year Ago
Superior	15 cm below	same	16 cm below	2 cm below
Michigan-Huron	22 cm below	same	24 cm below	5 cm below
St. Clair	14 cm below	30 cm below	16 cm below	25 cm below
Erie	10 cm below	34 cm below	10 cm below	33 cm below
Ontario	13 cm below	37 cm below	13 cm below	34 cm below

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totals for the Lake Superior and Lakes Michigan-Huron basins, as well as for the Great Lakes basin as a whole when compared to 1900-2009 data.

Summer Outlook

Although it's impossible to predict at this point in time, we can look to the Monthly Water Levels Bulletin prepared by the Canadian Hydrographic Service for an idea of what might be expected for the upcoming summer months.

The March 2010 edition of the Bulletin, found at: **http://www.waterlevels.gc.ca/C&A/tidal_e.html** contains the water levels forecast for April through September 2010. A probable range of future levels is provided for each of the lakes in the Bulletin. Based on the latest forecast, it looks like below-average water levels conditions may be experienced on each of the lakes over the next six months. There is also a good chance that levels will be several centimetres lower than they were at the same time last year, with the exception of Lake Superior, where levels comparable to last year's are more likely. What actually happens will depend on water supply conditions over the next few months. As can be seen in the Bulletin, the possible range in the forecast is quite large at the beginning of the summer. For this reason it's a good idea to check the Bulletin at the beginning of each month for an update on water level conditions and the latest six-month forecast.

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March Precipitation over the Great Lakes *

Great Lakes Basin	**43%**	**Lake Erie**	**61%**
Lake Superior	**25%**	**Including Lake St. Clair)**	
Lakes Michigan-Huron	**30%**	**Lake Ontario**	**84%**

March Outflows from the Great Lakes *

Lake Superior	**84%**	**Lake Erie**	**96%**
Lake Huron	**101%**	**Lake Ontario**	**102%**

*** As a percentage of the long-term March average.**
NOTE: These figures are preliminary