



LEVELnews

Great Lakes – St. Lawrence River Water Levels Relatively Dry Conditions Return During March

After a few months of generally wetter-than-average conditions, relatively dry conditions returned to the Great lakes basin in March. As is normal for this time of year, water levels on each of the Great Lakes, except Lake Superior, began or continued their seasonal rise in March, but at a slower-than-average rate due to the relatively dry conditions. Lake Superior, which typically does not begin to rise until April, fell more than average during March. Downstream of the lakes,

below-average outflows from Lake Ontario and near-average outflows from the Ottawa River resulted in water levels at Montreal Harbour remaining well below average for this time of year.

- Lake Superior’s level fell by 4 cm during March, 3 cm more than it has on average over the 1918–2012 period of record.
- Lake Michigan–Huron’s increased 2 cm during March, one-half its average March increase of 4 cm.

- Lake Erie’s level rose by 2 cm during March, 11 cm less than its average February increase of 13 cm.
- Lake Ontario’s rose by 4 cm during March, 11 cm less than its average March increase of 15 cm.
- Montreal Harbour’s monthly mean level in March was 82 cm below average and 111 cm lower than it was during March of last year.

Relative to their beginning-of-April levels and assuming **(continued on next page)**

Great Lakes Water Level Information				
Lake	March 2013 Monthly Mean Level		Beginning-of-April 2013 Level	
	Compared to Monthly Average (1918–2012)	Compared to One Year Ago	Compared to Beginning-of-Month Average (1918–2012)	Compared to One Year Ago
Superior	32 cm below	2 cm below	33 cm below	8 cm below
Michigan–Huron	67 cm below	37 cm below	68 cm below	39 cm below
St. Clair	26 cm below	35 cm below	34 cm below	41 cm below
Erie	15 cm below	44 cm below	22 cm below	44 cm below
Ontario	10 cm below	39 cm below	17 cm below	37 cm below

average water supply conditions, the levels of each of the lakes are expected to rise during April. Montreal Harbour's monthly mean level in April is expected to rise compared to its March level.

Summer Outlook

We've only turned the corner into spring and people are beginning to wonder what water levels will be like this summer on the Great Lakes. It's a question that is asked a lot at this time of year, but one that can't be answered with a high degree of certainty so early into the season. We can however, look to the monthly *Water Levels* bulletin prepared by the Canadian Hydrographic

Service for an idea of the range of levels we might see over the next six months. The March 2013 edition of the bulletin found at: www.waterlevels.gc.ca/C&A/bulletin_e.html contains a six-month water levels forecast from April to September 2013 for each of the Great Lakes, Lake St. Clair and Montreal Harbour.

Right now, it looks like the levels of lakes Superior, Michigan–Huron, St. Clair and Erie will remain below average throughout this spring and summer. Levels on these lakes will most likely be lower than they were last year, and Lake Michigan–Huron could set new record low levels if it experiences low water supply conditions. In Lake Ontario's case, there is a possibility that its level could climb above average if it receives average or higher water supplies over the next few months. The current forecast also suggests that levels on Lake Ontario will be higher than they were last year.

Although water levels are likely to fall somewhere within the probable ranges provided, what actually happens will

depend on the water supply conditions over the next few months. For up-to-date information on water level conditions, visit the Canadian Hydrographic Service website at: www.waterlevels.gc.ca/C&A/tidal_e.html

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March Precipitation over the Great Lakes*

Great Lakes Basin	61%	Lake Erie	43%
Lake Superior	88%	(including Lake St. Clair)	
Lake Michigan–Huron	65%	Lake Ontario	32%

March Outflows from the Great Lakes*

Lake Superior	82%	Lake Erie	97%
Lake Michigan–Huron	91%	Lake Ontario	95%

* As a percentage of the long-term March average.

NOTE: These figures are preliminary.