



Warm Weather Leads to Early Snow Melt **End of February Sees Exceptionally Warm Temperatures**

Exceptionally warm weather over the last few days of February brought precipitation in the form of rain and led to an early snow melt over much of the Great Lakes - St. Lawrence River basin. While the levels on all lakes, except Lake Superior, rose slightly in response to these factors, only Lake Ontario appears to be experiencing a sustained rising trend. Unless this early loss of the basin's snow cover is followed by an exceptionally wet spring, water levels on all lakes will remain well below average this summer.

Lake Superior's level declined steadily throughout

February ending the month 6 cm lower than it was at the start. The lake began March at about the same level as last year, 21 cm below its long-term average and 14 cm below Chart Datum for the lake.

Levels on Lakes Michigan-Huron fell a couple of centimetres during the mid part of February, then recovered at month's end due to basin precipitation and runoff. As a result, the lakes' beginning of March level was virtually the same as that recorded at the beginning of February. The lakes remain about 45 cm below average, 38 cm below last year's level, 12 cm below Chart Datum

and just 30 cm above the record low levels recorded in 1964.

The warm weather also helped ease ice conditions on the St. Clair River allowing inflows from Lake Huron to Lake St. Clair to increase. As a result, Lake St. Clair levels recovered from the small, but sharp, drop that occurred in late January and persisted throughout the first three weeks of February. At the beginning of March, Lake St. Clair remains about 15 cm below average, down 34 cm from last year's level at this time.

Similar to Lakes Michigan-Huron, the levels of Lakes (continued on next page)

Water Level Advisory

Water levels on Lake Superior and Lakes Michigan-Huron are presently below Chart Datum. Water levels on Lake St. Clair, Lake Erie and on the St. Lawrence River at Montréal are presently above Chart Datum, but considerably below their all-time average for this time of year. The level of Lake Ontario at present is slightly below its all-time average for this time of year. Mariners should exercise extreme caution throughout the entire system, especially on Lake Superior and Lakes Michigan-Huron where water levels are below Chart Datum and may remain so for the next several months.



Erie and Ontario also fell a few centimetres over the first three weeks of February only to recover during the last week of the month. Of these lakes, only Lake Ontario appears to be experiencing a sustained rising trend. At the beginning of March, Lake Erie's level was virtually the same as that recorded a month earlier. Lake Erie remains about 23 cm below average, 35 cm below last year's level. Lake Ontario was about 11 cm below average, 6 cm higher than at this time last year.

While water levels in the St. Lawrence River rose somewhat in late February and early March as a result of the snow melt along the St. Lawrence valley, they will decline once runoff conditions diminish. Levels on Lake St. Louis and at Montréal harbour are

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February Precipitation Over Great Lakes

As a percentage of the long-term February average:

Great Lakes Basin	93%	Lake Erie	75%
Lake Superior	68%	(including Lake St. Clair)	
Lakes Michigan-Huron	111%	Lake Ontario	90%

NOTE: These figures are preliminary

expected to rise temporarily once snow melts on the Ottawa River basin; however, they are expected to remain below average thereafter. Lake St. Lawrence, on the other hand, should see above average summer water level conditions due to the low flows through the hydropower dam at Cornwall/Massena.

Lakes Superior and Ontario Regulation

Lake Superior outflows for the next few months are expected to remain below average and as specified by the lake's regulation plan.

The International St. Lawrence River Board of Control continues to maintain low Lake Ontario outflows. In order to conserve water on Lake Ontario, this Board has authorized that outflows from the lake be less than specified by its regulation plan during the spring if dry conditions on Lake Ontario continue.

Future Meetings

The International Lake Superior Board of Control has tentatively scheduled its annual public meeting for the evening of Tuesday, June 27, 2000 in Marquette, MI.

The International Niagara Board of Control has scheduled its annual meeting with the public for the evening of Tuesday, September 12, 2000 in Niagara Falls, NY.

The International St. Lawrence River Board of Control has tentatively scheduled its annual public meeting for Tuesday, May 30, 2000 in Olcott, NY.

Please watch for detailed announcements for these meetings in future editions of *LEVELnews*.

February Outflows From Great Lakes

As a percentage of the long-term February average:

Lake Superior	92%	Lake Erie	89%
Lake Huron	96%	Lake Ontario	91%

NOTE: These figures are preliminary