



Great Lakes low water levels 2013

U.S. ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS

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(AS OF: 7 August 2013)

CURRENT

- 1) Lake Michigan-Huron's January 2013 monthly mean water level set an all-time record low at 576.02 ft. This is lower than any other month in the entire period of record, which goes back to 1918. The previous all-time record low was set in March 1964 at 576.05 ft. The July 2013 monthly mean water level for Michigan-Huron was 577.72 ft, which is 20 inches higher than the all-time record low set in January 2013. All elevations are referenced to the 1985 International Great Lakes Datum.
- 2) The average seasonal rise for Lake Superior is 12 inches. So far in 2013, Lake Superior's seasonal rise has been 19 inches from March through July. The lake is forecasted to continue rising another 3 inches through August. For Lake Michigan-Huron, the average seasonal rise is 11 inches. So far in 2013, Lake Michigan-Huron's seasonal rise has been 20 inches from January through July.
- 3) Lake Michigan-Huron's seasonal rise was only 4 inches in 2012 due to the very dry basin conditions. Lakes St. Clair and Erie have average seasonal rises of about 15 inches, but in 2012 both lakes had no seasonal rise. These two lakes steadily declined for most or all of 2012. This was the first time in its recorded history that Lake Erie did not have a seasonal rise.
- 4) The most recent 6 month bulletin does not call for record low levels on any lakes given any scenario. The most probable forecast shows Lake Michigan-Huron remaining 11 to 12 inches ABOVE record lows through January.
- 5) Lakes Superior and Michigan-Huron have been below average for 14 straight years, the longest stretch in each of their recorded histories.
- 6) Lakes Superior, Michigan-Huron, and St. Clair were below their long term averages during July. Conditions needed for the upper lakes to make gains with respect to their long term averages include heavy precipitation over multiple months, abundant runoff and reduced evaporation. Lakes Superior, Michigan-Huron, and St. Clair are expected to remain below their long term averages (LTA) for at least the next 6 months. Even under very wet scenarios, Michigan-Huron will remain below its LTA for a much longer period of time.
- 7) Lake Superior and Lake Michigan-Huron were above chart datum in July. Lake Superior is expected to remain above datum through December and be near datum in January. Lake Michigan-Huron is forecasted to remain at or above chart datum through October and be below datum for November through January.
- 8) There are no discernible long term cycles of water levels apparent over our period of record (1918-2012) for Great Lakes water levels. While the historical record shows periods of high and low water, it is not possible to predict with any certainty when/if water levels will reach new record highs or lows. Lake levels could go higher or lower from their current levels in future years.