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## Melting snow should boost below-average lake level

Erie, St. Clair will get the most help, officials say

By Mike Wowk / The Detroit News

**HARRISON TOWNSHIP** -- Employees breaking ice from around boats at Miller Marina in St. Clair Shores swear water levels have risen about a foot over the past two weeks.

But Doug Martz of Harrison Township, still can't float his boat.

"I used to keep a 17-footer in my back yard, but two years ago it was like somebody pulled the plug on the lakes, and I can't get my boat in there now," said Martz who owns a canal lot and is chairman of the Macomb County Water Quality Board.

"It'll be interesting to see what happens this spring when we get the (melted snow) runoff from up north."

Officials say large amounts of snow dumped throughout the state this winter could help bring up water levels locally -- but not by much.

"(Melting snow) certainly will have an impact," said John Love, a physical scientist with the Corps of Engineers Detroit district. "But most of that impact will be in lakes Erie and St. Clair, and it probably won't be enough to bring the lake levels back to average."

Water levels in Lake St. Clair were 11 inches below average in November, according to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

Meanwhile, levels in Lake Superior were 14 inches below average, and 22 inches below average in lakes Michigan-Huron. The figures for lakes Michigan and Huron are combined because they are always at the same level.

Levels were 4 and 3 inches below average, respectively, in Lake Erie and Lake Ontario.

Those levels are expected to approach near-average figures this summer on the lower lakes, especially Ontario, according to the Corps.

Prior to last Friday, total snowfall this season at Detroit Metro Airport was 23.4 inches --



Todd McInturf / The Det

**Miller Marina employee Gary Shea breaks ice around boats in the covered bays. He says water levels have risen a foot over the past two weeks.**

### Snow shovels are used most often in these cities

Average seasonal snowfall in inches for cities of 100,000 population or greater:

- (1) Syracuse, N.Y.: 108.
- (2) Buffalo, N.Y.: 93.
- (3) Rochester, N.Y.: 93.
- (4) Erie, Pa.: 87.
- (5) Denver: 68.
- (6) Albany, N.Y.: 66.
- (7) Worcester, Mass.: 61.

already more than half the average annual total of 36 inches, according to the National Weather Service.

It's a great time to be a skier and snowmobiler in Michigan, but the piles and drifts of snow also could raise the spirits of boaters and anglers, who have suffered most from low water over the past few years.

Michigan's Upper Peninsula is buried under far more snow than the southern Lower Peninsula. While Metro Detroit's snow depth last week measured less than 20 inches, some places in the Upper Peninsula had more than three feet of snow on the ground.

Much of that northern covering is lake-effect snow and won't raise the water levels of Lake Superior, Michigan or Huron appreciably because those snow flakes came out of the western waters in the first place, Love said.

Meaningful increases in the upper lakes won't happen until the prevailing westerlies bring in more moisture from the Pacific Ocean, he said.

Most of the snow now in Metro Detroit was created by moisture from out west and should increase water levels on the lower lakes.

"To really raise the water levels, you want to get more snow (running into) those northern lakes," Love said.

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Source: National Weather Service.

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