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Steve Pollick | Article published March 14, 2002

Erie levels expected to be up



Steve Pollick

Lake Erie boaters, from fishermen to recreational skippers, should be buoyed up by a forecast that says water levels this spring and summer should be up slightly from a year ago.

Several months ago it was feared that a lack of ice cover on Erie and the other Great Lakes would increase winter evaporation and lead to even lower water levels this year than in 2001.

But evaporation was not as great as expected because of the mild winter. The air and water temperatures remained nearly the same, said John Love, a physical scientist with the Detroit District of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. The greater the difference between air and water temperature, the greater the evaporation.

Too, rainfall in October and November was well above average in the basins of Erie and Lake St. Clair, just up the Detroit River. The autumn months are typically those that see declines in lake levels, Love said. "So we started out higher than we normally would have. Lake activity was up rather than declining or flat."

Lake Erie was an inch below average as of last Friday, but about four inches higher than the same time in 2001. If the Erie basin receives at least average rainfall this spring, it will be about four inches below its mid-summer average in July but seven inches above the 2001 July level, Love said.

The lake typically rises and falls about 15 inches with the seasons, losing water in the fall and winter through evaporation and gaining water from spring snow-melt and summer rains. Erie water levels have been below average since 1999. But in the mid-1930s the lake was 31 inches lower than it is today, and in 1986 it was 35 inches higher, according to Dave Cashen, state hydrologist.

About 80 per cent of Lake Erie water comes from the upper lakes via the Detroit River. So what happens in the watersheds of lakes Huron, Michigan and Superior is crucial. About 10 per cent of Erie's water comes from its tributaries, such as the Maumee and Sandusky rivers in northwest Ohio. The rest comes from rain and snow directly on the lake, notes the Ohio Department of Natural Resources.

The Ohio Division of Watercraft said it expects most Lake Erie boat launches to be fully operable this spring and summer. But the division strongly advises use of charts when navigating unfamiliar waters, especially around islands in the western basin and around shoreline.

Fishing report: More walleye action seems to be taking place on the Sandusky River in downtown Fremont than on the rapids of the Maumee River, as of mid-week.

The Sandusky, being a smaller stream, may be warming up and clearing up more

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quickly following the recent spate of cold, stormy weather. In turn, that may be drawing fish upstream more quickly.

On the Maumee, a few fish are being taken in the Orleans Park area on the Perrysburg side, said Jan Lowry at Maumee Valley Bait and Tackle. The Maumee water temperature yesterday was 40 degrees and warming under a mild, sunny afternoon.

DATEBOOK

Tomorrow and Monday: Public trapshoots, 6:30 p.m., Wolf Creek Sportsmen's Association, 349 Teachout Rd. north of State Rt. 2, Curtice; call Frank Schaffer, 419-691-2769.

Tomorrow: Hike and lecture on flying creatures, 4:30 to 6 p.m., Wolf Creek Park, off State Rt. 53 south of Fremont; meet at canoe launch; to register, call the Sandusky County Park District, 419-334-4495 or 1-888-200-5577.

Saturday: Community-service program for youths, 1 to 4 p.m., Van Buren State Park, nature center, State Rt. 613 east of I-75, north of Findlay; call Ron Bowerman, 419-299-3807.

Saturday: Boat-handling and seamanship class, 7:30 a.m., U.S. Coast Guard Station, Toledo, Bay View Park, sponsored by Flotilla 10-05, U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary; to register call 419-276-6589.

Saturday: Toledo Naturalists' Association, Andersons' activity center, 1833 South Holland-Sylvania Rd.; program on Ecuador by Eric Durbin and Todd Haggard.

Saturday: Wild turkey-hunting clinics, 11 a.m. to 3 p.m., Wolf Creek Sportsmen's Association, 349 Teachout Rd. north of State Rt. 2, Curtice; to register call Jim Daniels, 419-698-3417 or Mike Szymanski, 419-244-5526. Also, 10 a.m. to 3 p.m., Ohio Wildlife District 2, 952 Lima Ave., Findlay; to register call District 2, 419-424-5000; also, **Saturday**, drawing for special youth wild turkey hunt, register 11:30 a.m., drawing 1 p.m., Lake LaSuAn State Wildlife Area headquarters, 09-455 Road R, Pioneer, Ohio, drawing for hunters ages 17 and under for hunts April 20-May 19, call District 2 or LaSuAn, 419-485-9092.

Saturday: Volunteers to help conserve native wildflowers and prairie grasses, 10 a.m., Kitty Todd Preserve, 10420 Old State Line Rd., call The Nature Conservancy, 419-867-1521.

Saturday and Sunday: Gun show, Saturday 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., Sunday 9 a.m. to 4 p.m., Sandusky County Sportsmen's Club, State Rt. 600 east of Gibsonburg; call Jim Kohler, 419-637-2339.

Saturday and Sunday: Gun and knife show, Saturday 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., Sunday 9 a.m. to 4 p.m., Sherwood VFW Post, Sherwood, Ohio; sponsored by Sherwood Lions and Paulding Fish and Game Club; call Theresa Caryer, 419-399-4420.

Saturday and Sunday: Mid-Winter Sailing Rendezvous, Sawmill Creek Resort, Huron, Ohio; call Meg Anderson or T.J. Wright at Harbor North, 419-433-6010 or 1-800-451-7245.

Saturday and Sunday: Black Swamp Bird Observatory, annual book fair, 9 a.m. to 4 p.m., at the 577 Foundation, Perrysburg; call BSBO, 419-898-4070.

Sunday: Bowshoots: Maybee Sportsmen's Club, register 9 a.m. to 2 p.m., 11490 Hoffman Rd., Maybee, Mich., 30 3-D targets, call Kevin Addy, 734-529-3384; also, **Winnetka Bowmen** of Adams Conservation Club, register 9 a.m. to noon, 240 South King Rd., Holland, 30 3-D mixed animal targets, call Doc Merkin, 419-841-9896; also, **Lenawee County Conservation League**, register 10 a.m. to 2 p.m., 1404 Sutton Rd., Adrian, Mich., 30 3-D targets, call Allan Andrews, 517-431-2909.

Steve Pollick is The Blade's outdoor writer. E-mail him at spollick@theblade.com.

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