



NEW FIND A BUSINESS

GO ▶

» [OR Search By Biz Name, Location](#)

- Home
- News+Biz
- Travel
- Sports
- Forums+Chat
- Cams+Radio
- Living
- Entertainment

NEWS

CLASSIFIED

The Grand Rapids Press [Click here to subscribe!](#)

» [More From The Grand Rapids Press](#)

Top Stories

Scarce snowfalls, dry conditions could bring Lake Michigan levels back down again

Wednesday, January 08, 2003

By John Tunison
The Grand Rapids Press

HOLLAND -- Bill Christensen has some advice for West Michigan boaters this summer -- stay in the middle of harbor channels and away from the Lake Michigan shoreline.

The experienced boater knows the pitfalls of shallow water and figures this summer could be as treacherous as any for snagging vessels on rocks and logs submerged just below the surface.

After a brief reprieve last year from declining water levels, Lake Michigan is on its way down again because of scarce snowfalls and dry conditions.

"If you go south and start getting close to Saugatuck, near Mount Baldhead, you have to go out deeper because there are rocks there that are close to the surface," said Christensen, who operates Christensen Fiberglass, a fiberglass mold maker and boat repair shop.

Low water levels typically bring more people with damaged boats to his shop.

INSIDE

News

- » [GR Press](#)
- » [Town Talk](#)
- » [Local Photos](#)
- » [Statewide News](#)
- » [NewsFlash](#)
- » [Weather](#)

▶ [SEND THIS PAGE](#)

▶ [PRINT THIS PAGE](#)

SPEAK UP!

- » [NewsTalk](#)
- » [TownTalk](#)
- » [More Forums](#)
- » [Log On to ChatXtra!](#)

NEWSLETTERS

- » [Get free local news e-mail updates!](#)
- » [More Newsletters](#)

Get The Best Local
[Jobs](#) | [Autos](#) | [Real Estate](#)
[All Classifieds](#) | [Place Ad](#)

» [Shoppers Guides](#)



A FUNNY THING HAPPENS
YOU FIND THE JOB YOU WANT
IN THE PLACE YOU LOVE

THE BEST LOCAL JOBS

"You can definitely spend more time on your back repairing bottom damage," he said. "People run into just about anything out there."

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers so far this year is predicting a return to the near-historic low levels reached in 2001.

The scenario could change if the weather brings significantly more rain or snowfall to the region, but forecasters aren't offering much hope, said Marie Strum, a water resources engineer with the Corps of Engineers.

"Conditions will be similar to two years ago, rather than last year," she said. "The National Weather Service is saying we are supposed to have a moderate El Nino effect, and that wouldn't help to bring levels back up."

Lake Michigan is now about 11 inches above the record January low set in 1965 and 6 inches below last year at this time. The lake dropped 3 inches in December alone.

The decline is part of a trend that began in 1998. Today, Lake Michigan is 19 inches below its long-term average.

Water levels seemed to bottom out in 2001 and began to rise modestly in the early and middle months of 2002, boosted by a wet fall and significant winter snows. In fact, Lake Michigan was almost a foot higher last summer than the previous summer.

"This past year, we haven't seen anything close to that (precipitation)," Strum said. "The Michigan-Huron basin has been very dry."

Strum said she doesn't think the lake this year will recede to the record summer lows set in 1964, but probably will approach the lower levels of 2001.

She said boaters who enjoyed last year's rising levels will need to adjust to the changing conditions. Boaters may want to consult water depth charts if venturing into unfamiliar areas.

Herb Eldean of Eldean Shipyard in Park Township said he remains hopeful the dropping water level will stabilize. He wasn't sure if he would have to dredge areas around Eldean's 370 boat slips on the north side of Lake Macatawa or the 280 slips on the south side.

"It all depends on what happens and it's too early to call," he



FROM OUR ADVERTISEMENTS

- » [Win a Best Western Sterling Package! Click here.](#)
- » [SAVE TIME with Consumers. Receive & pay your energy bill.](#)
- » [Rock Financial, The Mortgage Experts, has been helping Michigan homeowners for nearly 20 years.](#)

» [Advertise With Us](#)

said.

Eldean said he doesn't anticipate lower water levels will cause many problems for experienced boaters.

"The biggest thing is you just have to be more careful and you have to read your charts more," he said.

© 2003 Grand Rapids Press. Used with permission

» [Send This Page](#) | » [Print This Page](#)

MORE NEWS

- » ['Healing' is sought after priest resigns](#)
- » ['She obviously didn't learn': Woman accused in fatal crash lost license for drunken driving](#)
- » [Planners table farmland preservation resolution](#)

[More Stories](#) | [14-Day Archive](#) | [Complete MLive News Coverage](#)

MORE FROM THE GRAND RAPIDS PRESS

[Today's News, Links & Archives](#)

[User Agreement](#) | [Privacy Policy](#) | [Help/Feedback](#) | [Advertise With Us](#)

© 2003 mlive.com. All Rights Reserved.