



**US Army Corps  
of Engineers**

North Central Division

# Great Lakes Levels Update No. 32 March 3, 1988

What a difference a year makes! Last February we had an ice jam on the St. Clair River and storm damage on Lake Michigan. This year, with a light ice cover similar to last year's, we escaped with no reported damage. However, March is traditionally a month with some of the most intense storms, so . . . watch out!

Overall, February's precipitation on the Great Lakes basin was about average. Preliminary reports indicate that Lakes Superior and Ontario received about 20% above their average amount, Lakes Michigan-Huron close to average, and Lake Erie received about 15% greater than average precipitation.

The Great Lakes are either close to or emerging from winter low levels. Lake Superior declined in February and is expected to continue declining this month. Lakes Michigan-Huron are expected to begin rising seasonally and remain about three quarters foot above average during the next six months. Lake St. Clair uncharacteristically held steady in February after a January drop in levels and is expected to begin rising seasonally. Lake Erie also held steady in February and will rise seasonally. Lake Ontario has been slowly rising and will continue so.

We're continuing to flow a little extra water from Lake Superior to eliminate the remainder of the storage put there during emergency regulation in 1985-1986. The 15,000 cfs-months of storage remaining on Lake Superior is being eliminated at a rate of 7,500 cfs per month and will be eliminated by the end of April.

With Lake Superior below long-term average and Lakes Michigan-Huron above long-term average, the current minimum outflow from Superior favors downstream lakes, which remain high (except for Lake Ontario). The Lake Ontario level is near long-term average and the outflows are as prescribed by Regulation Plan 1958-D. The ice cover on the St. Lawrence River is about average for this time of year. Outflows were gradually increased in February under stable ice cover, according to the Plan.

In view of the overall improved situation, the Advance Measures Program for damage preventive works will soon end. The only additional work will be on projects already underway: Wightmans Grove, Ohio, on Lake Erie; Luna Pier, Michigan, on Lake Erie; and Hampton Township on Saginaw Bay on Lake Huron.

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**For Great Lakes basin technical assistance or information, please contact one of the following Corps of Engineers District Offices:**

*For New York, Penn. & Ohio:*

**Colonel Daniel R. Clark**  
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*For Mich., Minn. & Wisc.:*

**Colonel Robert F. Harris**  
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*For Ill. & Indiana:*

**LTC Jess J. Franco Jr.**  
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(312) 353-6400

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The *Help Yourself* brochure is available at District Offices listed above or from this office: North Central Division, 536 South Clark Street, Chicago, Illinois 60605-1592, telephone: (312) 353-6364.

I emphasize that March storms can be severely damaging, especially with little ice on the lakes. Please be alert to the near-shore wave warnings provided by various National Weather Service Offices

for certain portions of the Great Lakes. Information can usually be heard on the National Weather Service's local weather radio broadcasts.

The Corps of Engineers' "Self Help" program of distributing sandbags, sand and plastic sheeting to flood-threatened communities will continue; but, in view of the current and predicted levels, the program will extend only for temporary measures to be in place by this spring. Contact local or state disaster assistance agencies for materials and assistance under this program.

The IJC's Task Force Study Report for the Great Lakes Levels Reference has been completed and is currently awaiting public input. The Commission has decided to forward, by June of this year, an interim report to Governments based on the Task Force Report. The IJC's Great Lakes study on level fluc-

tuations continues. A background paper to the study plan for the Great Lakes Levels Reference Study is available. The IJC will be reviewing possible measures, either to affect fluctuating lake levels or to modify the impacts of fluctuating levels around the Great Lakes. More information on the study is available from both the U.S. and Canadian Section Offices of the IJC. In the United States, the address is: International Joint Commission, 2001 "S" Street, NW, 2nd Floor, Washington, D.C. 20440, or telephone: (202) 673-6222.

These updates will continue to accompany the Monthly Bulletin until all the lakes approach their long-term seasonal averages.



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