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6/20/04 Lakes creep closer to average levels

By JACK STOREY/The Evening News

DETROIT -- Last week was another wet one across much of the Great Lakes basin, contributing to further rise in lower Lakes water levels, according to a report from the Corps of Engineers.

As it was during a very wet May, the Lake Superior watershed did not receive nearly as much concentrated rainfall as the lower Lakes.

According to the Corps, succeeding waves of heavy rain added to the already soggy conditions -- especially in the southerly region of the Great Lakes basin.

As of Friday, June 18, Lake Superior was six inches over its level a year ago but still four inches below its average for June. Lakes Michigan and Huron, meanwhile, have risen some 13 inches so far this season. The two lakes are now within 10 inches of their long-term June average.

A year ago, the two lakes ran fully 24 inches below their average -- even with rising levels during the spring.

Lake St. Clair is currently nine inches higher than last year at this time and last week climbed to dead even with its average. Lake Erie and Lake Ontario rose a few inches above their respective averages in the past week.

If mid-month water levels hold through the end of June, three of the six lakes monitored by the Corps will be at or above average levels when July arrives.

The Corps forecasted that the three lakes still below average -- Superior, Huron and Michigan -- will continue their seasonal rise for the next month or so. Lake Erie and Lake St. Clair should reach their peaks later this month and level off for a few weeks as the summer season hits full swing.

Corps forecasts indicate Lake Ontario will fall a few inches over the next month.

Across the northern Lakes region, a return to rainy weather is expected as early as Monday. Some forecasts call for a succession of weather systems

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to cross the region this week, raising the chances of more rain with each system's passage.

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