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Lake levels up sharply



KAREN EBERT YANCEY/USA TODAY NETWORK-WISCONSIN

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Increase of four feet in Lake Michigan water levels called "historic event"

KAREN EBERT YANCEY
USA TODAY NETWORK-WISCONSIN

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Mike Krieger checks out damage to a dock at the Kewaunee Marina caused by high water levels.

the increase, said O'Bryan. In addition, higher precipitation throughout the Great Lakes Basin this spring caused the lake level to rise faster than normal, O'Bryan said.

"It was still snowing near Lake Superior last week," said O'Bryan, noting that Lake Superior was a "feeder" lake to Lake Michigan. The effects of the wet spring won't be fully evident until

July, when Lake Michigan is expected to rise an additional two inches from its May levels, he said.

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FILE/KEN WESELY/USA TODAY NETWORK-WISCONSIN

The beach at Whitefish Dunes State Park looked a lot different in May 2001, when Lake Michigan was approaching record low levels.



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in the shipping industry, allowing cargo ships back into the lake that couldn't navigate through harbors and channels for more than a decade when the water levels were low, O'Bryan said. In addition, the ships can carry heavier cargo loads.

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At the Brown County Port Authority, Director Dean Haen says the high water levels have increased ships' carrying capacity.

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The result for Green Bay this summer may be less ships with more cargo on each ship, he said. This, in turn, reduces transportation costs.

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Lake Michigan levels up sharply by four feet

Water increase is called 'historic event'

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ON THE SHORE

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TOP: KAREN EBERT/USA TODAY NETWORK-WISCONSIN; ABOVE: YANCY KEN WESELY/USA TODAY NETWORK-WISCONSIN

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For example, rare fringed genetian that began growing along the beach may disappear because the native flower doesn't do well in areas with too much water, said Harris.

But higher water benefits spawning grounds for small-mouth bass and northern pike in the park's Weborg Marsh, she said.

Shoreline erosion is another downside to higher water levels. On both the Michigan and Wisconsin sides of the lake, several houses have already been condemned due to bluff erosion, the most recent in Mt. Pleasant, Wis., and New Buffa-