Kewaunee County Star-News

Kewaunee, Wisconsin

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2016

Lake levels up sharply



Algoma's Crescent Beach has a wide enough stretch of sand that it has not been as affected by higher water levels.

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

KAREN EBERT YANCEY

USA TODAY NETWORK-WISCONSIN

Lake Michigan water levels have risen more than four feet since January 2013, an unprecedented increase since the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers began keeping records in 1918, says Thomas O'Bryan, area engineer for the US Army Corps of Engineer's Lake' Michigan office.

"This is an historic event," O'Bryan said, noting that the high water levels have caused dramatic changes along the shoreline.

According to the agency's data, the lake has risen from 576.02 feet in January 2013 to 580.09 feet this May. It is still more then two feet below the record high of 582.35 set in October 1986.

Lower evaporation during the cold winter of 2014-2015 and more than average snowfall the last two winters have contributed to



KAREN EBERT YANCEY/USA TODAY NETWORK- WISCONSIN 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. In Door and Kewaunee counties the effects of rising water levels have become more apparent since the snow melted this spring.

Fred Viste, park manager at Whitefish Dunes State Park, reports that the sand on the beach has been almost completely washed away by higher water and winter storms, leaving a rocky shoreline.

"It was surprising to a lot of folks when the snow melted and this is what they saw," said Viste.

Tony Jeanquart of Town and Country Realty in Kewaunee said he currently has five listings for houses and vacant lots on the shore.

"The high water levels discourage people because they can't walk the beach," said Jeanquart "Where there are stairs down to the beach, right now their first step is often right into the water."

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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.

Lake

Continued from Page 1A

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.. "The whole industry is

booming again," he said.

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

"It's mind boggling how fast the lake has gone up," Haen said. "For every change of an inch in water levels, the ships can add or subtract a hundred tons of cargo.

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.

"Companies are getting raw materials cheaper, which should translate lower into consumer prices," he said.

For smaller carriers, like the Washington Island Ferry Line, the higher water levels have increased safety margins and eliminated worries about harbors being too shallow for boats to navigate. "While fluctuating wa-

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For the last few years, the ferry line was dredging areas of its main island harbor to ensure its car ferries would be able to pass through to the dock, Purinton said.

This summer the ferry company has completed dredging operations and is adjusting its docks and ramps higher and longer to account for the fourfoot change in water levels, he said

The higher water levels also make it easier for most recreational boaters to maneuver in and out of docks and harbors, although Purinton notes that submerged cedar trees and other plants that had grown up during lower water levels can be a hazard to boaters along the shoreline.

For marinas, the higher water levels bring more business.

"The higher water levels are a great thing - they mean bigger boats can get into the harbor and higher revenues for the city of Kewaunee," said Mike Krieger, assistant marina manager for the city.

While beaches may be shrinking, the weedy, smelly areas created by low water levels should be abated, says Stephen Galarneau, a spokesperson for the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources.

The high water levels won't get rid of cladophora, which can harbor E. coli and salmonella, and creates a smell like rotten eggs, but it shouldn't exaggerate the problem as lower water levels often did, he said.

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KAREN EBERT YANCEY/USA TODAY NETWORK-WISCONSIN

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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 Buffalo, Mich., O'Bryan said.

Karen Ebert Yancey can be reached at kyancey@kewauneestarnews.com, on Facebook at Kewaunee County Star News Facebook, on Twitter at @EbertYancey or by calling 920-559-1235.

APPLETON, Wisconsin

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Lake Michigan levels up sharply by four feet

Water increase is called 'historic event'

KAREN EBERT YANCEY

USA TODAY NETWORK-WISCONSIN

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Lower evaporation during the cold winter of 2014-2015 and more than average snowfall the last two winters have contributed to 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.

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The greatest impact has been 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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For marinas, the higher water levels bring more business. "The higher water levels are a great thing – they mean bigger boats can get into the harbor and higher revenues for the city of Kewaunee," said Mike Krieger, assistant marina

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Fond du Lac, Wisconsin

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ABOVE: The beach looked a lot different in May 2001, when Lake Michigan was approaching record low levels

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Green Bay Press-Gazette

Green Bay, Wisconsin

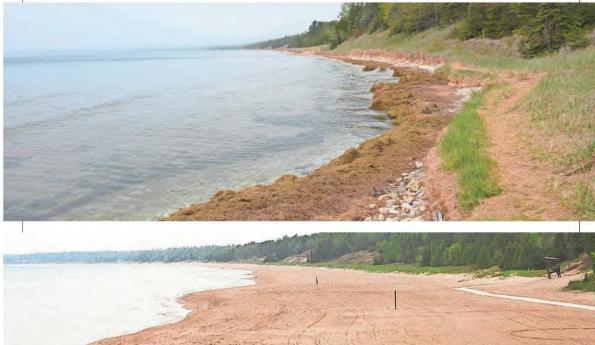
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ON THE SHORE

Lake Michigan levels up sharply





TOP. KAKEN EBERT/05A TODAT NETWORK-WISCONSIN, ABOVE. TAINET KEN WESELT/05A TODAT NETWORK-WISCONSIN

Increase of four feet called 'historic event'

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Levels

Continued from Page 1A

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Herald Times Reporter

Manitowoc, Wisconsin

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Manitowoc, Wisconsin

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Oshkosh, Wisconsin

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"It was still snowing near Lake Superior last week," said O'Bryan, noting that Lake Superior was a "feeder" lake to has been in the shipping 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.

In Door and Kewaunee counties the effects of rising water levels have become more apparent since the snow melted this spring.

Fred Viste, park manager at Whitefish Dunes State Park, reports that the sand on the beach has been almost completely washed away by higher how fast the lake has water and winter storms, leaving a rocky shoreline.

Tuesday, May 31, 2016	
Daily	
14642	
52.04	sq. inches
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	Daily 14642 52.04 \$49.90



"It was surprising to a land Ferry Line, the highlot of folks when the snow melted and this is what they saw," said Viste.

Tony Jeanquart of Town and Country Realty in Kewaunee said he currently has five listings for houses and vacant lots on the shore.

"The high water levels discourage people because they can't walk the Where there are stairs down to the beach, right now their first step is often right into the water."

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

"The whole industry is booming again," he said.

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

"It's mind boggling gone up," Haen said. "For every change of an inch in water levels, the ships can add or subtract a hundred tons of cargo.³

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.

"Companies are getting raw materials cheaper, which should translate into lower consumer prices," he said.

For smaller carriers, like the Washington Is-

er water levels have in-creased safety margins and eliminated worries about harbors being too shallow for boats to navi-

gate. "While fluctuating water levels are part of do-ing business on the water, it's easier to fix docks than dredging," said Hoyt Purinton, ferry line president.

For the last few years, the ferry line was dredg ing areas of its main is-land harbor to ensure its car ferries would be able to pass through to the dock, Purinton said.

This summer the fer-y company has completed dredging operations and is adjusting its docks and ramps higher and longer to account for the four-foot change in water levels, he said.

The higher water lev-els also make it easier for most recreational boaters to maneuver in and out of docks and harbors, although Purinton notes that submerged cedar trees and other plants that had grown up during lower water levels can be a hazard to boaters along the shoreline. For marinas, the high-

er water levels bring more business.

more business. "The higher water lev-els are a great thing – they mean bigger boats can get into the harbor and higher revenues for the city of Kewaunee," said Mike Krieger, assis-tant marina manager for tant marina manager for

the city. While beaches may be shrinking, the weedy, smelly areas created by low water levels should be abated, says Stephen Galarneau, a spokesper-son for the Wisconsin Department of Natural Re-

sources. The high water levels won't get rid of cladopho-ra, which can harbor E. coli and salmonella, and creates a smell like rot-ten eggs, but it shouldn't exaggerate the problem as lower water levels of-

ten did, he said. "You always have win-ner and losers in nature when you have cyclical changes," said Kathleen Harris, naturalist for

Harris, naturalist for Peninsula State Park. For example, rare fringed genetian that be-gan growing along the beach may disappear be-cause the native flower doesn't do well in areas with tee much urate raid with too much water, said Harris.

higher But water benefits spawning grounds for small-mouth bass and northern pike in the park's Weborg the park's 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. Pleas ant, Wis., and New Buffa

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