



**GREAT LAKES  
COALITION**

**Michigan/Lake Michigan Chapter  
For Shoreline Preservation  
Newsletter – Winter 2013**

**IJC CHAIR MAKES PRESENTATION AT ANNUAL MEETING  
RECORD CROWD IN ATTENDANCE**

The Michigan/Lake Michigan Chapter of the Great Lakes Coalition held its annual membership meeting on August 10, 2013 at the Haworth Conference Center in Holland, MI drawing over 100 members to hear guest speaker Lana Pollack, Chair of the U.S. section of the International Joint Commission responsible for protecting waters shared by the U.S. and Canada. Her presentation focused on Great Lake water levels; inflows, outflows, and other affecting factors.

As you are aware, Lake Michigan has been below normal levels for the past 15 years and hit a historical low this past winter. Those who live and vacation in Lake Huron's Georgian Bay have seen an even greater reduction in water levels and have been strongly voicing their concerns along with a call for the IJC to intervene in some manner to reverse the trend.

Ms. Pollack stated that the combination of natural precipitation + all inflows – all outflows over the past years show that water levels should be rising. Since this is not true other factors must be involved, and there are. The most critical is evaporation and this is facilitated by low winter ice volumes. When the water is covered by ice it is not able to escape into the atmosphere via evaporation. Given the change in climate we have experienced, the winter ice packs have been substantially reduced (compared to prior historical periods). This results in longer periods, and higher volumes, of evaporation.

An example of the impact this can have came from a new study that showed water evaporation in a low ice year reduced Lake Superior water levels by 25 cm (9.84"). Additionally, the impact of low water levels differs by location due to something called the Glacial Isostatic Adjustment. When the Great Lakes area was covered by glaciers the ice compressed the land beneath them. When the glaciers receded (leaving the lakes) the land slowly adjusted to the reduced weight and is, apparently, still adjusting today. Ms. Pollack stated that the Georgian Bay area has increased in elevation 24 cm (9.45") over the past 100 years while Chicago has decreased in elevation 18 cm (7.09").

Consequently, more water would naturally be retained in Lake Michigan than in the Georgian Bay exacerbating the low level problem for them.

In response the IJC has proposed four actions:

1. Recommended adjusting the flow of water at the St. Marys River

2. Opposed the study of multi-lake regulation
3. Recommended that the Governments undertake further investigation of structural options to restore water levels in Lake Michigan-Huron by 13-25 cm (about 5-10 in). **Note: Restricting flows through the St. Clair River to increase levels on Lake Michigan-Huron is one of the main concerns of the study from our property owners' perspective.** Also recommended the Governments undertake periodic bathymetric surveys along the St. Clair River to better understand the impact on Lakes Michigan and Huron
4. Supports the Study Board's adaptive management approach (with monitoring)

In short, other than potentially making some change to the flow of water from Lake Superior through the St. Marys River, the IJC is recommending they let nature take its course (**with the exception of #3 above**).

Ms. Pollack's presentation was expertly given and well received. If you wish more information regarding this or other topics involving the IJC please visit their website at [www.ijc.org](http://www.ijc.org).

*(Editor's note: Thanks to Rick Vorel of the Lake Michigan Shore Association for providing much of the information contained in the above report.)*

We want to thank all of you who took the time to come out to the IJC presentation and to those of you who actively participated in the question-and-answer session. Your support is so important to us.

### **GREAT LAKES COALITION POSITION ON INSTALLATION OF STRUCTURES IN THE ST. CLAIR RIVER TO INCREASE LAKE MICHIGAN-HURON LEVELS**

The Great Lakes Coalition has issued our position paper on investigation of installation of structures in the St. Clair River that would increase water levels in Lake Michigan-Huron. Our position is consistent with the IJC's position in their *International Joint Commissions' Advice to Governments on the Recommendations of the International Upper Great Lakes Study*, issued April 15, 2013, wherein the report states in Section 3, "The Commission encourages the Governments to focus on an option that would not result in a permanent restoration change that could exacerbate future high water levels...". The Coalition cannot support a proposal to increase Lake Michigan-Huron levels by the installation of flow restriction structures in the St. Clair River unless it is absolutely certain that the resulting levels increase can be, and will be, completely negated in the future to avoid higher high levels that would have existed without the flow restriction.

The Coalition directors met with a group supporting restoration of natural ranges of water levels and have stated to them our opposition to the installation of flow restriction structures. The Coalition has also written to Michigan Gov. Rick Snyder stating our position with copies to Senators Carl Levin (MI) and Mark Kirk (IL), co-chairmen of the Senate Great Lakes Task Force.

The Coalition position paper may be viewed on our website at [www.iglc.org](http://www.iglc.org).

## BOARD MEMBER RESIGNATIONS

The Board of Directors reluctantly accepted the resignations of two of our long-time directors. Gay Peterson and Ray Oakes submitted their resignations due to health reasons and travel restrictions. Ray is a founding director of the Coalition and Gay has been a member since its inception. Our hearty good wishes go out to these folks for their dedicated service to the Coalition.

## ELECTION OF DIRECTORS

Two directors were re-elected for three year terms, Joe Milauckas and Ric Curtis. New to the board is John Yerington of Stevensville who was elected for a three-year term. John replaces Ray Oakes. The board will now consist of 9 directors.

## LAKE LEVELS ON THE RISE

Lake Michigan-Huron water level set an all-time (100 years of record keeping) record low mark in January, 2013 going below the previous record low level set in 1964. However, since January water level has increased over 21 inches. Last year at this time, winds from Hurricane Sandy reached the Midwest and were responsible for 17 to 22-foot waves on Lake Michigan. In terms relative to LTA (Long Term Average), Michigan-Huron levels started this year 29 inches below the January LTA and by November levels reached a point 14 inches below the November LTA. This 15-inch, or 50% reduction in the gap between actual levels and LTA in only 10 months' time is evidence that levels can increase more significantly and in much less time due to Mother Nature than placing restriction structures in the St. Clair River.

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**Time to renew your membership for 2014, or join us if not already a member:**

**Michigan/Lake Michigan Chapter-Great Lakes Coalition**  
**P. O. Box 429**  
**Saugatuck, MI 49453**  
**(269) 857-8945**

We are a 501(C) (3) tax-exempt organization  
Contributions are deductible to the full extent of the law

NAME \_\_\_\_\_

MAILING  
ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_

LAKE PROPERTY ADDRESS IF DIFFERENT:  
\_\_\_\_\_

E-MAIL ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_

**SUGGESTED MEMBERSHIP CONTRIBUTION:**    \_\_\_ \$35    \_\_\_ \$50    \_\_\_ \$100    \_\_\_ Other

**MISSION STATEMENT**

*The Great Lakes Coalition (GLC) concentrates on water levels; natural sand supply to beaches, dunes, and bluffs; and coastal management. The objective is to promote environmentally sound management of the coastal zone. Natural conditions have been changed by sometimes flawed government intervention and judgment. The GLC is a respected advocate for shoreline property owners that challenges inappropriate regulations and encourages beneficial government decisions.*

**RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED**

[www.iglc.org](http://www.iglc.org)  
P. O. Box 429, Saugatuck, MI 49453  
Michigan/Lake Michigan Chapter

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