



GREAT LAKES  
COALITION

*Michigan/Lake Michigan Chapter  
For Shoreline Preservation*

P.O. Box 429

Saugatuck, Michigan 49453

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## Newsletter – Winter 2015

### LAKE LEVELS

Lake levels continue to remain high. Average mean level of Lake Michigan-Huron for the month of November is 579.21 feet, or 0.57 feet above the long term average and 3.19 feet above the record low level recorded in January, 2013. As reported in our Summer newsletter, many of our members are reporting undercutting of their foredune causing a dropoff, or escarpment to the beach area or complete loss of beach altogether. The story is the same up and down the entire shore. Reports received from our members:

*"I have resided here for the past 6 years and can attest that the lake level here is similar to 5 years ago and all of the beach (about 60 feet at the max) has disappeared. Fortunately during the construction of the home I put in many limestone boulders at a considerable cost to me. The water is lapping at their feet if not spraying upwards of 10 feet or more when we get a typical 20 to 30 knot wind lasting days out of the N, NW..My condition is typical of most of the shoreline south of the St. Joseph Piers... The lake bed is visually steeper at my residence...". -Stevensville, Grande Mere area*

*"Our beach on the North Shore of Spring Lake looks like the photos that were attached in your email. We have about a 10' bank and the small beach is littered with junk." -Spring Lake, Michigan*

*"At our place we have lost all of our beach since the October 2014 storm. Probably 4-5 feet of elevation on sand and about 60 feet of beach in front of shore protection." -Stevensville, Grande Mere area*

*"Our beach on Lake Michigan is very small....and the sand cliff is high to get to the shore so some of us have to use a ladder to get down there....old folks and young folks." -Laketown Township..North of Saugatuck Dunes State Park*

*"We're fortunate to have about 20 feet of beach, but lots of rocks making it hard to wade or swim. I hope this is as high as the water can get." -Fennville, MI*

*"...Actually, the water is now touching the bottom of the cliff, and there is now no sandy-beach in this area." Lake Erie, Willowick, Ohio east of Cleveland*

*"...high water at Golden Sands, Mears area leaving high cliffs and no beach, very concerning." -Mears, MI*

*"Yes we are 5 miles south of Saugatuck Douglas and have had significant loss to our beach and beach grass. From 2013 to date we've lost over 50 feet of beach and a depth at this point to about 4-5 feet of sand. Praying we don't have a repeat of October 1986." -Fennville, MI*

*"Yes, we have lost our entire beach. Water is usually above our first stair." -Saugatuck Twp.*

*"...Lost 5 sets of steps and 6th is threatened. 20' of shore and 15 feet of secondary bluff lost during winter." -West Olive, MI*

*"I am a property owner that has lost all of my beach. No shoreline." -Mears, MI*

*"We have lost all our sand beach. The neighbors also. Towards the pier, the banks are eroding."*  
**-West Olive, MI**

The Coalition will continue to keep in touch with the International Joint Commission (IJC) again thanking them for their foresight in deciding not to recommend that barriers be installed in the St. Clair River to alleviate the low water levels previously reported on Georgian Bay and Lake Huron shores. The IJC had made a recommendation to the U.S. and Canadian governments to undertake further investigation of options to increase water levels in Lake Michigan-Huron. To date governments have not responded meaning to us that no investigations are underway.

## **ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING**

The Michigan/Lake Michigan Chapter of the Great Lakes Coalition held its Annual Membership Meeting on Saturday, August 8, 2015 at the Haworth Inn and Conference Center on the campus of Hope College, Holland, Michigan. After calling the meeting to order, Coalition President, Dr. Larry J. Robson, introduced Luis Saldivia, Grand Rapids District Supervisor of the Water Resources Division, State of Michigan Department of Environmental Quality. Mr. Saldivia opened his presentation "Shoreline Protection" with an overview of programs pertaining to the Great Lakes and the interface of land and water protected by the Water Resources Division of the MDEQ. Programs include the Clean Water Act, floodplain management, inland lake levels, local river management, surplus water. There are 3 programs (statutes) for Great Lakes regulatory issues:

**1) Part 325 - The Great Lakes Submerged Lands Act** - created to prevent pollution; protect natural resources; maintain public trust for shipping, commerce, fishing and navigation; - program covers Great Lakes and Lake St. Clair.

**2) Part 323 - Shorelands Protection and Management Act** - covers high risk erosion program and environmental areas program. Mr. Saldivia showed U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) charts showing levels have rebounded in 18 months from the all-time record low of January 2013. He also described the Erosion Hazard Line based on recession rate studies. For a "readily movable structure" - use 30-year recession rate; for a "non-readily movable structure" the 60-year recession rate is used. The high risk erosion setbacks for all Great Lakes coastal properties in the State of Michigan are available on the MDEQ's web page.

**3) Part 353 - Sand Dune Protection & Management** - Public Act 222 dated 1976 - for sand mining. In 1989, the dune law was amended to cover critical dunes. An atlas was developed that shows the properties that have Critical Dunes areas in the State of Michigan. The atlas is available on the MDEQ's web page.

Mr. Saldivia then described the permitting process: A permit is required for any activity or construction below the Ordinary High Water Mark (OHWM) of the Great Lakes which would include dredging, filling, placement of structures such as docks and seawalls, and docks for marinas. A permit is also required for new construction, additions, retaining walls, driveways and well & septic. Part 325, Great Lakes Submerged Lands Act sets the OHWM for each of the Great Lakes in the State of Michigan. The datum or reference point on which the OHWMs are based requires updating about every 30 years or so because the land surface around the Great Lakes is constantly changing in elevation due to the "bounce back" of the earth's crust following retreat of the glaciers during the last ice age (also referred to as isostatic rebound). For example, the OHWM for Lake Michigan-Huron was established as 579.8 feet International Great Lakes Datum (IGLD) 1955. The reference point today is 580.5 feet IGLD 1985. The USACE has concurrent authority on the Great Lakes and an applicant must apply for a permit from both the MDEQ and the USACE. The permit application is available online at [www.mi.gov/jointpermit](http://www.mi.gov/jointpermit) or at <https://miwaters.deq.state.mi.us>. Cost for a general permit is \$50, \$100 for minor projects, and from \$500 to \$2,000 for individual projects. The permit is processed at the local MDEQ district office. One application is filled out with copies to both MDEQ and USACE. The process could start with a pre-application meeting - no fee if this is done in MDEQ office, \$400 for a meeting on-site. The application is then completed, an evaluation is made and then a decision rendered. A decision is made within 60 to 90 days after a complete application is received. Permits are valid for up to 5 years.

A question-and-answer session followed. Questions asked:

1. How to obtain critical dune area maps: *Online*
2. Is permit needed to repair existing seawall below OHWM? *Depends. Was seawall originally built with or without a permit? Adding rocks to seawall? Would be site-specific.*
3. Question regarding OHWM. Will it change in 2015? And who determines? *The OHWM does not change.*

As stated above, the datum or reference point on which the OHWMs are based requires updating about every 30 years.

4. How is High Risk Erosion Area determined? Based on recession rates that are monitored. Owner then receives notification.

5. How effective are exposed jetties and shore protection? Have a high failure rate. Mr. Saldivia recommended a USACE publication "Living on the Coast" available online from the MDEQ.

6. Placement of boulders, etc. At the access point to bring in shore protection, who governs? At the time of permit process, the question would be asked. Permission is needed.

President Larry Robson thanked Mr. Saldivia for his informative presentation and Mr. Saldivia agreed to stay on after the meeting if there were further questions.

**Banks v. US Lawsuit:** Director John Ehret reported that the first judge hearing the lawsuit has retired and has been replaced. Director Ehret is in the process of filing a petition to recuse since the current judge was clerking for Judge Hewitt during original hearings. At the present time case is in the damages phase.

**Election of Directors:** Directors Dr. Larry Robson, Roger Smithe and Marcia Wineberg were re-elected for 3 year terms.

**Integrated Assessment of Adaptive Management Study Panel:** Coalition President Dr. Larry Robson reported on the study panel of which he is a member. The panel, conducted by the University of Michigan Water Center, is now identifying local areas to be studied, and they are receiving grant applications from experts in fields to be studied. The panel's next meeting will be held September 4 and grants will be awarded. The study panel will be in force until 2017 at which time their findings will be published.

With no further business, the meeting was adjourned. Next Annual Membership Meeting will be held in Summer 2016 with date and location to be announced.

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**Time to renew your membership for 2016, or join us if not already a member:**

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**Saugatuck, MI 49453**  
**(269) 857-8945**

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



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***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.*