

# Climate Change and the Great Lakes Water Levels

## What Are the Potential Impacts and What Can We Do?

**March 30, 2001**

8:30 A.M. to 4:00 P.M.

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Region 5  
77 W. Jackson Boulevard  
Chicago, Illinois 60604  
12<sup>th</sup> Floor, Lake Michigan Room

A Workshop Presented by:

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency,  
University of Michigan, and the  
National Wildlife Federation

Recent findings from the Great Lakes Regional Assessment suggest that increased water temperatures and evaporation could contribute to a lake level decline of approximately 1.5 to 3 feet on the Great Lakes within the next 30 years. What does that mean for the stakeholders who rely on using the lakes for commercial and recreational purposes? Speakers at the "Climate Change and the Great Lakes Water Levels: What are the Potential Impacts and What Can We Do?" workshop will address challenges faced by the owners of marinas and cargo businesses, as well as critical water management and mitigation strategies. Panel discussions will provide a forum for stakeholders to discuss the potential effects of climate change and policy options to address the impacts.

## Background

Because the Great Lakes basin is an internationally shared resource, numerous state, provincial, county, and municipal authorities make up a complex jurisdictional structure. Within that structure, water regulation strategies must be able to accommodate both high- and low-water levels. Commercial carriers, for example, are very dependent on water depth in the channels and harbors. Lower lake levels mean that ships cannot carry as much cargo. The Great Lakes-St. Lawrence water transportation system supports more than 30,000 jobs in the United States and Canada. Also, more than 4 million recreational boats and a large network of marinas are owned in the Great Lakes region. With lower lake levels, the risk of running aground is greater. Dredging activities may be used to offset some of the effects but are not without their own potentially negative consequences—namely the cost and resuspension of toxic sediments.

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## Agenda

- 8:30 Welcome and Opening Remarks**, Gary Gulezian, Director, Great Lakes National Project Office, USEPA
- 9:00 Impacts of Climate Change on Lake Levels**, Brent Lofgren and Frank Quinn, Great Lakes Environmental Research Laboratory, NOAA
- 9:45 Break**
- 10:00 Impacts of Climate Change on Regional Economy**  
(Moderator: Peter Sousounis)  
*Shipping Industry's Perspective*, George Ryan, President, Great Lakes Carriers Association, Cleveland, Ohio  
*Canadian Shipping Industry's Perspective*, Wayne Smith, Vice-President, Seaway Marine Transport, St. Catharines, Ontario, Canada  
*Effects of Low Lake Levels on a Marine Salvage Business*, Don Biganeiss, Owner, Michigan Marine Salvage, St. Clair Shores, Michigan  
*Effects of Low Lake Levels on Recreational Boaters*, Jeff Henderson, Owner, Harrison Marine, St. Clair Shores, Michigan  
*Regional Economic Impacts*, George Albercook, Center for Environmental, Policy, Economics and Sciences
- 11:00 Impacts of Climate Change on Regional Economy Panel Q & A**
- 12:00 Lunch**
- 1:15 Welcome Back**
- 1:30 Water Management and Mitigation Strategies**  
(Moderator: Patty Glick)  
*Dredging and Toxic Sediments*, Scott Vowinkel, Army Corps of Engineers, Great Lakes Regional Office  
*Great Lakes Management Issues*, Gerry Galloway, International Joint Commission  
*City of Madison's Climate Change Action Plan*, Jayne Somers, City of Madison, Wisconsin  
*Great Lakes Management Issues and Stakeholder Involvement*, Frank Quinn, Great Lakes Environmental Research Laboratory, NOAA
- 2:30 Water Issues Management and Mitigation Strategies Panel Q & A**
- 4:00 Wrap-up**, Peter Sousounis, University of Michigan

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## Registration Form

Name \_\_\_\_\_  
Title \_\_\_\_\_  
Address \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Phone Number \_\_\_\_\_  
Email \_\_\_\_\_

Submit to: Julie Magee  
USEPA, Region 5, 77 West Jackson Blvd. (AE-17J), Chicago, IL 60604  
Fax: (312) 886-0617; Email: [magee.julie@epa.gov](mailto:magee.julie@epa.gov)

You may also register at the following website: <http://www.epa.gov/glnpo>  
If you have any questions please contact Julie Magee at 312.886.6063.

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## Cosponsors

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