


 H₂Observer
TIP OF THE MITT WATERSHED COUNCIL

Where are current Great Lakes water levels?

The Great Lakes are experiencing the highest water levels since 1986. Lake Superior, Lake St. Clair, Lake Erie and Lake Ontario set new record high water levels over the summer of 2019. Lakes Michigan and Huron have reached monthly mean record high levels in 2020.

What are the impacts of high water levels?

While water level fluctuations are considered vital to the health and functioning of the Great Lakes ecosystem, they can adversely impact those who live on or use the Great Lakes or their connecting waters. We are seeing flooding, erosion, and high water tables. Throughout Michigan, these exceptionally high water levels have caused millions of dollars in damage to private property and public infrastructure, including roads and Michigan state parks. Water levels are also impacting community water systems and causing other public health concerns. In addition, a high ground water table could pose problems for inland lakes with respect to flooding, septic systems, and drinking water wells.

Why are lake levels so high?

Water levels on the Great Lakes are cyclical, with periods of low and high water. Each period may last for several years depending on the amount of precipitation, runoff, and evaporation that occurs. Persistent wet conditions across the Great Lakes Basin continue to drive current high water levels. Many cities across the Basin set records in 2019 for the wettest period on record. The warmer than average temperatures in December led to greater runoff due to snow pack melting, especially on Lakes Superior, Michigan and Huron, leading to more water supply. The warm air also caused less evaporation off the lakes' surfaces, which led to more water in the system.

What resources are available to help with high water issues?

Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Environment
www.Michigan.gov/EGLEHighWater

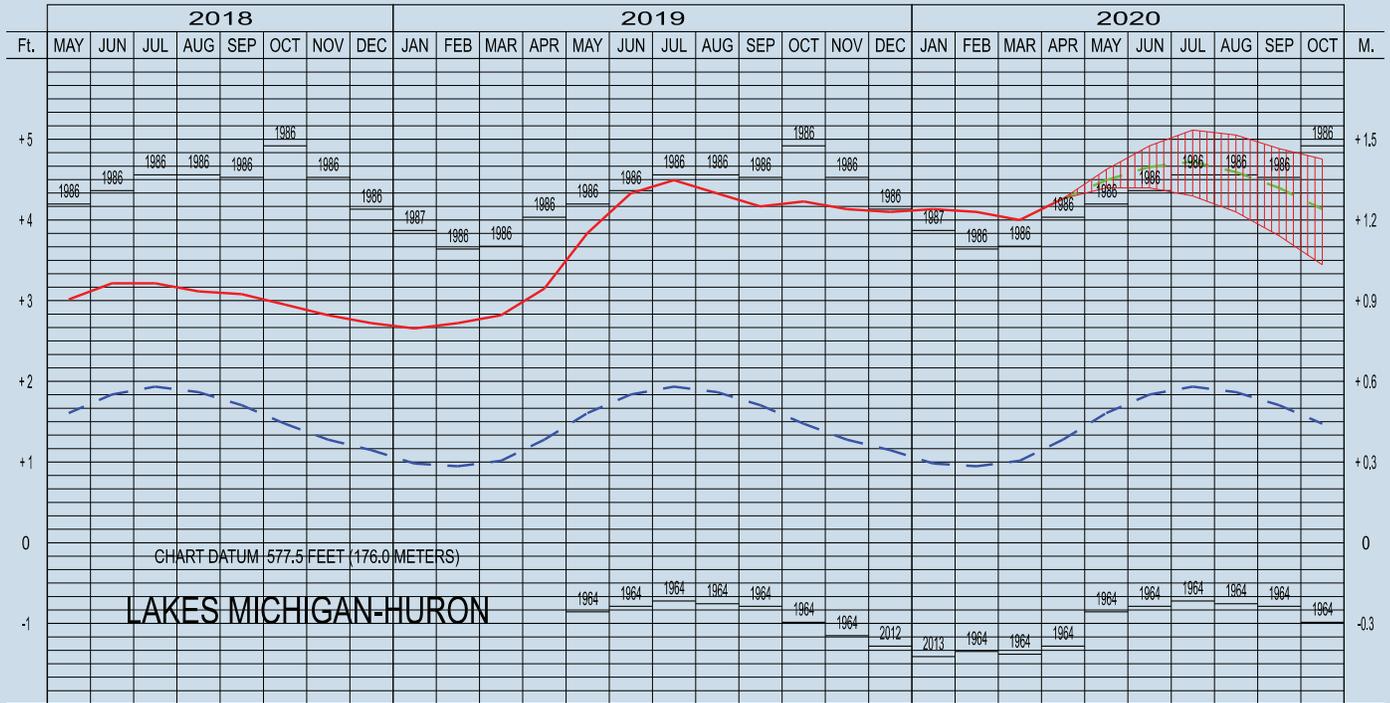
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
www.lre.usace.army.mil/About/Great-Lakes-High-Water

Health Department of Northwest Michigan
www.nwhealth.org

What are predictions for future water levels?

According to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, the most recent six-month forecast of Great Lakes water levels shows levels continuing to be well above average over this period.

LAKES MICHIGAN-HURON WATER LEVELS - MAY 2020



Credit: U.S. Army Corp of Engineers

The black dashed line and the green dashed line are the two lines to focus on.



BLACK DASHED LINE: current record level for each month.
GREEN DASHED LINE: most likely forecast water level

The current forecast shows Lakes Michigan-Huron above records for the next six months. The forecast has a hatched red widening area surrounding the green dashed line. This red hatched area shows a reasonably likely range of values for the future lake levels.

It is projected that Lakes Michigan-Huron will remain above the monthly record high water levels through August 2020, by approximately 1 - 5 inches. All of the other Great Lakes are expected to peak below 2019 levels.

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