

## **2011 WATER LEVELS**

Lake Superior began 2011 at 13 inches below its Long Term Average (LTA), remained well below LTA the entire year, and ended 2011 at 12 inches shy of LTA. In fact, Superior is in its longest recorded stretch of being continuously below LTA. The last time the Lake was at or above a monthly mean was April 1998.

Lake Michigan-Huron (considered one body of water hydraulically because of the connection at the Straits of Mackinac) began 2011 at 19 inches below LTA. Above-average precipitation over the course of the year enabled the Lake to rise to within 11 inches of LTA by December 31.

Lake Erie started the year six inches below LTA, but a significant snow melt run-off and then a very rainy spring and summer pushed Erie's water level up 30 inches and had the Lake 17 inches above LTA by the end of 2011.

Lake Ontario (rarely transited by U.S.-flag lakers) was three inches below LTA in January. However, Lake Ontario also benefited from significant snow melt and above-average precipitation and by June was 11 inches above LTA. The Lake ended 2011 four inches above LTA.

## **IMPACTS OF DREDGING CRISIS ON COMMERCIAL NAVIGATION**

The vessels enrolled in LCA carry anywhere from 50 to 267 net tons of cargo for each inch of loaded draft and, when harbor and channel conditions permit, load to drafts that range from 19 to 28 feet or more. (Some of the largest vessels have loadlines that allow for drafts of 30 feet or deeper, something currently unattainable given the project depth in the connecting channels and most ports.) However, the decades-long dredging crisis has dramatically affected waterborne commerce. The table below uses select ports to illustrate how lack of dredging, coupled with fluctuations in water levels, has affected Great Lakes shipping in recent years. System-wide, it is estimated that three out of every four cargos LCA members have carried in the past 5 years represent less than full loads.

## **COMPARISON OF LARGEST CARGOS IN VESSELS OF COMPARABLE SIZES CALENDAR YEARS 2006-2011 AND RECORD CARGO**

(net tons)								
PORT	COMMODITY	LARGEST CARGO						RECORD CARGO
		2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	
Two Harbors, MN	Iron Ore	66,259	65,186	67,392	68,029	65,630	66,500	<b>70,987</b>
Escanaba, MI*	Iron Ore	66,457	65,717	67,451	70,040	66,102	69,106	<b>76,322</b>
Superior, WI	Coal (Head-of-Lakes)	66,429	64,504	67,799	68,541	66,265	67,205	<b>70,903</b>
Presque Isle, MI**	Limestone	34,623	34,442	34,442	35,457	34,563	34,163	<b>35,457</b>
Alpena, MI***	Cement	15,678	15,682	16,032	16,109	15,900	15,025	<b>17,740</b>

\* The all-time record out of Escanaba is 81,033 tons in 1986, but that was a time of extremely high water and the vessel could load to 34 feet.

\*\* 1,000-footers rarely carry limestone. The vessel used to benchmark Presque Isle, the self-unloading barge GREAT LAKES TRADER, is 740 feet long.

\*\*\* Due to the capacity of storage silos, cement moves in comparatively small cargos. The vessel used to gauge Alpena, the self-unloading barge INTEGRITY, is 460 feet long.