

## **2008 WATER LEVELS**

Lake Superior remained in its longest period of continuous below average water levels since 1918. It began 2008 10 inches below Long Term Average (LTA). Even when Superior peaked in August, it was still 5 inches below LTA. The lake then went into seasonal decline and ended the year 8 inches shy of LTA.

Lakes Michigan-Huron continued their second-longest period of continuous below average water levels since 1918. In January, the lakes were more than two feet below LTA. Their August peak was still 14 inches below LTA. Michigan-Huron ended the year 16 inches below LTA.

Lake Erie was only 1 inch below LTA as 2008 began, and peaked early – in April – at 7 inches above LTA. The lake ended the year essentially at LTA.

Lake Ontario started the year at LTA, and like Erie, peaked early, this time in May, at 11 inches above LTA. Ontario stayed above LTA for the remainder of the year, ending 2008 at +5 inches.

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

LCA's members' vessels 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 of every four cargos LCA members have carried in the past 5 years represented less than full loads.

## **COMPARISON OF LARGEST CARGOS IN VESSELS OF COMPARABLE SIZES CALENDAR YEARS 2003-2008 AND RECORD CARGO**

(net tons)

PORT	COMMODITY	LARGEST CARGO						RECORD CARGO
		2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	
Two Harbors, MN	Iron Ore	64,860	67,645	66,498	66,259	65,186	67,392	70,987
Escanaba, MI*	Iron Ore	64,244	65,464	64,493	66,457	65,717	67,451	76,322
Superior, WI	Coal (Head-of-Lakes)	64,831	67,531	66,735	66,429	64,504	67,799	70,903
Presque Isle, MI**	Limestone	30,346	34,557	33,239	34,623	34,442	34,442	35,457
Alpena, MI***	Cement	15,927	16,662	16,106	15,678	15,682	16,032	17,740

\* The all-time record out of Escanaba is 81,033 tons in 1986, but that is the only time a vessel has ever actually loaded even close to its designed depth of 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.