

Officials warn against continually rising water levels

Highs trending into the fall

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Published 6:00 am EDT, Friday, September 13, 2019

HURON COUNTY — High water levels across the entire Great Lakes have both state and local officials warning waterfront property owners to prepare for the worst.

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers announced recent data is revealing interesting trends and the possibility of high levels again during the fall and early winter.

Based on preliminary August data, Lake Superior tied its record high for the month while Lake St. Clair and Lake Erie established new record high monthly mean water levels in August. Water levels on Lake Michigan-Huron and Lake Ontario were slightly below record highs, but still very high compared to average.

“The fall and early winter often bring significant storm systems to the Great Lakes,” said Keith Kompoltowicz, chief of Watershed Hydrology, Detroit District. “These systems have the potential to bring tremendous impacts to the coastlines including more erosion and coastal flooding, even with the declining lake levels. Those with interests along the shoreline should be prepared for these events.”

The August levels continue a trend of new records set on the Great Lakes this spring and summer. Because of this, waterfront owners are being urged to beat the rush and apply for shore protection permits now.

"There's a lot of concern for the spring thaw about what we're going to end up getting, especially when the winds pick up," said Huron County Emergency Services Director Randy Miller.

Added Miller: "I would suggest that they (property owners) start doing something to be prepared and not wait until the ice is breaking up and coming through your front lawn to do anything."

Miller said many shoreline property owners have already begun the process and he has been in talks with Army Corps officials about what can be done to alleviate as much damage as possible in the county.

Miller said he is particularly concerned about the Sebewaing, Fairhaven Township and Wildfowl Bay areas. He noted that Caseville also has some concerns about its harbor.

"We're watching closely," he said. "We're really not sure what's going to happen — but there's concern."

On the Great Lakes and other navigable waterways, many shore protection projects, including riprap, revetments, seawalls and backfill, and bioengineered shore protection commonly require permits from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. Coastal shoreline property owners may want to consider applying for proposed shore protection permits now.

Many tend to put turning in such applications until an emergency situation arises; however, regulatory staff advise property owners to plan their projects and apply for permits in advance.

"Now is the time before the winter sets in," Miller said. "Don't wait until spring."

Applications for permits should be submitted online through the Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes and Energy MiWaters website. Links to MiWaters, information on Nationwide and Regional General Permits, and other resources are available on the Detroit District Regulatory website at <https://www.lre.usace.army.mil/Missions/Regulatory-Program-and-Permits/>