
INTERNATIONAL RAINY LAKE BOARD OF CONTROL (IRLBC)
INTERNATIONAL RAINY RIVER WATER POLLUTION BOARD (IRRWPB)
NEWSLETTER
1st Quarter 2008

This newsletter provides a summary of the activities of the International Rainy Lake Board of Control (IRLBC) and the International Rainy River Water Pollution Board (IRRWPB) during the 1st Quarter (January-March) of 2008.

Basin Conditions and Regulation

Both Rainy and Namakan lakes started the year with inflows of 80 percentile, a carryover from the wet fall of 2007 when inflow to Namakan had peaked in October at the maximum on record (for the time of year) and Rainy inflow had peaked at 95 percentile. Inflows continued to decline gradually over the first quarter, reaching 20 percentile on Namakan and 25 percentile on Rainy by March 31, with no sign of spring runoff yet evident. As inflows declined, the Companies managed the lake levels by reducing outflows as well. Namakan Lake started the quarter with its level at 45 percent of the IJC band and remained close to mid-band through the quarter, ending at 49 percent of band. Rainy started the quarter a little higher, at 73 percent of band, but reached mid-band by mid-January and ended the quarter at 51 percent of band. Precipitation recorded over the winter was below normal but March snowpack water content was about median. Water levels, inflows and outflows for both lakes are shown on the attached graphs.

Board Meetings

During the quarter, the Boards held joint conference calls on February 1 and March 28, and the IRRWPB held a call on March 14. Topics addressed included: basin conditions, the governance questions posed by the IJC (merger of the two Boards, creation of a watershed board with expanded geographic area), the proposed Namakan River hydropower developments, nutrient loading to Lake of the Woods, work to develop a plan of study to collect data needed for future rule curve review, the response to MPCA regarding the Pine Island Peat Mine, material for the IJC's International Watersheds Initiative Workshop, and the spring report/presentation to the IJC.

Several Members and staff attended the 5th annual International Lake of the Woods Water Quality Forum in International Falls on March 12-13. In addition, representatives of both Boards attended the IJC's International Watersheds Initiative Workshop in Vancouver on March 18-19. This workshop brought together Members and staff of a number of IJC Boards with IJC Commissioners and staff to discuss the principles, framework and governance, action plan and funding priorities for this IJC initiative. More information on the initiative is available at:

http://www.ijc.org/conseil_board/watershed/en/watershed_home_accueil.htm

Proposed Hydropower Developments on the Namakan River in Ontario

Previous Newsletters have noted the public concern about these proposed developments and reported that the IJC alerted the two federal governments about the issue. The proponents held two public

information sessions in the basin in February, at which it is understood that the developments were strongly supported by the Lac La Croix First Nation and received a mix of views by the general public. It is expected that environmental assessment results will be released later in 2008, with opportunity for public comment. The Boards continue to monitor the issue and keep the IJC advised. More information on the proposals can be seen at: www.opeg.ca.

Data Collection and Monitoring for Future Rule Curve Evaluation

As reported previously, concern has been growing that there are gaps in the data and information needed to re-assess the Rainy and Namakan rule curves in 2015. In addition, funding for the data programs that are in place is at risk. At the IJC's request, the Boards recommended members in March 2007 for a work group to develop and cost a plan of study to address this issue (as a basis for seeking funds from governments). The IJC named members in late 2007. The Work Group held its first meeting on January 31 and subsequently held a gap analysis workshop of agency and academic experts on March 10-11. The Group expects to submit a draft Plan of Study to the IJC this spring, followed by a final report in late summer, 2008.

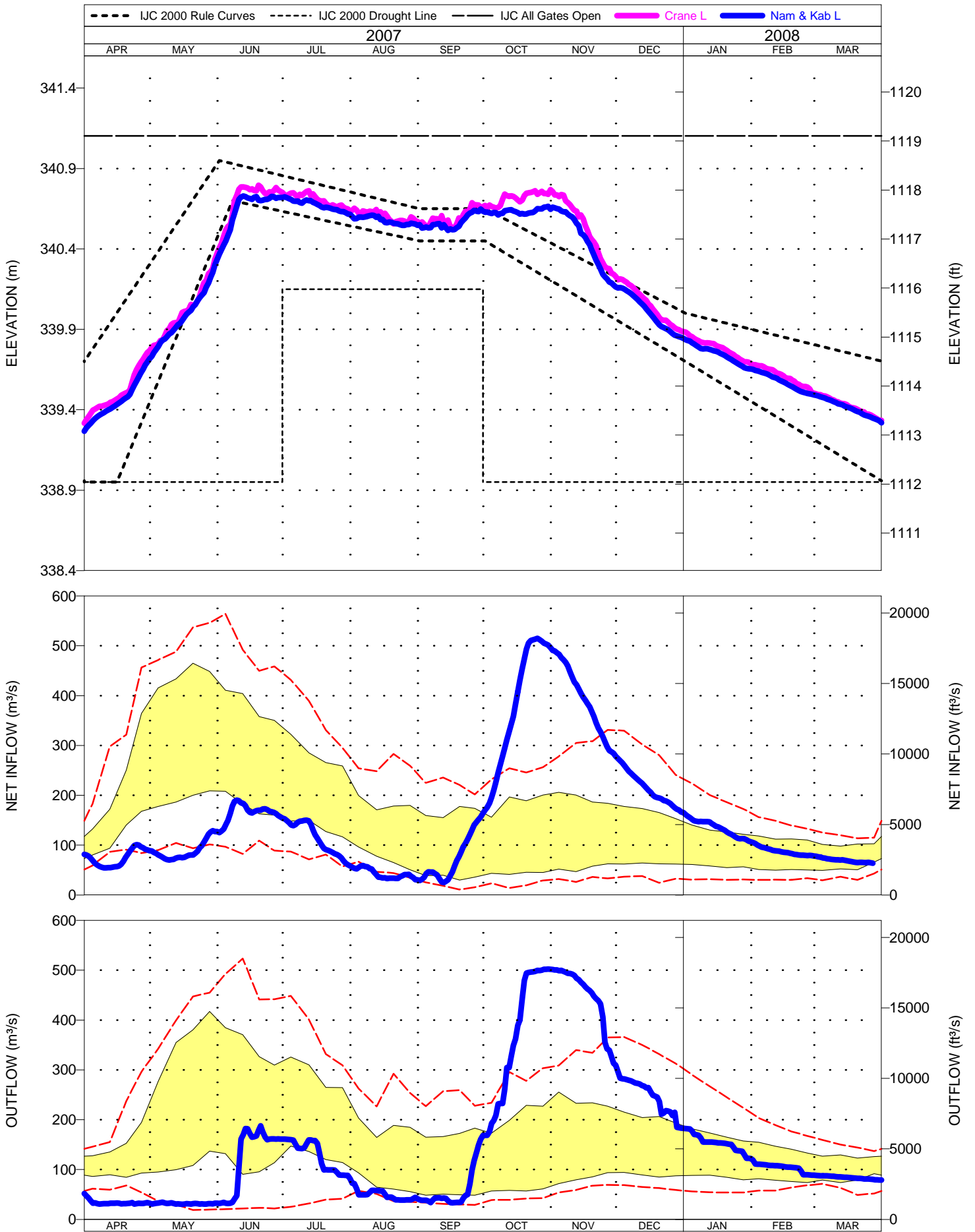
Mercury Monitoring for the Pine Island Peat Mining Project

As noted in the last Newsletter, the IRRWPB received a letter from the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA) in late November, 2007, declining to take on additional monitoring as recommended by the Board to detect mercury that may be released into the Black and Rainy rivers from the peat mine. The MPCA felt that the monitoring required under the mine's permit was adequate. Upon review, the IRRWPB concluded that the likelihood of being able to detect an increase in mercury at downstream sites and attribute it to the mine was minimal. Consequently, the Board withdrew the monitoring recommendations made previously to the MPCA, saying that it would instead annually review the data required under the permit and, depending on that review, may again recommend additional monitoring in the future.

Questions or comments? Contact the Boards' Secretary:

*Kari Layman
USACE - St. Paul District
190 Fifth Street East
St. Paul, Minnesota 55101 - 1638
Phone: 651 290-5424
Fax: 651 290-5841
Email: Kari.L.Layman@usace.army.mil*

NAMAKAN LAKE



RAINY LAKE

