
INTERNATIONAL RAINY LAKE BOARD OF CONTROL (IRLBC)
INTERNATIONAL RAINY RIVER WATER POLLUTION BOARD (IRRWPB)
NEWSLETTER
3rd Quarter 2007

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 3rd Quarter (July-September) of 2007.

Basin Conditions and Regulation

Water levels, inflows and outflows for both Rainy and Namakan lakes are shown on the attached graphs. As noted in the previous Newsletter, inflows to both lakes, but especially to Rainy, had improved in June, apparently ending the severe year-long drought the basin had been experiencing. However, inflows again deteriorated as the 3rd quarter progressed, especially for Rainy, until rainfall led to improved inflows in mid-September. Rainfall was less than half the normal amount from mid-July through August, but then averaged twice or more the normal amount in September. In response, on Namakan, outflow was reduced from about 160 m³/s in early July to only 40 m³/s at the end of August, thereby keeping the lake level in the 30-50 percent of band range. With the improved September inflows, the outflow was increased to 170 m³/s by the end of the quarter; in spite of this, the lake level reached 93 percent of band. On Rainy Lake, it was not possible to hold the level as well. In spite of reducing the outflow from near 380 m³/s in early July to only 100 m³/s (the normal IJC minimum) by August 6, the lake level declined from mid-band to slightly below its lower rule curve by mid-September. With improved inflows, the lake level was again near mid-band and the outflow was increased to 180 m³/s by end-September.

Annual Basin Meetings and Tour – August 21-23

The Boards held their annual joint meetings in International Falls on August 21 and 23 to address water issues in the Rainy-Namakan and Rainy River basins. On August 22 the Boards inspected the Prairie Portage Dam. IJC Commissioner Allen Olson and several IJC staff attended the meetings and tour.

The Boards met with Boise and Abitibi, the Rainy and Namakan lake dam operators, on the afternoon of August 21. Dam operations, emergency plans, maintenance and safety were discussed, along with data collection procedures and public information efforts. The Companies had received no comments from the public on regulation; the Boards very few.

The Boards' annual joint public meeting, held on the evening of August 21 at the Rainy River Community College in International Falls, was attended by about 40 members of the public. The presentation, lasting 25 minutes, addressed the partnership struck to enhance spring spawning success (through voluntary limits on hydropower peaking operations), the appearance of spiny water fleas in the basin, the impacts of high and low river flows on water quality, recent lake levels and flows, and the work done to date on developing a hydraulic computer model of the lower Rainy River. During the subsequent Question period, the main topic of discussion was the proposed hydropower developments on the Namakan River in Ontario; see below for more information on this issue.

On August 22, an all-day trip was made to inspect the Prairie Portage Dam, located at the outlet of Sucker Lake and just above Basswood Lake. The trip was led by the US Forest Service, Superior National Forest, the owner of the dam. Oversight of this dam was assigned to the IRLBC by the IJC when it disbanded its Prairie Portage Board after the current concrete weir (overflow dam) was built in 1975.

On August 23, the Boards met with representatives of local resource agencies and other governmental organizations responsible for water resource information and management within the basin. This meeting is expected to become an annual event; the first meeting of this sort had been held in 2006. Voyageurs National Park representatives briefed the Boards on nutrient loading to the lakes and recent lake sturgeon surveys, and also expressed concern over the lack of progress to date in setting up an IJC-appointed team to develop a plan of study to address gaps in information gathering and studies needed for the 15-year review of the Year 2000 rule curves adopted for Rainy and Namakan lakes.

Proposed Hydropower Developments on the Namakan River in Ontario

The Ontario government's identification of three sites on the Namakan River in Ontario for potential hydropower development was addressed in the previous Newsletter and in Board reports to the IJC. As noted above, this became the main topic of discussion at the Boards' public meeting in August. Many comments and concerns were expressed, and it was clear that the public had expectations as to the role to be played by the Boards and the IJC in the matter. Commissioner Olson responded that he would recommend to his fellow Commissioners that the IJC alert the federal governments about the level of public concern, but he stated that the IJC has no authority to act unless requested by the governments of Canada and the USA to do so. Subsequent to the public meeting, by letter dated August 28, the Boards updated the IJC on the issue, including the public concern and expectations, and forwarded a copy of a presentation received by the Boards from the Rainy Lake Conservancy requesting IJC involvement. The Boards also wrote to the IJC's legal advisors posing a number of questions on the IJC mandate regarding the issue and later discussed these with the advisors by conference call on September 5.

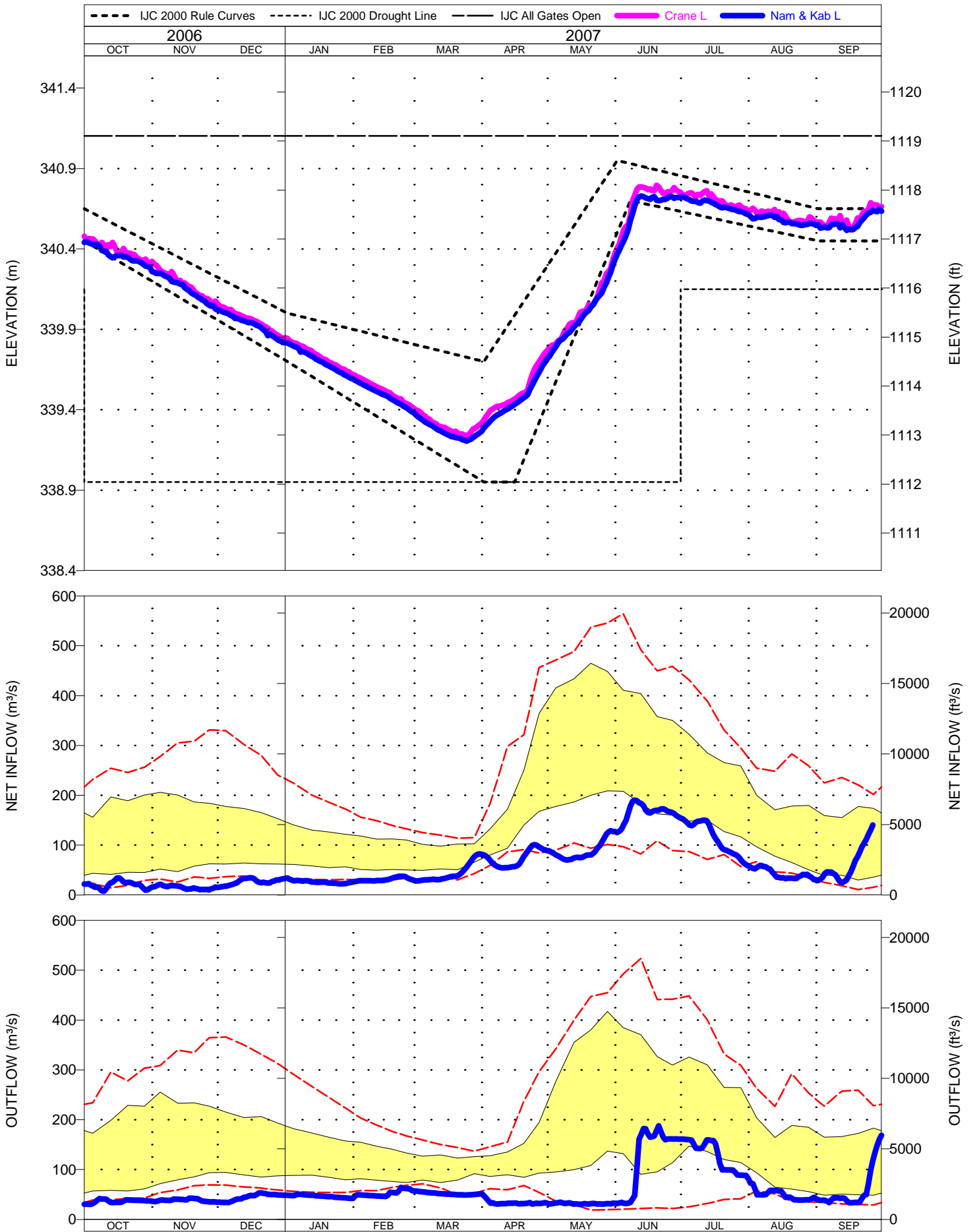
Board Meetings

During the quarter, in addition to a face-to-face meeting in August, the Boards held three conference calls, on August 15, September 5 and September 20. The conference calls addressed: basin conditions and lake regulation, August basin meetings and tour, an IJC proposal for data harmonization in international watersheds, Board membership, invasive species, impacts of the drought, IJC authority regarding the proposed Namakan River hydropower developments and the related Rainy Lake Conservancy submission, the fall report and presentation to the IJC, and governance mechanisms for addressing water quality issues on Lake of the Woods. A number of these topics were the subject of email exchanges as well.

Questions or comments? Contact the Boards' Secretary:

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NAMAKAN LAKE



RAINY LAKE

