
INTERNATIONAL RAINY LAKE BOARD OF CONTROL (IRLBC) INTERNATIONAL RAINY RIVER WATER POLLUTION BOARD (IRRWPB)

NEWSLETTER

3rd 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 3rd Quarter (July-September) of 2008.

Basin Conditions and Regulation

Water levels, inflows and outflows are shown on the attached graphs for both lakes.

Due to very high inflow in the previous quarter, Namakan Lake was 19 cm (7.5 in) above its Upper Rule Curve (URC) on July 1 and all sluices in both dams at Kettle Falls were fully open. Although inflow was still greater than 95 percentile (%ile) in early July, it had been declining through June and the lake level was also declining, having reached its peak on June 15. The level fell below the URC on July 7, having been above the IJC operating band since May 13. The dams, fully open since May 12, also started to be closed on July 7. With inflow continuing to decline through to mid-September, outflow was further reduced in steps in order to keep Namakan within its operating band. Outflow was increased again in late September in response to rising inflow, and the lake ended the quarter at 75 percent (%) of band.

As with Namakan, Rainy Lake started the quarter well above its URC and with all gates in the Fort Frances – International Falls dam fully open. Although declining, inflow remained above 95%ile through July 22. The lake level, which had risen above its URC on May 13 and peaked on June 29 but was still 36 cm (14 in) above its URC on July 1, declined with the declining inflow, finally falling below its URC on July 23. The dam was fully open from June 6 to July 17. All gates in the dam were closed by August 1 but, with inflows continuing to decline and reaching only 15%ile by late August, the outflow through the powerhouses was reduced to the IJC-specified minimum in order to maintain the lake level within the operating band. With a little rise in inflow in mid-September, outflow was increased slightly above the minimum and the level of Rainy Lake ended the quarter at 56% of band.

Annual Basin Meetings and Tour – August 26-28

The Boards held their annual joint meetings in Fort Frances on August 26 and 28 to address water issues in the Rainy-Namakan and Rainy River basins. On August 27 the Boards toured the Namakan Chain of Lakes. IJC Commissioners Olson and Trépanier, and several IJC staff, attended all or some of the meetings and tour.

The Boards met with Boise and ACH/AbitibiBowater, the Rainy and Namakan lake dam operators, on the afternoon of August 26. Dam operations and maintenance, operating constraints (including the location of the fire-water intake for the Canadian mill), environmental monitoring programs, data collection procedures and public information efforts were discussed. The Companies had received only a few calls about the high water levels in 2008. Commissioner Trépanier thanked the Companies for their co-operation in suspending hydropower peaking operations during the spring fish spawning period on the Rainy River.

The Boards' annual joint public meeting, held on the evening of August 26, was attended by about 30 members of the public plus representatives of area resource agencies and the Companies. The presentation, lasting 25 minutes, summarized the IJC's involvement in the basin, a number of basin issues under review, and the high water events of fall 2007 and summer 2008. During the subsequent question period, a number of attendees expressed concern and frustration with the negative impacts of high water and questioned why the lakes couldn't be managed better. In particular, several questioned why the gates on the dam were not opened sooner. Board staff explained that, due to the restriction at Ranier Rapids, the upper river could not deliver the full discharge capacity of the dam until the lake was at higher levels. The Boards were also questioned about the status of the Namakan River hydropower proposals and were given two submissions, one expressing concern over proposed sulphide mining in the Ely area and one regarding measures to address Lake of the Woods water quality issues. In addition, a representative of Rainy River First Nations advised the Boards of what he felt was a miscarriage of justice regarding a spill of untreated waste into the Rainy River.

On August 27, the Boards spent the day touring the Namakan Chain of Lakes by boat. Travelling from the Ash River Visitor Center of Voyageurs National Park to Crane Lake, the Boards viewed the several narrows that result in Crane Lake levels being higher than Namakan-Kabetogama during periods of high inflow. The Boards also inspected the dams at Kettle Falls.

On August 28, the Boards met with representatives of local resource agencies and other governmental organizations responsible for water resource information and management within the basin. Members of the Rule Curve Assessment Workgroup provided an update on their development of a plan of study to collect and evaluate data needed to assess the Year 2000 Rainy and Namakan rule curves in 2015. Following this, agency representatives provided updates on their environmental monitoring programs. General discussion addressed invasive species, work of the Rainy River (Hydropower) Peaking Workgroup and aspects of the upcoming rule curve review process.

Board Meetings

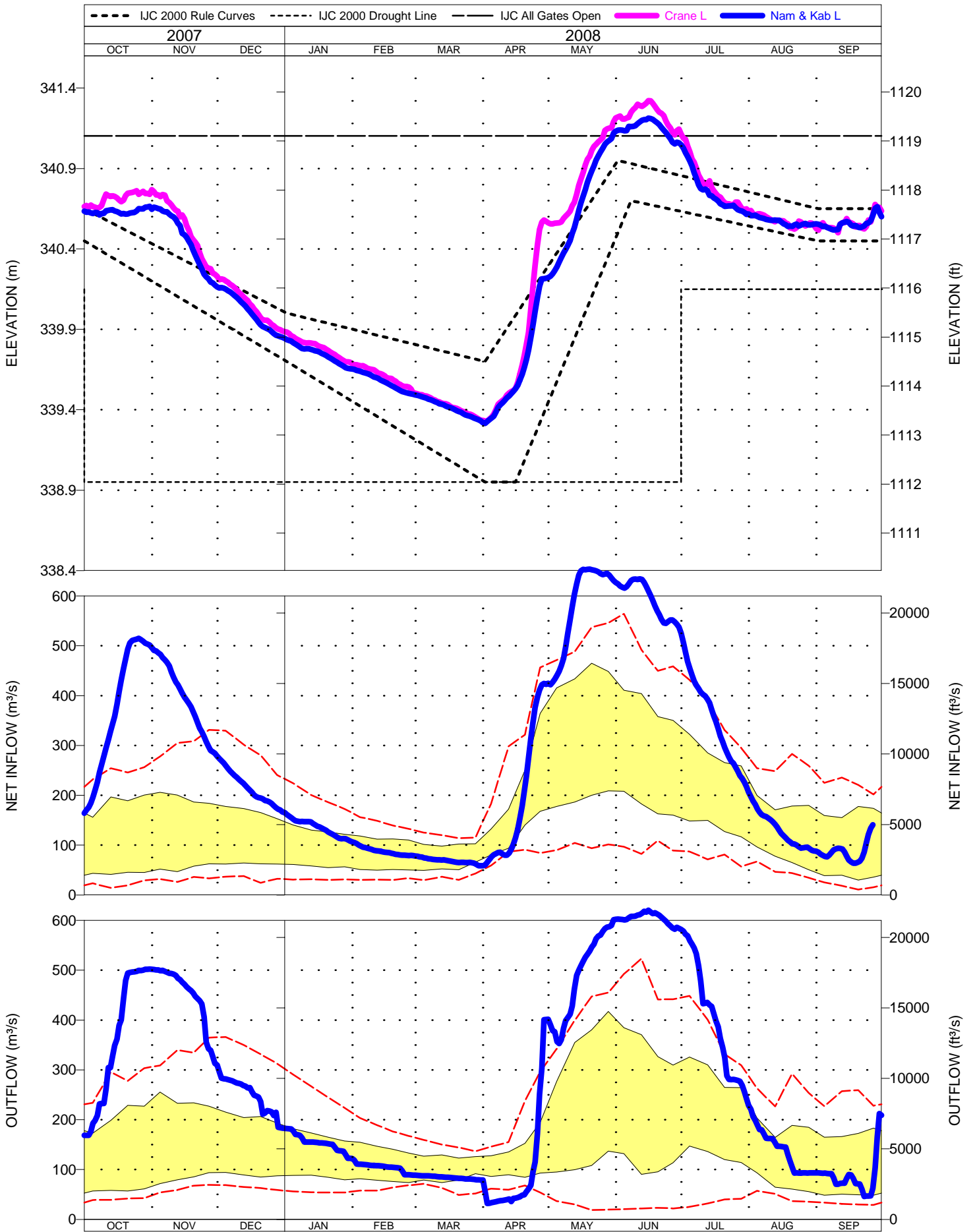
During the quarter, the Boards held a conference call on July 22 and met while in the basin in August. Topics of discussion included the August meetings, the fall report to the IJC, a letter to the IJC regarding possible merger of the Boards, hydropower peaking, the plan of study for rule curve evaluation and the submission of project funding proposals to the IJC under its International Watersheds Initiative. Glen Witherspoon was selected to replace Peter Williams on the Peaking Workgroup.

2000 Rule Curve Assessment Workgroup

As addressed in previous newsletters, the IJC established a six-member Workgroup in October 2007 to develop a Plan of Study (POS). The Workgroup's mission was to report on and prioritize the monitoring and analyses required to lead to a scientifically defensible identification of the impacts of the adoption of the 2000 Order by 2015 for Rainy and Namakan Lakes and Rainy River.

During the quarter, several members of the Boards provided comments on the draft workshop proceedings and draft POS that the Workgroup had submitted to the IJC in late June.

NAMAKAN LAKE



RAINY LAKE

