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Corps of Engineers report Great Lakes water levels remain high as fall storms approach

DETROIT- U.S. Army Corps of Engineers officials report despite seasonal declines, Great Lakes water levels remain high as fall storms approach.

“The Corps of Engineers urges anyone impacted by high water levels last fall to prepare for similar or worse impacts in the coming months,” Detroit District Great Lakes Hydraulics and Hydrology Office Chief, John Allis said.

The Corps’ Detroit District is responsible for monitoring, forecasting, collecting and disseminating Great Lakes water level information. For the most up-to-date Great Lakes water level information visit the district’s website at www.lre.usace.army.mil/Missions/Great-Lakes-Information.

Fall and early winter months typically bring some of the strongest Great Lakes region storms. “Even though lake levels are declining, this active weather can potentially bring tremendous impacts to coastlines, including erosion and coastal flooding,” Allis said.

Lake Michigan-Huron and Lake St. Clair set new monthly mean record high water levels in August. Lake Michigan-Huron’s previous August record was in 1986. Lake St. Clair surpassed last year’s record high.

Water levels on lakes Michigan-Huron, St. Clair, Erie and Ontario declined during August and are expected to continue declining throughout the fall. The Lake Superior’s water level likely reached its peak in August and will begin its decline this month.

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During response operations, Detroit District's Emergency Management Office conducts emergency operations to save lives and protect public facilities and communities. The Corps of Engineers can provide technical assistance in the form of advice and expertise in construction of temporary flood protection measures such as sandbagging, or direct assistance by providing flood fight supplies to state, county or local governments. Assistance is supplemental to local and state efforts and at the state's request. Private property or business owners need to contact their local government.

In response to Great Lakes high water, Detroit District activated its Emergency Operations Center in May 2019. September 2020 marks more than 500 consecutive days providing support. In that time, under its technical assistance authority Detroit District conducted hundreds of on-site assessments in 15 counties and provided flood fight supplies in two counties under the direct assistance authority. To date, the district has provided 350,000 sandbags to assist counties with flood fight efforts.

Projects to alleviate erosion or flooding may require a permit from a Corps of Engineers regulatory office. A permit may be needed because these projects could potentially impact the nation's rivers, streams, wetlands and other aquatic resources.

To find more information about Great Lakes high water, emergency management or the permit process, visit the Detroit District website at www.lre.usace.army.mil/About/Great-Lakes-High-Water. The site includes information about how to protect property and investments along the coast and related Corps programs and authorities.

-30-

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