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

NEWSLETTER

4th Quarter 2009

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 4th Quarter (October-December) of 2009.

Basin Conditions and Regulation

The final quarter of the year was unremarkable in terms of basin hydrology. The levels of both Namakan and Rainy lakes remained within their IJC-specified rule curve bands throughout. Water levels, inflows and outflows are shown on the attached graphs for both lakes.

The level of Namakan Lake started October at 46% of its IJC band, with inflow at 45 percentile (%ile) and declining. Inflow declined to 30 percentile by late October but improved to 55%ile by early November, to 65%ile by November 26 and then to 70%ile from December 8 through year-end. In response, the lake level reached its lowest band position of 32% on October 23, recovered to median by November 4 and was at 80% of band at year-end. To keep the lake level from rising higher, outflow was increased in early and mid-November in response to the increasing inflow.

The level of Rainy Lake started the quarter at 48% of its IJC band, with inflow at 60%ile and declining. Inflow declined to 25%ile by October 26 but had recovered to median by October 31 and then was mostly in the 60-65%ile range through to year-end. In response, the lake outflow was reduced from 196 m³/s at the start of October to a low of 138 m³/s by October 26, then increased to 338 m³/s by November 24 and ended the year at a somewhat lower 296 m³/s. As a result of these changes in inflow and outflow, the lake level declined to as low as 32% of band and then rose as high as 63% of band before ending the year on a declining trend at 42% of band.

International Joint Commission Semi-Annual Meeting

IRLBC and IRRWPB members and staff attended the fall semi-annual meeting of the IJC in Ottawa Ontario on October 28. The Boards' presentation to the IJC addressed water quality and provided updates on basin and Board activities. The water quality component reported on water sampling, fish consumption advisories, municipal/industrial point source discharges and trends in BOD (biochemical oxygen demand) loads on the Rainy River. While the data was mostly positive, it was noted that turbidity in the Big and Little Fork rivers, and DO (dissolved oxygen) in the Big Fork, had exceeded ambient water quality guidelines. The Baudette municipal discharge had also exceeded average and maximum TSS (total suspended solids) concentrations four times in May 2008. The basin activities component provided an update on the proposed Namakan River hydropower development, environmental monitoring for future rule curve evaluation (work by both a committee of the resource agencies and by a workgroup named by the IJC to develop a Plan of Study), spring hydropower peaking operations, and work under the IJC's International Watersheds Initiative (IWI).

Following the Boards' presentation to the IJC, two members of the Year 2000 Rule Curve Assessment Workgroup presented a summary of their final report "Plan of Study for the Evaluation of the IJC 2000

Order for Rainy and Namakan Lakes and Rainy River”. This report is available on the Board web sites.

Board Meetings and Activities

During the quarter, the Boards met in Ottawa on October 28 in two sessions both before and after their presentation to the IJC. The Boards also held two conference calls (on October 5 and December 18) and conducted other business via email.

On the October 5 conference call, the Boards discussed: their Fall Report and presentation to the IJC, issues with several of the approved IJC IWI projects (temperature monitoring on the Rainy River and aquatic vegetation study on the lakes) and the latest draft of the Boards’ workplan. In addition, several IJC staff members joined part of the call to discuss options for Board amalgamation and mandate expansion, and several representatives of the Health Professionals Task Force joined part of the call to brief the members and answer questions on their report on Water and Health in the basin. The Boards’ Fall Report was subsequently submitted to the IJC on October 9.

When in Ottawa, the Boards finalized their presentation to the IJC, addressed revisions to their fall report, discussed the status of several IWI projects and defined steps to be taken, and discussed other matters, including the draft workplan, Board mandate expansion and the possible application to the Rainy basin of the IJC project to harmonize Canadian and United States data sets.

On the December 18 conference call, the Boards discussed: the status of the several IWI projects approved for the basin, possible changes to the Boards’ web sites, newsletters and reports, the status of a possible Reference to the IJC regarding Lake of the Woods water quality, and participation in the 2010 Lake of the Woods Water Quality Forum. In addition, IJC staff members working on the IJC’s data harmonization project joined part of the call to brief the members on the project, describe the work completed in the Rainy basin to date and agree on future Board involvement.

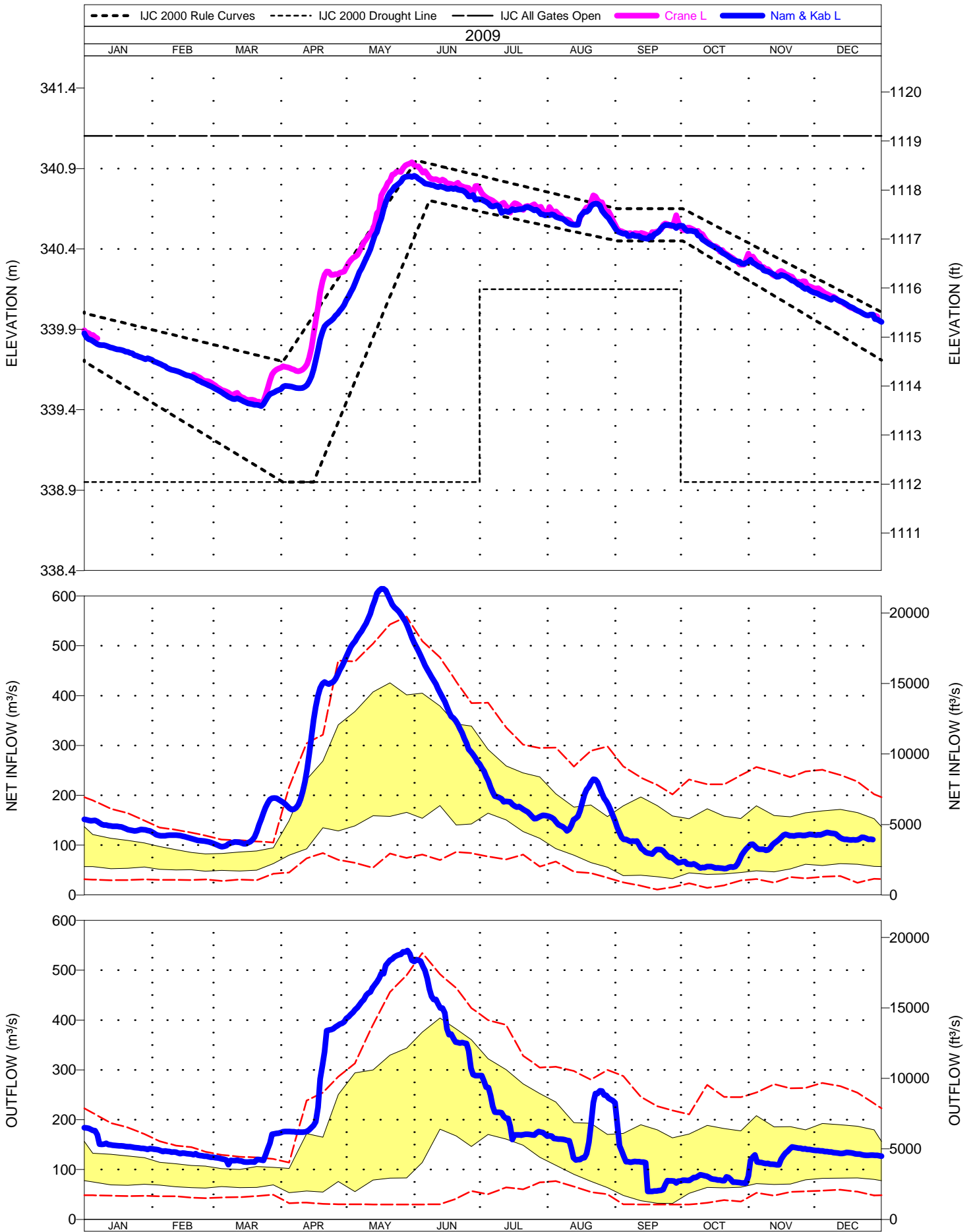
Other items that were completed or advanced during the quarter are noted below:

- regarding IWI projects, bathymetry data for the upper Rainy River was collected during the week of October 12, funding was approved on October 1 and a contract let by the IJC to develop a hydraulic model of the upper Rainy River, a further revision of the Rainy River temperature monitoring proposal was submitted to the IJC on October 16 (data is being collected at Manitou Rapids), and Environment Canada staff completed their testing of the hydraulic model developed several years ago for the lower Rainy River by the US Army Corps of Engineers.
- information was provided and follow-ups sought concerning potential dioxin/furan contamination on Couchiching First Nation lands.
- a response was provided to an individual regarding his concerns over the proposed Namakan River hydropower project. The Ojibway Power and Energy Group (OPEG) subsequently released their Draft Environmental Report on December 23 for public and agency review until February 26, 2010; the report is available in the Fort Frances and Atikokan public libraries and can also be viewed on-line at: <http://high.opeg.ca/>

Board Members

Greg Chapman, the new District Manager of the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources in Fort Frances, was appointed by the IJC as a member on the IRRWPB, replacing Bill Darby who had resigned in late July. Kelli Saunders, with the Ontario Ministry of the Environment in Kenora, was appointed as Greg’s alternate. Both appointments are for a three year term, from December 8, 2009 to December 12, 2012.

NAMAKAN LAKE



RAINY LAKE

