

INTERNATIONAL RAINY LAKE BOARD OF CONTROL

NEWSLETTER

REVIEW OF THE IJC ORDER FOR RAINY & NAMAKAN LAKES

Number 5

April, 1999

This is the fifth in a series of periodic newsletters concerning the review of the rule curves used to manage the water levels of Rainy and Namakan lakes. The study is proceeding in accordance with a Plan of Study adopted by the International Joint Commission (IJC) in 1996, and was initiated in response to a proposal for change by the Rainy/Namakan Water Level International Steering Committee (SC).

Update

The Board's Status Report, and its last newsletter, were issued in March, 1998. Since that time activity has continued in three main areas. First, the Board has completed its own work on the flood risk and economic components of the study. Second, interests and agencies downstream of Rainy-Namakan have assessed how they might be impacted by the proposed rule curve changes and have reported back to the Board. (The Board released Addendum 1 to the Status Report in December 1998, providing computed Rainy River levels resulting from the rule curve options, to assist the Rainy River interests in their work.) Third, interests and agencies have provided comments on the Status Report.

Draft Final Report

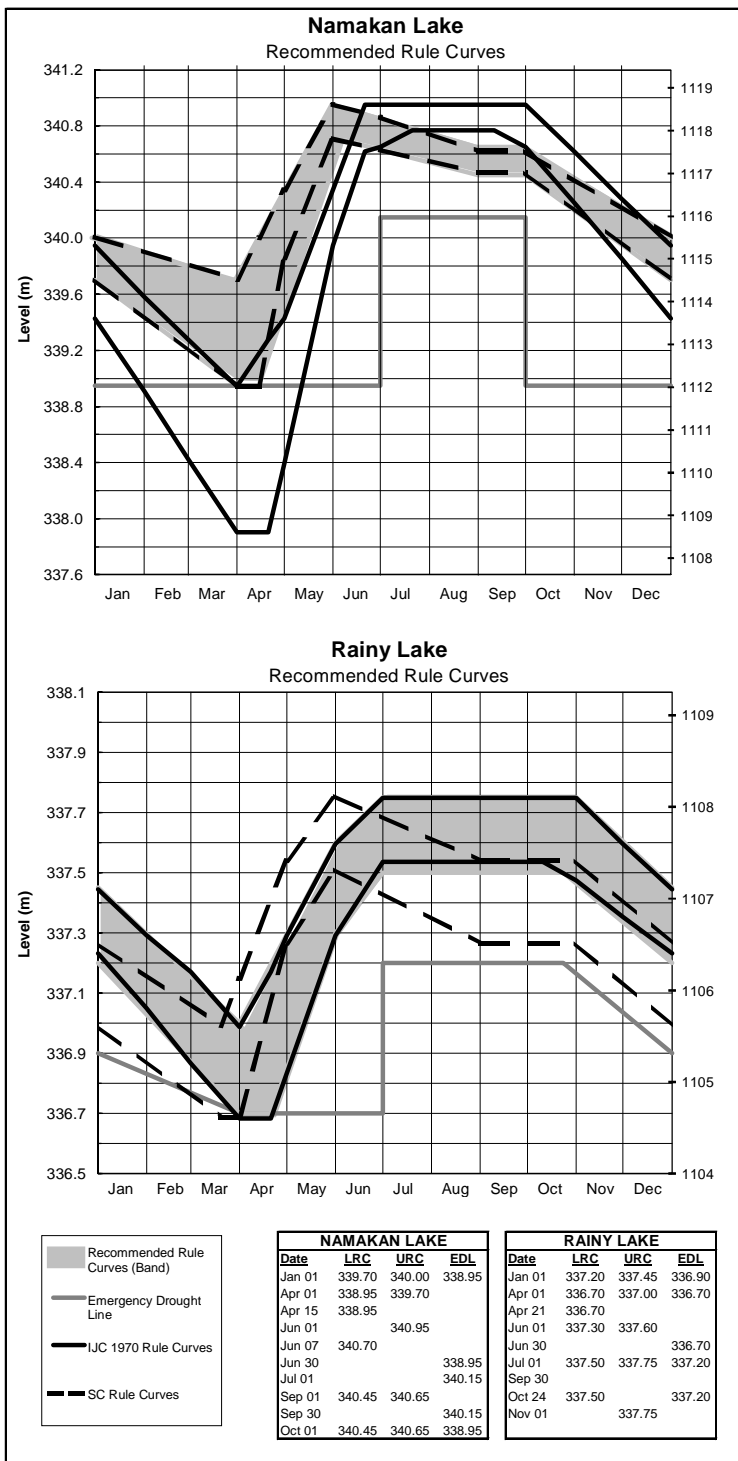
Based on its own analysis, plus the comments and analysis received from others, the Board has prepared its Draft Final Report, dated April 28, 1999. This report is an extension of the earlier Status Report in that it includes the material reported upon previously but also documents the work done over the past year and contains the Board's recommendations. These recommendations were presented to the International Joint Commission in Washington on April 13th, and to the public at the Board's annual meeting in Fort Frances on April 28th. The public are encouraged to review the report and provide their comments to the Board. The report is posted on the Board's Web site and is also available in paper form or on computer diskette by contacting either of the Engineering Advisors (see below). Both the Web and diskette versions contain graphs in colour.

Recommendations

The recommendations of the Board follow. They attempt to address not only the tradeoff on Rainy-Namakan of the fishery and environmental concerns versus hydropower and flood risk, but also the balance between benefits and interests on Rainy-Namakan versus those downstream.

- 1. The recommended rule curves shown on Figure 1 should be adopted. These are essentially a minor modification of the proposed International Steering Committee rule curves on Namakan Lake and the existing IJC rule curves on Rainy Lake.*
- 2. The minimum outflow criteria for Namakan Lake should be expressed in terms of the total Namakan Chain of Lakes outflow rather than in terms of the Kettle Falls outflow, so that the overflows from Gold and Bear Portage are accounted for.*
- 3. The minimum outflow criteria should be revised as follows for both lakes. On Namakan Lake, the outflow should be reduced to 30 m³/s instantaneous whenever the lake level is below the Lower Rule Curve, and should be further reducible, at the discretion of the IRLBC but no lower than 15 m³/s, whenever the lake level is below the Emergency Drought Line (EDL) shown on Figure 1. On Rainy Lake, the outflow should be reduced to 100 m³/s instantaneous whenever the lake level is below the LRC, and should be further reducible, at the discretion of the IRLBC but no lower than 65 m³/s, whenever the lake level is below the EDL shown on Figure 1. (The current seasonal and diurnal criteria would be eliminated.)*
- 4. Any new rule curves adopted should be implemented on a trial basis. The length of the trial could be for a defined period, or linked to certain hydrological extremes occurring during the trial period, but in any case should not be shorter than 10 years so that a range of events can be experienced and adaptations of the biological community can begin to be identified.*

Figure 1



6. The Order should state that, within the rule curve operating bands, regulation operations are to be solely at the discretion of the dam owners in accordance with basin conditions. The flexibility intended to be offered by these bands for responding to current basin conditions and local needs should not be constrained by any additional rules.

The rationale for these recommendations is given in the Draft Final Report.

Remaining Process

A three month period, to July 30, 1999, has been set aside for public review and comment. Both the Board and the IJC will gladly accept written comment during this period. In addition, the IJC intends to hold a Public Hearing in the basin in early July. Following the review period, the Board will finalize its report and submit it to the Commission in the early fall. The Commission will then decide what action is appropriate.

The Draft Final Report and other study documents can be found on the Board's Web page:
www.mvp-wc.usace.army.mil/ijc/rainylake.html

To request copies of study documents on paper or on diskette, or if you have comments or questions, please contact the Board's Engineering Advisors:

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5. Monitoring programs should be implemented by the resource management agencies in accordance with the recommendations of the fisheries and environmental resources experts to enable the impacts of new rule curves on the biological and aquatic communities to be identified, and to provide an adequate source of information for future reviews.