

**INTERNATIONAL RAINY LAKE BOARD OF CONTROL  
INTERNATIONAL RAINY RIVER WATER POLLUTION BOARD****NEWSLETTER****3<sup>rd</sup> Quarter 2005**

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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 3<sup>rd</sup> Quarter (July – September) of 2005.

***Basin Conditions and Regulation***

Water levels, inflows and outflows up to the end of September 2005 are shown on the attached graphs for Namakan and Rainy lakes. Basin conditions were very different in the 3<sup>rd</sup> Quarter of 2005 than they were in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Quarter. The wet, high water conditions of May and June gave way to relatively dry conditions by early August. Namakan Lake started the quarter at near median level and was at 25 % of band by the end of September. Inflows for July through September averaged only 34 percentile. For Rainy Lake, inflows averaged 40 percentile for the 3 months and the lake level declined from 1 cm (1/2 in) above its upper rule curve on July 1 to only 18% of band at the end of September. Rainy Lake outflow was at the IJC minimum of 100 m<sup>3</sup>/s for much of the period from late August through September as the Companies attempted to keep the lake from declining too far below mid-band.

Compared to recent past events, the Boards heard relatively little from the public in response to the 2005 event. However, there was some criticism regarding the regulation of Rainy Lake in 2005, particularly by members of the Border Lakes Association. The Association had expressed their concerns in letter to the Commission in advance of the meeting. Of the six spring seasons since the new rule curves were adopted, this was the third year in which the level of Rainy Lake rose above its upper rule curve (in 2001, 2002 and 2005; the level remained within its operating band in 2000 and 2004, and fell well below the band in 2003). The main points of criticism were that Rainy Lake should have been held lower in its operating band prior to the event and that more water should have been stored on Namakan Lake to provide relief to Rainy. Upon the request of the IJC, these points were assessed by the Boards. The Boards concluded that the Rule Curve had minimal effect on the high water event and that, based on the historical record, high and low water events are likely to reoccur. The Boards will investigate the need for more public education and outreach regarding high and low water events. Details on the 2005 assessment are available in the Boards' "Fall 2005 Report" and letter response to the IJC request, while full assessments of the larger 2001 and 2002 events are available in separate Board reports. These reports are available at [www.ijc.org](http://www.ijc.org).

## ***Rainy River Hydropower Peaking***

The IJC formally requested in writing on April 14 that the Companies, Boise Paper Solutions and Abitibi-Consolidated Company of Canada (ACCC), voluntarily suspend peaking operations during the spring spawning season from April 15 through June 30. Subsequently, the Companies responded to the Commission indicating an interest in further dialogue on this subject and their belief that there is insufficient scientific evidence with which to make a decision at this time and that any decisions with respect to peaking should not be made without ensuring that adequate scientific investigation has been completed. The IJC requested the Boards to review, by the end of August, the unpublished O'Shea report as recommended in the Boards' "Spring 2005 Report" to the Commission to provide more detail on peaking impacts on the Rainy River that could prove helpful for further dialogue with the Companies. The report is dated January 26, 2005 and is entitled "Recommendation Report From "The Committee On The Environmental Effects Of Peaking On Rainy River". The Boards completed and submitted their review to the IJC on August 31.

## ***Annual Public Meetings***

The Boards held their fourth annual joint public meetings, on July 21 in International Falls, Minnesota at the Rainy River Community College and on July 22 in Stratton, Ontario at the Rainy River First Nation's (RRFN) Kay-Nah-Chi-Wah-Nung Visitors Centre to discuss water issues in the Rainy Lake and Rainy River basin. On July 21 the Boards also met separately with representatives of the RRFN in Stratton to discuss basin water issues and with dam operators (Boise Paper Solutions and Abitibi-Consolidated Incorporated) in International Falls to discuss dam operations and maintenance. IJC Commissioners Allen Olson and Jack Blaney along with several IJC staff were in attendance at these meetings. The meetings provided an opportunity for the public to become acquainted with newly appointed IRRWPB members Jeff Stoner and Nolan Baratono and newly appointed IRLBC member Peter Williams. All three were appointed to their respective boards by the IJC during the first four months of 2005.

At the public meeting in International Falls, the key topic of discussion centered on regulation of Rainy and Namakan lakes since implementation of the 2000 rule curves. There was some criticism regarding the regulation of Rainy Lake in the spring 2005 high water event. The main points of criticism were that Rainy Lake should have been held lower in its operating band prior to the event and that more water should have been stored on Namakan Lake to provide relief to Rainy. The boards also received comments supporting the new rule curves and recognizing improved communications between the IJC, Boards and the public.

At the public meeting in Stratton, discussions focused less on the 2005 spring high water event and more on broader ranging issues. A representative from Crane Lake pointed out the negative impacts of the various choke points (connecting narrows between lakes in the Namakan chain of lakes) on high water levels on Crane Lake during periods of high inflow, and was pleased that a model study of the Namakan chain had been recommended by the Boards under the Watersheds Initiative. Representatives of the RRFN raised concerns about involuntary sanitary sewer bypass flow from the Town of Fort Frances during high water events and the need for improved communication with the RRFN in these situations. The IRRWPB will look into guidelines used during instances of sewer bypass. The May 2001 ACCC untreated effluent spill to the Rainy River was noted in particular, because it occurred at a time when the RRFN was about to release

Sturgeon fry into the river. The RRFN requested that they be kept abreast of developments at an early stage, regarding the Rainy River peaking review, and that they be included as an advisor to the review. Commissioner Blaney expressed the IJC's commitment to keeping the RRFN informed on the matter.

### ***Board Meetings and Tour Summary***

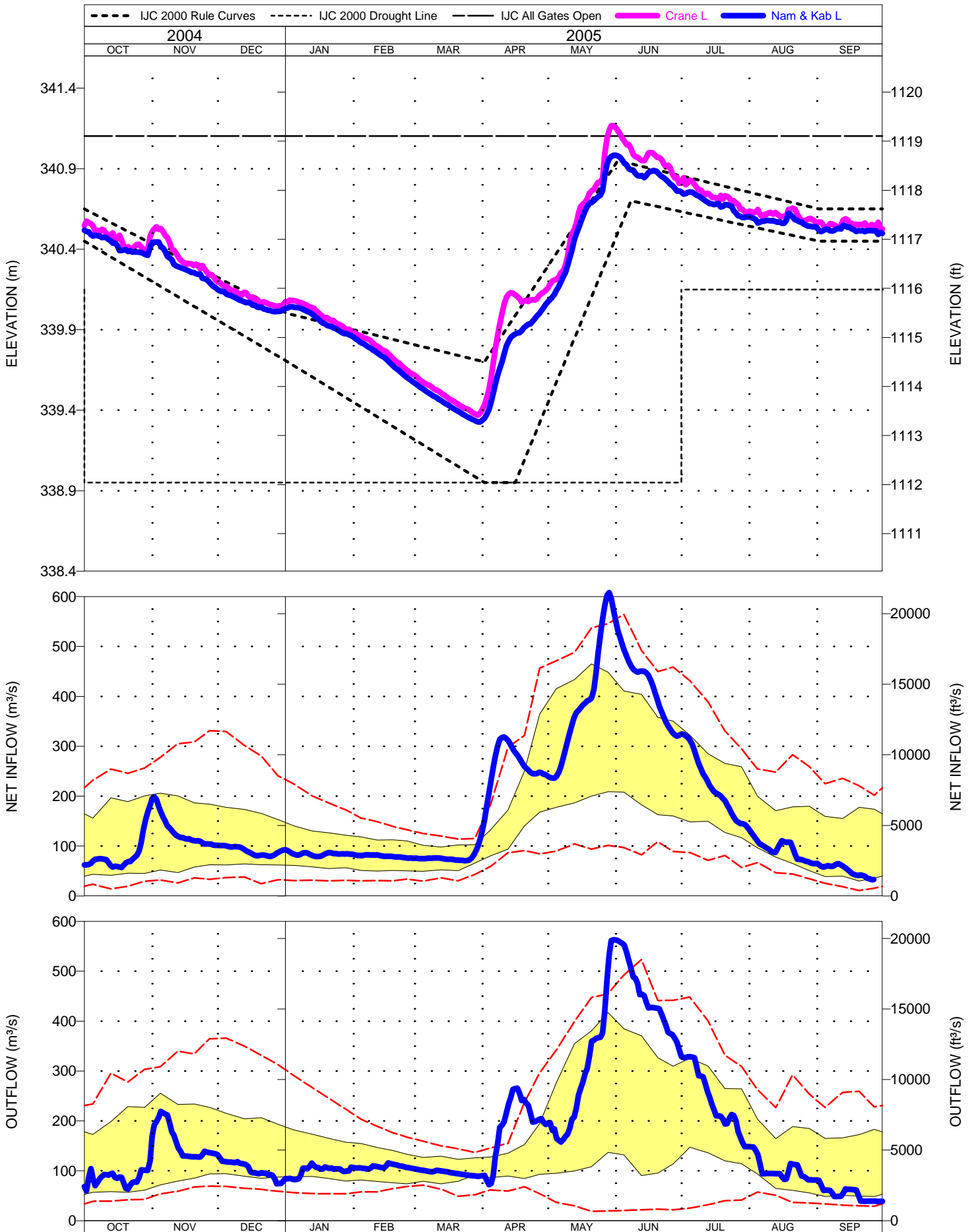
The Boards held one joint conference call and one joint meeting during this reporting period. The conference call was conducted on August 11. Key topics of discussion included funding for hydraulic modeling of the Rainy River, review of the O'Shea report on Rainy River hydropower peaking and preparation of comments to the IJC, response to an IJC request for comments on a letter to the Commission from the Border Lakes Association concerning 2005 regulation of Rainy and Namakan lakes, coordination of contact information with the Rainy River First Nation (RRFN) and the Fort Frances Area Chiefs Council, preparation of the 3rd Quarter Newsletter, preparations for the Fall semi-annual meeting of the IJC and work on the Boards' Fall 2005 Report to the Commission. Separately, Board and IJC staff held a conference call on June 23, 2005 to discuss and finalize arrangements for the Rainy public meetings and tour scheduled for July 21 & 22. A joint Board meeting was held on July 22 in International Falls in connection with the annual joint public meetings in the basin. The key topics of discussion included improving Board communications with First Nations in the basin, the IJC response to the Border Lakes Association letter and the Boards' review of the O'Shea report on Rainy River hydropower peaking for the IJC.

On September 21-22, several Members of both Boards toured wastewater treatment facilities on the Canadian side of the Rainy River. Facilities visited were those of the Town of Fort Frances, the Abitibi-Consolidated mill, and Rainy River First Nation. A tour of United States facilities is planned for 2006.

*Questions or comments? Contact the Boards' Secretary:*

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# NAMAKAN LAKE



# RAINY LAKE

