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

## NEWSLETTER

### 4<sup>th</sup> Quarter 2008

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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 4<sup>th</sup> Quarter (October-December) of 2008.

#### *Basin Conditions and Regulation*

The final quarter of the year was marked by several rainfall events that led to increases in inflow in both October and November and then resulted in sustained upper quartile inflows through to year-end. The level of Namakan Lake started October at 62% of its IJC band and, apart from a dip to mid-band in early October, tracked in the 60-70% of band range through to early November. Inflow then increased by 100 m<sup>3</sup>/s, from 65 to 85 percentile (%ile), over only a few days, resulting in the lake level rising above the IJC Upper Rule Curve (URC). Outflow was not increased as quickly as normal under these circumstances as the Companies were thwarted by jammed stop-logs in the Kettle Falls dam and illness of the dam tender. The lake level was above its URC for 16 days, from November 9 through November 23, with a maximum deviation of 7.5 cm above the URC on November 17. At year-end, the level of Namakan was 50% of the IJC band and both inflow and outflow were a little above 75%ile.

The level of Rainy Lake also varied through the quarter in response to the rainfall events but was contained within its IJC operating band, starting the quarter at 56% of band, reaching 89% on November 7, dropping as low as 50% on November 21, and ending the year at 78% of band. A number of outflow changes were required to keep the level within the band in response to the varying inflows. Outflow was increased from 219 m<sup>3</sup>/s on November 3 to 539 m<sup>3</sup>/s on November 15, and then down to 327 m<sup>3</sup>/s by November 30. Water levels, inflows and outflows are shown on the attached graphs for both lakes.

#### *International Joint Commission Semi-Annual Meeting*

IRLBC and IRRWPB members and staff attended the fall semi-annual meeting of the IJC in Ottawa ON on October 29. The Boards' presentation to the IJC addressed water quality, basin activities, Board meetings, lake regulation and potential merger of the Boards and expansion of their mandate. The water quality component reported on water sampling, fish consumption advisories, municipal/industrial point source discharges and trends in BOD (biochemical oxygen demand) and phosphorus loads on the Rainy River. While no violations were reported at municipal or industrial operations, it was noted that federal guidelines for several water quality indicators had been exceeded at Manitou Rapids in the spring and fall of 2007. When problems were discovered, the sewage lagoon operators managed discharges so as to minimize impact on the environment. The basin activities component provided an update on spring hydropower peaking operations, 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), the proposed Namakan River hydropower developments, the status of the Pine Island peat mine, and work under the IJC's International Watersheds Initiative (IWI). The latter included an update on the Rainy River hydraulic model and a summary of projects submitted for funding. The meetings component addressed the Boards' meetings in the basin in August, noting in particular the concerns raised at the public meeting (need for an IJC board to address water quality issues on Lake of the Woods,

risks associated with proposed sulphide mining near Ely MN, and 2008 high water levels).

### ***Board Meetings and Activities***

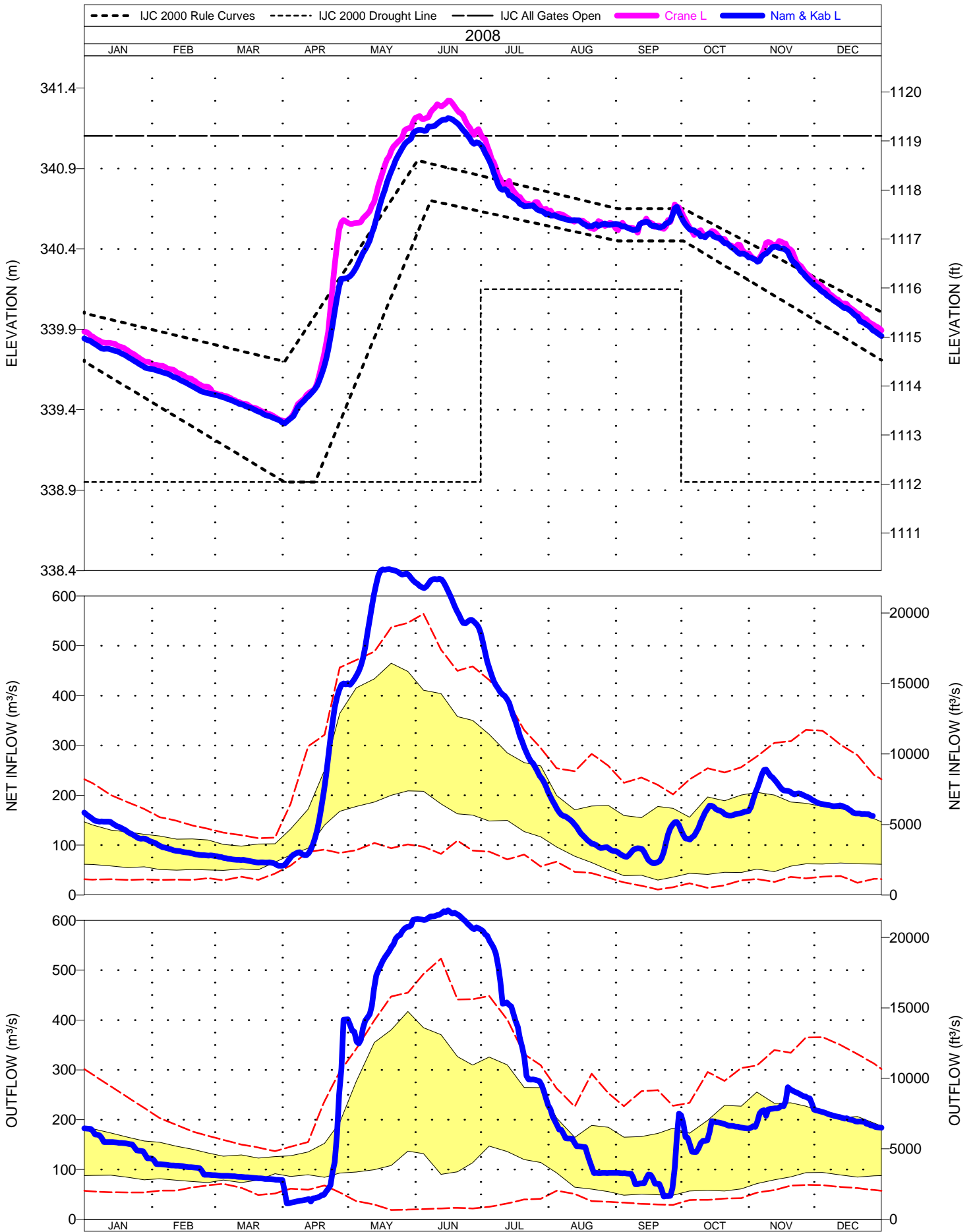
During the quarter, the Boards met in Ottawa on October 29 in two sessions both before and after their presentation to the IJC. The Boards also held a joint conference call on December 17. As well, several members represented the Boards at the IJC's IWI Workshop on October 27.

When in Ottawa, the Boards finalized their presentation to the IJC, addressed revisions to their fall report to the IJC, discussed the IWI Workshop and the status of several projects proposed for IWI funding, and reviewed the status of several basin issues and activities. Decisions were made regarding several matters, including follow-ups to concerns raised at the August public meeting, replies to submissions to the Boards, a plan to assess the 2008 high water event, and follow-ups to regulation issues. The need to update the Boards' workplan was noted, tentative meeting and activity plans were discussed for 2009 (the IJC centennial year) and arrangements were made to carry on without a Board Secretary, as Kari Layman (US Army Corps of Engineers) would no longer be available for this role. On the December conference call, the Boards reviewed and discussed several outstanding action items, another submission received by the Boards, IWI projects and how to simplify and share the preparation of Minutes without a Board Secretary.

As a result of Board discussions, as noted above and via email, and also via several conference calls involving sub-sets of Board members and staff, the following items were completed or advanced:

- fall report submitted to the IJC on October 5, revised report submitted on November 13 and subsequently posted on the web
- basin issue submissions (mining, water quality) presented and referred to the IJC, and subsequently monitored
- detailed response to regulation proposals of the Border Lakes Association (BLA) issued December 2
- submission by the IJC's Health Professionals Task Force for Board support for an IWI project pertaining to water-related health issues in the basin considered and questions posed
- letters issued to AbitibiBowater and ACH Limited Partnership regarding regulation-related issues of sluice leakage and forebay drawdown constraints
- arrangements for the Rainy River Peaking Work Group to review the two-year spring period moratorium and consider an extension. Review of equipment needed, agency support and funding for a water temperature gauge network to better define the spawning period.
- continuing work on a Plan of Study for rule curve assessment in 2015. Receipt of the first of 5 reports from the resource agencies' committee studying water level impacts.
- detailed letter response to the IJC regarding Board merger and mandate expansion, with recommended first step, submitted October 20 and later addressed in presentation to the IJC
- consideration and identification of appropriate web links regarding aquatic invasive species in response to request for support in this area from the resource agencies
- several replies to individuals and associations regarding the high water event and water levels
- comments on the IJC's 3<sup>rd</sup> IWI report to governments, and consideration of Board support for the IJC centennial in 2009

# NAMAKAN LAKE



# RAINY LAKE

