Coalition for Equitable Water Flow

Water Levels Update & Ice Advisory
as of April 10, 2011

POTENTIAL FOR INCREASED LEVEL OF ICE DAMAGE IN 2011

A number of Members have alerted CEWF to an unusual pattern of ice damage starting in March 2011. The following images show the result of ice movement on Catchacoma Lake (top), Loon Lake (middle), and Gull Lake (bottom).

In 2010 the snowpack melted very quickly and the TSW had difficulty in filling the reservoir lakes. This year the snowpack is again below average and the TSW inserted logs at most dams by mid-March in an attempt to retain as much of the spring run-off as necessary for their operations. The result is that the lakes are filling at rates close to the multi-year average.

For example, as of April 1, 2011 Kennisis Lake was some 43" below the normal high water level: this is actually 8" higher than the multi-year average for this date, or a week ahead of the average schedule.

Typically, as the lakes fill, the winter ice sheet breaks away from the shoreline and floats on the lake with a 'moat' of water around the shoreline. This year however, there have been several unusually cold nights after the lakes began to fill. This has resulted in fresh ice forming along the shorelines. The potential for damage to shoreline structures has therefore been increased this year.

We note the following:

- fresh ice formation in Spring, combined with additional freeze-thaw cycles, can damage docks, especially if the water level is higher than the normal December freeze-up level;
- fresh ice formation may delay the normal ice-out date;
- there is the possibility of increased damage from floating ice, especially wind-blown ice, when the ice remains on a lake at water levels that are higher the usual level at 'ice-out'.

We appreciate that a number of members have alerted us to this issue and have documented problems by taking photographs. While there is little that can be done by shoreline property owners at this late stage to avert the potential for ice damage, CEWF is advising Members to monitor their shorelines as closely as they are able over the coming month.

We note that the TSW has taken action in some cases to try to reduce the negative impact of ice damage. We encourage CEWF members to continue to inform CEWF and the TSW of their concerns as the 2011 spring thaw and freshet proceeds.

TSW Water Levels Website

CEWF has learned that a number of enhancements to the water levels section of the TSW web site are due to be released later this year.

As noted by CEWF in mid-March, the TSW water levels website is not currently up to date. However, the TSW has confirmed that they are attempting to bring their water levels website back to full functionality as soon as possible. As a step in that direction, the water level data were updated as of April 1, 2011.

The data for some lakes (e.g. Gull, Kennisis and Moore) indicate some spikes during the period from late February to early March: we believe that these spikes should be interpreted as data anomalies and not extreme water level fluctuations. Note also that the March data for several lakes appear to be interpolated from readings for late February and early April and thus do not provide a true daily record of actual water levels.

A link to the Parks Canada TSW web site can be found on the CEWF home page at www.cewf.ca