



MEDIA RELEASE
LOW FLOW CONDITIONS ACROSS THE
LAKE OF THE WOODS –RAINY RIVER DRAINAGE BASIN

May 11, 2015

Water levels throughout most of the Winnipeg River drainage basin in Ontario and Minnesota are below seasonal norms. Lake of the Woods is at a low level reached on average once every seven years in early May, 28 cm (11 in) below the median level. Although the overall level of the lake has risen slightly over the past week, strong winds have resulted in the temporary setup of the lake surface, with higher levels generally south and west and still lower levels generally to the east and north.

Flows released from upstream reservoirs (Namakan Lake, Rainy Lake) are at the minimum allowed under the regulations of the International Joint Commission. This follows the limited runoff from the melting of a low-normal snowpack in March and persistent dry conditions through April and early May. The Rainy River, which normally provides more than half of the flow into Lake of the Woods in early May, is at a one-in-ten year low for this time of year due to the low Rainy Lake outflow and locally dry conditions. This small flow, combined with the driest April in the local Lake of the Woods basin since the 1980s, has resulted in the rate of inflow into Lake of the Woods falling to a one-in-seven year low for this time of year.

The Lake of the Woods Control Board has held outflow from the outlets of Lake of the Woods into the Winnipeg River at a constant rate of 175 m³/s since April 16th in order to prevent the lake level from declining. Outflow this low occurs, on average, one-year-in ten in mid-May. As a result of this reduced outflow and generally dry conditions in the area, the Winnipeg River level below Kenora is at a one-in-ten year low for early May.

In recent days, inflow to Lake of the Woods has risen by approximately 25 % to 250 m³/s due to local precipitation, but still remains below normal. In order for the level of Lake of the Woods to rise to normal seasonal levels, rainfall is needed not only around the lake, but also in upstream areas so that water is released at a higher rate from the international dam on the Rainy River. Most meteorological forecasts call for above-normal precipitation across the basin over the next two weeks which would cause water levels to rise. A return to drier weather, however, would likely prevent a significant rise in water levels.

The Lake of the Woods Control Board is directing outflow from Lake of the Woods to balance the low water conditions between the lake and the river. This balance is important to a variety of interests, such as recreation and tourism, shoreline property owners, the quality of fish spawning and shorebird nesting areas in both the lake and river, and water quality. Regulation decisions on outflow from Lake of the Woods will consider all of these interests and be subject to changing water supply conditions.

Further details on basin conditions are available at the Board's web site at www.lwcb.ca or by listening to its recorded message at 1-800-661-5922 ex 1.

FURTHER INFORMATION:
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