

STAFF REPORT: Recreation Department



REPORT TO: Recreation Committee

MEETING DATE: February 14, 2008

REPORT NO.: DOR 08 06

SUBJECT: Harbour Water Level

**PREPARED BY: Ryan Gibbons, Harbour
Supervisor**

A. Recommendations

THAT Council receive this report regarding the harbour water levels for information purposes only.

B. Background

As the attached charts and data show Lake Huron is experiencing some of the lowest water levels it has seen since the nineteen sixties (1960's). Although the Canadian Hydrographical Society is anticipating Lake Huron water levels to increase it is still a concern that we should be prepared for.

This Spring I was forced to make some slip allotment changes in the harbour due to depth related issues. Although it was only one vessel that was an immediate issue we are reviewing the current water levels and are seeing that if the water levels do not increase we will see an immediate impact on at least five (5) of our current seasonal boats. Although this is not a large portion of the seasonal slip holders if the water levels were to go down another 0.152 metres (six inches (6")) we would have an additional fourteen (14) vessels being restricted. This is now approaching ten percent (10 %) of our overall seasonal slip holders. This Fall we were forced to haul our deepest keeled boat at the pier due to the water levels. Fall 2008 we are anticipating hauling three (3) to four (4) of the other deep keeled vessels at that location as well.

After referring to our "Waiting List" if the water levels were to go down the 0.152 metres (six inches (6')), the water levels would also affect ten (10) of our current applicants.

The entrance of the harbour currently has approximately three (3) metres of depth. Under calm winds this depth is sufficient for all of our vessels. If the wind increases and causes a surge through the entrance to the harbour there is the possibility of enduring over one (1) metre swells. This is not a strange occurrence. If a vessel is entering or leaving the harbour during these swells there is the possibility of hitting bottom. If the vessel hits bottom, depending on weather conditions it would lose control and could end up on the rocks.

In summation we are not in a situation where any action is necessary and are optimistic that the Canadian Hydrographical Society's foresight is accurate. We are researching all of our options, and potential scenarios. Re-installing our shallow water buoys is an option that is being looked at. The majority of our seasonal slip holders are aware of the problem areas within the harbour and in most cases can navigate accordingly. Unfortunately we do have transient boaters that could be unaware of our problem areas and the low water buoys would prove beneficial to them. In addition, depth soundings in the harbour will be updated in the Spring as soon as weather will permit. I will be accompanying Meaford's Harbour Master to a meeting with some Department of Fisheries and Oceans (DFO) personnel to discuss the low water issue and potential funding assistance if a scenario involving dredging becomes inevitable.

C. The Blue Mountains' Strategic Plan (Statement(s) identifying how actions further the goals of the Strategic Plan)

1. Managing growth to ensure the ongoing health and prosperity of the community

3. Preserving and enhancing natural and environmental features, and cultural heritage of the community

4. Supporting the development of social and recreational programs to meet the broad range of needs in the community

- 4.6 Liaise with the Province, the County and the Conservation Authority with regard to the formal management of public recreational lands

5. Ensuring long-term financial sustainability

D. Budget Impact (cc: Treasury if required)

None at this time.

E. Attached (Relevant documentation not personal information about an identifiable person)

Chart referencing the water level in metres for Lake Huron with high and low water levels from 1918 until 2007.

Tide Currents and Water Levels. Monthly Mean Water Levels in metres referred to IGLD (International Great Lakes Datum) 1985

Respectfully submitted,
Ryan Gibbons,
Harbour Supervisor

Signature

