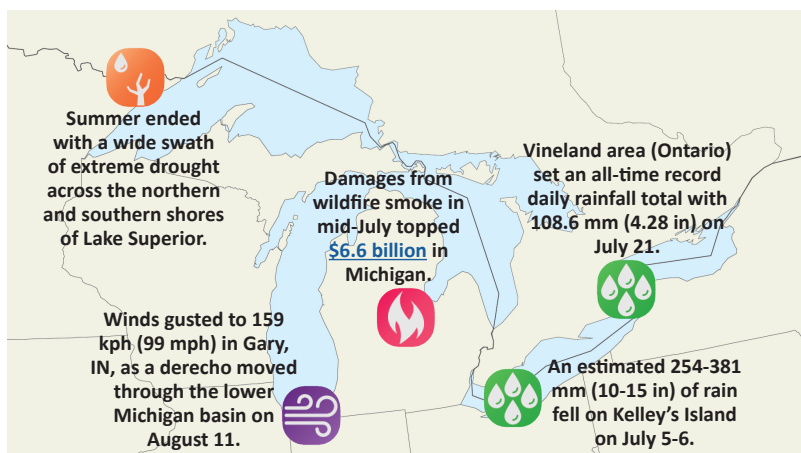


Great Lakes Significant Events – June - August 2026



A widespread damaging wind and thunderstorm event (derecho) moved across the Michigan basin on June 10, followed by a tornado outbreak around southern Lake Michigan on June 11.

A humid heatwave blanketed the southern half of the basin from June 30 to July 3, fueling heavy rainfall that continued through the first week of July.

Wildfire smoke led to very unhealthy to hazardous air quality conditions across most of the basin from July 14-18. For many areas across the basin, this smoke outbreak was among the worst on record.

The Niagara region had several extreme events, each bringing 100 to 150 mm (4 to 6 inches) of rain

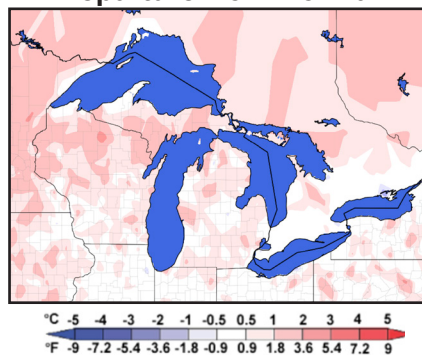
from July 21 to August 2. Some sites had a record wet summer after picking up several months' worth of rain in just two weeks. On the US side, Lockport, New York, had a daily total of 126 mm (4.95 inches), a 100-year storm event.

On July 27, 50-100 mm (4-6 inch) hail fell along a swath from southwest Lake Superior to southern Lake Michigan.

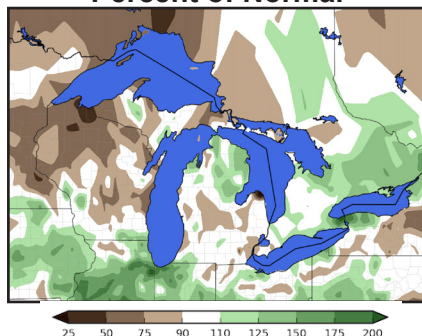
The northwest portion of the basin largely missed out on the summer rains and drought persisted and intensified. The Thunder Bay area (Ontario) and areas across Northern Wisconsin had a top 10 driest summer.

Regional Climate Overview – June - August 2026

Summer Temperature Departure from Normal



Summer Precipitation Percent of Normal



Precipitation and temperature normals based on 1991-2020.

Air Temperature and Precipitation

June temperatures ranged from 1°C (2°F) below normal in the southern Michigan basin to 2°C (4°F) above normal in the western Superior basin. July was as much as 4°C (7°F) above normal, especially in the western Superior basin. August was within 1°C (2°F) of normal for most areas. Summer was up to 2°C (4°F) above normal.

Precipitation was highly variable. June ranged from 25% of normal in places such as the western Superior basin to over 200% of normal in locations like the southern Michigan basin. July ranged from 25% of normal in spots such as the southern Superior basin to over 200% of normal in areas like the northern America/Ontario basin. August ranged from below 25% of normal in places such as the southern Superior basin to over 200% of normal in locations like the Erie basin. Summer ranged from 25% of normal in the Superior basin to over 150% of normal in the southern Michigan basin.

Current Water Levels

Lake	End of Aug 2026 Level Compared to:		Change in Level from beg. of June to end of Aug	
	Average for Aug	Aug 2025	2026 Change in Level	Average Change in Level
Sup.	-5 cm	+3 cm	+8 cm	+13 cm
Mich.-Huron	+2 cm	+16 cm	0 cm	+1 cm
Erie	+11 cm	+8 cm	-8 cm	-11 cm
Ame./Ont.	+37 cm	+40 cm	-20 cm	-24 cm

End of August water levels were above average on all lakes, except Superior. Additionally, all lakes were above their levels from last August. During the summer, conditions were variable with generally drier conditions in the western portions of the Great Lakes basin and wetter conditions in the eastern portions. Both Lake Superior and Lake Michigan-Huron's water levels rose less than average, while Lakes Erie and America/Ontario had smaller than average declines from the beginning of June to end of August.

Regional Impacts – June - August 2026

August 11 Derecho: A long-lived organized windstorm (derecho) brought 112-160 kph (70-100 mph) winds and torrential rainfall to the southern Lake Michigan area. About [20,000 customers](#) in Gary, IN, lost power for two full weeks. In Portage, IN, forested areas lost more than 80% of their tree canopy. At least [one fatality](#) was attributed to this derecho.

Niagara Region Flooding: Repeated extreme rainfall from July 21 to Aug 2 resulted in historic flooding in Canada. Rainfall overwhelmed sewage and drainage systems in [St. Catharines](#), flooding homes and businesses. [Lincoln](#) was in a state of emergency due to widespread power outages and damaged infrastructure. At least [\\$360 million in insured losses](#) have been reported in Canada. On the US side, hundreds of homeowners reported [flood damage](#).

Agriculture: In the Superior basin, drought resulted in stressed crops and water supplies. In the Niagara region, severe flooding affected vineyards, with the extent of the [damage unknown](#) at this time.

Wildfires and Air Quality: Heat and prolonged dryness contributed to severe wildfire activity, evacuations, and [social disruptions](#) throughout Ontario. By the end of July, 140+ fires were active in Ontario, with more than 720,000 ha burned. The worst smoke outbreak of summer occurred basin wide from about July 14-18. Poor air quality resulted in cancelled and modified events and activities from [Minnesota](#) to [New York](#), resulting in tens of billions in [economic losses](#).



EF-3 tornado damaged structures in Appleton, WI on July 27 (Credit: [NWS](#))



Smoky skies in downtown Chicago on July 16 (Credit: Alicia Pearson)



Destructive hail in Rock, MI on July 20 (Credit: Chad Beauchamp/[NWS](#))

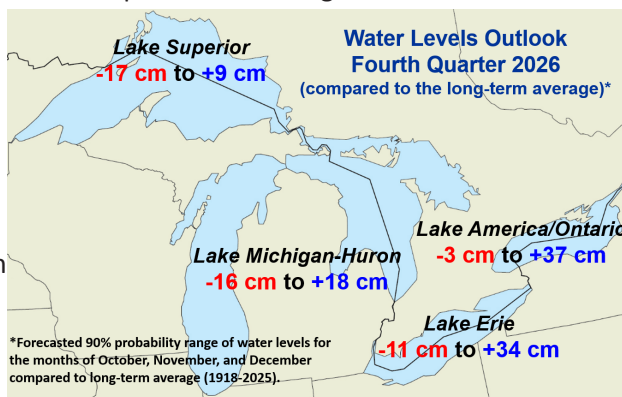
Regional Outlook – October - December 2026

Temperature and Precipitation

[Canadian](#) and [American](#) outlooks favor above-normal temperatures. Canadian outlooks are not favoring wetter or drier conditions, while American outlooks show a slight chance of below-normal precipitation in the central portion of the basin.

Great Lakes Water Level Outlook

The September 6-month forecast indicates that during the 4th quarter of 2026 (Oct, Nov, Dec) all lakes will be in their period of seasonal declines. During late fall and early winter, lake level decline is typical due to increased evaporation and less liquid precipitation. Lakes Superior and Michigan-Huron could experience water levels above or below long-term average depending on if wetter or drier water supply conditions are received. Water levels for Lakes Erie and America/Ontario are likely to remain above long-term average levels in the 4th quarter, unless very dry water supplies are received.



Potential El Niño Impacts

[El Niño conditions](#) have developed. There is a 90% chance of a very strong event in fall and winter 2026-27. An El Niño pattern generally favors warmer and drier conditions across the Great Lakes basin.

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