

Lake Superior might hit record low levels

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Lake Superior is nearing a record low level for the month of August and might set records for September and October, U.S. government hydrologists said.

Scientists with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration can forecast lake levels 12 months in advance, using current hydrological conditions combined with long-term climate outlooks.

"Lake Superior is less than 6 centimeters (2.3 inches) higher than its August record low of 182.97 meters (600 feet) which was set in 1926, and it looks as though the water levels may continue to plunge," said Cynthia Sellinger, deputy director of NOAA's Great Lakes Environmental Research Laboratory in Ann Arbor, Mich.

Sellinger said NOAA's lake level forecasts predict a 15 percent to 20 percent probability that new monthly records will be set some time this fall.

The researchers said for every inch Lake Superior drops, 529 billion gallons of water are displaced. During the past decade, 12.7 trillion gallons of water have left Lake Superior.

The lake's all-time record low of 182.69 meters (599.37 feet) was set in April 1926 as a result of a major climatic event that led to the nation's infamous dust bowl era.

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