

Haven Drawbridge to a point near the Blue Star Highway Bridge . This channel was dredged to a depth of 6' below the "ordinary low water datum" in 2000. In 2008 the dredging consists of removing high spots and scooping out basins in the c

### **Water Levels in South Haven Harbor**

The depth of the water in South Haven Harbor is determined in large part by the level of the water in Lake Michigan (which is the same level as Lake Huron ). The Lake level, and thus the Harbor depth, has dropped and has remained below normal for the last several years. There is a web site which tracks the rise and fall of the water level of Lake Michigan . You may wish to refer to it to judge the probable levels of the water in Lake Michigan and the South Haven Harbor . This is their address:  
[http://www.lre.usace.army.mil/\\_kd/Items/actions.cfm?action=Show&item\\_id=3885&destination=ShowItem](http://www.lre.usace.army.mil/_kd/Items/actions.cfm?action=Show&item_id=3885&destination=ShowItem)  
(You'll need acrobat reader to open.) You will note that there is an annual cycle with seasonal highs in June, July and August and lows in February and March. The snow melt is the main factor in the annual rise of water level. The 2009 boating season can expect higher water levels due to the 2008/2009 winter snows which were well above average. Already in March of 2009, the Lake Michigan water level was 11 inches higher than the year before.

Water level in the harbor is also effected by how much sand, silt and mud has built up on the river bottom of the Black River and basins connected to the river. And in addition to this, the water level may go up and down 6 to 10 inches within a few hours on any given day due to barometric pressure, winds or other causes. The Harbor downstream from the South Haven Drawbridge is deeper than the upstream portion.

The City of South Haven dredged the river channel upstream from the drawbridge in 2000 and did more dredging in the spring of 2008. In the spring and summer of 2000 a 50' wide channel was dredged from a point just upstream from the South hannel floor where sediments can be captured. In 2007, boats with 4 1/2 foot draft had just enough water. Boats with a 5' draft were bumping bottom in several places. Boat with 5'3" draft were complaining and boats with any deeper draft could not easily navigate the River above the Drawbridge. The 2008 water levels were 6" -8" higher. For 2009, with all the snow plus a higher starting point, the water levels should be better yet.

Slip renters or buyers should inquire or make their own determination concerning water depth of slips and of the river when they are considering leasing or purchasing. They should keep in mind that levels are not static, but are effected by a number of different factors as outlined above.