



The GLSS Solo Challenger

The Official Newsletter of the Great Lakes Singlehanded Society
March 2015 – Ken Verhaeren(verhaerk@aol.com) editor

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From the Helm

Jeff Neuhalfen GLSS President

History, Seamanship, Camaraderie

Two years ago, I was fortunate to meet Mike Richmond, the first President of the GLSS, at the AGM in Chicago. Last year Larry Rotta and James Douglas presented the Board with the Charter Member Plaque at the Detroit AGM. I was honored to assume guardianship of that same plaque, at the AGM in Chicago.

For those not fortunate enough to have attended an AGM recently, many years ago the charter members of the GLSS commissioned a plaque listing the 17 skippers who completed the very first Port Huron to Mackinac Island Challenge. This plaque was presented to the Board of Directors in 2014 to be kept as an heirloom of the Society. It will be passed from President to President at the annual meeting.

I would be remiss if I did not extend our sincerest thanks to Jim McLaren for again organizing our GLSS Booth at the new Strictly Sail, Boat and RV show at Chicago's McCormick Place, as well as the many volunteers that manned the booth throughout the weekend. To Jeff and Gaye Urbina for once again opening their home to everyone for a wonderful evening of food, drink and camaraderie. Thanks to Ken Verhaeren for the exhaustive task of setting up, coordinating, and executing a great evening at Maggiano's Italian Restaurant. And of course Dave Rearick for a very entertaining presentation, reminding all of us, even the most seasoned sailor can be challenged to go beyond their comfort level and return home better off.

On behalf of all those who attended the AGM, thanks to all who helped put on another great weekend at the AGM.

As we prepare for the 2015 slate of GLSS Challenges and supporting events, the Race Chairs and Committee members are hard at work preparing the documents, venues and personnel necessary to ensure a smooth experience. Once again the GLSS will host several Open House and Safety Seminars across the Great Lakes Region. Check the calendar for one near you. Those willing to lend a hand will not be discouraged!

The GLSS has grown to include a Challenge on each of the Great Lakes; as a result it has often been discussed if we are ready to add more locations to host the annual membership meeting. Along those lines, we have set up a survey on the website to evaluate interest in adding locations other than Detroit and Chicago as options for the host city. Please visit the website to participate: www.solosailors.org

So as we watch the winter snow slowly give way to spring, and boat yards begin to wake from their winter nap, I anxiously look forward to sailing alongside my fellow GLSS members to the celebration at the other end of the lake. History, Seamanship, Camaraderie: core to the success of the GLSS.

See you on the lake!

Jeff

What follows is an article by Dave Rearick, the GLSS's 2015 Eilberg Award recipient. In it Dave tells us about some of his up coming presentations. If you did not follow his trip around the world on Bodacious Dream, you might be able to find his blogs on line and catch up on that wonderful trip. As those who attending the 2015 AGM in Chicago know, Dave is a great speaker who talks from the heart. If you have the opportunity to hear him speak, don't miss it.



Bodacious Dream Expeditions

Dave's Upcoming Talks in the Midwest

February 5, 2015 - Shores of Lake Michigan

Greetings to all from the frozen Midwest!

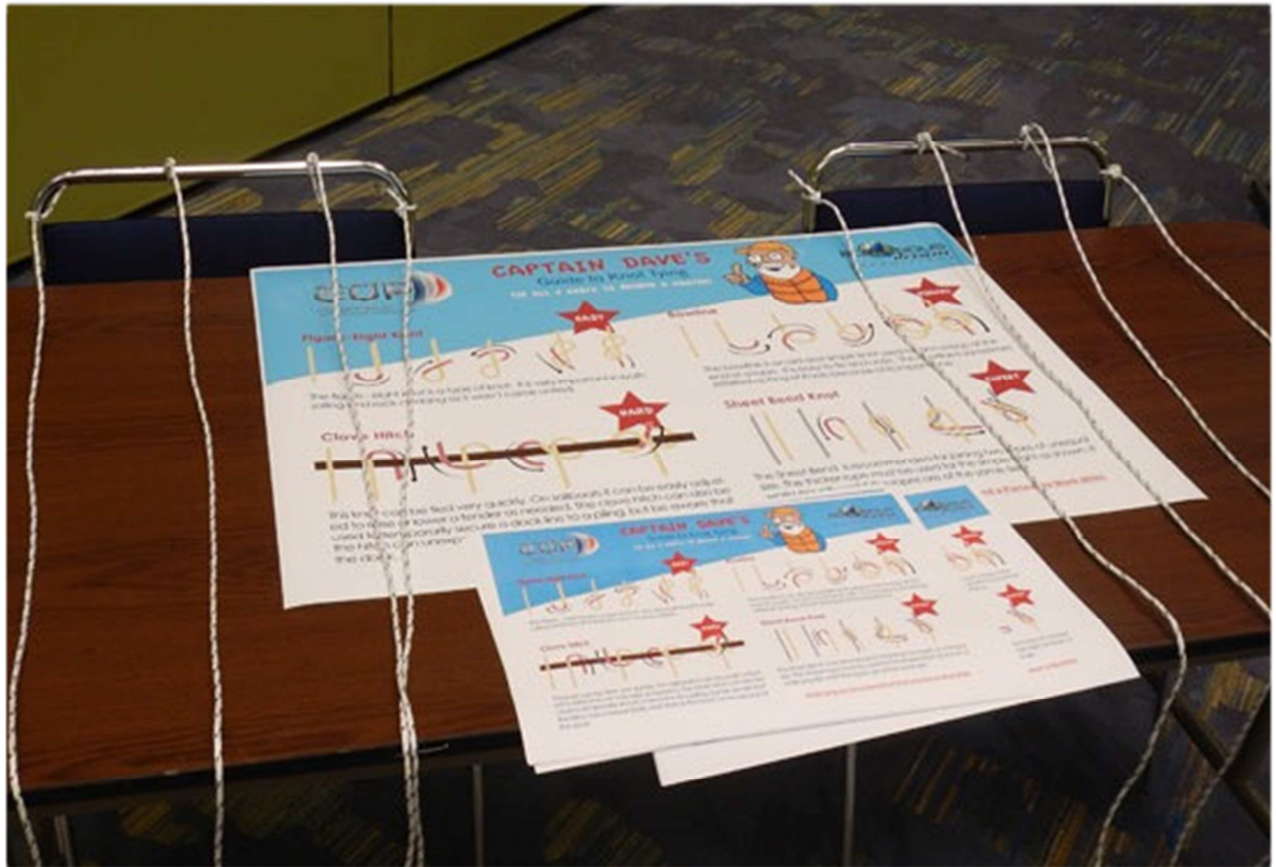
I've just returned from a road trip to and from [California](#) in a cargo van and wound up arriving home in the middle of a blizzard brought on by Winter Storm [Linus](#)! Even at the slow pace of 40 mph in the deep snow, covering the 5000-mile round trip in 6 days of driving time was quite a contrast to

ocean-traveling the same distance which would have taken five weeks! On the open road, I sure missed Otto and Franklin!

So, I've been having a lot of fun recently speaking in public and talking about exploring the world with kids and tying it in with our ongoing relationship with The [Atlantic Cup Kids Page](#) ... and their work with my tales of the ocean. Here are some photos from recent events.



Ready for the Kids Exploring the World seminar at Strictly Sail in Chicago.



Knot Tying station courtesy of The Atlantic Cup Kids.

Alex points out South Africa on the large globe at the Chicago Seminar



In my last update, I promise a list of my upcoming talks. So here goes!

Saturday, March 14, 2015: Racine, WI @ 12:30 pm

The **United States Power Squadron** District 20 will be holding their spring conference in Racine, Wisconsin. If you're a member of the Power Squadron, I'm sure you would enjoy this event. For more information, contact admiralbill@sbcglobal.net

Friday, April 17, 2014: Chicago, IL The Cruising Fleet of the **Chicago Yacht Club** will be having their Meet the Fleet event at the Monroe Street Station in Chicago. I will be regaling them with stories of sailing the open ocean and the wonders of cruising the destinations I visited when circumnavigating. This event is open to Chicago Yacht Club members and their guests. For more information Contact: info@chicagoyachtclub.org

There are a few other events in the planning at this stage; I'll let you know when they are firmed up. If your organization or school would be interested in having me come speak to them, please contact me.





And here's a photo of the Eilberg Award, presented by the [Great Lakes Singlehanded Society](#) for seamanship. It's an honor to be included with such notable names in Singlehanded Sailing as [Steve Pettengil](#), [Tim Kent](#) and many others. Thanks friends!

So, for now, back to the snow shovels! More soon! Information that is, not snow!

- Dave

Kris Kimmons is one of our new members having completed the Chicago Solo Mac this past summer. You might remember his article in the December Solo Challenger telling the story of his first Challenge. This article was written for the Columbia Yacht Club.

Of course everyone knows about the Chi-Mac, but it is surprising that many ColYC members are not aware there is another Chicago Mackinac race hosted by Columbia in late June: The Great Lakes Singlehanded Society's Chicago Mackinac Challenge.

The GLSS Solo Mac, one of a series of solo challenges held throughout the Great Lakes, is held in the third week of June, and is actually a race with two concurrent starts. One at Columbia and the other, at Port Huron. Both fleets then converge on Mackinac (hopefully) for post-race festivities. I had first read of the Solo Mac when preparing to move up from Houston to Chicago and was intrigued. I have always mostly singlehanded. Not because I don't like people, but because I have always worked in occupations that are far removed from a 9-5 Monday through Friday schedule. In order to go sailing, at all, it usually means I am going it alone. And while I am no 'round the buoys racer, the prospect of competing –or for that matter actually just completing– the Solo Mac appealed to me.

While labeled a Challenge, the GLSS Solo Mac should not be confused as a leisurely rally. You race the same 287 nm course as the "big" Mac on the inland sea known as Lake Michigan, with its ever present lee shore, thunderstorms, fog, shipping, calms, straits, reefs, bridges, and bugs. Except you do it alone. But while you are alone on the boat, you are in the midst of a group of likeminded sailors who are quick to offer mutual support and encouragement. It is a special event in the company of a great bunch of folks.

The first thing I realized after deciding I wanted to sail to Mackinac Island *sans* crew, was that I was in no way prepared to do so. Ironically, sailing on the Gulf Coast really doesn't afford much opportunity to truly sail offshore unless you are engaging in some no joke blue water sailing. I, like the vast majority of sailors in that part of the world, rarely left the passes of the bays (some fine sailing in those bays but that is grist for another tale), and even then its usually during coast wise endeavors such as the Harvest Moon Regatta. Very few Gulf sailors have neither the time nor the boat to sail in an open ocean race like the 555nm Regata al Sol, and I wasn't one of those fortunate souls. Sailing on Lake Michigan actually affords more opportunity to engage in "open water" sailing than a majority of Gulf of Mexico sailors will ever see.

The GLSS requires documented experience before they will let compete in a Solo Mac. At a minimum, you need to complete a solo passage of at least 24 hours and 100nm. Many use the annual Solo Scramble, a 110 nm GLSS race with concurrent starts from Racine and Holland, out to the NOAA buoy, then rounding the corner to Michigan City, as a qualifier. I had gone to sea as an occupation for a number of years in the navy, then later on offshore seismic research ships. While many skills from that world are of course transferable, the experience is a universe away from being out there alone on a little plastic boat. Other than a double handed passage from Miami to Pensacola on a Contest 27, my offshore experience on sailboats was actually quite limited. Before I could ever think about entering the Solo Mac, *Shadow* and I needed some work.

Transitioning *Shadow* from a sedate day sailing "bay boat" to a solo "Lake" boat required fitting her with new standing rigging, new sails (she still only sports a cruising rig of main and 135 roller furler though), electrical rehab, and replacement engine. Out there alone at o'dark stormy thirty, its critical to have the peace of mind

knowing your boat isn't going to let you down. You want to reduce as much as possible any potential failure that could put you or your boat at risk. There is no one to assist, or at best they are too far away to help before you are in a full blown problem. It is no cliché to adopt the motto, "Failure Is Not An Option" when it comes to evaluating the material condition of your boat.

I too needed some transitioning. I have never bought into the contrived divide between "cruiser" and "racer". The real question is how good a sailor are you? I will argue that most racers and cruisers alike are likely in need of preparation if they want to take on endurance singlehanding like the Solo Mac. Solo sailing forces you to confront that perhaps uncomfortable reality front and center. While I hadn't been in a race in decades, I still have always liked to sail a boat to her maximum in both fair weather and foul. I hate to see a boat luffing along. Preparing for a Solo Challenge demands that you get ready for the unique demands that sailing alone for day on end puts on...You. You must constantly, and critically, evaluate your decision making. Does it make sense to launch? Does it make sense to continue? Are you pushing the boat too hard? Too timidly? Are conditions better than you thought? Can you amp it up a notch? Not to mention you have to be able to quickly and easily handle all aspects of your boat in potentially the worst conditions. Alone. Will you have problems reefing if the 50 knot outflow comes at you out of nowhere on that moonless night? Singlehanding is all about preparation and "headwork." And – ALWAYS- with safety as your first thought.

To that end, once I launched the boat at Crowley's in 2012, I started to sail Shadow in progressively more demanding conditions. In August, I launched on what I was hoping to be a 100nm 24 hour qualifier with an idea that I could get qualified for the 2013 Solo Mac. It was not to be. The whole affair was marked by poor headwork in both planning and execution. I didn't allow myself enough time before real world obligations. I was too optimistic about the weather. And once out on the lake, I was too timid and unsure of what to do in the face rapidly changing, and deteriorating, conditions. The short of it is, I bailed from the attempt, motorsailed back to Belmont being chased by seas building to 6 feet plus as the NWS radio was making noises about gale warning, and feeling more than a little disappointed. Three weeks later though, I was able to make a full 24 hour 120nm sail, but I still wasn't really satisfied. The 2013 season was another year of learning. Not only was I unable to get the time off, I knew I really wasn't ready to leave the porch and run with the big dogs just yet. I did a couple more overnight solos to nowhere out to the middle of the lake and back, and also participated in the Solo Scramble from Racine. This was the first actual race I had participated in for decades, and it was a good primer to think about the rigors of racing.

The slowly veering wind out the SE to SW at 12 15 kts were perfect for Shadow and she sailed at her best. I managed to start without any faux pas marring the proceedings and the majority of the race was a starboard close reach to a beat as the wind clocked around. I hadn't sailed against other boats in completion in years. As they say, you are never faster than sailing by yourself, and the adrenaline and energy spent trying to not get left by the fleet kept me from getting adequate rest. So, by the time I neared Michigan City in a slackening wind and looming thunderstorms to the northwest, I managed to round the wrong buoy at the finish! "Gethome-itis" got me.

Another lesson learned. You must –ALWAYS- guard against the corrosive effects of fatigue. And you –WILL- be fatigued. In this case I fell prey to a condition known as "Expectation Bias". Even though I had back of the mind

doubts that buoy was not in the right spot, I wanted it to be the right one and went with it. If I were to follow similar course down the wrong thinking around Gray's Reef, things could end up deadly.

The third week of June is pretty early in the season, but *Shadow* and I were ready to tackle the Solo Mac. Dawn, June 21 2014, was barely discernable in the dense fog, which dogged the fleet all the way to the Manitous. With the fog there was plenty of cold, plenty of shipping, plenty of flies, and for the brief time we weren't fighting foggy calms, there was plenty of wind -on the nose from the northeast- from the Manitous to Gray's Reef. I found that I failed to make my own luck as other boats did. Again, it was a case of not really managing fatigue. Instead of catching that quick little bit of fresh wind in the foggy wet predawn, I went back for a 15 minute snooze. Do that two or three times, and you end up at the back of the fleet. After 117 hours – and a quick reround of the correct side of buoy 3 outside Mackinac Island Harbor at the finish line - *Shadow* finished the 2014 Chicago Solo Mac.

With only 36 boats total in the Huron and Chicago fleets, several of whom had left before I got there, the “liberty” at Mackinac was quite enjoyable. It was pleasant not having to contend with the throngs of Mac sailors which would flood the island in a few weeks time. I missed the after race festivities on Wednesday, but spent a couple days recouping at the island before heading back south in company with GLSS President Ken Verhaeren on *Kismet* and Jeff Stack on *Compensable*. We stopped first in Frankfort, with a plan to jump to the western shore of the lake to Sheboygan, but ended up in Manistee as some severe thunderstorms across the lake, and brought with them another day of near gale force winds in their wake. From Manistee, it was a straight shot back to Chicago in company with *Kismet*.

Growing up in Florida, I have watched with dismay over the years as once uncrowded and fun cruising grounds are overrun with development and draconian anchoring laws. The west coast of Michigan arguably serves up some of the finest cruising this country has to offer. I can't wait to spend more time exploring all the picturesque, and still relatively unspoiled, little ports.

As Chicago came into view on 3 July, we merged courses with Brian Parkinson on the T-10 *Yanqui* as he was completing the Super Mac and Back. The Super Mac and Back is run every three years as part of the overall annual Solo Macs. For Brian, it was 1000 nm and 13 days nonstop from the start at Columbia, to the buoy off Port Huron, and back. Solo. The next one will be in 2017. I may just have to try it.

Some may shy away from singlehanding because they fear it is too isolating. The camaraderie of the Solo Mac will belie that myth. While a race, all the skippers band together in a mix of friendly competition and mutual support that you don't see in other venues. I probably would have been a DNF without the constant support and mentoring from Ken Verhaeren on *Kismet*, who finished 9 minutes behind me. For both the racers and cruisers out there, the Solo Mac Challenge will test your abilities as a sailor in ways that no crewed race, or leisurely cruise ever can. And you join a group of sailors who know they have met a Challenge that few have the temerity to attempt.

GLSS Safety Seminars

Join GLSS volunteers as they journey around our lakes to encourage safe sailing.

March 14th	<u>Torresen Marine</u>	3003 Lakeshore Drive Muskegon, MI 49441
March 21st	<u>Larson Marine</u>	625 Sea Horse Drive Waukegan, IL 60085
March 18th	<u>Kingston Yacht Club</u>	1 Maitland Street Kingston, Ontario K7L 2V3
March 28th	<u>Crowley's Yacht Yard, Lakeside</u>	3434 East 95th Street Chicago, IL 60617
March 28th	<u>Great Lakes Yacht Club</u>	23900 Jefferson Avenue St. Clair Shores, MI 48080
April 1st	<u>Oakville Yacht Squadron</u>	146 Lakeshore Road West Oakville, ON L6K 0A3

Going to the AGM? Sure, but where will it be?

It took about twenty years to add another lake to the Great Lakes Singlehanded Society, going from one to two lakes. The AGM continued around Detroit until someone said, "Why not have the AGM in Chicago this year?" Since that time the AGM has alternated between Detroit and Chicago. Since 2005 we have added three

additional lakes to the mix truly reflecting all of the Great Lakes. AS we continue to add sailors from each of the lakes and with great cities lining to shore of each lake, the question has coming back. Why not have the AGM in Cleveland, Duluth or Toronto?

Well that question is being presented to you! The BOD has asked our webmaster to post a survey to get your feelings about the AGM site. You can go to the website, www.solosailors.org and find the link on the homepage.

Let us know your opinion!

Spring Weather Outlook

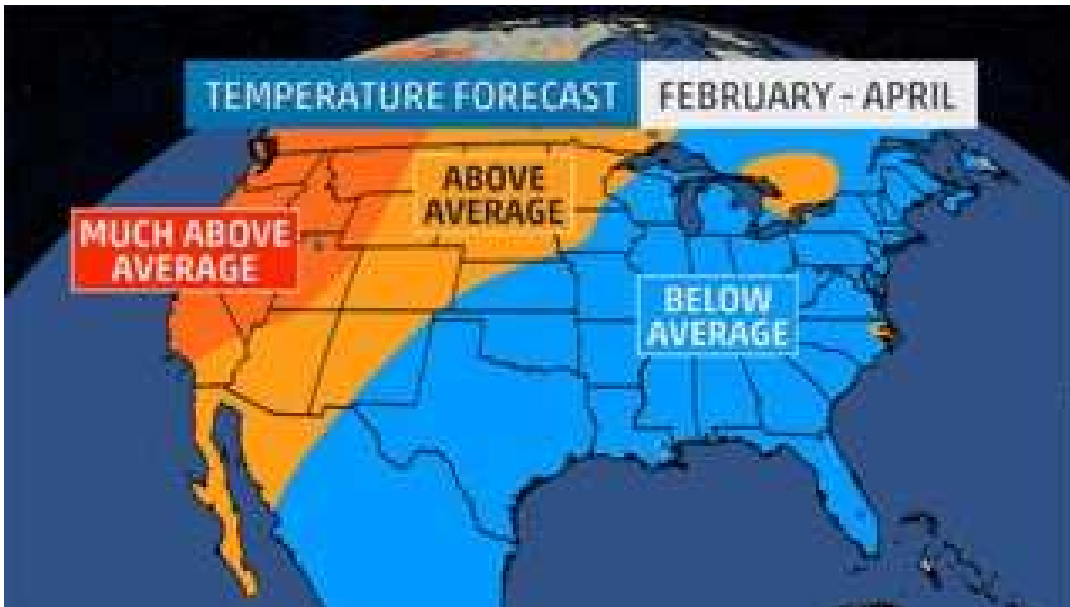
Waterspout Appears In Gig Harbor, Washington

A waterspout appeared in Gig Harbor, Washington in this raw video.

For those hoping for an early spring, it looks like you may be out of luck for most of the East. The chilly conditions will continue for areas east of the Rockies as we head into February, while the trend in above-average temperatures in the West will continue as well.

The weather forecast models are not showing signs of any sustained stretches of above-average temperatures over the next few weeks. However, there may be some changes in the pattern heading into March and April.

(MORE: [Expert Analysis](#) | [Winter Central](#))



Temperature Forecast for February through April. (Weather Services International)

Forecast Highlights

In February, colder than average temperatures are expected for locations east of the Rockies with warmer than average temperatures in the West.

Below-average temperatures will persist in March and April for the Southeast and South-Central regions of the U.S. However, there are indications that the Northeast and North-Central sections of the country will see a trend toward above-average temperatures beginning in March and continuing into April.

(FORECAST: [10-Day Forecast Maps](#))

Overall, the West will continue to experience warmer than average temperatures through April.

Forecast Factors

WSI forecasters look at long-range computer models as well as several indices when making the seasonal forecasts and it is a combination of factors that leads to the resulting temperature pattern.

According to WSI Chief Meteorologist Dr. Todd Crawford:

"Cold weather has returned in January as expected, with below-normal temperatures observed across most of the eastern two thirds of the nation. We originally expected a spell of much warmer temperatures during late January, but it now appears that this will not occur, as another cold spell will set in as we head into February. The impacts from the weak El Nino event are already waning, allowing for a pattern similar to last year to set up for the last half of winter."



Map shows the typical moderate to strong El Niño winter temperature impacts. Above-average temperatures from the Northwest to the Great Lakes and below-average temperatures from the Gulf Coast to southern Texas.

NOAA's [Climate Prediction Center](#) notes that neutral El Niño/Southern Oscillation (ENSO) conditions are currently in place with positive equatorial sea surface temperature anomalies found across most of the Pacific Ocean, although recently positive sea surface temperatures have weakened in the eastern Pacific. NOAA indicates that there is approximately a [50-60 percent chance of El Niño conditions](#) through mid-March, with ENSO-neutral conditions favored thereafter. El Niño conditions can lead to [milder temperatures in the northern tier](#), depending on the strength of the El Niño event.

(MORE: [El Niño Winter Temperatures](#))

There are also indications that there will be a negative North Atlantic Oscillation (NAO) index phase heading through the end of January and early February. When there is a [negative NAO index phase there tends to be more cold outbreaks and snow](#) in the eastern U.S.

Meanwhile, a high pressure ridge looks likely to remain over the West Coast which will protect the area from intrusions of arctic air.

The Climate Prediction Center also is suggesting that the eastern two-thirds of the U.S. will experience below-average temperatures toward the end of January and beginning of February, with a significant arctic intrusion possible. The CPC also expects above-average temperatures to persist for much of the West.

GREAT LAKES SURFACE ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS (GLSEA)

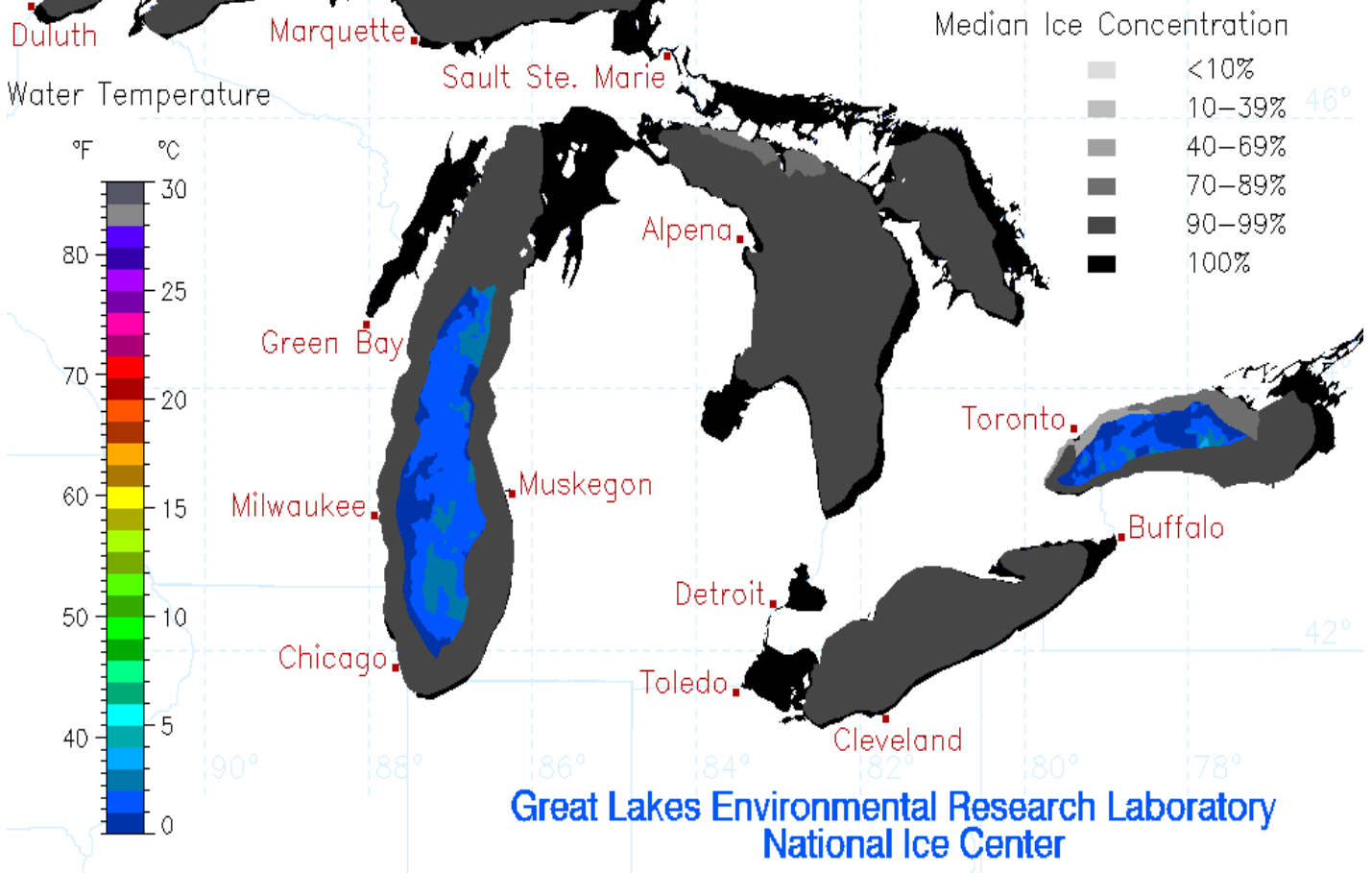


Analysis Date: JD 058 02/27/2015
 Percent Pixels with Data within +/-10 Days: 9.8%

Date of last ice analysis: 2/27/2015 48°

NOAA CoastWatch

Great Lakes Total Ice Cover: 86.8%



Great Lakes Ice Coverage 2014 vs. 2015	
February 25, 2014	77.3%
February 25, 2015	85.5%

The SOLO CHALLENGER is your newsletter. The content will be driven by what you want and articles that you write. There will be a letter to the editor column, **IF** we have letters to the editor. The Project Bench will be opened for articles on upgrades that you have done to your boat. Another possible section called the Equipment page would deal with equipment you've like or hated on your boat. Send any ideas or articles for publication to Ken Verhaeren at verhaerk@AOL.com