

QUESTION

How do read the USGS lake level graph? Does 776.00 mean the lake is 6 feet deep on that day?

ANSWER

You have made a very insightful observation and the simple answer is - there is not a direct correlation to the water level order and how USGS reports lake level.

USGS is very misleading - and then local news outlets parrot what USGS says, which only further exacerbates the misunderstanding of the public.

The sea level measurement referred to is measured in tens - 776.1 - in tens to 777.0. However, the difference from 776.0 to 777.0 is also a foot. As you know feet are measured in inches - 12 inches is a foot.

So what happens is the media reports 776.55 as the lake being 6.55 FEET deep. This is technically incorrect.

776.55 is a sea level measurement and thus measured where the surface of the lake is at - not the depth. The lake bottom topography changes.

The right way to report lake levels is how RKLD posts the number -

776.55 is summer level

775.75 is winter drawdown level

778.0 is county slow no wake on river

780.0 is high water

(USGS erroneously reports this as "10 ft")

781.5 is flooding.

We don't blame the public for being confused.