



Physical Processes in Lakes and Oceans (Coastal and Estuarine Studies)

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Published by the American Geophysical Union as part of the Coastal and Estuarine Studies, Volume 54.

Physical limnology is the study of motion, transport and mixing in a lake and so forms an exact parallel to physical oceanography. However, in comparison with the field of physical oceanography, the hydrodynamics of lakes has received little attention; what is known about lakes is the result of the efforts of a few individuals who have relied heavily on the research results from the ocean! This is a very peculiar situation if it is remembered that lakes are logistically much easier and cheaper to work in than the ocean. The answer must lie in the fear that since in a lake the boundaries are usually complicated and close to the field of observation, the motion is correspondingly complicated and thus difficult to unravel. The second peculiarity which should be pointed out is that lakes supply probably 80% of the world's drinking water, constitute major tourist attractions and support important fisheries, yet the funding of fundamental research into the hydrodynamics of lakes, both small and large, has always been and still remains pitifully small. At present no universities have a major program in physical limnology, few research institutes focus on physical limnology, there is no textbook on the subject, nor is there a journal focused on physical limnology. No wonder we are only beginning to understand the fundamentals of the hydrodynamics of lakes.

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