

Save The River

Protecting the St. Lawrence River through Advocacy, Education and Research

September 15, 2006

U.S. Section Secretary
International Joint Commission
1250 23rd Street NW, Suite 100
Washington, DC 20440

International Joint Commission

ACTION: BU
INFORMATION: LB, Y, FB, RT
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INTL. JOINT COMMISSION
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Subject: International Lake Ontario – St Lawrence River Study

Dear Commissioners:

As you know, Save The River has been very involved in regional water levels regulation issues for many years. For fifty years, we have witnessed the damage caused to the St. Lawrence River and Lake Ontario by the current water levels management regime, 1958DD. The impact on our regional environment, particularly wetlands and the fish and wildlife populations that rely on them, has been significant. Now is the time for change and we strongly urge the IJC Commissioners to adopt Plan B+, and take an important step forward in restoring the health of our River and Lake.

Support for Plan B+ has been widespread in our communities along the St. Lawrence River and Lake Ontario throughout the IJC's study process. Many citizens and Save The River members, from throughout the region, have written letters and attended public meetings to express their support of Plans B and B+. Numerous towns, villages, and counties have passed resolutions in support of Plans B and B+. And, recently, many local and regional conservation groups have joined us by signing on to a group letter in support of Plan B+. We urge the IJC Commissioners to take this outpouring of local and regional support of Plan B+ into consideration when choosing a new water levels regulation plan for the region.

As we have stated before, we strongly believe that the Lake Ontario-St. Lawrence River Study Board's Year Three Final Report provides the Commission with extensive and significant documentation that clearly and objectively shows Plan B+ as the best option for regulating the Lake and the River.

Adoption of Plan B+ will allow for more natural variability in water levels throughout the LOSL system. As demonstrated through the research conducted by the Study Board and its committees, water level fluctuation is critical to maintaining healthy, diverse plant and animal populations along the waters edge. In addition to benefiting the environment, Plan B+ would benefit a majority of the users of the River and Lake including fishermen

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and other recreational and municipal users without any disproportionate loss to other users of the system.


As we have stated previously, in addition to urging you to adopt Plan B+, we encourage the IJC to also adopt several of these key recommendations:

- ❑ Funding must be provided for an adaptive management approach. Ongoing research and monitoring is critical to understanding the impacts of water level regulation on the River and Lake and will provide important data to assist decision making in the future.
- ❑ Deviations from Plan B+ should only be allowed in the event of a significant emergency.
- ❑ Support local, state/provincial, and federal government reviews of shoreline management and permitting processes. This review will help identify long-term options for managing problems in erosion-prone areas of the LOSL system.
- ❑ Increase communications and public education efforts to explain changing water flow regimes and to assist River and Lake users in adapting to those changes.
- ❑ Adopt Plan E – the most ambitious natural flow plan considered as part of the Study process – as a long-term management objective.

Disproportionate loss has been suffered by the environment for nearly fifty years as other stakeholders reaped benefits from water level regulation. The time has come to make amends.

Save The River strongly urges the IJC commissioners to take the outpouring of local and regional support of Plan B+ into consideration, along with the scientific data collected that supports Plan B+, into account when choosing a new water levels regulation plan for the Lake Ontario –St. Lawrence System. Adoption of Plan B+ provides a critical opportunity for the International Joint Commission to take a long-term step towards restoring the health of the St. Lawrence River and Lake Ontario.

Sincerely,



Jennifer J. Caddick
Executive Director