

June 13, 2008

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INT'L JOINT COMMISSION

2008 JUN 27 P 12: 10

To: International Joint commission

Subject: Comments pertaining to the June 10 meeting in Greece NY

From: Harley Ruft, Lake Ontario Shoreline Resident

Thank you for coming to Greece and allowing comments on the regulation of Lake Ontario. I heard only two categories of opinions at the Greece meeting:

- 1.) (From self-proclaimed environmentalists) Lake Ontario is in bad shape and needs the proposed plan that allows higher lake levels than ever.
- 2.) (From shoreline residents and municipalities) we cannot tolerate even the 247.3 (feet above sea level) lake level that we had this spring, much less 248 or more; these levels would cause cataclysmic damage surpassing what Katrina did to New Orleans

As a lake Ontario shoreline resident and an experienced erosion-control engineer, I unequivocally concur with the latter group. Lake Ontario shoreline residents have been able to subsist for the past 50 years with the 243 to 247 ft. level. The damage to shoreline structures and the environment that higher levels will produce cannot be tolerated by us, by shoreline municipalities, or by our children who will end up with an environmental nightmare to deal with.

Although well intentioned, the self-designated "environmentalists" appear to be misled and indoctrinated with false information. As an elderly shoreline resident stated in the meeting, the lake is currently cleaner than it has ever been. I live in the middle of a 2800 acre shoreline wildlife management area and I can tell you with first hand knowledge that our wetlands are just fine; the fish are plentiful (but tainted with chemicals), and all of the critters and growing things are doing great. The one-lake problem that is increasing is algae and it is increasing because of the high water. Lake Ontario has essentially lost all of its natural beaches due to the water level increases cause by the Massena NY power dam. The organic matter (leaves etc,) used to wash up on beaches dry and blow away. Now in the fall we see twenty feet of leaves (like a puree) slosh against our breakwalls until the ice comes. We have no beaches because of the dam and that is Lake Ontario's biggest environmental problem.

I keep hearing that higher highs is good for the wetlands; this is dead wrong and I offer my testimony and data to anybody in the US or Canada to refute these allegations. High water destroys wetlands. I have sailed out of Braddock's Bay for the past 18 years. This bay connects to the largest wetland on the south shore and I have personally witnessed about a 40 percent reduction in this wetland because lake storms during high water episodes drove sand into the bay. I survey Braddock's Bay each year and I have seen the mud bottom replaced with sand and the wetland vegetation no longer grows in the sand. Lake Ontario wetlands are destroyed not helped by high water. However, environmentalists do not know this because none of them live on the shore and use the wetlands on a daily basis.

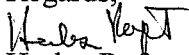
Some boaters advocate high water, but theirs is an absurd request. I have been sailing on Lake Ontario for more than 50 years – out of four different harbors and I have seen every water level that we have had since 1953. I never had a problem with low water, only high water. Every dock on Lake Ontario was under water in 1973 and boating essentially stopped that year. High water hurts boating and true boaters can cope with any water level.

Of course shippers want high water, but inbound shipping should not be a consideration in Lake Ontario level decisions because its economic value is less than miniscule and its environmental consequences are incredible. The Seaway has already devastated commercial fishing on all of the lakes with sea lamprey; in addition zebra mussels brought in by ships have caused billions of dollars in damage in the USA and Canada. Who knows what new alien species or terrorist calamity the seaway will bring in the future. Inbound shipping past Montreal must be stopped. The St Lawrence Seaway is America's and Canada's "Trojan horse".

Finally, some of the proposed plans suggest helping shoreline stakeholders fortify against the proposed higher lake levels. This is also an absurdity. In New York State the Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) requires years of paperwork for permit approval and they only approve a reinforcing bar/stone system that does not last more than three years or steel pilings that cost more than \$1000 per foot for installation. The cost to harden the shore is in billions of dollars on the US side and it is the worst thing that can happen environmentally since there will never be any beaches to allow the lake to clean herself of organic debris and algae by washing it on shore to dry and disappear.

You are charged with what may be the most important decision in the world. The Great Lakes are a world resource of ever increasing importance. Please do not allow any plan that willfully raises the lake level above 247 for any purpose or that allows deviation from the 100-year average lake level for any duration. The detrimental environmental and economic consequences may be greater than our two countries and the world can tolerate.

Regards,


Harley Ruft

Rochester, NY

CC:

President George Bush
Member of the USA Congress

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