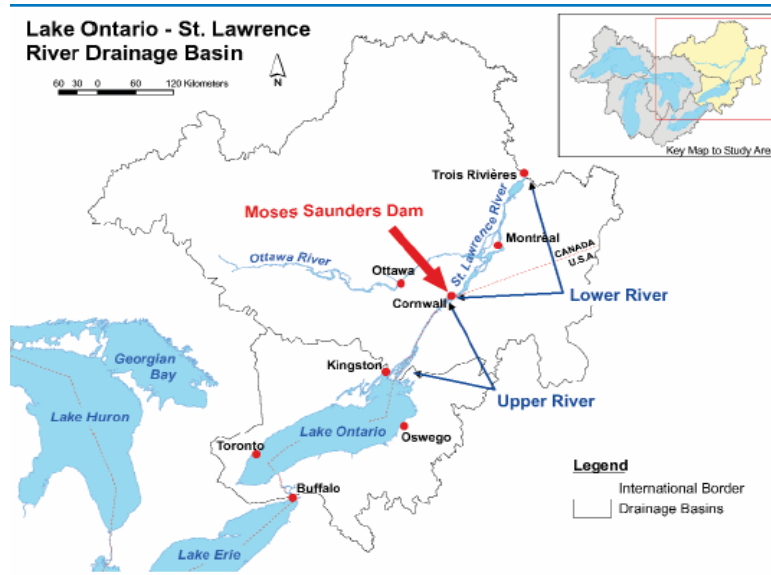




FACT SHEET

Lake Ontario and St. Lawrence River: A Draft New Approach to Manage Water Levels and Flows

Water levels and flows of Lake Ontario and the St. Lawrence River are primarily determined by natural factors including rainfall and snowmelt. Under the International Joint Commission's (IJC) 1956 order of approval, the regulation of flows through the Moses-Saunders Dam has made high and low water levels on Lake Ontario and the St. Lawrence River less extreme than would occur under natural conditions. This has benefitted the people who live, work and recreate on Lake Ontario and the St. Lawrence River, but has harmed the health of the lake and river by degrading wetlands and other habitat.



In keeping with its responsibility to protect interests in both countries, the IJC is reviewing the 1956 order of approval to develop a draft new approach that would consider all environmental, social, and economic interests, including recreational boating, commercial navigation, coastal property, hydropower, public water supply and the health and resilience of the environment.

A draft new approach for Lake Ontario and St. Lawrence River would:

- **Substantially improve wetlands, a key indicator for lake and river health.** Healthy wetlands support birds, fish and other wildlife, while filtering pollutants and enhancing recreation for the basin's human residents. It is anticipated that wetland meadow marsh community, the most diverse and productive type of coastal wetlands in the basin, would increase by 40 percent.
- **Retain protection for Lake Ontario coastal property, while increasing some shoreline protection costs.** The new approach is estimated to maintain 88 percent of the benefits of reduced flooding, wave damage and shoreline protection maintenance provided by the current regulation plan.
- **The boating season on Lake Ontario and the St. Lawrence River will be longer in some years** because of higher water levels in the fall. However, levels will occasionally be lower in the summer.



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- **Pose no significant changes for interests along the St. Lawrence below the Moses Saunders Dam.** Communities downstream from the Dam would continue to receive flood protection benefits while also providing for adequate depths for the Port of Montreal and commercial navigation.

The draft new approach for managing water levels and flows at the Moses Saunders Dam for Lake Ontario and the St. Lawrence River builds upon a five year binational study, extensive public comment, and the assistance of a Working Group representing the governments of Canada, the United States, the provinces of Ontario and Quebec, and the State of New York. Major components include:

ORDER OF APPROVAL: Under the Boundary Waters Treaty of 1909, the IJC approves construction and operation of dams affecting the levels and flows of transboundary water. The current order was last amended in 1956. A revised order, consistent with the draft new approach, would address environmental, social, and economic needs of Lake Ontario and the St. Lawrence River system and reflect current scientific knowledge.

REGULATION PLAN: The Regulation Plan specifies how the conditions of the order of approval are met. The draft new approach would mimic natural level and flow patterns more closely than the current plan, while also continuing to provide protection from extreme high and low water levels. This would allow the regulation plan to perform better under much drier and wetter conditions than the current plan, including more extreme conditions than those experienced to date.

ADAPTIVE MANAGEMENT STRATEGY: Regular monitoring and periodic review of the levels and flows of Lake Ontario and the St. Lawrence River would improve the capability of the plan to adapt to future changes. These might include socio-economic changes in the basin and significant changes in climate, such as more intense storm events or prolonged droughts.

GOVERNANCE and COMMUNICATIONS: The IJC establishes a board to ensure that the operation of the dam follows the order of approval and regulation plan. Under the draft new approach, the IJC board would be also responsible for overseeing the adaptive management strategy and would have enhanced responsibilities to communicate with basin governments and the public.

COMPLEMENTARY INITIATIVES: The IJC and basin governments are working to identify and implement initiatives to complement the draft new approach, such as adaptive management, environmental restoration initiatives and best practices to reduce risks related to high and low water levels and flows.

The IJC intends to release additional information further detailing the specific draft new approach for full public review. The IJC will hold informational sessions throughout the basin to further discuss the draft new approach with the public in 2012. Prior to finalizing a revised order and regulation plan, the IJC will conduct formal public hearings throughout the basin and carefully consider all public comment.