

Mandate

International Souris River Board

of the International Joint Commission



No. ISRB-2009A

The mandate of the International Souris River Board traces back to the Boundary Waters Treaty of 1909 between Canada and the USA.

The Boundary Waters Treaty

The main points of the treaty are:

- Both countries must agree to any project that would affect the natural level or flow of boundary waters on the other side of the line.
- Water pollution should not harm the other side.
- Water use considerations are to be ranked:
 1. Domestic and sanitary
 2. Navigation (canals)
 3. Power and irrigation



The treaty founded the International Joint Commission (IJC) to investigate, resolve, and prevent boundary water disputes. Three Canadian and three American commissioners, and their staff, look into boundary water issues. When situations develop they advise both the governments on how to implement the treaty. The IJC establishes control boards, task forces, and study boards to help carry out activities when issues arise in the various watersheds along the boundary.

Focus on the Souris River

The IJC became involved with Souris River issues over 70 years ago. The IJC developed the 1940 Interim Measures as the first set of rules for sharing the waters of the Souris River. The states and provinces retained the authority to manage and use their waters but within the limits established by the IJC for impacts across the border. IJC boards, task forces and study groups have considered various questions in the Souris watershed, and have monitored compliance to IJC measures and directives. In 2000, the IJC amalgamated two boards to form the current International Souris River Board (ISRB). Additional water quality and flood forecasting oversight functions were assigned to the ISRB in 2005.

2007 IJC Directive to the ISRB

The IJC defined the current mandate of the ISRB in a 2007 directive. The full text of the directive can be found through the Boards tab at the IJC web site http://ijc.org/conseil_board/souris_river/en/souris_mandate_mandat.htm#reference

Under its mandate, the ISRB must:

- Oversee water apportionments
- Oversee flood forecasting
- Implement the Joint Water Quality Monitoring Program
- Watch for activities that could affect the basin's water
- Report on aquatic ecosystem health issues
- Conduct at least 1 public meeting a year

continued

Water Apportionment Mandate

The ISRB ensures that the boundary waters are distributed between the two countries according to agreed rules. These rules specify certain flows, levels, and dates. There are modified rules for during floods and droughts. The main monitoring points are the Souris River at Sherwood, the Souris River at Westhope and the two sites where Long Creek crosses the International Boundary. To oversee the water apportionment, the ISRB:

- Identifies and supports the water and weather monitoring networks. These help determine natural flows and apportionment decisions
- Supports the operation of flow control to meet apportionment targets

Flood Forecasting and Control Mandate

A number of agencies in both countries are responsible for the different aspects of flood forecasting and of reservoir operations to provide control. The ISRB provides support to these agencies by:

- Assisting with data and information
- Deciding when flood rules are to be applied
- Suggesting improvements to flood operations

Water Quality Mandate

The ISRB also contributes to The Joint Water Quality Monitoring Program. Using data from the water quality monitoring program, the ISRB:

- Prepares an annual report on the monitoring results and water quality objectives
- At least every five years suggests changes to the monitoring program and water quality objectives

Water and Ecosystem Issues Mandate

The ISRB is to be aware of emerging issues, projects and changes that may affect the waters of the river or the ecosystem of the basin. The ISRB is mandated to:

- Investigate water requirements
- Promote ecosystem monitoring programs
- Collaborate with other agencies
- Encourage local capacity to resolve issues
- Advise the IJC

Public Meeting Mandate

The ISRB provides opportunities for the public to be involved in its work. The main opportunity is through

- An annual public meeting alternating between towns in Canada and USA.

The **International Souris River Board** is a board of the **International Joint Commission** of the **Boundary Waters Treaty**

Contacting the ISRB

Canadian address

**Canadian co-secretary,
International Souris River Board**
Transboundary Waters Unit
Environment Canada
2365 Albert St., Rm. 300
Regina, SK, Canada S4P 4K1

Phone: 306-780-5040

American address

**American co-secretary,
International Souris River Board**
Water Resource Engineer
North Dakota State Water Commission
900 East Boulevard Avenue, Dept 770
Bismarck, ND, USA 58505-0850

Phone: 701-328-2756

Contacting the IJC

Canadian address

**Canadian Section Office (Ottawa)
International Joint Commission**
Public Affairs Adviser
234 Laurier Avenue West, 22nd
Floor
Ottawa, ON Canada K1P 6K6

Phone: 613-947-1420
Fax: 613-993-5583
info@ottawa.ijc.org

American address

**U. S. Section Office (Washington)
International Joint Commission**
Public Information Officer
2401 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Fourth Floor
Washington, DC USA 20440

Phone: 202-736-9024
Fax: 202-254-4562
info@washington.ijc.org

<http://www.ijc.org>