MINUTES
INTERNATIONAL JOINT COMMISSION
Executive Meeting
Washington, DC
December 12-14, 2017

The International Joint Commission met in Executive Session in the U.S. Section office in Washington, DC on December 12 and 13, 2017, from 9:00 to 5:30 PM EST, and December 14, 2017, from 9:00 AM to 12:00 Noon EST, chaired by Lana Pollack.

COMMISSIONERS
Lana Pollack  Chair, U.S. Section
Gordon Walker  Chair, Canadian Section
Rich Moy  Commissioner, U.S. Section
Benoit Bouchard  Commissioner, Canadian Section
Richard Morgan  Commissioner, Canadian Section

SECTION STAFF
Chuck Lawson  Secretary, U.S. Section
Camille Mageau  Secretary, Canadian Section
Paul Allen  Manager, Policy and Communications, Canadian Section
Glenn Benoy  Senior Advisor, Canadian Section
Frank Bevacqua  Public Information Officer, U.S. Section
Kevin Bunch  Writer-Communications Specialist, U.S. Section
Pierre-Yves Caux  Director, Science and Engineering, Canadian Section
Mark Colosimo  Engineering Advisor, U.S. Section
Susan Daniel  Legal Advisor, U.S. Section
Antionette Dunston  Special Assistant, U.S. Section
David Fay  Senior Engineering Advisor, Canadian Section
Mark Gabriel  Engineering Advisor, U.S. Section
Nick Heisler  Senior Advisor, Canadian Section
Talante Henderson  Network Specialist, U.S. Section
Dave Hermann  Senior Advisor, U.S. Section
Wayne Jenkinson  Senior Engineer Advisor, Canadian Section
Jeff Kart  Exec Editor, Water Matters and Great Lakes Connection
Jeff Laberge  Information Management Analyst, Canadian Section
Mike Laitta  Senior Advisor, U.S. Section
Catherine Lee-Johnston  Environmental Officer, Canadian Section
Sarah Lobrichon  Public Affairs Advisor, Canadian Section
Isabelle Reid  Executive Assistant, Canadian Section
Victor Serveiss  Environmental Advisor, U.S. Section
Cindy Warwick  Senior Advisor, Canadian Section
John Yee  Chief, IM and IT Services, Canadian Section
Shane Zurbrigg  Legal Advisor, Canadian Section
GREAT LAKES REGIONAL OFFICE STAFF
Patricia Morris
Director
Antonette Arvai
Physical Scientist
Jennifer Boehme
Physical Scientist
Mark Burrows
Physical Scientist
Matthew Child
Physical Scientist
Raj Bejankiwar
Physical Scientist
Sally Cole-Misch
Public Affairs Officer
Mike Mezzacapo
Sea Grant Fellow
Diane Varosky
Administrative Coordinator
Lizhu Wang
Biological Scientist

APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA

1. Commissioners approved the agenda as amended with the addition of several items under Other Business.

BRING FORWARD

2. Commissioners reviewed the Bring Forward list of correspondence and discussed the US Commissioners’ December 11, 2017, letter which noted that the Department of State has stated that it does not support the IJC taking any action on the recommendation in the 2013 IUGLS report regarding further investigations of structural options in the St. Clair River. U.S Commissioners therefore requested that item 1 concerning the St Clair River issue be removed from the Bring Forward list. Commissioners did not reach a decision on the request and requested that Secretaries prepare a paper for discussion at the next executive meeting on the purpose of the Bring Forward list and the criteria for inclusion of correspondence on the list.

Commissioners noted that governments have not yet responded to the Commission’s letter to governments on Shoal Lake. Commissioners requested that this issue be included on the next meeting with governments and that advisors draft a letter to governments reiterating the Commission’s interest in the issue and requesting that governments consider again the Commission’s recommendation from its 2012 report on water management in the Lake of the Woods-Rainy River Watershed to conduct a water levels study.

ACTION ITEM LIST, COMMUNICATIONS ACTIVITIES CALENDAR, AND COORDINATED CALENDAR

3. Commissioners reviewed the IJC Action Item List. Commissioners received information on the frequency of hits on and growth of subscribers to the Commission’s various social media tools. Commissioners reviewed the communications activities calendar and the coordinated calendar and requested a number of modifications, including the identification of alternate meeting dates for the March Executive meeting in Windsor to avoid a timing conflict with the Great Lakes days in Washington.
MODERNIZATION OF THE IJC WEBSITE

4. Commissioners approved the cost sharing plan for funding of the website modernization project, with the US section committing to provide the funding needed for the hosting and maintenance of the new website for U.S. Fiscal Years 2019 through 2023.

INTERNATIONAL WATERSHED INITIATIVE (IWI)

5. Commissioners received an update on IWI activities, including a detailed briefing on the outcome of vertical testing of the Climate Change Guidance Framework conducted with the St. Croix board. Commissioners approved posting of the pilot project report to the IJC website and endorsed staff’s request to explore testing of the framework with other boards. Once the Guidance Framework document has been updated, Commissioners will consider how best to publicly profile both the Framework and the Pilot Test report. Commissioners requested that staff explore mechanisms to enhance amongst boards knowledge transfer and lessons learned on dealing with climate related changes including possible web mechanisms and shared analytical platforms. Commissioners expressed particular interest in the climate stress test analysis designed to show how a basin would perform under a wide range of climate conditions. Commissioners also received an update on IWI project proposals received from boards, noting the submission of a large number of GLAM and communications projects.

WATER QUALITY BOARD

6. Commissioners discussed the Water Quality Board’s proposed work plan and approved the work plan and requested budgets with a few exceptions and comments: i) Commissioners did not support the board’s Great Lakes Plastic and Fiber Debris Study; ii) Commissioners endorsed the concept of the Green Infrastructure and Great Lakes Resiliency to Extreme Weather proposal but deferred further consideration due to funding limitations; iii) Commissioners approved the long-term collaboration with First Nations, Metis and Tribes proposal but requested that the IJC communication team be directly involved. Commissioners favorably received the board’s suggestion to reach out to other GL boards to jointly develop a detailed PBDE implementation project work plan for possible consideration in 2019-2020.

The approved work plan projects and activities are: i) Great Lakes Climate Resilience Leadership; ii) Wetland Study Project; iii) Oversight of Animal feeding operations for Manure Management in the Great Lakes Basin; iv) literature review and workshop regarding decommissioning of nuclear facilities; and v) long-term collaboration with First Nations, Metis and Tribes proposal. Given the importance attached to this project, Commissioners requested that the IJC Communication team be directly involved and also requested that time be set aside at the next Executive meeting to scope out the key elements of a Commission - First Nations, Metis and Tribe engagement policy for all of the transboundary regions. Commissioners also approved the following projects: vi) public engagement events; vii) collaboration with other boards; viii) binational poll
follow-up; ix) watching briefs; x) inventory of Great Lakes communication partners; and general board activities on TAP, LAMPS, and indicators.

SCIENCE ADVISORY BOARD

7. Commissioners approved the Research Coordination Committee’s proposed work on the Current Status and Assessment of Great Lakes Connecting Channel and the funding requested. With respect to the Science Priority Committee (SPC), Commissioners approved the project entitled: An Evaluation of Stressor Interactions in the Great Lakes and the associated funding. Commissioners approved the SPC revised report on Fertilizer Application Patterns and Trends, and their Implications for Water Quality in the Western Lake Erie Basin as a Commission report and tasked the Communication team to put together a package for its release.

HEALTH PROFESSIONALS ADVISORY BOARD

8. Commissioners discussed the Board’s proposed scoping study related to a Centennial Study of Great Lakes Contamination and requested that it be broken down into two phases, agreeing to fund a first workshop and to revisit the study proposal based on the outcome of Phase 1. Additionally, Commissioners noted that the Proof-of-concept Pilot Investigation of Waterborne Acute Gastrointestinal Illness from Great Lakes Source Water and Influential Environment Factors (AGI) has been incorporated into the GLRO U.S. Sea Grant Fellow’s work plan and will be completed at no additional cost.

TRIENNIAL ASSESSMENT OF PROGRESS REPORT

9. Commissioners approved a proposal to conduct a survey in January 2018 of the inter-office TAP team and the two primary TAP authors that will focus on lessons learned from the Commission’s process that produced the first TAP report. Commissioners approved a proposal to hold a workshop with Great Lakes advisory boards on the margins of the Spring 2018 Semi-Annual meeting to plan for the boards involvement in future TAP processes, how to improve this process and also to scope key issues that should be addressed in the next TAP report. It is anticipated that, ideas, stemming from this workshop should form the basis of the Great Lakes advisory boards’ work plans for future years. Commissioners noted the need to improve engagement with the boards in the TAP report development process and requested an update on plans for this workshop at the January Executive meeting. Commissioners discussed a number of options relating to content differences in the printed and electronic versions of the final TAP report but did not reach closure on the issue.

DATA HARMONIZATION TASK FORCE

10. Commissioners received a briefing on the activities of the data harmonization task force, including the preparations for the Spring 2018 Task Force workshop for the Great Lakes and connecting channels and the use of the Lake Champlain-Richelieu River watershed to pilot test the new North American hydrographic data harmonization model.
Commissioners noted that the IJC’s facilitation and coordination role in this file has been recognized in a cooperation agreement for data sharing and data collection between Environment and Climate Change Canada and the U.S. Geological Survey, which may redefine the Commission’s future role in this key binational initiative.

GREAT LAKES REGIONAL OFFICE

11. Commissioners discussed the proposed combined Great Lakes Regional Office budget for 2018-2019 and, following a review of proposed expenditures, instructed the GLRO Director to make the agreed upon modifications and resubmit the budget targeting the agreed upon 3.2 M total budget based on an equal contribution of 1.6 M from each of the Sections. Commissioners indicated that, based on previous years budgets that a free margin of + or – 50K would be acceptable. Commissioners directed the Director to submit the revised budget approval by polling.

GREAT LAKES-ST. LAWRENCE RIVER ADAPTIVE MANAGEMENT (GLAM) COMMITTEE

12. Commissioners received an update on key activities of the GLAM Committee, including its ongoing work to report on the causes of the 2017 Lake Ontario-St. Lawrence River high water conditions and its assessment of associated impacts. The impact assessment will be based on the limited available data collected by government agencies and other sources, including surveys underway or to be conducted by the GLAM Committee. If the data are sufficient, it will be used to validate and update the Committee’s models of impacts and, otherwise, to identify data gaps needing to be filled. The committee will provide an update on the report’s progress at the Commission’s Spring 2018 Semi-Annual meeting. Commissioners directed IJC staff to work with the GLAM Committee to develop a communications strategy for the release of the report. Commissioners discussed the need for long term, sustained funding for GLAM initiatives given the Commission’s commitment to adaptive management in the face of climate change impacts. Commissioners directed staff to prepare a letter to governments regarding both the short term needs for US funding to match and therefore release the existing Canadian funding commitment and also addressing the question of long term funding investments needed by both governments.

RAINY-NAMAKAN LAKES RULE CURVES REVIEW

13. Commissioners received an update on the review of the Rainy and Namakan Lakes rule curves and noted that there still has been no written response from governments regarding the November 14, 2017 letter on the revised Order for the Rainy Namakan Lakes. They also noted that the Secretaries will be sending a letter to the International Rainy-Lake of the Woods Watershed Board and its Water Levels Committee requesting that the board and the committee review and provide comments on the draft supplementary directive for the WLC that will be issued following finalization of the supplementary order.
LAKE CHAMPLAIN-MISSISQUOI BAY AND LAKE MEMPHREMGOG WATER QUALITY REFERENCE

14. Commissioners received an update on work undertaken by staff to address the Champlain-Memphremagog Water Quality Reference, including the development of a draft work plan and of a number of outreach discussion with sub-national governments to solicit their support and participation.

LAKE CHAMPLAIN-RICHELIEU RIVER STUDY

15. Commissioners received an update on the activities of the LCRR Study Board, including the weekly meetings of a core group of managers to which both technical work group leads and study board members are invited depending on the items to be discussed. Commissioners noted that several meetings with government officials and researchers involved in the basin have been held in order to ensure complementarity between their respective initiatives. Commissioners also noted that the U.S. Public Advisory Group (PAG) co-chair is stepping down and that staff are actively seeking a replacement.

ST. MARY AND MILK RIVERS

16. Commissioners received a briefing from advisors on the conditions in the St, Mary and Milk Rivers and background on the apportionment procedures. Commissioners directed advisors to draft a letter to the Accredited Officers and Field Representatives supporting their review of the Administrative Procedures and Letters of Intent and identifying a time frame for their reporting to the Commission. Some Commissioners expressed the view that since the order is almost a century old, that the Commission should review it without further delay.

REVIEW OF ORDERS

17. Commissioners received information about the International St. Croix River Watershed Board’s interest in conducting preliminary studies to evaluate whether conditions and issues in the basin warrant a review of its orders. Commissioners requested that advisors develop a paper identifying orders for which a review might be warranted.

IJC COMMUNICATIONS

18. A. IJC Communications Strategy
Commissioners approved initiation of Phase 1 of a two phase branding exercise, which will focus on developing a consistent look and feel for the new IJC website. Commissioners also approved the assigning of one communication staff per board to assist Great Lakes and Control boards and endorsed the proposal to hold a multi-board communication workshop on the margins of the Spring 2018 semi-annual meeting.
B. IJC Communications Strategy for the Great Lake Water Quality Agreement
Commissioners approved the updated wording of goal #10 of the Commission’s Communication Strategy for the Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement (2015-20) and also the development of specific products tailored to particular audiences (national, subnational, media, science). Commissioners requested that staff recirculate the Commission’s policy on rapid communication response.

C. IJC Social Media Policy
Commissioners approved the proposed changes to the frequency of IJC newsletters, reducing the production of the Great Lakes Connection to eight issues per year and continuing the production of four issues per year of Water Matters. Commissioners approved the proposed IJC Social media policy, with the addition of the following statement: If the content contemplated for posting could adversely affect the Commission’s independence, impartiality, or relates to an issue currently before the Commission, or may be controversial, the social media manager should check with the IJC Communication advisers and seek approval prior to posting.

RECORDS OF DECISIONS
19. Commissioners received a briefing on past practices regarding the production of minutes and the maintenance of records of Commission decisions. Commissioners considered options for recording decisions and agreed to the following:
   a) At the conclusion of discussion of an item, the chair of the meeting will summarize the discussion, including any decisions reached and the different perspectives if no decision is reached, and will seek agreement from each Commissioners on the summary;
   b) For items where there is extensive discussion or differing points of views, additional narrative detailing the discussion should be recorded for internal record keeping, with a shorter summary of the issue being recorded for the minutes;
   c) Secretaries will submit draft minutes to commissioners for review and approval and, as appropriate, any associated narrative text within ten business days of end meeting day;
   d) Commissioners will provide their comments/approval within the usual three business days;
   e) If there are any questions about the wording of the minutes, that item will be addressed at the next Commission meeting.

DISPOSITION OF RECORDS
20. Commissioners received a briefing on the Commission’s policy and domestic legislative and regulatory regimes in both countries regarding the management and disposition of information and records produced by officials in organizations such as the Commission. In both countries, and according to IJC policy, all information assets created or acquired during the course of employment belong to the organization and not to the individual.
INTERNATIONAL SOURIS RIVER STUDY BOARD (ISRSB)

21 Commissioners received an update of the ISRSB activities, including the development of a draft work plan and efforts to establish an Independent Review Group and a Public Advisory Group.

OTHER BUSINESS

22.  A) International Lake Ontario-St. Lawrence River Board
Commissioners received an update on water levels in Lake Ontario and the St Lawrence River and noted a number of upcoming GLAM Committee and ILOSLRB activities.

B) Minutes of the Fall 2017 Semi-Annual Meeting
Commissioners approved the October 23-27, 2017, Semi-Annual meeting, as amended.

C) 2017 Annual Activities Report
Commissioners received an update on the development of the Commission’s 2017 Annual Activities Report and noted that they will be provided with a first draft of the report for review before the January 2018 Executive meeting, with an intended production date in March 2018.

DECISIONS TAKEN VIA POLLING

International Lake Ontario-St. Lawrence River Board
On December 8, 2017, Commissioners approved a letter to the Board regarding increasing outflows through the Moses-Saunders dam.

Great Lakes Adaptive Management Committee
On December 8, 2017, Commissioners approved the reappointments of: Ms. Wendy Leger as Canadian Chair of the GLAM Committee; Messieurs Jacob Bruxer, Robert Caldwell, and Frank Seglenieks as Canadian members of the Committee; and Messieurs John Allis, Drew Gronewold, and Keith Koralewski as U.S. members of the Committee, each for a three-year term, effective from January 1, 2018, to December 31, 2020.

September 2017 Executive Meeting Minutes
On December 8, 2017, Commissioners approved, as amended, the minutes of the September 12-14, 2017, Executive meeting.

International Lake Superior Board of Control
On November 22, 2017, Commissioners approved the International Lake Superior Board of Control’s request that it be authorized to implement deviations from Plan 2012 flows during the period December 2017 to April 2018.

Schedule of Commission Meetings for 2018
On November 9, 2017, Commissioners approved the schedule of commission meeting for 2018.
Great Lakes Science Advisory Board
On November 16, 2017, Commissioners approved the appointment of Ms. Sandra Eberts to be a U.S. member of the Science Advisory Board’s Research Coordination Committee for a three-year term effective from November 1, 2017, through October 31, 2020.

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Charles A. Lawson             Camille Mageau
Secretary                    Secretary
U.S. Section                 Canadian Section