

PLAN 2014 EXPEDITIED REVIEW

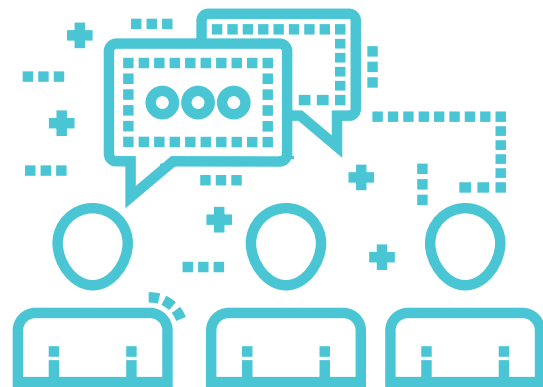
Public Advisory Group

Creation of the PAG

An 18-member Public Advisory Group, or PAG, was formed to ensure that the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence River Adaptive Management (GLAM) Committee was exposed to a wide range of observations and opinions about the impacts of extreme high water as they worked on Phase 1 of the expedited review of Plan 2014.

The PAG is made up of volunteers with a significant stake in the water levels on the St. Lawrence River and Lake Ontario including representatives of shoreline residential communities, business sectors, Indigenous communities, local governments, agricultural interests, and environmental advocacy groups. The PAG met virtually once or twice a month beginning in July 2020, sometimes on its own and other times jointly with the GLAM Committee, the International Lake Ontario-St. Lawrence River Board (Board) and staff of the International Joint Commission (IJC). Nearly two dozen sessions were held in total.

The Public Advisory Group brought a greater degree of transparency to the process and led to a spirit of understanding and trust between the GLAM Committee and IJC officials and members of the PAG.



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PAG topics: Outflows, Water Levels and the Decision Support Tool

Meetings in 2020 were devoted mainly to discussion of the Lake Ontario-St. Lawrence River system, outflow management, and the factors that affect water levels. Technical experts explained how outflows are managed and the nuances of Plan 2014, while PAG members shared information and raised concerns about how outflow management and varying water levels affect their constituencies.

In 2021, PAG members shifted their attention to advising GLAM Committee researchers on creation of a Decision Support Tool, which was made to help support the Board during extreme conditions when the Board is making decisions on potential “deviation strategies” (i.e. outflows that differ from those specified by Plan 2014).

The IJC-appointed International Lake Ontario-St. Lawrence River Board (Board) oversees the operation of Plan 2014 and can adjust its provisions, or “deviate”, during times of extreme high or low water. The Decision Support Tool, or DST, provides the Board with both broad-based metrics and detailed information about local impacts of potential outflow strategies that they are considering.

PAG members helped the researchers understand the different kinds of impacts that high water can have on various water uses and interests including residential properties, marinas, municipal infrastructure, public parks, tourism, agricultural lands, and wetlands. PAG members recommended the most relevant impacts to be included in the DST, made suggestions for how they should be measured and how the metrics presented to the Board could be made both thorough and intuitive. PAG members’ counsel proved very helpful as the Decision Support Tool was constructed and refined.

Beyond the Decision Support Tool

In a report they prepared in the summer of 2021, PAG members said the advisory process had been a success in that it established lines of communication, gave PAG members a much better understanding of the outflow management process, and allowed them an opportunity to help shape the tool that will inform and support the Board’s outflow management decisions under extreme conditions going forward.

PAG members did note some limitations, including the heavy demand on their time. The PAG recommended that similar public engagement be used to advise the GLAM Committee on Phase 2 of the expedited review of Plan 2014, with some suggested changes in the way the advisory group is organized and run.



Organizations represented in the Public Advisory Group

From Canada

- Ault Island (ON) residents
- Beaconsfield (QC) Yacht Club
- Boating Ontario Association
- Communauté métropolitaine de Montréal (CMM) (Montreal metropolitan community)
- Mohawk Council of Akwesasne
- Montreal Port Authority
- Regroupement des usagers du Saint-Laurent (RUSL) (Quebec-St. Lawrence River Users Group)
- Union des producteurs agricoles (UPA) (Union of agricultural producers)
- United Shoreline Ontario
- Université du Québec à Trois-Rivières (University of Quebec at Trois-Rivières)

From the United States

- Jefferson County Legislature
- New York Power Authority
- Niagara County government
- Rochester-area shoreline residents
- St. Lawrence Seaway Pilots Association
- Save our Sodus
- Save the River/Upper St. Lawrence Riverkeeper
- The Nature Conservancy
- Thousand Islands International Tourism Council