



Restore Our Water International

August 18, 2020

Canadian and US Commissioners, International Joint Commission

Canadian Section
234 Laurier Avenue West, 22nd Floor
Ottawa ON K1P 6K6

U.S. Section
1717 H Street NW, Suite 835
Washington, DC 20006
United States

Dear Commissioners:

Our organization, Restore Our Water International, represents shoreline property owner organizations on both the U.S. and Canadian sides of lakes Michigan and Huron and along Georgian Bay. The economic and ecological damages that are occurring as a result of the extreme high-water level conditions along these shorelines have been in crisis for the last two years. No action has been taken by the International Joint Commission (IJC), except for providing affected shore property owners with underestimations of fact, platitudes, and faulty excuses.

It is clear to us that the Lake Superior Outflow Plan 2012 is critically flawed. Over the last year, implementation of the plan has provided disproportionate benefits to Lake Superior interest and to those of the hydropower and commercial navigation industries. As a consequence, excessive Lake Superior outflows called for by Plan 2012 have directly accelerated shoreline damages to riparian interests on all of the middle Great Lakes. In particular, for four months last winter the IJC's International Lake Superior Board of Control (ILSBC) intentionally over-discharged water into Lake Huron beyond that called for by Plan 2012 to benefit hydropower alone without any plans to compensate for these actions thereafter.

As Lake Superior has fallen well below its long-term extreme high this summer, Lakes Michigan-Huron has gone the opposite way breaking past high extremes by considerable amounts. Meanwhile over the same period, Plan 2012 has consistently called for above average discharges from Lake Superior into the lower lakes. Clearly, the IJC's Upper Great Lakes Study failed in its mission to improve the Lake Superior outflow management program. Unequal benefit is being provided to one regional interest over another and for selected user communities over others including riparian concerns.



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We now hear from you and your staff, and your supporting U.S. and Canadian federal agencies, that Lake Superior outflows are now at the lowest levels since 2014. This is not good enough! Plan 2012 is failing substantially in balancing concerns between lakes and between affected parties.

Much of the problem with Plan 2012 lies in its application of flawed water supply forecasting procedures which, at its root, considers the conveyance of the St. Clair River as being stable over time. Evidence is clear that the net basin supply forecasting method embedded in Plan 2012 ignores the non-stationarity of St. Clair River outflows as the natural channel deepens or shoals based on sediment loading.

The U.S. and Canadian federal agencies supporting the IJC, and the IJC itself, have not monitored the changes in the St. Clair and Detroit river system. Outflows through the St. Clair-Detroit Rivers have likely been overestimated by Plan 2012 over the last 4 years, causing the plan to overestimate discharges from Lake Superior into the lower lakes. Without a formal IJC Board of Control focused on the St. Clair – Detroit River system, lakes Michigan and Huron and Georgian Bay have been consistently ignored by your organization.

As a representative of several shoreline property owner organizations, ROWI demands that the IJC conducts a comprehensive review of the inequities imbedded in Plan 2012.

Furthermore, we demand that the IJC deviate from Plan 2012 for the foreseeable future to reduce inflows to the middle lakes while we are setting new record highs. The IJC has shown that it will deviate from the regulation plan for Lake Ontario. It is long overdue that the IJC focus its attention on the current damages afflicting the middle Great Lakes.

Yours sincerely,

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