

**International Lake Ontario-St. Lawrence River Study
Communications Plan, Year Three
November 21, 2002**

Introduction

This communications plan is developed for the third year of the International Lake Ontario-St. Lawrence River Study. For the purposes of this plan, the Communications Team consists of the Public Interest Advisory Group and the Study Board combined. The Public Information Advisory Group is the channel for communication with the public. Outreach assistance is provided by the Support Staff.

Background

The International Lake Ontario-St. Lawrence River Study Board was formed in December 2000 by the International Joint Commission (IJC) to assess and evaluate the Commission's Order of Approval used to regulate outflows from Lake Ontario through the St. Lawrence River. The IJC also appointed a volunteer bi-national Public Interest Advisory Group (PIAG) to ensure effective communication between the public and the International Lake Ontario-St. Lawrence River Study team for the duration of the Study. After completion of the 5-year Study, the Board will, based upon the results of the Study and consultations with the public, deliver recommendations to the IJC for possible amendments or additions to the present criteria and the recommended regulation plan to give effect to these criteria.

The Study area is the Lake Ontario basin in the United States and Canada and the St. Lawrence River basin from Lake Ontario to Trois-Rivieres, Quebec.

Funding for the International Lake Ontario-St. Lawrence River Study is provided federally by both the United States and Canada.

History

The International St. Lawrence River Board of Control has been using Plan 1958D since April of 1963 to satisfy the existing set of criteria established by the International Joint Commission to regulate outflows from Lake Ontario through the St. Lawrence River.

Studies that have included public participation and are complete are as follows:

- 1973 - International Great Lakes Levels Study
- 1980 - Update of studies to improve Lake Ontario Regulation
- 1993 - International Great Lakes Levels Reference Study
- 1997 - Updated Regulation Plan Studies

This Study considers the traditional uses of the system such as domestic and sanitary uses, navigation, and hydro electric power; along with the emerging interests concerned with environmental factors particularly in terms of wetlands, coastal processes such as flooding and erosion, recreational boating and tourism.

Public Awareness and Interest

The PIAG worked extensively during the first two years to develop an awareness of the Study with various interest groups. They will continue to engage these groups to keep them involved throughout the Study.

Stakeholder and interest group concern level is medium to high. Those that have become aware of the Study consciously try to stay informed. The publics that have not been reached may not be aware that the International Joint Commission is currently regulating the outflows from Lake Ontario through the St. Lawrence River. The approach by some interests to this Study is guarded. There is a sentiment of concern that this Study will not offer a fair recommendation for new regulation criteria.

The scope of the Communication Plan includes those interests within the Study area that are affected by lake and river management.

Communications Goal

The goal of the Communications Team is to make sure that the inputs received from all interests are considered in the development of a recommended alternative regulation plan for outflows from Lake Ontario through the St. Lawrence River. It is also their goal to develop an awareness of the fact that compromise may be necessary to develop a recommendation that will receive the acceptance of all.

Communications Matrix

The Study is open to input and involvement from all user groups and interests. The Public Interest Advisory Group is the link between the public and the Study. The PIAG and Study Board have developed a network of liaisons for each of the Technical Work Groups (TWGs). The Co-Chairs of the PIAG are also members of the Study Board. The PIAG Co-Chairs directly interface with the International Joint Commission liaisons for the Study. There is an ad hoc Outreach Group that consists of the Study Co-Directors, the PIAG Co-Chairs, the Study General Managers, the IJC Study liaisons, and the Support Staff. The ad hoc Outreach Group exists for the sole purpose of coordination and is not included in this matrix. Any recommendations made by the Outreach Group are brought to the Study Board and the Public Interest Advisory Group for approval.

(See Appendix A - "Public Outreach Structure," Appendix B - "Functions of the Outreach Support Team," and Appendix C "PIAG Position on TWG Public Outreach Efforts.")

Communications Matrix



Target Audiences

The *Public Participation Guidance to the Study Board* states "For purposes of the study, the 'public' or 'publics' will include everyone who is interested in the criteria review, or who could be affected by it, including but not limited to the following groups:

- Governments at all levels;
- Native Americans/Aboriginal peoples;
- Commercial navigation;
- Environment;
- Riparians;
- Recreational boating;
- General public;
- Hydroelectric power;
- Domestic water supply and sanitation; and
- Upstream and downstream."

Public Involvement Goal and Objectives

The objectives of this public involvement program are to:

- Continue to create an awareness of the causes of water level problems and promote the understanding that most proposed solutions could have consequences;
- Insure that the Study process is open, inclusive and fair;
- Provide opportunities for the publics to participate;
- Explain the decision-making process of the Study;
- Identify and consider the publics' views of the principal issues, questions and Study objectives;
- Identify and consider the publics' priorities and preferences;
- Identify and utilize local expertise and information;
- Broadly disseminate Study findings as they become available; and
- Encourage the publics to assist in disseminating Study findings.

The following assumptions were made in the development of this plan.

- The PIAG members will continue to meet with stakeholder groups throughout the basin. This will include responding to opportunities or requests from educational institutions.
- The PIAG will hold six public meetings and round table discussions during the year. Areas that remain to be introduced to the Study are Brockville, Sodus Bay, Toronto, Lake St. Louis, and Wilson. The St. Regis Mohawk Tribe has requested a meeting with the PIAG.
- The Study Board will continue to hold one public meeting per year.
- The PIAG will hold four member meetings.
- The PIAG will continue to evolve the idea of an educational video/presentation.
- The PIAG will continue to work on developing a basin-wide representative survey to gather input from interests.
- Adjustments will be made to this plan based on input received through the PIAG Survey for determining how publics want to be reached and participate.
- The PIAG will pursue any information needed by the Technical Work Groups from the public. Any information that needs to be provided to the public from the Technical Work Groups will be coordinated through the Public Interest Advisory Group.

Adjustments will be made to this plan based on input received from the Technical Work Group leads regarding their needs.

General Public

The following Support Staff activities will assist the Communications Team in reaching their objectives with all publics:

- Provide assistance to the Public Interest Advisory Group for their public meetings by:
 - Making location arrangements - reservations, set up, stenographer;
 - Coordinating representative attendance from Study Board and TWGs;
 - Developing news releases, web announcements, advertisements, and posters;
 - Assisting with onsite coordination - set up, sign in, handouts, media responses;
 - Preparing meeting summaries;
 - Summarizing survey inputs;
 - Entering participants in the database; and
 - Sending thank you letters to attendees with a meeting summary.
- Develop a public response database of action items and their status, to be provided to the team on a regular basis. This database will provide a way of summarizing the concerns expressed to the team by postal mail, e-mail, and telephone call.
- Assist the Public Interest Advisory Group with the development of their year-three presentation, basin-wide survey, and public meeting survey.
- Increase website visitation by updating the site as new information becomes available, reviewing the design on a semi-annual basis and continuing to expand the electronic list service. (As the Technical Work Groups begin to receive results from their studies, it will be increasingly important for the Support Staff to work with the Information Management Group to make information available in a format that is easily understandable.)
- Develop a dialog with those that requested the year one reports by sending a follow-up letter that will ask for comments.
- Continue to develop media relations, expanding media outreach through news releases at important points in the Study, i.e. funding announcements, release of key reports, and meeting announcements.
- Continue to develop partnerships with related stakeholder groups to increase awareness of Study activities. Attend relevant public meetings, open houses, workshops and appearances hosted by other organizations as a means of expanding knowledge of the Study.
- Continue outreach to the database through the Study newsletter, ***Ripple Effects***, which will be published quarterly.
- Distribute Study brochures to libraries, visitor centers, local chamber of commerce offices, and town halls throughout the basin.
- E-mail notifications will be sent to partner user groups.

Governments at all levels

- Update and expand the government official database to include newly elected officials.
- Develop contacts with government agencies that need to have an awareness of the Study.

Native Americans/Aboriginal Peoples

- Continue to involve the Mohawk Nation community of Akwesasne.
- Contact will be made with the St. Regis Mohawk Tribe for a Public Interest Advisory Group meeting.

Commercial Navigation

Representatives from the major commercial navigation interests participate in the Commercial Navigation Technical Work Group. They keep their respective agencies informed of Study progress.

Environment

- Progress has been made in including Canadian environmental groups in the Study database. Further research needs to be done to include environmental groups on the U.S. side. Outreach would include web searches and working with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, New York State Department of Environmental Conservation, Environment Canada, and the Ontario Ministry of Environment to find environmental groups in the Study basin. Once the organizations are found they would be contacted to see if they have a newsletter and would be willing to place an introduction article about the Study in their group newsletter or provide their group with the opportunity of a PIAG presentation focusing on key environmental factors for the Study.
- Key environmental reports will be available this year. A news release should be developed summarizing the findings and availability of the reports.
- Contact with the Center for Environmental Information in the U.S. will be maintained.

Shoreline Property Owners

Many of the property owner interest groups have been included in presentations given by PIAG members. This outreach will continue.

Recreational Boating

- Contacts for marinas and yacht clubs throughout the system have been provided by the Recreational Boating group and will be added to the database. The opportunity to receive further information about the Study will be provided to participants in the recreational boating survey.
- An effort will also be made to partner with the Coast Guard for distribution of brochures at boat shows throughout the system.

Hydroelectric Power

Hydroelectric power visitor centers need to be contacted for placement of Study brochures.

Domestic Water Supply and Sanitation

- Representatives from the key water use interests participate in the Industrial, Municipal and Domestic Water Uses Technical Work Group. The group members keep their respective agencies informed of Study progress.

- The Technical Work Group will provide the PIAG with questions to add to their basin-wide survey.

Communications Tools

The following communications tools will be used to reach the objectives listed above:

- Multi-media presentation
- Website
- Newsletter
- Brochure/Fact Sheet
- Glossary
- Frequently Asked Questions Fact Sheet (development of FAQs is being undertaken by the Plan Formulation and Evaluation Group)
- Tabletop display
- Mailings to the key contacts database
- News releases
- Display advertisements (to be placed in newspapers)
- Public Service Announcements
- Promotional Material - bookmark, magnet, coaster

Key Messages

- This Study was initiated because of concerns expressed by the public.
- We will insure that the Study process is open, inclusive and fair.
- Public consultation is critical to the fair assessment and development of plan criteria.
- The Study will review the needs and preferences of all users or interest groups affected by water level and flow fluctuation in the Lake Ontario-St. Lawrence River System.
- The complexity of the Lake Ontario-St. Lawrence River System dictates that most proposed solutions could have consequences for others.

Strategic Communications Considerations

- The best approach is proactive, using a low-profile strategy targeted at the regional level.
- Publicity activities will be coordinated with the IJC, the St. Lawrence River Board of Control, and elected officials.
- Linking with opportunities throughout the system will be given priority.
- The challenge will be in clearly differentiating between other on-going studies, i.e. the Great Lakes Navigation Study and IJC/St. Lawrence River Board of Control activities.
- Those that live outside the study area that have a seasonal interest also are included in this plan.

Appendix A

International Lake Ontario - St. Lawrence River Study Public Outreach Structure

The "Outreach Group" and the "Support Team" responsibilities and lines of authority need clarification for an effective public strategy undertaken by the PIAG, the Study Board, and the TWGs.

The first order of business should be to develop a long-term public outreach plan for the full length of the study, formulated and endorsed by the PIAG and Study Board and its constituent groups (primarily the TWGs). The 2003 plan should establish concrete objectives, connected to realistic resources (budget and support staff). The out years of the plan would set more general objectives that would be tied to more specific implementation when a better idea of specific needs develop as the out years approach.

Outreach Support Team

The Support Team (formerly known as the "A Team") consists of communications support staff in the Study offices in Buffalo and Ottawa, and includes any other Study staff, equipment or resources they use to accomplish outreach objectives. This unit provides key outreach support functions and reports to the Study Board and the PIAG, depending on the function, as outlined on the attached list of responsibilities. The Support Team has no vested authority, but may be given authority to oversee specific activities as designated by the Study Board and/or the PIAG the co-chairs. "Support" is key in naming this unit, since its purpose is to provide outreach support to both the Study Board and the PIAG. It must thus operate under their guidance. However, since media experts staff it, it should also develop, analyze and draft media strategies, which will be forwarded to the Study Board/PIAG (as appropriate) for review, amendment (if necessary) and approval.

Outreach Coordination

The Support Team (formerly known as the "A Team") consists of communications support staff in the Study offices in Buffalo and Ottawa, and includes any other Study staff, equipment or resources they use to accomplish outreach objectives. This unit provides key outreach support functions and reports to the Study Board and the PIAG, depending on the function, as outlined on the attached list of responsibilities. The Support Team has no vested authority, but may be given authority to oversee specific activities as designated by the Study Board and/or the PIAG the co-chairs. "Support" is key in naming this unit, since its purpose is to provide outreach support to both the Study Board and the PIAG. It must thus operate under their guidance. However, since media experts staff it, it should also develop, analyze and draft media strategies, which will be forwarded to the Study Board/PIAG (as appropriate) for review, amendment (if necessary) and approval.

Given the scope of the study, the number of people engaged in it, and the interlinkage of issues and related organizations (TWGs, Control Board, etc.), it is probably useful to have periodic coordination meetings between the PIAG, the Study Board, and (if necessary) relevant TWGs and the Control Board. These would be coordination meetings - there is no set hierarchy for specific implementation of public outreach, beyond the general guidelines set within the framework of the study (i.e., message needs to be consistent, unbiased and various elements needs to be integrated). The coordination meetings would be called by the PIAG co-chairs as needed or as requested by other standing participants of the coordination meetings. (See below.)

The Support Team is best structured to provide logistical support for the coordination meetings, coordinate the agenda and facilitate. This is on the assumption that the Support

Team can operate as a neutral staff support unit, with no vested interest of its own. If this is not the case, staff IJC could facilitate.

Participants at Outreach Group meetings would normally include the Study co-chairs, the Study general managers, PIAG co-chairs, Support Team and IJC lead staff. Others would be invited as appropriate (TWGs, Control Board, PIAG members with specific interests, etc.) The meetings are not expressly closed, but should be small enough to accomplish the coordination objectives. Participants would be expected to fully share the proceedings and outcomes with the entities they represent, and seek their entity's full support, if necessary, to implement the agreed coordination objectives.

Bottom Line: The Outreach Group meetings are coordination meetings, not decision-making meetings. Implementation and development of outreach activities must fit within the 3 - 5 year outreach plan. Development of this plan must be the first priority.

Appendix B

International Lake Ontario-St. Lawrence River Study Functions of The Outreach Support Team

Staff:

Buffalo: Arleen Kreusch, Kelley Foster

Ottawa: Arianne Matte (temporary)

Responsibilities Under Shared Study Board/PIAG Direction

Direct Public Outreach

- Design and publication of documents/brochures as specified in work plan
- Public Correspondence (most would go out under PIAG co-chair signature)
 - *Responding directly to or forwarding letters to appropriate TWGs, the Control Board, the Study Board for response.*
 - *Maintaining a log of pending responses and monitoring completion*
 - *Maintaining a system of easily retrievable files (or e-files) of public queries/comments and responses*
 - *Circulating significant public input (and responses) to Study Board management, relevant TWG and Control Board members, the PIAG members, and the IJC staff.*

Other Support Activities

- Coordination with IJC Media Advisors on ILOSLR study issues, and dissemination of related media to relevant Study Board/TWG members and the PIAG.
- Publication of *Ripples Effects*
- Support of media development (storyboard)
- Maintenance of Public Outreach Database, including stakeholders, media, key contacts
- Stakeholder analysis and identification

- Outreach/Communications strategy development for approaching stakeholder groups
- Drafting of Communications Strategy annual workplans, including budget realistic budget estimates.
- Tracking/coordination of TWG public outreach activities with the PIAG

Responsibilities Under PIAG Direction

- Organizing Public Interest Meetings/PIAG meetings, including logistics and managing the agenda preparation as requested by the co-Chairs.
- Managing PIAG e-mails and correspondence (including internal PIAG e-mail circulation) on behalf of the PIAG co-chairs.
This would include drafting appropriate responses to the public as requested by the co-chairs and circulating TWG meeting or other reports to PIAG members.
- Acting as central information repository and coordination point for the work of any PIAG subcommittees that might be established.
- Coordinating PIAG participation in TWG meetings
- Supporting the development of communications/outreach tools used by the PIAG, including power point presentations, new forms of participation in public events and public outreach, etc.

Appendix C

International Lake Ontario - St. Lawrence River Study Public Interest Advisory Group Memorandum

To: The Technical Work Group Co-Leads
From: The Public Interest Advisory Group
Date: November 21, 2002
Subject: PIAG Position on TWG Public Outreach Efforts

In the document put out by the IJC, "Lake Ontario-St. Lawrence River Regulation Criteria Review Public Participation Guidance to the Study Board", it indicates the roles of the Study Board, Study Teams and PIAG with respect to public participation.

Although it does state that Study Teams will conduct outreach meetings with the publics, it is a concern of the Public Interest Advisory Group that if Technical Working Groups hold public meetings, even with just their stakeholders, separately from the PIAG, problems might arise.

Some of our concerns are:

- consistent messages
- how can the PIAG support a public presentation that only includes info about one of the TWGs?
- will the PIAG and its meetings have any relevance if the TWGs hold separate meetings?

To solve the question and to alleviate our concerns, there should be discussions between the PIAG Co-Chairs, TWG Co-Chairs and the Outreach Support Team to discuss stakeholder

meetings/public meetings as well as cooperation on surveys.

Would any TWG Co-Chairs who are interested in holding stakeholder meetings (which are public meetings, even though they are specific public) please contact Dan Barletta or Marcel Lussier to arrange for a teleconference to look at concerns and ways of resolving the protocols.

Appendix D

Appendix D is a detailed list of elected officials, agencies, media contacts and stakeholder groups. It is constantly being developed and updated. Contact Arleen Kreusch, Public Affairs Specialist, U.S. or Arianne Matte, Public Information Officer, Canada for further information.

International Organizations

- International Joint Commission
- International St. Lawrence River Board of Control
- Lakewide Area Management Plans (LaMPs)
- Great Lakes Commission
- International Association for Great Lakes Research
- Great Lakes Information Network
- Great Lakes Fishery Commission

Government

- Elected Officials

United States

- Federal
 - Senate
 - Congress
- State
 - Governor
 - Senate
 - Assembly
- Local
 - County Legislature
 - Town Council
 - City Mayor

Canada

- Federal
 - Members of Parliament (MPs)
- Provincial
 - Members of Provincial Parliament (MPPs) Ontario
 - National Assembly Members (Quebec)
- Municipal
 - City Councillors
 - Mayor and/or Town Clerk

- City Departments ie. Dept. of Public Works, Chamber of Commerce, Dept. of Environment etc.
- Agencies

United States

- Federal
 - Federal Emergency Management Agency
 - National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
 - U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
 - U.S. Coast Guard
 - U.S. Department of Agriculture
 - U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
 - U.S. Geological Survey
- State
 - NYS Department of Environmental Conservation
- Local
 - Department of Environment and Planning
 - Chamber of Commerce

Canada

- Federal
 - Environment Canada
 - Department of Fisheries and Oceans
 - Canadian Hydrographic Service
 - Canadian Coast Guard
 - Department of Foreign Affairs
 - Agriculture Canada
 - Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency
 - Canadian Heritage
 - Climate Change - Government of Canada
- Provincial
 - Ministry of the Environment
 - Ministry of Natural Resources
 - Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs
 - Conservation Authorities (Ontario)
 - Remedial Action Plans (RAPs)
 - Ministry of Environment Quebec
 - ZIP Committees (Quebec)

- Interest Groups

International

- International Great Lakes Coalition
- International Water Levels Coalition
- Thousand Islands Area Residents Association (TIARA)
- Thousand Island Association (TIA)

United States

- Bluff Road Homeowners Association
- Braddock Heights Association
- Chaska Beach Lot Owners Association
- Ducks Unlimited
- Finger Lakes-Lake Ontario Watershed Protection Alliance
- Friends of Salmon River
- Friends of Sandy Pond Beach
- Friends of the Genessee
- Grand View Beach Association
- Grand View Heights Association
- Great Lakes Information Network
- Great Lakes Protection Fund
- Great Lakes United
- Lake Bluff Cottagers Association
- Lake Macatawa Shoreline Association
- Lake Ontario Riparian Alliance
- Lake Ontario Shoreline Owners
- Lake Ontario South Shore Council
- Lakeland Beach Road Association
- League of Women Voters
- Murray Isle Association
- New York Rivers United
- New York Sea Grant
- North Rainbow Shores Association
- Ontario Dune Coalition
- Outing Park Association
- Outlook Club
- Point of Sand Point Association
- St. Lawrence Seaway Pilots' Association
- Save our Sodus
- Save the River
- Selkirk Beach Association
- Shoremont Homeowners Association
- Sierra Club
- The Nature Conservancy (Great Lakes Program)

Canada

- Ontario Marina Operators Association
- Hamilton Harbor RAP Coordinators
- Canadian Coalition of Provincial Cottage Associations
- Bay Area Restoration Council
- Royal Botanical Gardens (Hamilton)
- Comité Parc des Rapides inc.
- Fédération québécoise pour le saumon atlantique (FQSA)
- Les Amis de la vallée du Saint-Laurent (AVSL)
- Communauté urbaine de Montréal
- Société de la faune et des parcs du Québec (SFPQ)

- Société de développement économique du Saint-Laurent (SODES)
- Media - United States and Canada
 - Newspaper
 - Radio
 - Television
 - Internet
- Other - The following areas will also be researched for initiating contact in both the United States and Canada:
 - Universities
 - Colleges
 - Schools
 - Libraries
 - Power Squadrons (Boaters)
 - Registered Boaters
 - Marinas
 - Conservation Clubs
 - Riparian Associations
 - Cottager Associations
 - Fisheries and Hatcheries
 - Hydroelectric Power
 - Estuaries
 - Birdwatchers
 - Yacht and Sailing Clubs
 - Environmental Associations

Bibliography

International Joint Commission Directive to the International Lake Ontario-St. Lawrence River Study Board, December 11, 2000

International Joint Commission Lake Ontario-St. Lawrence River Regulation Criteria Review Public Participation Guidance to the Study Board, November 9, 2000

International Lake Ontario-St. Lawrence River Study Board Communications Staff Work Plan 2002

International Lake Ontario-St. Lawrence River Study Public Interest Advisory Group Terms of Reference

Plan of Study for Criteria Review in the Orders of Approval for Regulation of Lake Ontario-St. Lawrence River Levels and Flows, September 1999

Public Interest Advisory Group Year Two Work Plan, March 2002