



International Lake Ontario - St. Lawrence River Study

Public Interest Advisory Group Report for Study Years Two and Three

April 2002 - March 2004



Public Interest Advisory Group

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Dear Commissioners and Study Board Members:

The Public Interest Advisory Group (PIAG) is pleased to submit their report for years two and three of the International Lake Ontario – St. Lawrence River Study to the International Joint Commission and the Study Board.

The enclosed report was written with the objective of describing PIAG activities, accomplishments and information received from the public during the period from April 2002 to March 2004. It includes a summary of the performance indicators, questions and concerns collected by the PIAG, through their newsletter, *Ripple Effects*, the Study Website at www.losl.org and from the people who attended public meetings. Every attempt was made to ensure that the public's impressions, opinions and feedback were accurately captured. The opinions and thoughts do not necessarily reflect those of the International Lake Ontario – St. Lawrence River Study Board. Any mention of, or reference to, statements contained in this report should not be construed as their endorsement.

This report will be made available to the public through the Website and by request. Questions regarding this report can be directed to Ms. Arleen Kreusch in the United States at (716) 879-4438 or Mr. Greg McGillis in Canada at (613) 992-5727.

Ce rapport est également disponible en français.

Respectfully submitted,

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Enc.

The Public Interest Advisory Group is a volunteer group appointed by the International Joint Commission to ensure effective communication between the public and the International Lake Ontario-St. Lawrence River Study team.

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Table of Contents

	Page
<u>Executive Summary</u>	1
1. Public Interest Advisory Group (PIAG)	3
2. Meetings of the Members of PIAG	4
3. PIAG/Plan Formulation and Evaluation Group (PFEG) Workshops	5
4. PIAG Outreach Activities	5
a. PIAG Public Meeting Summaries	5
i. Akwesasne Outreach	5
1. Akwesasne, February 20, 2003	6
2. Cornwall Island, February 25, 2004	6
3. Cornwall Island, March 3, 2004	6
4. Cornwall Island, March 17, 2004	6
ii. Kahnawake Outreach	6
Kahnawake, Quebec, November 20, 2003	7
iii. Tyendinaga Outreach	7
iv. Canadian Meetings	7
1. Belleville, October 30, 2002	7
2. Trois Rivières, November 26, 2002	8
3. Cornwall, May 15, 2003	8
4. Niagara-on-the-Lake, June 18, 2003	8
5. Dorval, September 24, 2003	9
v. U.S. Meetings	9
1. Sackets Harbor, August 8, 2002	9
2. Wilson, June 19, 2003	9
3. Greece, August 7, 2003	9
4. Sodus Point, September 10, 2003	10
b. PIAG Year Two-Three Survey Results	10
c. PIAG/TWG Public Outreach	10
d. Performance Indicator Suggestions Summary	11
5. Public Outreach Tools	11
a. Database Expansion	11
b. Website	12
c. Newsletter	12
d. Video	12

Appendices (Available upon request or at www.losl.org)

- A. Public Interest Advisory Group Membership and Affiliations
- B. Outreach Meetings
- C. Summary of Akwesasne Concerns
- D. Summary of Kahnawake Concerns
- E. Questions and Answers from Canadian Public Interest Advisory Group Public Meetings
- F. Questions and Answers from United States Public Interest Advisory Group Public Meetings
- G. PIAG Survey Results
- H. Performance Indicator Suggestions and Responses

Acronyms

ATFE	Akwesasne Task Force on the Environment
IJC	International Joint Commission
ISLRBC	International St. Lawrence River Board of Control
PI	Performance Indicator
PIAG	Public Interest Advisory Group
PFEG	Plan Formulation and Evaluation Group
TWG	Technical Work Group
U.S.	United States

**International Lake Ontario - St. Lawrence River Study
Public Interest Advisory Group
Report for Years Two and Three
April 2002 – March 2004**

Executive Summary

In December 2000, the International Joint Commission (IJC) formed the International Lake Ontario – St. Lawrence River Study Board to assess and evaluate the methods and criteria used to regulate outflows from Lake Ontario through the St. Lawrence River. The IJC also appointed a bi-national Public Interest Advisory Group (PIAG) to ensure the continuous involvement of all interests throughout the Study.

The 20-member volunteer PIAG is equally made up of American and Canadian members. PIAG members were selected based on their knowledge and experience in one or more interest areas associated with the Lake and River system. The members participate in all aspects of the Study; working to ensure effective communication between the Study Team and the public, and ensuring input from the public is considered. Individual PIAG members are assigned as liaisons to the various Study Technical Work Groups. The PIAG Chairs are members of the Study Board.

The PIAG's principal objective is to ensure that the results of the Study consider the interest and "natural knowledge" of the public. The PIAG's mandate is to create an awareness of the Study, educate the public regarding the Lake Ontario-St. Lawrence River system, and engage the public to stimulate their interest in becoming involved in the Study. A summary of the PIAG's first-year activities can be found in the PIAG Year One Report published in May 2002. This report details the work of the PIAG during years two and three of the Study.

During years two and three, the PIAG made progress in working together as a team. They held seven member meetings and one member telephone conference call. They continued to create awareness, educate, and involve the public by holding 9 public meetings and 51 local stakeholder meetings. All input received from and concerns expressed by the public at these meetings were relayed to the Study Team.

Not surprisingly PIAG members have found that their effective participation in the Study has required more time than was initially understood. The information flow via e-mail and other means has been overwhelming at times. However, this investment in time enabled all PIAG members to gain a far better understanding and insight into the workings of the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence River system, as well as knowledge of the concerns and issues of affected interests and stakeholders. The PIAG realizes and has been communicating the point that water levels and flows cannot be controlled in such a way as to satisfy "all interests all of the time".

Also during years two and three, five volumes of the Study newsletter *Ripple Effects* were produced and sent to the Study mailing list of some 4,400 recipients. The PIAG partnered with a local access cable television station to tape a video of their year-three presentation. This video was broadcast several times during the fall of 2003 in the Rochester area. Public surveys carried out by PIAG found that people prefer receiving information about the Study every three months, and by newsletter or e-mail in preference to other means, i.e. information fairs and toll-free hot lines. The survey results also indicate, that the time period for public information meetings is during the summer months when seasonal as well as full-time residents are in the area. Future Study newsletters and public meetings will continue to be tailored to these preferences.

At the request of the Study Board, the PIAG gathered public input on the performance indicators developed by the Technical Work Groups. Comment was sought during public meetings held in 2003 and through response items in the Study's newsletter and website. The PIAG received a good response with some 70 to 80 specific comments being received. Answers to these comments were prepared with the assistance of Technical Work Groups, Study Board and PIAG members. The PIAG feels that these interactions are developing a significantly improved understanding of the Lake Ontario-St. Lawrence system with the public.

The International St. Lawrence River Board of Control, whose responsibility is the managing of the water levels, has been severely criticized at times for shortfalls in its communications activities. PIAG met with representatives of this Board, reviewed its communications program and strategy and provided recommendations, including the suggestion that a network of community people be developed to assist in disseminating Board of Control information throughout the region.

1. Public Interest Advisory Group

To emphasize the importance of public outreach, consultation, and participation during the International Lake Ontario-St. Lawrence River Study, the International Joint Commission appointed a 20-member, bi-national Public Interest Advisory Group (PIAG) for the Study. Marcel Lussier, Canada, and Dan Barletta, U. S., are the PIAG co-chairs for this reporting period. They are also members of the Study Board. PIAG terms are 18 months with the ability to be reappointed and remain a member throughout the Study. A list of the current membership, their location along the system, and their areas of affiliation are listed in Appendix A.

The mission of the Public Interest Advisory Group (PIAG) is to ensure effective communication between the public and the International Lake Ontario-St. Lawrence River Study Team. They:

- Advise the public about the details of the Study in each of the sectors being investigated;
- Gather from the public their views and experience concerning water levels in the sectors that interest them;
- Advise the Study Board on the responsiveness of the Study process to public concerns;
- Advise the Study Board on public consultation, involvement and information exchange;
- Serve as a conduit for public input to the Study process, and for public dissemination of Study outcomes;
- Serve as liaison to and participate in the activities of Technical Work Groups as Public Interest Advisory Group members desire; and
- Provide a public liaison function to the Study Board through Public Interest Advisory Group co-chairs who serve as members of the Study Board.

The PIAG's objective is to ensure that the results of the Study consider the interests and the "natural knowledge" of the public.

The PIAG membership is mandated to hold four meetings together each year. The members have found that their effective participation in the Study has required much more time and dedication than just their membership meetings. They are active as liaisons to the Technical Work Groups and attend those meetings. They hold public meetings and through their speakers' bureau give presentations to groups as well. The e-mail traffic that they see can at times be overwhelming.

The PIAG met with the Plan Formulation and Evaluation Group of the Study five times to learn about their activities and the decision-making process that will be used by the Study Board to make decisions. Each time the PIAG gained a better understanding of the shared-vision process. The PIAG realizes that the Study Board will not be able to satisfy all of the interests all of the time.

Members of the PIAG continued to liaise with each of the Technical Work Group (TWG) teams. The members attend the TWG meetings, provide the TWG with information regarding the public's concerns and provide input regarding TWG work plans.

- 2. Meetings of the Members of PIAG** – The PIAG is mandated to meet as a group four times a year. These meetings usually take place in conjunction with Study Board or Plan Formulation and Evaluation Group meetings.
- a. St. Catharines, ON, May 8 and 9, 2002** – The PIAG met to discuss and develop their continuing public involvement program and activities for the second year of the Study. Presentations were given to the PIAG by each of the Study's Technical Work Groups including the Plan Formulation and Evaluation Group on the status of their work. The group discussed and considered the idea of developing and distributing a video, which would be used to help create public awareness of the complexity of regulating the outflows from Lake Ontario through the St. Lawrence River. The PIAG's Year-One Report was approved. It included an analysis of the input received from the public during the year-one survey and was presented to the Study Board. Work began on the PIAG year-two presentation.
 - b. Ogdensburg, NY, September 18, 2002** – The group gathered under new leadership in Ogdensburg to discuss updating their presentation with new information and a new survey to gather public input. PIAG liaisons to the technical work groups sought input from their respective group regarding information they needed from the public. A guest speaker from Syracuse University talked with the PIAG about developing a survey to find out how the public would like to stay informed about the Study. Issuing a contract for a scriptwriter to write a storyboard for a possible video was approved.
 - c. Buffalo, NY, November 12, 13, and 14, 2003** – The group met to discuss their budget and their work plans for year three. A presentation was given on the current regulation plan, Plan 1958 D with deviations. Finishing touches were placed on their year-two/three presentation and a meeting schedule for the next year was discussed. The scriptwriter presented his first draft of the storyboard to the PIAG. The PIAG asked him to prepare a second draft based on their comments, suggestions were made regarding stakeholders throughout the system who should be interviewed.
 - d. Ottawa, ON, March 12, 2003** – After a workshop with the Plan Formulation and Evaluation Group during the day, the PIAG met in the evening to discuss their year-three communication plan and the storyboard. The PIAG presentation for the summer meetings was reviewed. It was determined that the presentation needed additional information regarding the status of each of the technical work groups.
 - e. Greece, NY, May 27, 2003** – The group met to discuss their meeting schedule for the summer. Tentative dates and locations were set for the meetings. After reviewing the storyboard and the costs associated with producing a video, and considering the fact that the video would be outdated before it could be finished, the PIAG decided not to produce a video for public dissemination. A committee was established to determine whether it was within the PIAG's mandate to make recommendations to the International St. Lawrence Board of Control regarding its communication plan. Since the Domestic, Industrial, and Municipal Water Uses TWG was the only TWG that needed additional information from the public, it was decided that their questions would be published in the *Ripple Effects* instead of conducting a basin-wide survey.
 - f. Montreal, QC, September 23, 2003** – The PIAG budget for year four, and a draft plan for years four and five were reviewed and approved by the PIAG for submittal to the Study Board. A representative of the International St. Lawrence

River Board of Control gave a presentation to the PIAG regarding its communication strategy. Members of the PIAG commented on the Board's outreach efforts and said they would formally comment at a later date.

- g. Conference call, February 5, 2004** – The PIAG met by conference call to save travel dollars. They continued to discuss their plans for the summer meeting schedule, including the development of panel displays, and the possibility of using teleconferencing or web-based conferencing and finalizing the locations. The PIAG also discussed their recommendations to the International St. Lawrence Board of Control regarding their communication strategy. Wording and informational changes were recommended. The PIAG also suggested that after the Study is complete, the Board might consider developing a network of community member volunteers that would disseminate information regarding the Board of Control to members of the community.
- h. Toronto, ON, March 14, 2004** – Discussion at this meeting focused on the availability of information for the summer presentation, panel displays for the summer meetings, and information to include in the PIAG Year-Two/Three Report. The year-four presentation will focus on the performance indicators and criteria rather than recommendations for alternate plans. Recommendations by the PIAG to the International St. Lawrence River Board of Control regarding their communication strategy were reviewed and approved. Max Streibel, Coastal Processes TWG liaison, reviewed the Coastal Processes Group finding that higher Lake Ontario water levels coupled with higher energy wave action between late fall and early spring tend to accelerate destructive shore erosion.
- 3. PIAG/PFEG Workshops** – The PIAG met with the Plan Formulation and Evaluation Group five times in the last two years. Each time they gained a better understanding of how the Shared Vision Model that the group is using for the decision-process works. They were also able to provide input regarding areas of concern and interface with many of the members of the Study Team to ask questions and relay concerns from the public. It is very important for all members of the PIAG to understand and trust the Shared Vision Model when they give their presentations to the public in the final two years of the Study.
- 4. PIAG Outreach Activities** - The PIAG speakers' bureau as well as members of the Study Team have been busy giving presentations throughout the Lake Ontario-St. Lawrence System. Through the PIAG's Speakers' Bureau, public meetings, round table discussions, and small stakeholder group meetings, the Team has reached over 3,520 people since the Study began. (See Appendix B.) Input received from the public is forwarded to the Study Team.

 - a. PIAG Public Meeting Summaries** – Public meetings are usually advertised in the local newspapers to reach the largest audience possible. News releases are also sent out to publicize the meetings. Often the PIAG will hold a round table discussion meeting during the afternoon with the elected officials from the area prior to the evening meeting.

 - i. Akwesasne Outreach** - The PIAG received the concerns of the Akwesasne community through a public meeting held February 20, 2003; a radio talk show February 11, 2004; and open houses on February 25, March 3, and March 17, 2004. One of the most important things to realize is that water level regulation impacts the culture of the Nation. Controlling water levels goes against the Akwesasne belief system. Plants that the Nation used for

medicines such as the cardinal plant and sweet flag are becoming scarce. Fish consumption is no longer prevalent among the Akwesasne community; this impacts the health of the community. Erosion is an important problem for the people in Akwesasne, as are daily fluctuations in water levels. For a more detailed summary of the Akwesasne community's concerns, their questions, and the answers they received, please request a copy of Appendix C.

1. Akwesasne, February 20, 2003

Areas of concern brought up at this meeting include: the need to take fishing grounds into account when setting water levels, flooding, and loss of beach and land due to erosion. Major concern was expressed regarding the navigation study being undertaken regarding expansion of the St. Lawrence Seaway, which is totally separate from our Study.

2. Cornwall Island, February 25, 2004

The major concerns expressed at this open house were the following: erosion caused by shipping on Thompson Island, Yellow Island and on north shore of St. Regis Island. Also, shorelines are dropping from three to four feet (1.22 meters) in the summertime. There are many farmers concerned with the flooding of their farmlands because of the dams (beavers or Moses-Saunders). But, in some areas, water levels are dropping at least three to four feet (.91 to 1.22 meters). People were also really worried about our Study being used to justify dredging of the Seaway.

3. Cornwall Island, March 3, 2004

The major concerns expressed at this open house include the following: extreme water-level fluctuations at Akwesasne within a quarter-month may not be captured by the use of quarter-monthly averages. These fluctuations may be a result of peaking and ponding. The current Study is not adequately addressing the possible effects of peaking and ponding on erosion at "hot-spots" identified by both Pacific International Engineering Corporation and the people of Akwesasne - the erosion is mainly being attributed to ship wakes.

4. Cornwall Island, March 17, 2004

The major concerns expressed at this open house were the following: The ships' waves are a big problem: pleasure boats cause erosion along the shores. The commercial ships cause an eddy on Raquette Point. The water levels can vary as much as one and a half feet (.46 meters) within one day. In the village, the water level is one foot (30.48 cm) lower than when the ice goes out. It was said mentioned that levels don't matter if the bank is secure. There were also concerns similar to the ones from the two previous Akwesasne open houses.

- ii. **Kahnawake Outreach** – The word "Kahnawake" means "swiftly moving currents which we depend on daily for our survival". Prior to construction of the Seaway, the people of Kahnawake depended on the St. Lawrence River for fishing, washing clothes, swimming and other community activities. Current concerns are low water levels at the marina, drinking water intakes in the St. Lawrence River, zebra mussels and waterfowl. For a more detailed summary of the Kahnawake community's concerns, their question, and the answers they received, please request a copy of Appendix D.

Kahnawake, Quebec, November 20, 2003

The major concerns expressed at this public meeting were the following: some people worried that the Study was gathering information for the project to further widen the Seaway. Others were concerned about the water quality, as it affects both fish (sturgeon spawning beds downstream) and drinking water, as well as contaminated sediment. People also noted the disappearance of salamanders and small, centipede-like organisms used for bait (which in turn affected fishing). Concerns were expressed about the spraying for the West Nile Virus, affecting pike, muskrats, turtles, ducks and cranes. There were also concerns about increasing zebra mussels. For water quality, people were concerned that water levels affect the water quality, and the amounts of chlorine needed to treat the water at the purification facilities. However, there were also concerns about well water. Water levels have been exceptionally low around Kahnawake's marina.

- iii. **Tyendinaga Outreach** – The PIAG has extended an invitation to the Mohawks of Tyendinaga to hear their concerns about water levels. A meeting may be scheduled in late summer of 2004.
- iv. **Canadian Meetings** – Brief summaries of the PIAG's Canadian public meetings are included below. More detailed summaries of the questions and answers from the meetings are listed in Appendix F. If you would like to request a copy, please contact the Canadian Public Information Officer for the Study at 613-992-5727.

1. Belleville, October 30, 2002

During the afternoon roundtable discussion, dialogue focused on holdbacks, influence on controls, water management, dredging, recreational boating, integrity, water level fluctuation, progress, and fish and wildlife habitat. It was recommended that the plan identify impacts on various interests. Climate change and natural variability are significant points to consider. Restrictions and maneuverability on the control system that influences water levels raised interest. Feedback to communities was queried in terms of municipal water planning. Fish habitat and wetlands were recognized as an important aspect to the Study. Increased awareness on the many issues would perhaps provide a greater appreciation for the various impacts, opposing interests and sensitivities expressed. A writer, contracted through the Study, attended as an observer preparing a storyboard script for production.

During the evening public meeting, local interests were well supported with approximately 30 guests attending the open house. Public concern primarily focused on recreational boating interests. Timing of water levels and alerting mariners prior to extreme water level conditions were considered critical in handling detrimental effects. Concerns of water levels dropping too fast were repeated throughout the evening. Ideally, the preference was to control the influence so that levels do not drop too fast or too early. To be more responsive to rapid fluctuations and to compensate for unexpected scenarios, controls should allow for adjustments. Credibility for following through on recommendations and political interaction were also considered integral to the Study. The

volume and detail of information presented appeared somewhat overwhelming for local citizens to consume. Balance and appreciation between opposing interests remained rather distant. Increased awareness on the range of impacts would perhaps provide common ground for future discussion and collaboration. Undoubtedly, water was considered a precious resource and commodity.

2. Trois Rivières, November 26, 2002

During the roundtable afternoon meeting, major issues discussed were the effects of tides on water levels in Lake St. Pierre, the 1909 Boundary Waters Treaty, the prioritization of interests, erosion of banks, involvement of municipal, provincial and federal governments in terms of erosion and access to the River, low levels for marinas and commercial fishing interests, the enforcement of a new regulation plan, and climate change.

During the evening public meeting, major issues discussed were erosion and sand buildup at tributary mouths, the Seaway expansion project, the methods of modelling used by the Study, the threat of removing water from the Great Lakes for commercial purposes, the 1909 Boundary Waters Treaty, consideration given to other interests, such as the environment, and the delimitation of the Study at Trois-Rivières.

3. Cornwall, May 15, 2003

Major issues discussed at the afternoon roundtable meeting were low River levels for marina owners and recreational boaters, both upstream and downstream of the Moses-Saunders Dam; the possibility of building a dam south of Montreal; ferry passage at the Frontenac Islands; access to cottages on the Thousand Islands; sensitive spawning grounds at tributary mouths; wetland health; erosion on Lake Ontario; and water levels prior to the Seaway; ballast water and invasive species.

Major concerns discussed at the evening public meeting were water levels in the Thousand Islands, current Lake Ontario levels and lower supplies to all of the Great Lakes, the decision-making process of the Study and the IJC, restoring the environment/shoreline at Kahnawake, the Seaway expansion project, low levels in Kahnawake, and the perceived prioritization of interests i.e., environment over industry. The members of the Study were invited to Kahnawake to see the low levels and meet with community members.

4. Niagara-on-the-Lake, June 18, 2003

Sandra Lawn from the PIAG led a roundtable of questions and comments following the presentation. Dialogue focused on control, expectations, competing needs, water quality, shoreline property owners, a healthy system, wetlands and waterfowl.

At the evening public meeting, concern focused on water levels, shoreline erosion, loss of personal property and the need for protection.

To provide context and to infuse further knowledge, midway through the question and answer session, a specialized study on coastal erosion and

flooding was presented. Erosion was illustrated as a natural process related to waves as opposed to lake levels. Fundamental physics provide the basis for understanding the erosion process. In terms of eroding bluffs, a critical point of interest is that all sand on beaches comes from erosion. Beaches are a direct product of erosion. If shorelines do not erode we do not have beaches.

5. Dorval, September 24, 2003

The major concerns expressed at this public meeting were the following: high flows due to an emergency response to a need for electricity during the August 2003 blackout, climate change and adaptive management, the interests of the St. Lawrence vs. Lake Ontario, the possibility of reserving water on Lake Ontario for later use on the St. Lawrence, fluctuations on the River pre- and post-plan, possible export of water from the Great Lakes, perceived priorities of uses, i.e., industry/trade vs. environment, the possible use of the old St. Lawrence Riverbed as a reservoir, economic valuation of the environment, the need to educate the public on how the system works, and the vulnerability of commercial navigation to fluctuations in water levels.

- v. **U. S. Meetings** – Brief summaries of the PIAG's U. S. public meetings are included below. More detailed summaries of the questions and answers from the meetings are listed in Appendix F. If you would like to request a copy, please contact the U. S. Public Affairs Specialist for the Study, at 716-879-4497.

1. Sackets Harbor, August 8, 2002

The major concerns expressed at the PIAG meetings in Sackets Harbor were regarding erosion and property damage due to high water levels. The overall health of the system, wetlands, beaches and dunes were also of great concern. Economic recreation/tourism concerns were also expressed. An announcement early in the season that lake levels are expected to be low will cause people to go somewhere else on their vacations whether the levels end up being low or not.

2. Wilson, June 19, 2003

In the afternoon, a roundtable discussion brought elected officials from towns and villages across Niagara and Orleans counties. The officials felt that the Study's data-collection, which examines many different areas of the system, is important to the people they represent. The concern was raised, however, that once a positive plan is created, putting it into action will be a most difficult task.

In the evening, the PIAG conducted a public meeting drawing over 60 people from the two counties. After the presentation, there was a lengthy discussion touching upon many concerns from environmental impacts, such as fish spawning, to how water levels affect shoreline property owners and recreational boaters.

3. Greece, August 7, 2003

At this meeting, a number of shoreline residents expressed concerns about how the regulation of outflows from the Lake through the St. Lawrence River affect their property. There were also concerns raised

about the water levels in Montreal and the Ottawa River in Canada and how they impact Lake Ontario and the St. Lawrence River in the U.S. Many of the recreational boaters present were concerned with the high and low levels that affect their ability to get their boats in and out of marinas and shorten their boating season.

A few attendees pointed out that the Study's results will only accurately reflect the wishes of the people through public participation. Attendees from Hilton Beach and Manitou Beach asked questions about the goals and constraints of the Study. Dan Barletta, PIAG Co-lead, talked about the Study's goals. "The health of the system is at the top. You and I are part of the system. So are boaters and so is the environment. We need to preserve the health of all interests."

4. Sodus Point, September 24, 2003

Over 65 people attended this meeting, which was held in conjunction with Save Our Sodus, an organization concerned with deteriorating water quality in Sodus Bay. A member of the International St. Lawrence River Board of Control and the PIAG gave presentations about the current regulation and the status of the Study. Concerns were expressed about the length of the recreational boating season, erosion impacts on lakefront property, the conflict between riparian and shipping interests, as well as the need for a balanced effort to coordinate the needs of each of these groups.

- b. PIAG Year-Two/Three Survey Results** – The PIAG year-two/three survey was developed to determine how the Study's stakeholders wanted to be kept informed about the Study and how they wanted to be able to provide feedback to the Study. An analysis of the results indicated that members of the Lake Ontario-St. Lawrence River community preferred to be informed on a quarterly basis. It was also noted that meetings should be held in the summer months when the seasonal residents are in the area as well as the local residents. Appendix G contains a summary of the survey results from Canada and the U.S as well as the results from the test survey done at the Study Board's public meeting in Ogdensburg in 2002. If you would like to request a copy, please contact the Canadian Public Information Officer for the Study, at 613-992-5727 or the U. S. Public Affairs Specialist for the Study, at 716-879-4497.

c. PIAG/TWG Public Outreach

A contractor from the Coastal Processes TWG performed a survey on beaches in the U. S. and Canada asking beach goers how water levels impact their decision to go to the beach. The results of their survey will be summarized in the Coastal Process appendix to the Study's Year Two-Three Report. Contractors from another firm presented findings on erosion caused by ship vibrations to members of the Akwesasne community.

The Domestic, Industrial, and Municipal Water Uses Technical Work Group needed additional information from the public regarding shorewells along the St. Lawrence River. The PIAG placed the group's questions in *Ripple Effects*. A member of the public suggested that this request for information also be placed in newspapers along the St. Lawrence. Placement of ads was added to the scope of work for the Water Uses Group contractor and carried out.

In February of 2004, Brad Parker, the Canadian Co-lead of the Environmental Technical Work Group, presented to a group of interested citizens at Save The River's annual Winter Weekend Conference. Mr. Parker shared the findings to date that have come out of the extensive research on the environment, as part of the Study. The audience was made up of both US and Canadian citizens from the Thousand Islands area of the St. Lawrence River, and topics discussed included effects of water levels changes on fish habitats, muskrat populations and other important species in the River ecosystem. Members of the Environmental TWG also presented slides at a meeting in Kahnawake and at ZIP Committee Meetings in the Montreal area on the vulnerability of Lake St. Louis to changes in water levels.

A survey was mailed to all boaters registered in New York State by the Recreational Boating TWG. Respondents to the survey let the group know how water levels impact them. The results of that survey will be summarized in the Recreational Boating portion of the Study's Year Two-Three Report. Study information was distributed at different recreational boating association meetings and boat shows in Canada.

Members from the Hydrologic and Hydraulics TWG presented slides at a meeting in Kahnawake and at ZIP Committee Meetings in the Montreal area on past and projected water levels in Lake St. Louis based on different climate change scenarios.

- d. Performance Indicator Suggestions Summary** – The Public Interest Advisory Group was asked by the Study Board to gather input from the public regarding the performance indicators developed by the Technical Work Groups. A performance indicator is a measure of economic, social, or environmental health. In the context of the Study, performance indicators relate to the impacts of different water levels in Lake Ontario and the St. Lawrence River. The PIAG began receiving feedback from the public regarding the performance indicators during their meetings held in the summer of 2003. The PIAG also sought comment from the public through the Study newsletter and through the Study website. Suggested performance indicators and the Technical Work Group responses are included in Appendix H. If you would like to request a copy of Appendix H, please contact the Canadian Public Information Officer for the Study, at 613-992-5727 or the U. S. Public Affairs Specialist for the Study, at 716-879-4497.

5. Public Outreach Tools

a. Database Expansion

Members of the public sign up to be added to the Study's database for the mailing list at every meeting. They are also provided with the opportunity to be part of the Study's electronic list service that is used to notify the public of newsletter availability on the Web and upcoming meetings.

The United States section of the Study database includes over 2,700 entries. The list of elected officials in the database is reviewed and updated yearly after elections. Libraries, Chambers of Commerce, and high schools along the Lake Ontario-St. Lawrence River system were added to the database. Representatives of the environmental groups around the system were added to the list through a partnership with the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation. Respondents

to the Recreational Boating Survey were also provided with the opportunity to be added.

The Canadian section of the Study database contains 1700 names and is updated on a quarterly basis.

b. Website -

Discussion Forum

Users can now visit the revamped Discussion Forum on the website. They can view and post messages with ease and share their concerns with other users of the Lake Ontario-St. Lawrence River System. An example of a question for discussion is, “Do you have any family traditions involving Lake Ontario or the St. Lawrence River? Do water levels affect your ability to carry out these traditions?” The Discussion Forum can be accessed at: <http://www.losl.org/discussion/forum-e.asp>.

c. Newsletter

Five volumes of the Study newsletter, *Ripple Effects*, were released in years two and three. Each volume contained a mail-back piece that provided the public with either the opportunity to add a friend to the mailing list, to provide feedback to the Study, or to request reports. This newsletter is distributed to over 4,400 addresses in Canada and the U.S. It is estimated that the PIAG will only publish four additional volumes of this newsletter.

d. Video

The PIAG Year Three Presentation was turned into a video and aired several times on a public television station in the Rochester area.