

**INTERNATIONAL LAKE ONTARIO - ST. LAWRENCE RIVER BOARD**  
**Board Meeting 25 Sept 2019 - 9:00 am to 5:00 pm**  
**Canadian Centre for Inland Waters, South Seminar Room**  
**Burlington, ON**

The meeting began at 9:00 pm (EDT) with the following participants:

United States		Canada
	Board Members	
Mr. S. Durrett, Alt. Chair Mr. T. Brown Mr. R. Company Mr. A. David Dr. D. Kuehn Mr. B. Reilich		Dr. G. Béchard, Chair (ph) Mr. J. Aubry-Morin Ms. P. Clavet Ms. J. Frain Mr. M. Hudon
	Secretaries	
Mr. B. Carmichael		Mr. R. Caldwell
	Regulation Representatives	
Mr. K. Koralewski (Alt.)		Mr. J. Bruxer Ms. J. Dickhout (Alt.)
	IJC Commissioners	
Ms. J. Corwin		Mr. P. Béland
	IJC Staff	
Dr. M. Colosimo Mr. A. Greeley Mr. V. Serveiss		Mr. P. Allen (ph) Mr. D. Fay Ms. E. Klyszejko
	Associates	
Mr. J. Allis Dr. T. Eberhardt Mr. P. Davis Ms. C. Fisher Mr. R. Hippenstiel (ph) Mr. A. Kornacki Ms. M. Kropfreiter Mr. J. Oyler (ph) Mr. J. Scharf Ms. S. Wagner		Ms. G. Faveri Ms. S. Grady Mr. J. Hughes (ph) Ms. W. Leger Mr. M. McNiven Mr. B. Morton (ph) Dr. F. Seglenieks Mr. M. Shantz

**1 Roll, Opening Remarks, Objectives**

Mr. Durrett opened the meeting with a roll-call and introductory remarks. Dr. Béchard apologized for not being

available to chair and having to call into the meeting owing to medical leave. Mr. Durrett thanked ECCC for hosting the meeting and offered a warm welcome to recently appointed member, Mr. B. Reilich and IJC co-chairs, Ms. J. Corwin and Mr. P. Béland.

## **2 Approval of Agenda**

The agenda was adopted (attached). Item 9d was added regarding posting of conference call notes.

## **3 Previous Action Items**

All action items from the 6 March 2019 meeting were marked complete or deferred. Some actions were carried forward as follows:

- Mr. Aubry-Morin will send the notes from a 20 November 2018 meeting between the Seaway Corporations and the Great River Network.
- Mr. Davis will send the NYPA bulletins regarding boater safety near their structures.
- GLAM will look to add Board member liaisons in the near future.
- Mr. Aubry-Morin will schedule a call regarding the Seaway closing date with the Board, Power Entities and Canadian Coast Guard.

## **4 Gauging Committee**

### **a. Outstanding Gauging Committee Reports**

The 2017 draft report is now complete and will be sent to members prior to the October meeting. The 2018 Audit and report preparation will follow. OPG apologized for the previous delay and assured the Board that they are committed to returning to the regular schedule for preparation of the reports.

### **b. 2019 Inspections**

The Inspection Team conducted the annual water level gauge inspections on behalf of the Committee from 12 to 15 August. A closeout meeting with Committee and Power Entity representatives was held on 20 August. The Committee will meet in early 2020 to review remaining action items.

### **c. Precision Survey Update**

The precision survey was to take place in 2018, but was previously rescheduled for October 2019. OPG and NOAA are currently working through some agreement/contractual issues. First, a critical benchmark has dense vegetation surrounding it. A related environmental site assessment changed the scope of the survey work. Second, two contractual terms have created problems. The first requires a 15 percent withholding of tax that must be waived by the Canadian Revenue Agency. An application has been sent to the CRA. The second refers to standard contract terms required by OPG in a “small contract” which applies here to protect the corporation from liabilities. Since NOAA is not a typical vendor, their lawyers are undertaking a review to better define the problem terms. A reconnaissance visit scheduled for this week has been cancelled. The Power Entities remain committed to completion of the project, but it now appears that the window of opportunity for fall completion has passed.

NOAA's National Geodetic Survey (NGS) officials noted that the timing for the International Great Lakes Datum (IGLD) 2020 update is actually better due to this delay. Global positioning system (GPS) tests have been conducted on site and this project – different from the precision survey - has been under way since 2017 under the auspices of the Coordinating Committee on Great Lakes Basic Hydraulic and Hydrologic Data (CCGLBHHD). It is anticipated that survey work for the datum update will be completed in 2023. No line survey work will be performed in the future and vertical datums will rely solely on GPS. It will result in revised elevations at all water level gauges and benchmarks across both countries as of 2025 when rolled out. This will create a significant communications issue for the Board and other water management groups. NGS experts wish to provide some details to the Boards and the IJC at a special workshop in Washington in April. A packet of material will be provided in advance. IJC Chair Corwin suggested the team prepare a video that they can share well beforehand, and suggested this best be shared when levels are low. It was emphasized that the communication challenge is immense and all agencies and entities impacted by the update need to be proactive in their communication strategy. The Board enquired whether this datum update will require the Plan 2014 Compendium document to be updated. It was noted that all documents containing references to water levels throughout the system will require updates.

## **5 Current Conditions and Regulation Overview**

### **a. Regulation Overview and 2019 High-water Review**

The Canadian Regulation Representative presented an overview of the 2019 high-water event, as well as a review of current conditions and regulation strategy. This included highlighting the record-high levels on the upper Great Lakes, the record-inflows to Lake Ontario during the several months prior to spring and the record-high Ottawa River freshet, that resulted in a significant reduction in Lake Ontario outflows starting in mid-April and continuing into June. These factors all contributed to the record-peak level on Lake Ontario that occurred in early June. High inflows to Lake Ontario continued through summer. Record-high outflows and major deviations above Plan 2014 were conducted in the summer, and the major deviations continued into September. Lake St. Lawrence levels have been very low in recent months, as a result of the high outflows and declining Lake Ontario level. The significant contributions of Lake Erie outflows to the net total supplies of Lake Ontario was highlighted. Snowpack data from Quebec had not been coordinated with the Board's Regulation Representatives and this data would be extremely useful in making informed decisions regarding intensity and timing of Ottawa River freshets.

Because of the continued high outflows from Lake Ontario, Lake St. Lawrence levels are expected to remain very low. To assist with boat haul-out, the Board agreed to minor deviations to lower the outflow of Lake Ontario temporarily for up to 48 hours over one weekend, starting on the afternoon of Friday, 11 October. A target level of 73.38 m at Long Sault Dam will be employed. The ~1-cm increase of Lake Ontario will be paid back as soon as possible following the temporary flow decreases.

### **b. 2020 – A Look Ahead**

The Canadian Regulation Representative presented an overview of regulated outflows over the past few years, noting that outflows were set to maximum Plan 2014 limits or above (i.e., major deviations) more than 80% of the time since Plan 2014 implementation in January 2017. Similarly high outflows are expected over the next several months in response to the high levels of Lake Ontario and high inflows from the upper Great Lakes. There was considerable discussion about seeking all windows of opportunity for further deviations to pass maximum outflows at all times to the extent possible, both before and into 2020. These windows of opportunity would include the potential to deviate from all plan limits as defined in the 2016 Order and appropriate consideration of the impacts of any such deviations on all interests. Potential options for consideration include reductions in I-Limit thresholds to allow for increased flows during non-navigation season, deviations from the L Limit causing potential disruptions to navigation, deviations from rule curve in periods where limits would not apply, and alterations of the F-Limit tiers that would allow for more flexibility in increased outflows.

#### **c. Effects of Different Outflow Strategies**

The Canadian Regulation Representative showed results of various forecast scenarios that demonstrated considerable uncertainty and a wide range of possible Lake Ontario water levels during the spring of 2020. Despite the Board's current strategy of releasing outflows 200 m<sup>3</sup>/s above the L limit values through the fall and high outflows expected to continue thereafter, there remains roughly a 30% chance that levels of Lake Ontario will exceed 75.5 m in spring 2020. It will be challenging to find additional opportunities to further increase outflows, as such increases may increase the risk to other interests in the St. Lawrence River, and will not significantly reduce the risk of high levels on Lake Ontario next spring. Given current conditions, and regardless of the Board's deviation strategy, it was found that even under the most aggressive scenario, with significant impacts to a number of interests expected, it does not appear to be possible at this time to reduce the risk of Lake Ontario exceeding 75.5 m in 2020 below 10 percent. Under a more moderately aggressive scenario, with moderate impacts expected, the risk was reduced to roughly 20 percent. Lake Ontario levels depend primarily on water supplies. Dry weather helps, but if wet enough, there will be no way to avoid high water. Nonetheless, the Board agreed to continue to review potential opportunities and consider regulation strategies that would allow for further deviations to pass maximum outflows at all times to the extent possible, both before and into 2020.

Seaway officials noted that opening and closing of navigation dates are established carefully each year based on both the domestic ("laker") and international ("salty") demands plus environmental factors (including ice, outflows and water levels). A fourteen-day notice prior to any shutdowns in traffic is the Seaway Corporations' standard practice. They added that several studies are under way to help build resiliency within the system.

#### **d. Criterion H14 Exit Strategy**

The Board deferred most of this discussion until the 4 pm webinar with the IJC Commissioners. The Board intends to send a letter to the IJC seeking approval to waive any accumulated major deviations and extend their general deviation authority until after Lake Ontario peaks in 2020.

## 6 Communications Committee

### a. Public Outreach Activities

Communications Committee highlights were provided, including an upcoming webinar with community leaders, media interviews, and regular briefings. Online features include a revised social media strategy focused on #YAWA (you ask, we answer) posts, a wiki information piece and “book” featuring Lake St. Lawrence, and development of a quarterly newsletter. A comparison of Plan 2014 performance versus former Plan 1958-DD is also under way. Several draft communication plans have been prepared to help focus the team and ensure best practices are employed for all outreach activities.

Board members had engaged in a number of meetings with local elected officials and IJC staff throughout the reporting period. An overview of these engagements is listed below:

4 March	South Nation Conservation, Finch, Ontario
9 May	North Rainbow Shores Road Association, South Sandy Pond, NY
9 May	Preparedness Planning Workshop, Wolcott, NY
14 May	Wilson Hill Association, Louisville, NY
28 May	Meeting with IJC Commissioners and elected officials: Greece, NY
5 June	Tour of the Toronto Islands; IJC Commissioners and staff, Board member; City of Toronto and TRCA staff
10 June	Meeting with local officials, Greece, NY
24 June	Village Protection Structure, Sodus Point, NY
26 June	Meeting with Local Officials, Ogdensburg, NY
27 June	Fairhaven Official and NY Sea Grant, Fairhaven, NY
29 July	REDI (Resiliency and Economic Development Initiative) Commission, Oswego, NY
13 August	REDI Commission, Oswego, NY
27 August	Meeting with MPs, MPPs and Local Canadian Mayors, Brockville, Ontario
29 August	REDI Commission, Oswego, NY

Board members and associates also routinely provided information on conditions and current regulation strategy throughout the reporting period to numerous media outlets, and concerned citizens via its website contact form. The US Regulation Representative office provided numerous briefings on current conditions to the NYS emergency management office and subsequently to the county emergency management offices as frequently as three times a week during the most-active period of emergency-management coordination in June and July.

Despite the many efforts of the Board members and associates to engage as many stakeholders as possible, it was noted that the communication efforts had missed some specific groups and that the factual messaging of the Board was challenged by some stakeholders. Specifically, stakeholders in rural communities along the shorelines

were identified as especially likely to not receive Board media releases and public news articles and newsletters documenting Board regulation strategy and current conditions. This was identified as an issue for consideration and referenced that public-affairs expertise should be engaged to address this communication gap.

There continues to be significant attention and discussion regarding online harassment challenges that Board members and supporting staff have faced in recent months, including personal attacks, false allegations, and threats, largely through social media. Proposals to safeguard everyone involved are under consideration and several measures have already been implemented.

Ms. Corwin thanked the Board for its excellent communications during the current high-water event. She noted that the Board and Commission were demonstrating their accountability and showing it well.

The need to work directly with several groups involved in public outreach was discussed. It was stressed that dedicated communications expertise is key to improving our outreach effectiveness.

**b. Facebook Activity**

A synoptic analysis was prepared to highlight the activity on the Board's English Facebook site over the past six months. 108 posts were involved. It was noted that comments were just 6 percent of the total engagement. Though several anti-Plan 2014 groups have been created in recent months, there have also been at least two in support of Plan 2014 and the Board's activities. There was a total of almost a quarter million engagements and a reach of about 700,000 over the past six months.

**c. Website Updates**

Several interactive figures and tables of water level and flow information have been implemented on the Board's website and are updated as often as possible (normally daily) by the Canadian Regulation Representative office. Additional website enhancements are expected.

**d. Communications Strategy for Fall 2019**

The US Secretary will share the draft communications plan to members.

**e. Ongoing Support**

Mr. Durrett indicated that USACE is committed to continuing to provide a Public Affairs Advisor half-time to the Great Lakes Boards. This level of support can be reviewed if needs be. Fisheries and Oceans Canada hired a former Canadian Secretary on contract to support the Canadian Secretary and the Communications Committee. This support will continue part-time (3 days/week) until mid November. This person is willing to return in 2020 and work part time (2 days/week).

The IJC provided funding to contract with ECO Strategy to provide expertise in social media and traditional media monitoring and recommendations resulting from observed trends in these two areas. This support was helpful but limited in timeframe and the communications challenges persist to date.

## **7 GLAM Committee**

### **a. Yesterday's GLAM/Boards Workshop**

The Great Lakes–St. Lawrence River Adaptive Management (GLAM) Committee held an inaugural workshop jointly with all three Great Lakes Boards on 24 September. This helped clarify everyone's roles and responsibilities and ensured members of the Boards were aware of GLAM's short- and long-term strategies. The committee will be able to track resiliency going forward, will work with the Boards to update communications strategies, and will facilitate the packaging of decision-making information. The workshop was well-attended and exceeded expectations.

### **b. IWI Projects**

The GLAM Committee provided a brief summary of the four projects the IJC recently funded under the International Watersheds Initiative. USACE's Institute for Water Resources (IWR) will manage all four projects. They include: i) an economic assessment of halting commercial navigation on the Seaway, ii) engaging south shore Lake Ontario municipalities regarding high-water impacts, iii) assessing critical ice conditions during low-water periods on Lake St. Lawrence, and iv) assessment of low-water thresholds on Lake St. Lawrence to protect drinking-water infrastructure.

GLAM will facilitate a commercial navigation workshop in Montreal near the end of October. The municipal meetings will likely take place in January or February. A new IWI proposal will be submitted to facilitate similar meetings in Ontario and Quebec.

### **c. Expedited Plan 2014 Review**

The IWI projects will help inform an expedited review of Plan 2014. The review had been discussed in detail at the workshop on 24 September. The two-phased proposal still requires full funding, but indications are good that the US Government will vote to fund this important work.

### **d. FY20 Work Plan and Other Items**

GLAM will submit their FY20 Work Plan to the Board for approval in advance of the IJC semi-annual appearance. The work plan will include some work carried over from last fiscal year and some associated tasks with the Board, such as the plan comparison. The work plan will also include Phase 1 items from the expedited review and will identify those already funded and provide a list of priority tasks awaiting funding. The GLAM Committee is scheduled to contribute to the IJC triennial report on Great Lakes water quality in 2020. GLAM will request approval to provide a concise summary for 2017 through 2019 in the this next triennial report to the IJC rather than individual annual summaries. Further, they intend to request a delay beyond provision of this information in January 2020. These requests will be made during the GLAM Appearance in October. IJC advisors noted that there

is really not much overlap involved with respect to the triennial report schedule requirements, apart from some of the wetlands work involved.

A fact sheet summarizing the results of the 2017 high-water survey is now available on the Committee website. The LURA-prepared reports for the municipal and industrial surveys will also be posted soon. The executive summary will be shared with Board members. The Board agreed to promote the 2019 high-water surveys now available online. A special media release will be published.

## **8 Semi-Annual Report Review**

The Board reviewed its Semi-Annual Report for the period 1 March to 31 August 2019. A cover photo collage highlighting high-water challenges throughout the System will be developed. The Facebook synopsis presented under 6b will be included as an appendix. The US Secretary will revise the executive summary based on comments received.

## **9 Other Business**

### **a. Next Board Meeting, Appearance, Reception**

The next Board meeting is scheduled for 8:30 am to 12:00 pm on 22 October in Ottawa. A communications workshop is scheduled that afternoon. The Board Appearance is from 8:30 to 9:30 am on 23 October. The GLAM Committee's Appearance runs from 10:45 to 11:30 am. The IJC reception will be held at 6:30 pm that evening.

### **b. Next Board Meeting**

The Spring 2020 Board meeting will be held in either Syracuse the week of 16 March or in/near Detroit the week of 9 March. The former would best accommodate Ms. Kuehn's field-work schedule while the latter would best accommodate most parents (avoids typical March break period) and conforms to the usual US site rotation. The Boards' Secretaries will coordinate dates and location and will relay information to all involved as soon as possible.

### **c. GLAM Meetings**

The GLAM Committee expects to hold meetings in Canada in February and in the US in June. Details will be shared as arrangements are finalized.

### **d. Posting of Conference Call Notes**

The Board agreed that notes for any future Board conference calls will be posted online in a timely manner. It had been previously agreed that media releases published shortly after each past conference call sufficiently reflected the discussions, so it was agreed that notes for previous calls need not be posted.

The Board agreed to suspend Board conference calls until after the 22 October meeting.

## **10 Action Item Review**

The US Secretary reviewed each of the following action items:

- NYPA to provide boating safety bulletins to the Secretaries to relay to the Members.



- GLAM and the Board will pursue the idea of specific Board-member liaisons to the Committee.
- Mr. Aubry-Morin will schedule a Seaway closing call with the Board, Power Entities, and Canadian Coast Guard officials.
- NGS to host a special workshop in Washington in April to update the Board on the IGLD 2020 update. NGS officials will provide a packet of material in advance of the workshop.
- NGS to send an official letter to the Board's Gauging Committee regarding support of the IGLD 2020 update.
- Ms. Favari will distribute a recent Facebook post on the datum update.
- The Communications Committee will simplify and revise a water supply graphic recently developed and will feature it online.
- IJC Canadian Co-Chair Béland will coordinate a request for Quebec snow-water equivalent data with Ms. Clavet.
- Mr. Reilich to coordinate a workshop with Mr. Bernard Gigas and Ms. Sarah Delicate.
- IJC advisors to lead development of a roles and responsibilities storyboard for online website(s).
- GLAM to schedule a commercial navigation workshop in Montreal near the end of October.
- The Communications Committee will prepare a special media release to promote the new GLAM survey.
- US Secretary will revise the executive summary and finalize the semi-annual progress report.
- US Secretary will distribute the draft communications plan.
- GLAM Secretaries to distribute the LURA report executive summary.
- GLAM Secretaries to send the Board Co-chairs and Secretaries the Committee semi-annual report draft for the Board's endorsement.
- US Secretary to distribute final draft letter to the IJC requesting extended deviation authority.

## **11 Closing Remarks and Adjourn**

Mr. Durrett thanked everyone for a successful meeting and great communications, and thanked IJC Co-Chairs Corwin and Béland for attending. The meeting adjourned at 4:00 pm. It was immediately followed by a special 90-minute, recorded webinar between the Board and the IJC Commissioners to discuss the possible actions that could reduce the risk of flood levels next spring in response to the IJC's request in its August 8 letter.

**INTERNATIONAL LAKE ONTARIO - ST. LAWRENCE RIVER BOARD**  
**Board Meeting 25 Sept 2019 - 9:00 am to 5:00 pm**  
**Canadian Centre for Inland Waters, South Seminar Room**  
**867 Lakeshore Rd, Burlington, ON**

**AGENDA**

- |   |   |                 |
|---|---|-----------------|
| 1.  | Roll, Opening Remarks, Objectives [Bécharde]  | 9:00 am         |
| 2.  | Approval of Agenda [Bécharde]   | 9:10 am         |
| 3.  | Previous Action Items [Caldwell]  | 9:15 am         |
| 4.  | Gauging Committee [McNiven]<br>a) Outstanding Gauging Committee Reports [McNiven]<br>b) 2019 Inspections [Dickhout]<br>c) Precision Survey Update [Davis]   | 9:25 am         |
| <b>BREAK (15 min)</b>                                   |   | <b>10:00 am</b> |
| 5.  | Current Conditions & Regulation Overview [Bruxer]<br>a) Regulation Overview and 2019 High-water Review<br>b) 2020 – A look ahead<br>c) Effects of different outflow strategies<br>d) Criterion H14 Exit Strategy  | 10:15 am        |
| <b>LUNCH (1 hr) [cafeteria on 1<sup>st</sup> floor]</b> |   | <b>12:00 pm</b> |
| 6.  | Communications Committee [Hudon, Campany, David]<br>a) Public Outreach Activities [Hudon]<br>b) FB activity [Faveri]<br>c) Website updates [Bruxer]<br>d) Communications strategy for Fall 2019 [Hudon]<br>e) Ongoing Support [Bécharde, Durrett]   | 1:00 pm         |
| 7.  | GLAM Committee [Leger, Allis]<br>a) Yesterday's GLAM/Boards Workshop<br>b) IWI Projects<br>c) Expedited Plan 2014 Review<br>d) FY20 Work Plan and Other Items   | 2:00 pm         |
| <b>BREAK (15 min)</b>                                   |   | <b>2:30 pm</b>  |
| 8.  | Semi- Annual Report Review [Carmichael]   | 2:45 pm         |
| 9.  | Other Business [Caldwell, Carmichael]<br>a) Next Board Meeting, Appearance, Reception: meeting 22 October 0830-1200, Appearance 23 October 0830-0930, GLAM 1045-1130, Reception 23 October 1830 @ Pearson building<br>b) Next Board meeting: TBD March 2019, US [likely Syracuse area]<br>c) GLAM meetings: Canada Feb. 2020; US June 2020 [TBD]<br>d) Posting of conference call notes | 3:00 pm         |
| 10.   | Action Item Review [Carmichael]   | 3:20 pm         |
| 11.   | Closing Remarks and Adjourn [Bécharde]  | 3:40 pm         |
| <b>IJC Commissioners to call in</b>                     |   | <b>4:00 pm</b>  |
| 12.   | Webinar – IJC/Board Discussion on Regulation Strategy [Bécharde]  | 4:00 pm         |