

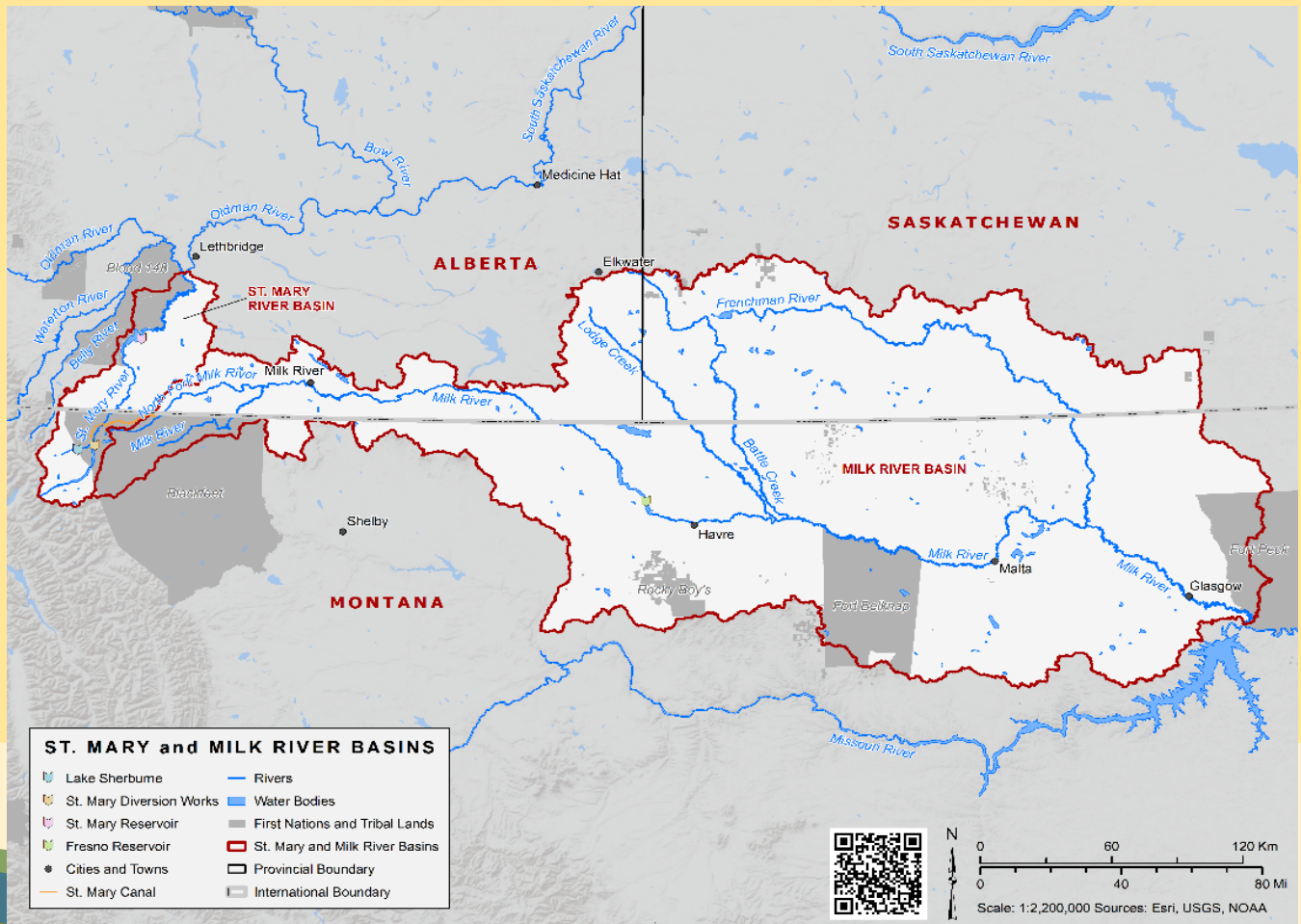


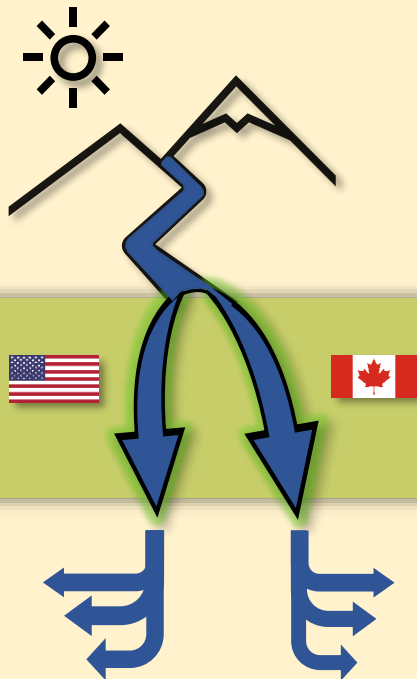
The River Blend: St. Mary and Milk

The International St. Mary and Milk Rivers Study Board publishes this semi-annual newsletter to help keep the public informed about the International St. Mary and Milk Rivers Study. This is the first of the series.

For over a century, the United States and Canada have shared the waters of the St. Mary and Milk Rivers through agreements negotiated by both countries. Over time, changing conditions in the watershed including climate and the state of the infrastructure used to store and move water have impacted the extent to which each country can access their share. The [International St. Mary and Milk Rivers Study](#) is a four-year effort (2021-2025) to determine if improvements can be made. The Study will present its report to the [International Joint Commission](#) in June 2025. The Commission will review the report and make recommendations to the governments of both countries for their consideration.

Originating in the Lewis Range of the Northern Rocky Mountains in Montana, the St. Mary and Milk Rivers flow northeast across Amskapi Piikani (Blackfeet) territory. The 29-mile (47 km) St. Mary Canal, built in the early 1900s, diverts water from the St. Mary River into the Milk River system to increase its downstream supply, which is especially important during the dry summer months. Both rivers then flow north into Alberta, Canada, where the St. Mary River joins the Oldman River near Lethbridge, Alberta. The Milk River turns south again and re-enters Montana just west of the Alberta-Saskatchewan provincial border, joining the Missouri River at Fort Peck. The portion of the Milk River in eastern Montana is also fed by tributaries flowing south from the Cypress Hills of Alberta and Saskatchewan.





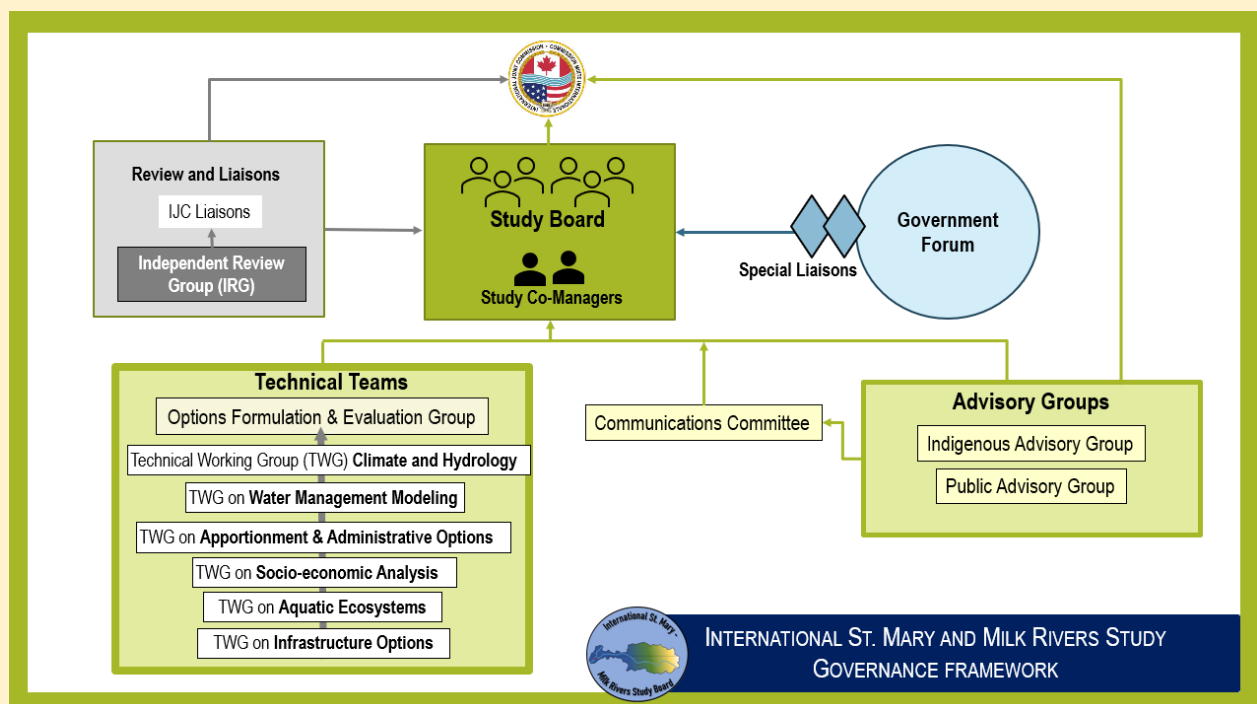
The original water-sharing agreement between Canada and the United States dates to the Boundary Waters Treaty of 1909, and a subsequent 1921 Order issued by the International Joint Commission. In the century since the Order was signed, many things have changed in these river basins including climate, the growing season, and the adequacy of the canals and other structures that are used to store and move water into the areas where it is most needed.

The International St. Mary and Milk Rivers Study is assessing whether options are available to enhance each country's access to their share of the water.



The study is not evaluating water-sharing or apportionment regimes *within* each country, nor will it be recommending changes to current domestic (federal, Indigenous, state, provincial, regional) water-sharing agreements, rights, or frameworks.

The Study is led by a six-person board appointed by the [International Joint Commission](http://www.ijc.org) (www.ijc.org), with specialist input from technical working groups, advisory groups, and a forum of government representatives. An Independent Review Group is also entrusted with reviewing the study's progress.



Timeline: International St. Mary and Milk Rivers Study



As we are just several months into 2023, the Study Board is continuing progress on the study. See some of their 2023 milestones below!

- February**
- Indigenous Advisory Group informational meeting held (virtual)
- March**
- The Study Board had a virtual meeting with the Indigenous Advisory Group
 - A proof of concept was developed to demonstrate the sequences of steps to be taken to complete the overall study and evaluate the two main water management models under consideration
- April**
- Study Board approval of updated workplan. Update includes more information on the work of the Technical Working Groups and Advisory Groups
 - Proof of concept presented to board and resulted in selection of water management models (one U.S. and one Canadian) that will be used for the entire study
 - The Study Board appeared before Commissioners to give an update on their work to date
 - Technical Working Groups produced State of Knowledge reports to assist in understanding baseline conditions in the basin
- May**
- PAG members met in-person in Havre, Montana to discuss ideas and plan for future public engagement
 - The Study Board hosted a Public Townhall in Havre, Montana to update the public on the study's progress, work plan and timeline of studies into 2024, as well as to solicit public feedback on future engagement
 - In-person Study Board meeting in Havre, Montana











Technical Working Group (TWG) Highlights

- The **Water Management Modelling TWG** is setting up and configuring the water management models to evaluate structural and administrative options for the study.
- The **Climate and Hydrology TWG** is testing different hydrologic models to determine which ones match the observed, historical hydrology. This TWG is also researching and using available future climate data in hydrology models to show the probable hydrology in the future.
- The **Infrastructure Options TWG** and **Water Apportionment and Administrative Options TWG** have been evaluating past work done in the basin to evaluate options to change the way water is stored, conveyed, or accounted for. They have selected options they feel would be the best to test in the water management models.
- The **Socio-Economic TWG** is investigating the social and economic systems in the basin and working to develop **Performance Indicators** to analyze various structural and non-structural scenarios being considered by the Study.
- The **Aquatic Ecosystems TWG** is currently researching all species in the basin, including native bull trout. The aim is to understand the potential impacts of changes in water flow on specific species.

Want to learn more about Performance Indicators?

The Board will be posting a fact sheet on Performance Indicators on their website soon!

Who are the Technical Working Groups?

TWG	Primary Responsibilities
Water Management Modelling 	Modify water management models to produce estimated streamflow at selected sites in the basin based on a variety of scenarios
Climate and Hydrology 	Develop hydrologic models using historical data and then use potential climate scenarios as input to models to describe how streamflow might change in the future
Infrastructure Options 	Evaluate potential infrastructure that could be added or modified
Water Apportionment and Administrative Options 	Evaluate potential water apportionment and administrative options that could be added or modified
Socio-Economic Analysis 	Explore cultural and economic values of water in the basin, develop performance indicators
Aquatic Ecosystems 	Describe species in basin, develop performance indicators



The Road Ahead...



As the International St. Mary and Milk Rivers Study is continuing progress, there are several meetings with advisory groups planned for the summer and fall.

- The **Indigenous Advisory Group** has met virtually twice this year with a view to having a face-to-face meeting in Fall 2023 to discuss and provide input on the work of the Technical Working Groups.
- **Public Advisory Group** members met in-person in May 2023 in Havre, MT and will be meeting in Fall 2023 to discuss and provide input on the work of the Technical Working Groups.
- The **Government Forum** includes management leads from agencies with water resource responsibilities directly related to the study. Several Forum member agencies are contributing staff to the Technical Working Groups and providing important technical information to the Study Board concerning policy and operations of the St. Mary and Milk River systems.



Public Townhall in Havre, Montana - May 2023. Credit: IJC Staff



PAG Meeting with the Study Board, MS Teams - January 13, 2023.





International St. Mary and Milk Rivers Study Board
May-December 2023 Road Map

- Communications Committee meetings (virtual)
- Study Board meetings (virtual)
- * To Be Confirmed



Want to learn more? Have comments or questions?

Scan the QR Code for quick access to the study board’s website and fact sheets:

- [Work Plan](#)
- [Apportionment](#)
- [Geography and Infrastructure](#)



Ideas for additional fact sheets? Contact the Study Board directly via email: smmr@ijc.org



www.ijc.org/smmr

