

## **INTERNATIONAL JOINT COMMISSION**

### ***September 2024 Executive Meeting Minutes – September 5, 2024***

The International Joint Commission (IJC) met virtually in Executive Session on Thursday, September 5, 2024, from 09:00 AM to 4:30 PM EST with Gerald Acker in the Chair.

#### **COMMISSIONERS**

Gerald Acker, Chair, U.S. Section  
Robert Goia, U.S. Section  
Lance Yohe, U.S. Section  
Pierre Baril, Chair, Canadian Section  
Merrell-Ann Phare, Canadian Section

#### **SECTION OFFICES**

Susan Daniel, Secretary, U.S. Section  
Christopher Wilkie, Secretary, Canadian Section  
Paul Allen, Manager, Policy, Programs and Communications  
Glenn Benoy, Director, Sciences and Engineering, Canadian Section  
Mark Colosimo, Director Science and Engineering, U.S. Section  
John Allis, Engineering Advisor, U.S. Section  
Rob Caldwell, Senior Engineering Advisor, Canadian Section  
Kevin Bunch, Writer-Communications Specialist, U.S. Section (contractor)  
Celine Desjardins, Project Officer, Canadian Section  
Oliver Dumville, Senior Policy Advisor, Canadian Section  
Antionette Dunston, Special Assistant, U.S. Section  
David Fay, Senior Engineering Advisor, Canadian Section  
Mark Gabriel, Engineering Advisor, U.S. Section  
Breanna Green, Senior Policy Advisor, U.S. Section  
Adam Greeley, Science Advisor, U.S. Section  
Shenice Gross, Network Administrator, U.S. Section (contractor)  
David Hermann, Senior Policy Advisor, U.S. Section  
Jeff Kart, Executive Editor, IJC Newsletters, U.S. Section (contractor)  
Erika Klyszejko, Engineering Advisor, Canadian Section  
Jeff Laberge, Information Management Analyst, Canadian Section  
Brian Maloney, Special Assistant, U.S. Section  
Reginald McClendon, Executive Administrative Assistant, U.S. Section  
Semra Mesulam, Legal Advisor, U.S. Section  
Diana Moczula, Junior Policy Advisor, Canadian Section  
Christian Moreau, IT Support Analyst, Canadian Section  
Isabelle Reid, Executive Assistant, Canadian Section  
Lyne Sabourin, Senior Water Quality and Ecosystem Advisor, Canadian Section  
Mounir Salmi, Accounting Assistant, U.S. Section

Avni Solanki, AAAS Science and Technology Policy Fellow, U.S. Section  
Derek Spelay, Administrative Assistant, Canadian Section  
Yon Trimble, Public Affairs Specialist, U.S. Section  
Ed Virden, Senior Policy Advisor, Public Affairs, U.S. Section  
Jo Werba, AAAS Science and Technology Policy Fellow, U.S. Section  
John Yee, Chief, IM and IT Services, Canadian Section  
Shane Zurbrigg, Legal Advisor, Canadian Section

**GREAT LAKES REGIONAL OFFICE STAFF**

Heather Stirratt, Director  
Antonette Arvai, Physical Scientist  
Raj Bejankiwar, Physical Scientist  
Mark Burrows, Physical Scientist  
Matthew Child, Physical Scientist  
Kenneth Getty, Administrative Officer  
Monique Myre, Administrative Officer  
Rajendra Poudel, Economist  
Laura Sabra, Administrative Officer  
Diane Varosky, Administrative Coordinator  
Allison Voglesong Zejnati, Public Affairs Specialist  
Lizhu Wang, Biological Scientist  
John Wilson, Physical Scientist  
Rachel Wyatt, Communications Officer

**1. APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA**

Commissioners approved the agenda as presented.

**2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

Approved with one change on Item 6.

**3. TRACKING OF COMMISSIONER STRATEGIC PRIORITIES**

Commissioners laid out their three Strategic Priorities and commensurate action items that they developed in recent months and their intention that it drive IJC activities over the coming years. Some priorities from previous years are now integrated into other parts of the IJC's work. Commissioners will be discussing next steps for the process moving forward.

#### **4. COORDINATED CALENDAR**

Staff discussed plans for the fall semiannual meeting and other upcoming Commission meetings. Commissioners discussed the possibility of an in-person meeting in DC in December.

#### **5. IJC NETWORK SECURITY**

Staff updated Commissioners on work taken to improve the IJC's network security posture. , Commissioners asked about industry standards as well as implications for day-to-day work of the Commission and were assured that protocols are very similar in Canada and the US, and that most issues were "behind-the-scenes". Estimated costs are still being identified; both sections are seeking additional financial resources for this effort.

#### **6. COMMUNICATIONS ACTIVITIES UPDATE**

Staff provided highlights of recent Communications Team work, including developing social media postings for Commissioners, videos and the launch of the Great Lakes Water Quality Board's Great Lakes Horizons game. Commissioners want a draft communications strategy that is synthesized with the new Commissioner Strategic Priorities and presented in December. Staff note they have a document that is more operational. Commissioners asked for a strategic document that reflects new Commissioner priorities.

#### **7. ELK-KOOTENAI/Y WATER POLLUTION REFERENCE**

Updates were provided to Commissioners on the progress in establishing the Study Board. As part of the nomination process, staff relayed that four potential study board members have been identified from the US, including an elder from one of the Tribes in the watershed. Three people have been identified for the Canadian portion of the board and discussions are continuing to identify someone from one of the Ktunaxa First Nations in Canada. Staff were encouraged to ensure that proposed board members' backgrounds include working with both western and Indigenous knowledge systems. Commissioners and staff discussed how Indigenous representation on the Study Board and other components of the board's structure should look like.

#### **8. TOOLS FOR UNDERSTANDING WATERSHEDS**

Staff provided an outline of the types of tools used in the past and others in progress based on the new Commissioner Strategic Priorities. Commissioners appreciated the work being done on mapping Indigenous territories within watersheds and wanted to know more about why we use certain tools in certain areas. Staff indicated that this is a long-term intention but faces limitations on resources and the needs of individual boards. Staff will be refining a suggested plan regarding future tools to include Indigenous territory maps for Commissioner consideration at a future executive meeting.

## **9. INTERNATIONAL WATERSHEDS INITIATIVE**

Staff presented on the briefing note, asking for Commissioner approval to stagger workplan reporting from watershed boards to fixed 3-year cycles, which may require changes to Directives. Staff also attached a guidance document on annual reports from boards for approval, as well as requesting availability for opening remarks for upcoming climate change workshop at the semiannual in October. Commissioners approved the IWB workplan template. IJC liaisons will work with watershed boards to ensure workplans are formatted according to the template and follow the staggered schedule identified in the briefing note. Commissioners approved Paragraphs 7 and 8 regarding workplans moving forward and asked staff to draft letters to each IWB outlining the request to use the workplan template going forward with specifics for each board articulated in the letters. Commissioners also requested IJC staff discuss and identify for inclusion in the letter to boards following Commissioner approval:

- A proposal for how to address the ISRB and IRLWWB's existing directives, which specify a requirement for annual workplans;
- When IWB workplans should be submitted to the Commission, either April 1 or October 1.

Commissioners requested IJC staff provide an editable version of the guidance document on annual board reports so they could provide some additional comments for consideration before approving.

Commissioners Acker and Baril agree to provide opening remarks for the climate change workshop on October 22, 2024.

## **10. INDIGENOUS COLLABORATION TEAM UPDATE**

Staff provided updates on activities over the past summer, such as filling out basin profiles for Indigenous nations and tribes that are and were historically within basins and a calendar of events per watershed that board members have requested. Work with the Circle of Experts was discussed, including plans for the October meeting. The Circle is still heavily skewed towards Canadian First Nations vs US Tribal members, making another outreach effort to people who have shown interest. Commissioners asked if an outside consultant could assist, to which staff are open, though they note that US agencies already engage with Tribes extensively and so they may not have the capacity.

## **11. INTERNATIONAL SOURIS RIVER BOARD**

Commissioners were briefed on proposed structure modifications to the board's committees submitted by the Water Management Agencies (WMA). The WMAs have confirmed receipt of the IJC's response. Commissioners commented that it looks like progress is being made on the issue.

## **12. INTERNATIONAL KOOTENAY LAKE BOARD OF CONTROL**

Staff briefed Commissioners to confirm that they wish to continue postponing International Watershed Board scoping activities in the basin due to potential recommendations that may come from the Elk-Kootenai/y reference. Commissioners agreed. Staff noted that the board has made good progress with expansion, adding an Indigenous member on the Canadian side and a public member on the US side. Reciprocal appointments are being pursued. Commissioners inquired and staff noted that advisors still plan to move forward with a Plan of Study for a Review of the 1938 Order at the start of 2025.

## **13. INTERNATIONAL LAKE ONTARIO -ST LAWRENCE RIVER BOARD**

Staff briefed Commissioners on the board's request to establish an eight-member Advisory Group at the end of Phase 2 of the Expedited Review of Plan 2014. Staff also provided an update on minor deviations from the September rule of the regulation plan. Commissioners agreed to establish the Advisory Group along with related requests including: (a) that the Advisory Group will have a minimum of eight members; the Commission offices will support travel costs for in-person meetings if necessary; that the Board will appoint Advisory Group members; and strongly dissuade the Board from creating an “ad-hoc” advisory panel. Commissioners expressed that the Advisory Group should be as diverse as possible; staff noted that the board has provided a draft Terms of Reference for the group and will be reporting on the group’s progress on a regular basis. Commissioners requested IJC liaisons draft a letter responding to the Board identifying Commissioners’ decisions and reemphasizing the purpose and expectations of the Advisory Group for IJC co-chairs to sign.

## **14. GREAT LAKES ADVISORY BOARD MEMBERSHIP**

Commissioners approved 10 appointments and four reappointments in total to the Water Quality Board, Health Professionals Advisory Board and Science Advisory Board committees.

Staff noted that a diversity of skills, as well as Indigenous and gender representation will be maintained or enhanced. Commissioners thanked the board for its extensive outreach to attract impressive candidates.

## **15. GREAT LAKES WATER QUALITY AGREEMENT 2026 TRIENNIAL ASSESSMENT OF PROGRESS REPORT**

Staff briefed Commissioners on plans for developing the 2026 TAP report, and for the anticipated public engagement activities to gather input on the governments’ Progress Report of the Parties (PROP). Commissioners approved the request to provide the Draft TAP Roadmap to the TAP Work Group for input. Commissioners offered guidance on the PROP engagement plan to ensure quality of public input. Staff will provide a revised TAP Roadmap to Commissioners at

the October Executive Meeting. The revised TAP Roadmap will include resource requirements and timelines.

#### **16. WATER QUALITY BOARD GREAT LAKES REGIONAL POLL**

Staff requested approval to post the Water Quality Board's 2024 report on the 2024 Fourth Great Lakes Regional Poll to the board website in early October. A letter of transmittal also will be sent to the Parties to notify them of the report's release. Commissioners approved posting of the report and sending the transmittal letter to the Parties. Staff also noted the board's engagement and follow-up plan for the report's release.

#### **17. INTERNATIONAL ST. MARY-MILK RIVERS STUDY BOARD**

Staff presented the results of the finalized Lap 2 scenarios and offered to discuss the topic in detail with Commissioners at a later date. They also informed the Commissioners that the letter from the board detailing budget and timeline for an extension is almost ready and will be sent to the Commissioners for their review soon.

#### **18. POPLAR AND BIG MUDDY BASINS**

Staff indicated that the International Poplar River and Big Muddy Creek Task Force Task Force now has its initial members and orientation for them is scheduled for a later date. Staff noted that they are working on recruiting Indigenous members. **Action:** Identify travel dates for fall 2024.

#### **19. OSOYOOS INTERNATIONAL WATERSHED BOARD FEASIBILITY STUDY TEAM**

Staff updated on the status of the Osoyoos Feasibility Study Team. Staff will be finalizing the Terms of Reference for the study.

#### **20. PROTECTION OF THE WATERS OF THE GREAT LAKES**

Staff provided updates on the planning process for the second 10-year review on the Protection of the Waters of the Great Lakes.

## **21. ORAL UPDATES**

### **a. TRANSBOUNDARY DATA HARMONIZATION**

Staff gave a brief update on the status of future meetings. They also mentioned that they would like to discuss further with Commissioners at a later date re: how the IJC can play a role in smoothing the coordination of other agencies on data harmonization.

*Original signed by:*

Christopher Wilkie  
Secretary  
Canadian Section

Susan Daniel  
Secretary  
United States Section