



Recreational Boating and Tourism Technical Work Group

Our Mission and Activities

Study Background

The International Lake Ontario – St. Lawrence River Study Board is undertaking a comprehensive five-year study for the International Joint Commission (IJC) to assess and evaluate the current criteria used to regulate outflows from Lake Ontario through the St. Lawrence River. The Study team engaged by the IJC is a bi-national group of diverse experts from government, academia, native communities, and interest groups representing the geographical, scientific and community concerns of the Lake Ontario – St. Lawrence River system. The Study Team is committed to involving the public throughout the study by asking for their opinions, considering their input, and incorporating their concerns with the science work of the technical workgroups to deliver recommendations for new criteria and an updated plan for water level and flow regulation to the IJC.

Technical Work Groups

A number of interest or user groups have been identified as being directly affected by fluctuations of water levels and flows in the Lake Ontario – St. Lawrence River system. To quantitatively analyze the effects of different outflow regulation criteria and plans on these interests, scientific and technical data must be collected.

The International Lake Ontario – St. Lawrence River Study Board has established bi-national working groups, which are responsible for common data collection, using the expertise of the multiple agencies. The Technical Work Groups focus on Coastal Processes, Commercial Navigation, Domestic, Industrial and Municipal Water Uses, Environment/Wetlands, Hydroelectric Power, Hydrologic and Hydraulic, Information Management, Plan Formulation and Evaluation, and *Recreational Boating and Tourism*.



The Mission of the Recreational Boating and Tourism Technical Work Group

The Recreational Boating and Tourism Technical Work Group was created to establish water level criteria for recreational boaters and boating related tourism. Boaters unhappy with their access capabilities as a result of high or low water levels have a direct impact on marina owners and the local tourism industry. Typical losses may include the loss of summer and winter storage fees, crane fees, service fees, and, in some cases, retail sales.

The corrective measure of dredging or installing floating docks may be too costly and time consuming for some marina operators. Historic data shows that boater reactions to water access constraints include moving to another marina, quitting boating, or acquiring a smaller boat that requires less depth.

How do Lake Ontario and St. Lawrence River water levels affect recreational boating and boating related tourism?

Low water levels result in: insufficient depths to launch boats in the spring, to haul boats out in the fall, and to operate in shallow areas and entrance channels; and, increased incidences of damage to propellers, shaft, and hull.

High water levels result in: inundated fixed docks and buildings, reduced bridge clearance, and submerged water hazards.

What are the Work Group's goals?

- To assess impact of water level according to boating activities and related tourism
- To assess impact of water level according to different boating related interest groups.

How will the Group achieve these goals?

The Group will estimate gains and losses to boating activities by developing a water level – impact relationship model.

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Completed Activities

- Physical data measurements were taken for all Lake Ontario and St. Lawrence River marinas. All boat access sites were visited to insure a complete picture of all sites along the Lake and the River.
- An inventory of all Lake Ontario and St. Lawrence River marinas and yacht clubs was conducted. The inventory included an interview with the owner or manager to inventory facilities and services and assess past experiences with high or low water levels. The survey also involved taking GPS and depth measurements to enable forecasting of impacts of high or low water levels in the future. (See Synthesis Papers #1, US and Canada for further information.)
- Going further in the analysis of the impacts on marinas and yacht clubs, a survey was implemented to review basic information about supply of services and access, identify impacts and problems, review water level preferences, and identify adaptation measures taken to cope with uncertainty of water level fluctuations. (See Synthesis Papers #2, US and Canada for further information.)

Ongoing Activities

- A boater survey is currently underway in both the US and Canada. Boaters are being surveyed to determine their boating use on Lake Ontario or the St. Lawrence River, expenditures, days lost to high or low water levels, the non-market value of the loss, and other related questions.
- A survey is also being implemented to assess the economic impact of changing lake levels on boating related tourism (tour boat/charter boat operators). This survey is focused on assessing the impact of water level changes and adaptations made by this user group.

Source

International Lake Ontario-St Lawrence River Study website,
www.losl.org: April 2003.

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