

Management Plan Update



A Status Report on the Lake St. Clair/St. Clair River Comprehensive Management Plan - October 2002

Applying Lessons Learned from Lake Champlain to Lake St. Clair

By Bill Howland, Lake Champlain Basin Program Manager

If you ask the residents in the Lake St. Clair watershed to close their eyes and imagine their “ideal lake,” chances are each person will craft a slightly different image. Some might desire a prosperous fishing industry; others might imagine living and working on or near the lakefront; still others might wish for nice beaches and plenty of green space along the coast. The reality is that many of the popular uses of any lake may conflict with each other, and each person has a different perspective of how these different uses should be balanced.

As manager of the Lake Champlain Basin Program (LCBP), I have learned that watershed management is as much about working with people’s needs and dreams as it is about managing the resource. The residents in the region depend on the lake for a wide variety of

See *Howland*, p. 4...

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Project Overview

The Lake St. Clair/St. Clair River Comprehensive Management Plan initiative represents a diverse group of interests that share a common goal of developing a management plan to protect and enhance the environmental integrity and the social and economic benefits of Lake St. Clair and the St. Clair River.

The management plan was authorized by Congress in Section 426 of the Water Resources Development Act of 1999. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the Great Lakes Commission are leading this effort in cooperation with U.S. and Canadian federal and state/provincial agencies, local governments, tribal/First Nation authorities, and other stakeholders. The draft plan is scheduled to be released in spring 2003, with the final document completed in the fall.

The goals of the planning effort are to evaluate the causes of environmental stress to the St. Clair River and Lake St. Clair; determine management goals and objectives; review ongoing management activities; and develop recommendations for management priorities. The plan will be a concise, action-oriented document that synthesizes existing studies, programs, and recommendations into a cohesive framework.

Management Plan Status Report

We have made significant progress on the management plan since publishing the first issue of the *Management Plan UPDATE* last March. Over the past six months we have:

- convened technical workgroups to assist with compiling data and information;
- prepared preliminary draft chapters;
- held numerous meetings with key stakeholders;
- convened the Project Management Team and Stakeholder Advisory Committee;
- revised and extended the project schedule;
- refined the approach for developing goals, objectives and recommendations; and
- updated the project website.

We also are pleased to report that Environment Canada and the Province of Ontario, via the Great Lakes Renewal Foundation, have funded a researcher to compile Canadian data and information. This important step will help ensure that Canadian issues and concerns are fully reflected in the management plan.

In the coming months we will continue to collaborate with our many partners to finalize the management plan chapters; develop goals, objectives and recommendations; and conduct outreach to key stakeholders. We plan to meet with the Project Management Team and Stakeholder Advisory Committee later this fall, after which the preliminary draft management plan document will be compiled for agency review and ultimately for release to the public next spring.

Revised Project Schedule!

The Army Corps of Engineers has extended the schedule for the management plan project through fall 2003, which provides additional time needed to develop a complete and comprehensive management plan. The revised schedule below highlights major project milestones between now and fall 2003. Please recognize that this schedule is subject to change.

Management Plan Schedule

Fall 2002:	Technical workgroups meet
Jan. 2003:	Preliminary draft plan submitted for agency review
Spring 2003:	Final draft plan released for public review
Spring 2003:	“State of Lake St. Clair” conference
Fall 2003:	Final plan completed

Management Plan Focus Area

The Lake St. Clair/St. Clair River management plan is taking an ecosystem approach and will assess impacts resulting from conditions in the Lake St. Clair/St. Clair River watershed, as illustrated in the map. The plan’s primary focus, however, will be on the lake and river and their immediate coastal areas. The management plan will address the tributary watersheds where feasible, while recognizing that they are, or will be, the subject of more detailed watershed management plans.



Management Plan Outline

The management plan’s primary topical chapters – chapters 6 through 11 – will include an overview of the chapter topic, current status and trends, a summary of key findings, and recommendations. In addition, each chapter will have a U.S. section, a Canadian section, and a discussion of binational issues and recommendations. This format reflects the distinct issues and different governmental structures on the U.S. and Canadian sides of the lake and river. This also will make it easier for elected officials, policymakers and the public to focus on the information and recommendations most relevant to them. Please note that the chapter outline and format may change as the final document is finalized.

Chapter 1	Executive Summary and Recommendations
Chapter 2	Introduction
Chapter 3	Overview of Lake St. Clair and the St. Clair River
Chapter 4	Sources and Causes of Environmental Degradation
Chapter 5	A Vision for Lake St. Clair and the St. Clair River
Chapter 6	Habitat and Biodiversity
Chapter 7	Human Health: Drinking Water, Fish Consumption and Beach Closures
Chapter 8	Land Use and Coastal Management
Chapter 9	Recreational Boating and Commercial Navigation
Chapter 10	Monitoring and Data Management
Chapter 11	Economic Benefits and Impacts
Chapter 12	Achieving Our Vision

Canadian Researcher Hired

Environment Canada and the Province of Ontario have provided funds to a coalition of four Ontario Conservation Authorities to document the Canadian portion of the management plan. They have hired a researcher to coordinate the collection of Canadian information.

Orrie Wigle, a former manager with the Ontario Ministry of the Environment, will work closely with Canadian agencies and project staff to ensure that the management plan includes relevant information and views from the Canadian portion of the Lake St. Clair watershed.

Wigle began his research this past summer and has already made a significant contribution to the management plan effort. His work will help ensure that the management plan fully reflects issues and concerns on both sides of the lake.

Wigle is working out of the offices of the St. Clair Region Conservation Authority in Strathroy, Ont. He can be reached at 519-245-3710, ext. 39, owigle@scrca.on.ca.

Management Plan Goals, Objectives and Recommendations

The Project Management Team met last May to discuss guidelines for developing goals, objectives and recommendations for the management plan. There was consensus that

- broad, overarching goals are needed for the lake; and
- the plan should include an “implementation matrix” that illustrates responsibilities and highlights gaps in oversight and authority.

The Project Management Team and technical workgroups have spent the past year assessing the causes and sources of environmental problems and are now beginning the second phase of the management plan effort, which is to develop goals, objectives and recommendations. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the Great Lakes Commission have prepared a preliminary suite of goals and objectives and reviewed these with the Project Management Team. They will remain in draft form until the recommendations have been finalized, with ample time for review by all interested parties.

A key point to note is that the goals and objectives developed for the management plan will pertain only to Lake St. Clair. A separate suite of goals and objectives are already in place for the St. Clair River. They were developed as part of the Remedial Action Plan (RAP) for the river and have been formally adopted by the U.S. and Canadian agencies coordinating the RAP process. The St. Clair River goals and objectives will be cited in the management plan, but will not be revised. The new goals and objectives for Lake St. Clair will build upon and be consistent with the RAP goals and objectives, and will be supplemented as needed to address issues unique to Lake St. Clair.

Draft Goals and Objectives for Lake St. Clair

- Goal:** Land use, recreation, and economic activities are sustainable and support a healthy ecosystem.
- Goal:** Public access to the lake is sufficient and provides for recreation, enjoyment and cultural activities.
- Goal:** A safe, adequate and affordable water supply, in quality and quantity, is available from the lake at all times.
- Goal:** Water is safe for body contact at all times.
Objective: Eliminate all beach closures.
- Goal:** There are no restrictions on human consumption of fish and wildlife for reasons of health.
Objective: Ensure that levels of contaminants in fish and wildlife attributable to sources in the lake and tributaries do not pose a health hazard to humans based on consumption guidelines.
- Goal:** All biological communities and habitats are healthy, naturally diverse and self-sustaining.
Objective: Ensure that there are no negative impacts on the health of aquatic populations due to water quality impairments.
Objective: Ensure no net loss of fish and wildlife habitat.
Objective: Protect existing wetland and aquatic habitat.
Objective: Reclaim, rehabilitate and enhance viable wetland and aquatic habitat where possible.
Objective: Enhance native species diversity and abundance.
- Goal:** New introductions of nonindigenous invasive species are prevented and adverse ecological and economic impacts of species already present are minimized.
- Goal:** Point sources do not impair water quality.
Objective: Achieve top quality water through pollution prevention activities and effective control of industrial, municipal, shipping, air and water discharges.
Objective: Spills are eliminated.
- Goal:** Nonpoint source pollution (bacteria, nutrients, pesticides and sediment) is minimized to achieve water quality improvements.
Objective: Control all urban nonpoint sources.
Objective: Control all rural nonpoint sources.
- Goal:** Monitoring of environmental quality is sufficient to track progress toward achieving management plan goals and objectives.
Objective: Identify key indicators, establish baseline conditions and track progress toward management plan implementation.
Objective: Ensure timely dissemination of monitoring information to the public, local authorities and other interested parties.
- Goal:** The public is informed of ecological and economic benefits and impacts affecting those benefits, and has the knowledge and commitment to taking actions to restore and protect the lake.
Objective: Increase awareness among the public, local governments and other stakeholders of adverse impacts to Lake St. Clair, actions needed to address them, and progress made toward achieving management plan goals and objectives.
Objective: Maintain a high level of public participation in, and commitment to, actions needed to achieve and maintain management plan goals and objectives.
Objective: Implement educational programs to foster appreciation of Lake St. Clair and its resources and to develop a stewardship ethic for the lake and its watershed.

Draft recommendations are being developed in consultation with the technical workgroups. After careful workgroup review, they will be

presented to the Advisory Committee and Project Management Team for review and discussion.

... *Howland*, continued from p. 1.

uses, from drinking water and recreation to agriculture and industry. The challenge is to manage the lake in a manner that sustains these uses in every way possible, both now and in the future. To do this successfully, it is vitally important to involve both public and private stakeholders in developing sustainable solutions that balance everyone's interests.

We learned some of this the hard way. After four years of work on our management plan, *Opportunities for Action*, we took the draft document to the public for review. This was the first time some of the business leaders in the region had an awareness of the project or opportunity to comment on the plan and, in that sector, it was not initially well received. We had to take a few steps back and revise our strategy to make the plan more relevant to the public's interests and concerns. The most important step was to immediately bring more business stakeholders into the planning process. With their help, an excellent plan was eventually approved with full committee consensus.

Since that experience, the LCBP has worked hard to maintain strong public involvement. We conduct numerous public input meetings, citizen perception surveys, focus group discussions, and technical workshops for local citizens, to ensure that our plan is meaningful for all watershed residents. Furthermore, we are careful to build flexibility into our programs so that our plan continues to be responsive to evolving public needs throughout the basin.

The Lake Champlain Basin Program's management plan is the result of numerous cooperating agencies, organizations, and individuals, all of whom have combined their efforts to protect and enhance the resources in the basin. Through partnership and collaboration, these diverse entities increase the efficiency and effectiveness of their efforts while sharing responsibility for managing the lake. The success of the Lake Champlain Basin Program and our management plan depends upon these organizations and individuals continuing their successful efforts.

Related Initiatives

Lake St. Clair Coastal Habitat Restoration and Conservation Project

The Great Lakes Commission, in cooperation with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), is undertaking a project to characterize Lake St. Clair's coastal habitat and develop a preliminary restoration and conservation plan. The project is being conducted under a two-year cooperative agreement with NOAA's Coastal Services Center. The Great Lakes Commission is the principal cooperator with NOAA and will work with other project partners to gather data and information about Lake St. Clair coastal habitat to incorporate into a digital information resource. This decision support tool will be used to develop a coastal habitat restoration and conservation plan for Lake St. Clair.

Contacts: Victoria Pebbles, Great Lakes Commission, 734-971-9135, vpebbles@glc.org; Alyssa Olson-Callahan, NOAA Coastal Services Center, 843-740-1219, alyssa.olson-callahan@noaa.gov.

Key Issues of Concern

We are committed to addressing the full range of issues affecting the lake and river. We have taken great strides to solicit input from individuals and organizations in the watershed. We have identified several "hot-button" issues that will receive special attention in the plan.

These include, among others:

- beach closings
- spills
- aquatic nuisance species
- monitoring

If you or your organization has a key issue or concern that you want to see addressed in the management plan, please contact us. Send your comments via email to Matt Doss, mdoss@glc.org, or visit the management plan website at www.glc.org/stclair and click on *Make a Recommendation* in the sidebar.

Let's Talk!

Does your agency or organization have special concerns related to Lake St. Clair or the St. Clair River? We want to touch base with the many groups that are involved in protection, restoration or management efforts in the Lake St. Clair/St. Clair River region. If you are a member of such a group and would like to arrange a meeting to discuss your issues, concerns or efforts, please contact Matt Doss, Great Lakes Commission at 734-971-9135, mdoss@glc.org.

Make a Recommendation

Do you have comments or recommendations for the management plan? If so, let us know and we will consider them as we develop the plan. You can send your comments via email to mdoss@glc.org or visit the management plan website at www.glc.org/stclair and click on *Make a Recommendation* in the sidebar.

Want More Information?

Visit our web site at www.glc.org/stclair/ for additional background on the Lake St. Clair/St. Clair River management plan. The site includes a fact sheet, focus area map, membership lists for project participants, meeting summaries, table of contents, a PowerPoint presentation, links to news items, and a direct link for submitting recommendations.

Contacts

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