

Orleans Legislature wants lake levels plan rejected

Posted: Thursday, August 29, 2013 12:00 am

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ALBION — Orleans County legislators view a new plan to regulate the levels of Lake Ontario and the St. Lawrence River with a mixture of opposition and resignation.

The legislature called Wednesday for the International Joint Commission to reject in full Proposed Plan 2014, the follow-up plan to the tossed-off Plan Bv7, and for the bi-national agency to not pursue the development of any other plan. But legislators also expressed doubt that opposition to the current plan would prevent the development of another new plan.

The IJC introduced Proposed Plan 2014 as a needed replacement to an outdated lake management agreement between the United States and Canada in a series of presentations on both sides of the border earlier this year.

According to the IJC, the plan returns a natural, seasonal water flow to the lake that would improve lakeside environments while providing a protection against flooding.

Elected officials from Orleans and neighboring counties have agitated against the plan from its announcement. Legislator Lynne Johnson, who argued against the plan at a July IJC hearing, echoed her comments Wednesday.

Citing projections that lake levels would more frequently be too high or too low for boaters under the new plan, Johnson said the new plan was created with a disregard for the economy, residential development and sportfishing of lakeside communities.

“Orleans County residents and elected officials are resolute in protecting the waters, streams, and harbors of Lake Ontario,” Johnson said.

Orleans and its lakeside towns joined a coalition of municipalities opposing Plan Bv7 before it was pulled from consideration. But as with previous defeats, a new plan quickly emerged.

“They seem to make their own ideas without the input of people who live on the lake having their say,” said Legislator Kenneth Rush. “We keep going through this every few years.”

Legislator Don Allport said Canadian influences will keep the production of new plans up even if Plan 2014 is defeated.

“The United States has very little say in the IJC,” Allport said. “Until Canada decides that Montreal is allowed to flood, nothing will change and we’ll continue to be punished.”

The compact requires the approval of both countries’ governments to be enacted.