LEVELER

E-Newsletter from the Lake Ontario Riparian Alliance

Issue 20 July 12, 2013

Grassroots Public Advocacy for the Protection, Restoration and Conservation of Lake Ontario Beaches and Riparian Property

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In this issue:

Please sign our petitions:

Pass them along to your friends and neighbors to sign!

www.stopplan2014.com

Visit www.Loranet.org for more information

Call for action!

The Honorable Louise Slaughter: Fight for a Lake Ontario plan that will not damage the County of Monroe, NY and the Lake Ontario South Shore - Sign the Petition!

Please join this campaign: http://chn.ge/184Z9VC

Sodus Bay, New York, Sept. 2012

Actual Water level = 244.35 feet
Plan 2014 Trigger for emergency deviation = 244.11 feet

The boathouses in the background would be totally useless with Plan 2014.

What happens to access points in case of a water emergency?

Braddock Bay, New York, Sept. 13, 2012

Actual Water level = 244.49 feet
Plan 2014 Trigger for emergency deviation = 244.06 feet

The channel depth on this date was 13 inches; with Plan 2014, the channel would be 8 inches or less. Might be able to float out of bay on an inner tube!

What happens to emergency access? The closest points for water rescue are between 7 and 10 miles away!

Sandy Harbor, New York, August 28, 2012

Actual Water level = 245.7 feet
Plan 2014 Trigger for emergency deviations = 244.42 feet

How would you get boats off of the hoist if lake is 15 inches lower?

Any plan that would have drastic low water over long durations will negatively affect quite varied groups. If ships can't carry as much, their industry suffers. Product prices go up. The secondary and tertiary effects of this plan, or any plan from the Lake Ontario-St. Lawrence River Study, were never evaluated.

Village of Sodus Point, New York, in June, 1973.

Actual Water level = 248.4 feet.
Plan 2014 Trigger for emergency deviations = 248.13 feet, which is three inches lower than this photo's level. However, the new Board of Control would need to ask IJC Commissioners for permission to deviate.

What happens to the area's sewer and septic systems?
Does sewage get released into Sodus Bay?

Town of Greece, New York, April 12, 1993

Actual Water Level = 247.4 feet
Plan 2014 Trigger = 247.38 feet

The Board of Control was operating under Criterion K at this time. Would the current Commissioners do the same?
Area has public sewers.

Town of Greece, New York, March 16, 1973

Actual water level = 247.01
Plan 2014 Trigger for March 16 = 246.78

The USACE approached the Town of Greece 4 months prior (December 1972) to event **(Operation Foresight)** stating there was nothing they could do and to prepare for the worst.

Will it happen again? Would the IJC act with a forecast to an upcoming disaster as occurred in 1972-73?
According to what their people say, they will, but the way the proposal is written, they will not!

In December, 1972, the Actual water level = 245.41 (Average for month)
The Plan 2014 trigger for December = 245.90 (Average for month)

The new plan is intended to insure that the lake eventually reaches the trigger levels which are extreme. The operational part of the plan exists not to protect from and prevent damage from extremes; it is there to guarantee that those extremes will occur as often as possible.

Once the lake reaches these extreme high or low levels, the Board of Control (those guys with their hands on the drain) must go to the Commissioners and ask for permission to let more water out or hold more back. Can they say, no? Can they say, let's wait? **Would they have said, "Let's wait," in December 1972?**

Can they even make a difference with levels that high or low, or is it now or will it be like a run-a-way train that is impossible to stop.

If the IJC believes that the environment is helped only at the extremes, and if the IJC wants to help the environment, and if the guys with their hands on the drain are asking to stop the environmental benefit, and if all the environmental groups are opposing deviations, how willing will the Commissioners be to help our plight?

Shore Acres, Hamlin, New York, February 24, 2012

Actual Water Level = 246.1 feet
Plan 2014 Trigger = 246.52feet

This was a mild winter storm! Trigger not reached for another 5 inches. If this had been a 3-day nor'easter, we can only imagine the damage!

Old Unanswered Questions for the International Joint Commission

- According to an Army Corps of Engineers report: The natural regime of the outlet of Lake Ontario, the St. Lawrence River, has undergone changes since **1825.** These changes, which include channel modifications and structures, were constructed for navigation and power generation. (Feasibility Study of Shoreline Protection and Lake Level Regulation for Lake Ontario, Nov 1981, page 23.) This begs the question: **what is the true pre-project condition?**

- According to the same US Army Corps of Engineers report: The removal of upland habitat for development and agriculture may also affect wetlands by altering runoff rates, so that water temperatures change and stream bank erosion and sedimentation increase. Additionally, disturbances to upland and shoreline areas may silt fishery spawning habitats. Stream bank erosion and alterations of stream vegetation are very critical to the salmonid fishery, especially in eastern Lake Ontario. Lake erosion is also detrimental to aquatic habitat. High lake levels allow larger waves in the littoral zone, causing increased bottom scour and loss of valuable fish habitat. Erosion can also affect barrier beaches, which protect wetlands. (Feasibility Study of Shoreline Protection and Lake Level Regulation for Lake Ontario, Nov 1981, page 40.) According to LOSL documents, **this effect was never evaluated by the Environmental Technical Working Group (ETWG). Why was this allowed to happen? Was the ETWG determined to say that only lake levels affected wetlands?**

- **What effect will the proposed Plan 2014 have on Flood Insurance rates, especially since we have shown that the risk for high-water events which can lead to flooding will increase five-fold?** Recently, Congress passed and the President signed into law the Biggert-Waters Flood Insurance Reform Act of 2012 (BW-12), which directed FEMA to require the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) to raise rates to reflect true flood risk, make the program more financially stable, and change how Flood Insurance Rate Map (FIRM) updates impact policyholders. This could lead to increases in flood insurance premiums of between 100% and 1000% for homeowners.

  So there are actually two questions now:
  1. What effect will Plan 2014 have on flood plain mapping?
  2. In light of Biggert-Waters and Plan 2014's higher risk of spring floods, what will be the effect on flood insurance premiums?

  This is another example of an economic value that was never calculated as a cost of changing plans. It needs to be addressed.

- **Muskrats - We have heard that they are an indicator species for the wetlands.** What this means is that if you have more muskrats, the better, the wetlands. While this seems like a straight assumption, there are a few flaws that poke holes in this concept that were not evaluated during the LOSL Study and that could suggest why the muskrat population is down and not due to water levels. First, New York State has a no-bag-limit when it comes to hunting muskrats. This means that you can kill as many as you want.

According to a report from Cornell, Central and Western New York are the best areas for hunting muskrats in the entire USA.

The second possibility that can affect muskrat population is the increase of coyotes into the Eastern US, which, and along with water levels that are not constant is causing, an increase in predation by coyotes and other animals.

LORA Demonstration Project

How much difference does a foot of water make? Lots!

Note the log on beach, the two round objects slightly down beach from log and the very tall trees in background for reference to same location six months later.

This is the same spot (note very tall trees in the background) after a very simple beach accretion structure was placed on site.

Note that the water level is at approx. 247.5