

LEVELER

E-Newsletter from the Lake Ontario Riparian Alliance

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

In this issue:

News Update:

- **Congressman Collins Speaks Out**
 - **Letters from the Shore**
-

Congressman Collins set up a meeting with International Joint Commission at his office here in Buffalo. The IJC was not very happy with the outcome because the Congressman told them in no uncertain terms . . . **"This thing was wrong from the beginning and its going nowhere. You did your job and now we will do ours, we are going to kill this in Washington once and for-all."**



Niagara-Orleans meet IJC to press against lake plan

By Tom Rivers, Editor Posted 26 September 2014

Officials from Orleans and Niagara counties continue to fight a new plan for regulating Lake Ontario water levels, fearing the lake would see more extremes in water levels, leading to an eroded shoreline during high water and parched marinas during low levels.

The two local counties were represented in a meeting on Thursday in Buffalo with board members from the International Joint Commission. That group includes representatives from the United States and Canada.

It has endorsed a plan that calls for the biggest changes in regulating water levels in the lake and St. Lawrence Seaway since 1958. Orleans and Niagara officials fear hundreds of millions of dollars of valuable property will be lost from erosion, which will force taxes to rise on every resident in the southshore counties.

Orleans County Legislator Lynne Johnson and Niagara County Legislator Dave Godfrey met with several IJC officials to again state their strong opposition to the proposal, Plan 2014. Johnson said the meeting was attended by Gordon Walker, acting chairman, Canadian Section; Dereth Glance, commissioner of U.S. Section; and Frank Bevacqua, public information officer, U.S. Section.

U.S. Rep. Chris Collins helped to set up the meeting, Johnson said. Collins issued this statement after the meeting.

“Plan 2014 is unacceptable,” he said. “It has been plagued by public backlash and flawed economic analyses from the onset. Most disturbing is that Plan 2014 shows no concern for the negative economic impact its implementation will have on the thousands of individuals, families, and businesses along the south shore of Lake Ontario.”

Johnson and Godfrey went to Washington, D.C. in early August to meet with federal officials, including the State Department, to rail against the plan.

The six southshore counties from Niagara to Oswego have 10,025 parcels of lakefront land with a total assessed value of \$3.7 billion. If they suffer a 10 percent loss, those communities would lose \$370 million in value, with the difference to be made up by other taxpayers in the counties, Johnson said

Besides the potential loss of valuable shoreline, the plan could cripple fishing and recreational industries on the south shore of the lake, Johnson and Godfrey said.

For rest of article go to: <http://www.oreanshub.com/news2014/Niagara-Orleans-meet-IJC-to-press-against-lake-plan.htm>

Letters from the shore

The following letter was written to the Rochester D&C in response to a Letter to Editor that called shoreline property owners “Squatters” and that we deserved what we got.

A recent letter to the editor described residents residing along the Lake Ontario shoreline as "squatters". Defined, squatters means, "A person who unlawfully occupies an uninhabited building or unused land". The letter was written regarding Plan 2014, a proposal to allow for greater lake level fluctuations, and ultimately, periodic flooding of shoreline properties. The intended purpose is to "restore" previous wetland conditions and thus improve wildlife habitats.

Clearly, lake shore property owners have purchased their properties legally. We are hard working middle class people who, in many cases, pay higher property taxes than our inland neighbors. Some of our homes are over a hundred years old, some having been in families for multiple generations. We take pride in our neighborhoods, care for and about one another, are respectful toward and protective of the wildlife we share this watershed with, and care deeply about the water quality of the lake. Allowing even one shore line flood would not only harm or destroy property, but receding water would carry sewage, pesticides, fertilizer, animal excreta, road salt and other filth back into the lake. Adding this to the already contaminated sediment and intermittent dangerous bacteria levels that plague our lake and beaches is senseless.

"Restoration" is not possible. Restore to what? The Great Lakes are home to hundreds of invasive species, primarily resulting from the shipping industry, an entity that will benefit from Plan 2014. Invasive species have overtaken indigenous species, and most people have no idea which are which. Further, over the past few hundred years, tributaries have carried industrial and agricultural waste to the lakes from far away towns and farms, adding further pollution, having changed the ecology forever. What we have today is an industrial waterway and a "playground" for fishing and recreational boating. Thus, citizens should learn to use this natural resource with respect. How many fishermen along the shore catch bowfin and throw them on the ground to die? These are indigenous fish! All lake users are changing the ecology to meet their own needs. At least most of us

who live here are cognizant of the water and wetlands we share with all creatures who live in, fly over and forage in these resources and coexist with them in relative harmony.

There are many kinds of wetlands, and those surrounding Lake Ontario have been evolving for hundreds of years. Does Plan 2014 guarantee successful construction, management and outcome of whatever era of wetland it is proposing? Will this plan restore the ecology of 200 years ago that has been totally undone? There will never again be a "natural" ecosystem surrounding the Great Lakes, and many of those who have contributed to this situation are the same ones who will benefit if Plan 2014 proceeds. Meanwhile, most property owners along the shore welcome and enjoy the wildlife we share this region with, including a resurgence of many species including minks, beavers, otters, blue herons, waterfowl, invertebrates, and more. We must be doing something right.

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LAKE ONTARIO WATER LEVELS

Six decades ago, a dam was built across the St. Lawrence River allowing a joint USA/Canadian Commission (IJC) to regulate the level of water in Lake Ontario. In 1958 the commission established high and low trigger points for intervention if lake interests were being threatened or harmed by "mother nature." This regulation has been unchanged and in effect for 55 years. Great Lakes shipping and hydroelectric power plants benefited from this new dam. Changes to shoreline interests like property owners, wildlife and water recreation interests were not given much if any consideration. Today, after six decades under this 1958 regulation, the lake along with all its basins and ponds has come to an new equilibrium based upon this regulation.

Now, environmental groups would like to roll back the calendar 58 years and reestablish lower lows and higher highs so the lake shoreline environment looks like it did in the 1940s and the 1950s before the dam. The revised plan is called 2014. Wetlands adjacent to the shore would receive water supplies they have not seen in 55 years and wildlife would flourish as they see it. They say the 1958 regulation did not foresee the environmental impact of the regulation and they are right....it did not.

What the advocates of this new plan fail to recognize is that over 55 years an entirely new environment was created along the shore based upon the 1958 regulation and the expectation that it would continue. People bought shore property and positioned homes and businesses based upon the expectation of stability. Fish, birds and other wildlife adjusted their habitats based upon where the water was and where it was not.

It is unrealistic to now say, "wait a minute.. we would like to recreate the shoreline environment as it existed six decades ago so nature can return as we think it was or should be now."

There are thousands of stakeholders living along the lake who would be potentially harmed economically if this new regulation is approved. We observe plentiful wildlife along the lakeshore and in the basin ponds. Fishing is good and shore birds are here in large numbers. The lake and its shoreline environment has come to a new equilibrium over the past six decades. Let's not make the mistake of making a drastic change that will take another six decades to establish another new equilibrium reversing all that has occurred since the first regulation.

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