

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:

- **Plan 2014: Is It Really About The Environment Or Something Else? Our So-So Story--
You may be surprised with the conclusions.**
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So, let the story begin....

On March 25, 2017, the International Joint Commission (IJC) issued a media release that, in essence, stated that Plan 2014 is not the cause of the current high water disaster that is occurring on the south shore of Lake Ontario. Additionally, the release stated that this condition would continue for a number of months.

LORA obligated to respond that, indeed, the Plan 2014 is the cause.

Plan 2014 removed the ability of the Board of Control to deviate from the Plan if its members saw increases out of the ordinary, as was the case at the end of February and beginning of March, when the lake jumped to about a foot over its long-term average. The current board is only allowed to deviate for the flooding on lower river, hydropower, commercial navigation, and recreational boating on the upper and lower river but not on the lake.

In 1997, when the lake was high, the IJC invoked Criterion K at the beginning of March. Criterion K stated that, if supplies were greater or lesser than in the past, the Board was to do whatever it could to protect property on the lake and river at the expense of other interests when the lake was high, and protect commercial navigation when supplies were low.

With Plan 58DD and Criterion K, the Board was able to continue deviating until the lake level neared the upper part of the 4-foot range at 247.3 feet.

With Plan 2014, if a trigger point is hit, only then can the Board release more water, and once the water level goes below the trigger level, the over-discharge of excess water stops, which would still leave the lake higher and more dangerous.

Plan 2014 took away Criteria K and imposed "Trigger" point levels, which are difficult to achieve for protection of the south shore of Lake Ontario.

So, we have elimination of Criterion K and the current board with inability to deviate for lake interests in a timely manner and based on knowledge gained through fifty years of operation.

So, now, let us discuss the "Trigger" points.

Plan 2014 has upper and lower triggers such that, if lake levels surpass the trigger, the Board allowed to deviate.

The triggers are set at probable exceedence levels, but they are not set equally. To illustrating this fact, we will use a baseball analogy.

Imagine you are on a baseball field. Under high-water conditions, the pitcher's mound is 95 feet away from home plate; but under low-water conditions, it is only 90 feet away. It is easier to hit the lower level triggers compared to the upper level triggers because it is a closer target.

So, why is that?

The IJC boasts that Plan 2014 will only increase lake levels by a paltry 2-1/2 inches on average. While this may not seem that big a deal, when coupled with the 4 inches Plan 58DD added to the lake compared to pre-project conditions (before the Seaway and the Moses-Saunders Dam were built), it starts becomes significant. Additionally, Plan 2014 calls for levels above 247 feet about 300% more often than under 58DD.

Plan 2014 is touted as a means to improve the wetlands just by changing water levels. LORA has it on record that the International Lake Ontario-St. Lawrence River Study's (the Study's) primary wetland scientist has stated that Plan 58DD had appropriate high-water levels. What were missing were low-water levels during the summer months. The effect on the wetlands is limited to water level changes only. Other reasons for wetland damage, like fertilizers for lawns that get into water systems, have never been investigated by the Study.

So, why keep water levels in the upper end of range?

Any mathematics teacher will tell you, if you operate away from an average, that over time the average will increase or decrease. In the case of the IJC and Lake Ontario, Plan 2014 was created to keep the lake in the upper range more often than in the lower. Thus, over time, the Long-Term Average (LTA) will change. This will make Plan 2014 appear more normal, but during this time, the Plan will continue to wreak tremendous damage on the south shore of the lake.

So, who benefits from this?

The people who do not benefit are the south shore public and private property owners, lake recreational boaters, the wetlands and the shore in general. Currently the near-shore lake environment is in disarray. The IJC estimates damages in the range of \$2 million to \$3 million annually; but, due to outdated and erroneous data, LORA estimates the damages to be \$5 million to \$6 million annually.

The interest that will benefit greatly is hydropower. The hydropower interest is comprised of two dams operated by three separate agencies. The Moses-Saunders Dam spans the St. Lawrence River between Massena, NY, and Cornwall, Ontario, Canada. Hydro-Ontario and the New York State Power Authority operate this dam jointly. The other dam spans the river in the Province of Quebec, closer to Montreal, Canada, almost directly north of New York City. Operated by Hydro-Quebec, and is called the Beauharnois Dam. The two dams together generate 3,820 MW of energy.

According to IJC documents, hydropower will see, at a minimum, \$6 million more in benefits above the benefits they received from the old plan, 58DD. This benefit may actually be much higher. During the Study, the hydropower technical working group (TWG) did not share any information, claiming business proprietary concerns. The Hydropower TWG would take the other plan development

materials, run their own simulations, and then report its findings to the Study Board. There was no transparency between the two groups.

So, why does this matter? Please continue reading.

Recently, the Rochester Democrat & Chronicle newspaper reported that New York State is requiring the Indian Point Nuclear Plant to shut down. This plant sits about 35 miles north of Manhattan and supplies around 2,000 MW of power to the downstate area.

NYS Governor Andrew Cuomo has proposed construction of a high-voltage transmission line, The Champlain Hudson Power Express Project, to be constructed to bring power from hydropower dams in Canada to the NYC area to replace the power lost with the nuclear plant closing.

During the debate about Plan 2014, the only supporters of the plan on the NYS side of the border were representatives in and from Jefferson County and a few downstate congressional representatives. Nineteen counties in Western New York, all elected NYS Assembly and Senate members, and all levels of government in the six south shore counties, and two congressmen were and continue to be against Plan 2014.

So, where does that lead us?

We will leave it up to you, the reader, to decide whether there is anything to what we have just reported.

Here again are the facts:

- Plan 2014 leads to increased lake levels.
- Plan 2014 damages public and private property on the south shore of Lake Ontario.
- Plan 2014 damages recreational boating on the lake.
- Plan 2014 is destroying the lakeshore environment. The mud line extends 2 miles from shore.
- Plan 2014 protects the lower St. Lawrence River at the expense of the Lake.
- Plan 2014 increases hydropower profits to a minimum of \$6 million dollars per year above the old plan.
- There are two hydropower dams on the St. Lawrence River, one close to the NYS border (within 30 miles).
- NYS is closing down a nuclear plant near New York City.
- NYS is building a high-electric power transmission line from NYC to Quebec to tap into a one of the hydropower dam.

Any questions?

Current Lake Level

The Lake is now at 247.7 feet.

The average for this time of year is 245.87 feet.

**The lake is 21.96 inches above average
and 3.48 inches higher than last week.**

(As reported by the International Lake Ontario - St. Lawrence River Board, Week ending 4/26/17)

As always, the LORA website has all past newsletters posted at:
<http://www.loranet.org/> and <http://www.loranet.org/levelerarchive/pastissues.htm>

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