



PROPOSED PRIORITIES IJC GREAT LAKES 2011-2013 PRIORITY CYCLE

Under the Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement, the International Joint Commission has responsibilities including:

- Tendering of advice and recommendations to governments on problems of and matters related to the quality of the boundary waters of the Great Lakes System including specific recommendations concerning the General and Specific Objectives, legislation, standards and other regulatory requirements, programs and other measures;
- Tendering of advice and recommendations to governments in connection with matters covered under the Annexes to the Agreement;
- Provision of assistance in the coordination of the joint activities envisaged by the Agreement;
- Making a full report to the Parties and to State and Provincial Governments no less frequently than biennially concerning progress toward the achievement of the General and Specific Objectives of the Agreement.

In carrying out these responsibilities, the Commission is supported by its Great Lakes Water Quality Board and Great Lakes Science Advisory Board. The Commission also has other advisory bodies engaged in Great Lakes activities, namely the Council of Great Lakes Research Managers, International Air Quality Board and Health Professionals Task Force. All of these boards and advisory bodies are composed of experts from Canada and the United States, contributing to the work of the Commission in their personal, professional capacity.

To direct the boards and advisory bodies in their activities and as a step in the development of the biennial report, the Commission has a biennial process for setting Great Lakes priorities. For a description of the 2009-2011 priority work see: <http://meeting.ijc.org/workgroups>. The Commission is now calling for public comments on priorities for the Commission's Great Lakes 2011-2013 priority cycle. Priority proposals are set out below, along with examples of how they might be approached.

The Commission welcomes comments on the proposed priorities, suggestions on how they might be implemented or alternative proposals that the Commission should consider. Comments can be provided in person at our biennial meeting, where there will be a session on priority setting 8:30-10am on Friday October 14, 2011 or in writing.

Comments will be accepted until October 31, 2011 and should be submitted to

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PRIORITY PROPOSALS

INDICATORS TO ASSESS PROGRESS

The Commission is charged with reporting upon progress toward achieving the objectives of the Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement. However, this reporting has been hindered by the absence of a set of core indicators that are consistently monitored over time. Therefore, a proposed priority is the selection, further development and reporting of indicators to aid the Commission in assessing and reporting on the health of the Great Lakes.

This priority could be addressed by:

- Developing and applying methods to attribute observed changes in the Great Lakes to interventions directly arising from implementation of the Agreement and/or desired endpoints.
- Developing, and publically reporting on, a set of core indicators that includes some with historical data, some that address the condition of the nearshore and other focused on human health.

PREVENTION

The Commission believes that the Great Lakes are best protected by measures that prevent pollution, or other potentially harmful impacts, as opposed to managing or remediating problems after they have occurred. Therefore a proposed priority is prevention of harm as a fundamental component of activities.

This priority could be addressed by:

- Examining aquatic invasive species introduction pathways and exploring prevention strategies.
- Examining non-point-source inputs of pharmaceuticals into the Great Lakes, with an assessment of potential human health consequences.
- Better understanding atmospheric deposition and recycling of pollutants, including mercury, and preventing impacts on Great Lakes ecosystem and human health.
- Assessing the adequacy of waste treatment facilities and processes, current water quality laws and standards and/or enforcement.
- Developing a Great Lakes map showing impervious surfaces to better assess air deposition, overland flow and contaminant transport issues.

- Examining how low probability – high impact events, such as incidents related to oil or gas extraction or nuclear energy, are addressed in the Great Lakes.

ADAPTIVE MANAGEMENT

Adaptive management is a formal process for continually improving policy and practices to help ensure objectives are reached, even while conditions change over time. The Commission is of the view that adaptive management approaches are necessary for effective system management over time and therefore has proposed adaptive management as a priority.

This priority could be addressed by:

- Understanding the potential impacts of climate change on the Great Lakes, possible ecosystem responses and capacity for response and adaptation.
- Further refining the Commission's nearshore framework as a holistic ecosystem approach in an adaptive management context.
- Studying the ecological and economic value of natural systems, such as wetlands.
- Reporting on Lake Erie eutrophication, diagnosing the causes of relapse.

TOOLS COORDINATION AND CAPACITY

The Commission continues to be concerned that capacity for Great Lakes research and monitoring is maintained, and effectively utilized and that good quality science is facilitated. The Commission therefore proposes that it continues its integrating and coordinating role to address tools and capacity for Great Lakes research as a priority.

This priority could be addressed by:

- Surveying and assessing Great Lakes laboratory and science capacity.
- Reviewing the current state of science on pathogens and the enhancement of the Great Lakes Research Inventory to address this topic.
- Developing an integrated Great Lakes research vessel fleet status report.
- Improving searching ability and web services for Great Lakes Research Inventory.