

IJC to hold public hearings on study of critical sources of phosphorus loadings to Missisquoi Bay

The International Joint Commission (IJC) will launch its study of phosphorus loadings to Missisquoi Bay on Lake Champlain by holding public hearings, at the times and locations listed below.

In August of this year, the Canadian and United States federal governments asked the IJC to help them coordinate initiatives in both countries to reduce phosphorus loadings to Missisquoi Bay. Recognizing the recent advances made by the Province of Quebec, the Commission was asked to help develop complementary measures in the U.S. portion of the basin, in close partnership with the Lake Champlain Basin Program.

In October, the Commission appointed the International Missisquoi Bay Study Board to help it carry out this request. The public is invited to meet the members of the Study Board and provide comments on sources of phosphorus loadings and any other matters that the Study Board should consider.

The hearings will be held at the following times and locations:

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| December 15, 2008 | December 16, 2008 |
| 7:00 p.m. – 9:00 p.m. | 7:00 p.m. – 9:00 p.m. |
| Village of Swanton Office | Centre des loisirs |
| 120 First Street | 1 Tourangeau |
| Swanton, VT | St-Georges-de-Clarenceville, QC |

Written comments may also be submitted for receipt by January 5, 2009 at either address below:

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| U.S. Section Secretary International Joint Commission 2401 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW Fourth Floor Washington, DC 20440 Fax: 202-254-4562 Email: Commission@washington.ijc.org | Canadian Section Secretary International Joint Commission 234 Laurier Avenue West 22nd Floor Ottawa, ON K1P 6K6 Fax: 613-993-5583 Email: Commission@ottawa.ijc.org |
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The International Joint Commission is an international Canada-United States organization established by the Boundary Waters Treaty of 1909. It assists the governments in managing waters along the border for the benefit of both countries in a variety of ways including examining issues referred to it by the two federal governments.

Procedures for the public hearings are enclosed.

Contacts

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Background for Public Hearings on IJC Coordination of Phosphorus Reduction in Missisquoi Bay

The Governments of Canada and the United States, in a formal request (known as a Reference) dated August 1, 2008, asked the International Joint Commission (IJC) to coordinate initiatives in both countries to reduce phosphorus loading to Missisquoi Bay on Lake Champlain. The IJC established the International Missisquoi Bay Study Board to help it carry out this responsibility. As one of its first actions under the Reference, the IJC is conducting hearings with its Study Board on each side of the international border in the Missisquoi Basin on December 15 and 16, 2008. Members of the public are invited to share their perspectives, concerns and knowledge of local circumstances, as well as provide comment on any aspect of the work.

Missisquoi Bay has one of the highest phosphorus concentrations of any part of Lake Champlain. The IJC, in a 2005 report, identified the water quality status in Missisquoi Bay as an urgent matter of binational concern and recommended that the two federal governments take the necessary steps, individually and jointly, to assist in reducing phosphorus levels. According to the report, phosphorus loads (the amount of phosphorus being introduced into the bay) and ambient levels greatly exceed the target levels established by the provincial and state governments. Phosphorus contributes significantly to blooms of blue-green algae during the summer months. As local residents and visitors know, these blooms are often so dense that recreational use is not possible for many weeks at a time.

The Reference recognizes recent scientific advances made by the Province of Quebec in identifying critical sources of phosphorus within its areas of jurisdiction, and specifically asks the IJC to coordinate a number of corresponding tasks on the U.S. side of the border in partnership with the Lake Champlain Basin Program. Among these tasks are:

- identifying *critical source areas* in the watershed that contribute disproportionately to phosphorus levels;
- acquiring and compiling necessary data and imagery; and
- monitoring water quality in small tributaries in the basin over a two-year period.

The outcomes of this work will be compiled and analyzed with other data to provide an integrated picture of the watershed on both sides of the border. Two appropriations from the U.S. Congress totaling \$800,000 will support this work.

The IJC's final report on the work carried out under the Reference is to be completed by December 2011.