International Lake Ontario – St. Lawrence River Study

New Study Release Today

Study Board Offers Three New Options for Regulating Water Flowing From Lake Ontario into the St. Lawrence River

Lake Ontario- St. Lawrence River Report Released Today

- Report provides three new options for regulating Lake Ontario and St. Lawrence River water levels.
- The result of a five year,$20 million (US) study
- Run by an independent board with members from the U.S. and Canada.
- IJC will decide after consultation

Report offers IJC three options

- Plans A+, B+ and D+
- None radically different from current operating plan, 1958D with Deviations
- Study Board would not accept disproportionate losses in any sector for overall gains
- Had to balance 6 interests and 3 regions as well as Board's guidelines
- All 3 options increase overall benefits, but in different ways

Different ways of Achieving Benefits

- Plan A+
  - greatest overall economic benefits
  - but almost the same environmental benefits
- Plan B+
  - greatest overall environmental benefits,
  - but does increase overall economic benefits as well.
- Plan D+
  - minimizes losses to any party
  - does a little better for the environment and economically

High levels

(only 1% are higher)

All plans within 4” of current plan

B+ 4” higher

A+ 4” lower

Average levels

B+ varies less within the year

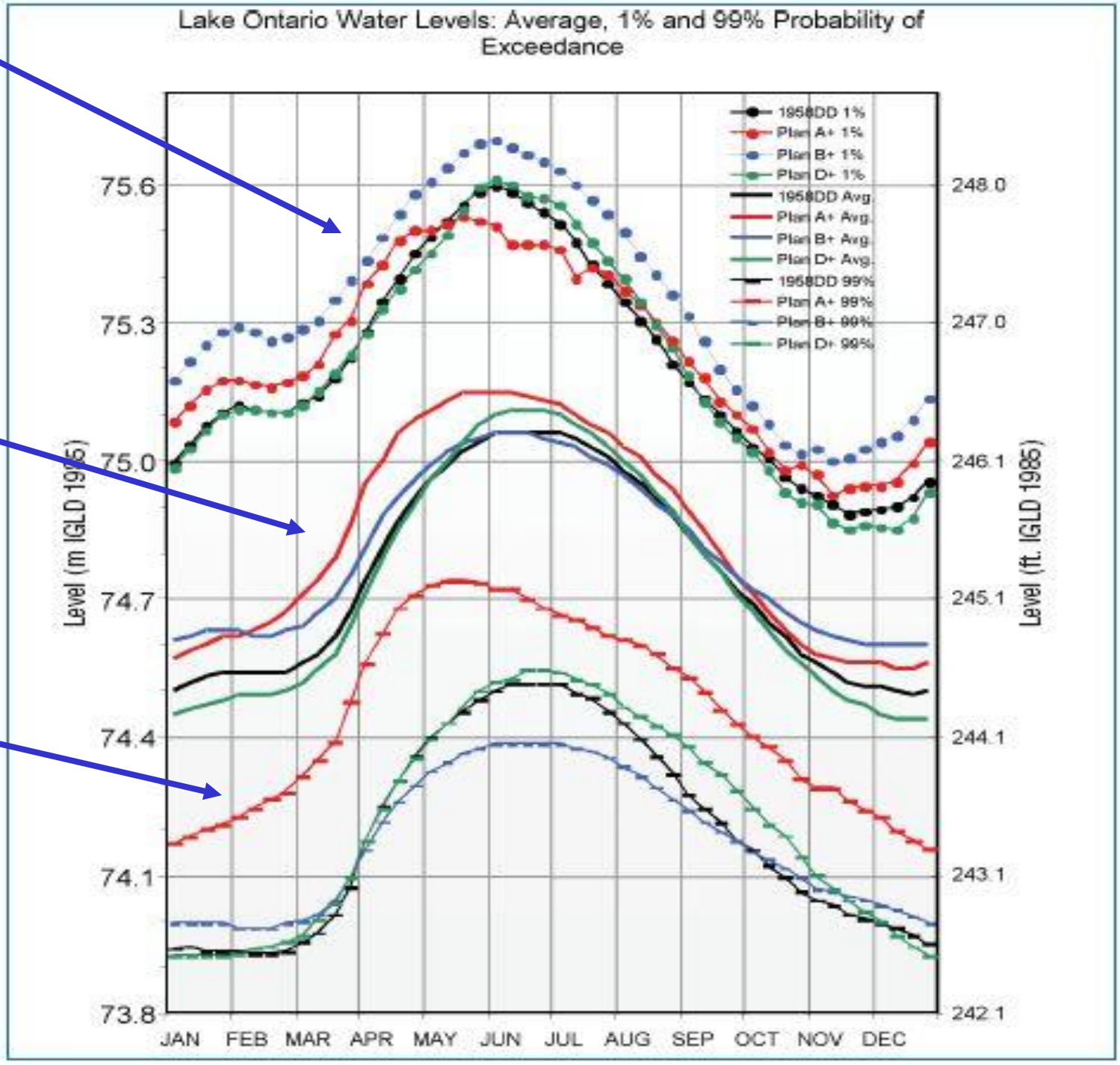
D+ varies more

Low levels

Only 1% are lower

A+ has higher lows

B+ has lower summer levels



High levels

(1% are higher)

A+ has higher peak levels

Average levels

A+ has different timing of levels

B+ varies more with lower fall levels

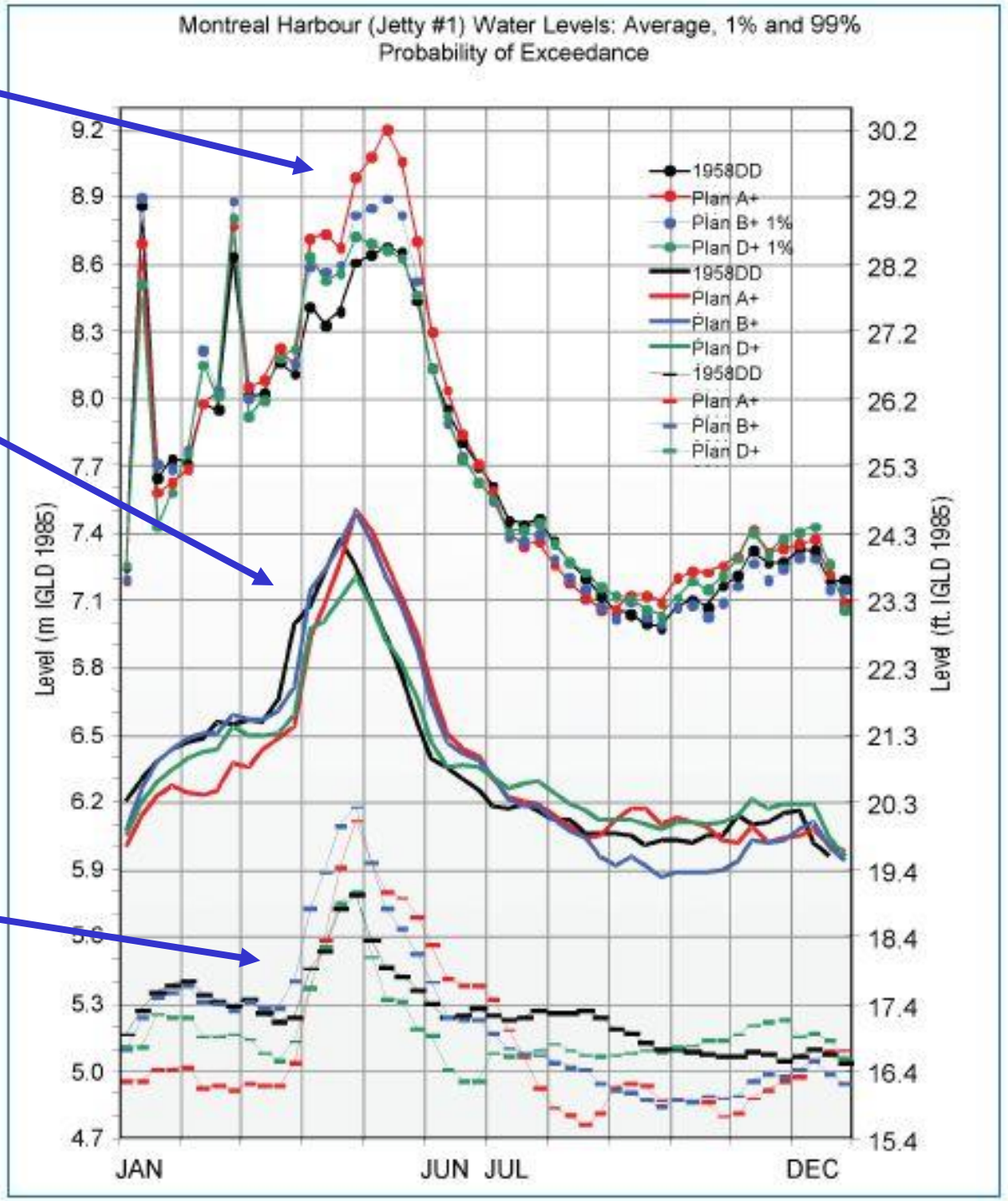
D+ has smaller peaks and higher fall levels

Low levels

1% are lower

A+ lower in fall and winter

B+ has lower fall levels



Most important study findings

- Flooding and erosion along Lake Ontario cannot be improved
- 1958DD and Plan D+ are best at easing erosion along Lake Ontario
- All plans about the same on flooding
- More natural regulation of Plan B+ improves Lake Ontario wetlands and species at risk, increases shore damages
- Low St. Lawrence River levels are unavoidable in long droughts
  - regulation helps keep river deeper during droughts
  - Plan D+ deals best with droughts.

Inclusive and Iterative Study Process

- Hundreds of people and dozens of bi-national (federal, provincial, state) organizations participated directly in the Study and contributed to the development of plans.
- Direct representation of all interest groups & NGOs involved in system use/mgmt at all levels of study
- Members of the public, aboriginal peoples, and outside experts were heavily involved and intimately familiar with the analysis.
- Hundreds of plans were formulated and evaluated in numerous Study Board decision workshops in the last two years of the study.
- Iterative decision process improved plans, understanding and decision criteria

Some findings are controversial

- Nearly all Board members agreed on findings
- Minority viewpoints on:
  - The certainty of the environmental findings that support Plan B+,
  - Whether candidate plans go far enough to improve environment damage caused by Plan 1958DD
  - Whether losses on Plans A+ and B+ were small enough to be acceptable.

Some findings are controversial

- National Research Council / Royal Society of Canada study
- Praised some aspects of the study / criticized others
- Recommended ways to address shortcomings over time.
- Study Board response praised some aspect of the NRC review, criticized others. The Board believes shortage of time and lack of communication with the study team hurt the NRC review.
- IJC will review and make its own decision about whether they have enough information to act.

Best and worst of Plan A+

- Best
  - Creates over six million dollars in net benefits each year
  - Over half of economic gains are to recreational boating interests
  - Tightest range of levels reduces damages to South Shore protection, higher low levels help Lake Ontario and Lake St. Lawrence boaters
- Worst
  - Tightest range of levels negates other environmental improvements; A+ offers very little environmental gain over the current plan and no gains for Lake Ontario wetlands.
  - More frequent flooding on the Lower River in Sorel/Lac St. Pierre (half $million/year increase on average, with an estimated 1,100 additional homes damaged by a once in 100 year flood).
  - Less able to provide reliable minimum depths at Port of Montreal in the fall.

Best and worst of Plan B+

- Best
  - Substantial improvement to Lake Ontario wetlands with consistent results under all water supply sequences tested.
  - Wetland improvements help species at risk
  - Boaters get higher fall Lake Ontario and Lake St. Lawrence levels in normal and wet years – extending boating season and making haul-outs easier.
  - Creates over $4 million a year in net economic benefits primarily with gains for hydropower and the Seaway.
- Worst
  - Would increase Lake Ontario erosion and shore protection costs by over $2 million per year (mostly to south shore)
  - Lower Lake Ontario levels during long droughts would hurt boaters in marginal docking areas
  - Results in more frequent flooding on the Lower River in Sorel/Lac St. Pierre (about $200K increase on average per year, with estimated 300 more homes damaged in a 1 in 100 year flood).

Best and worst of Plan D+

- Best
  - Creates overall gain with almost no loss in any sector
  - Best for keeping minimum levels in Port of Montreal.
  - Helps recreational boating, navigation, hydropower,
  - Almost no difference on Lake Ontario coastal damages from current plan,
- Worst
  - Only slight improvement to the environment and no consistent gains
  - Slightly worse for Lake Ontario boaters but better everywhere else and overall

More information

- Download the new report www.losl.org or ask for a paper copy by writing to the Commission
- Stay online for more details on the Study results
- Check the online version of “The Boardroom” to see the charts, graphs, and documentation used by the Study Board to evaluate the plans.