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**IMPROVING BINATIONAL COORDINATION
OF RESPONSE TO ENVIRONMENTAL
EMERGENCIES WITHIN THE RAINY-LAKE
OF THE WOODS INTERNATIONAL
TRANSBOUNDARY AREA**

An update to the 2019 Review of Environmental
Emergency Planning, Preparedness and Response in
the Boundary Waters of the Rainy-Lake of the Woods
Drainage Basin

ABSTRACT

While multiple procedures and plans exist to address environmental emergencies in the Rainy-Lake of the Woods International transboundary area, they do not consistently recognize the unique binational nature of the basin or explicitly ensure that affected cross-border communities are alerted in a timely and coordinated manner.

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For the:

**International Rainy-Lake of
the Woods Watershed Board**



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Executive Summary

This review expands on the 2019 *Review of Environmental Emergency Planning, Preparedness and Response in the Boundary Waters of the Rainy–Lake of the Woods Drainage Basin* and presents five recommendations that, if implemented, will strengthen binational coordination for environmental emergency response within the Rainy–Lake of the Woods transboundary region.

All government jurisdictions including federal, state/provincial, county, municipal, and community levels are legally required to maintain emergency management plans. Initial incident reporting is required by regulation at the state/provincial level on both sides of the border. However, these requirements and protocols typically do not include provisions for binational coordination. Formal cross-border coordination is generally addressed only through federal-level mechanisms like the Canada–United States Joint Inland Pollution Contingency Plan (the Inland Plan). The Inland Plan is typically only activated when an incident presents a substantial environmental threat across the international boundary or when the magnitude of the event justifies a request for assistance from the other country. Based on the incidents in the Basin reviewed from the past decade, none reached a level of severity or cross-border risk sufficient to warrant activation of the Inland Plan.

Binational coordination does occur at times through informal local notification practices built on long-standing professional relationships between counterparts on each side of the border. While this informal communication often precedes and supports formal notification processes, it is inherently relationship-dependent and, as such, can be inconsistent and unreliable. This review found clear evidence of local cross-border communication in only two significant environmental incidents within the Basin over the past decade.

An official policy or agreement between the primary environmental emergency reporting systems in Minnesota and Ontario needs to be established. This would ensure one side is required to notify and establish active communication with the other in the event of a clearly defined transborder incident. This will ensure that stakeholders, affected communities, and downstream interests on both sides of the border are consistently and appropriately notified, regardless of where the incident originates.

Federal governments need to formally establish and recognize a dedicated binational environmental emergency management committee for the Rainy River–Lake of the Woods Basin. This committee should be provided with a clear mandate to support cross-border coordination, communications, and preparedness planning. The federal governments should also provide sustained funding to support regular joint training, tabletop exercises, joint incident debriefings, and response simulations, with costs shared equally through a 50/50 Canada–United States funding arrangement.

The vast majority of the corporate and government emergency plans reviewed did not contain provisions for binational coordination/communication. In order for emergency plans to be effective, they must include hazard specific binational communication protocols. These protocols should be built into any templates provided by governments to agencies to support their emergency management programs.

Major infrastructure within the basin including bridges, dams, and wastewater treatment plants are supported by detailed maintenance and life-cycle replacement programs. These programs are governed by regulatory requirements and internal protocols that establish inspection schedules, maintenance standards, and reporting obligations. As a result, the likelihood of failure due to neglect or insufficient maintenance is reduced. While the risk of catastrophic events remains, contingency measures are included in these plans to address potential failure under extreme conditions.

Previous International Rainy–Lake of the Woods Watershed Board and Community Advisory Group recommendations arising from the 2019 review remain broadly relevant, with the modifications identified in this report. Overall, procedures and frameworks exist at the highest federal level to address an international environmental catastrophe within the Rainy–Lake of the Woods transboundary region. However, most incidents along the Basin’s waterways do not reach this level and existing non-formal community, local/county, and state/provincial frameworks do not consistently reflect the basin’s unique binational context. Nor do they reliably ensure that potentially affected cross-border communities are notified in a timely, coordinated manner.

To address this gap, federal and state/provincial agencies should work collaboratively to establish formal policies and agreements that include clear, actionable protocols for binational communication, notification and coordination at the state/provincial level where initial reporting is required. Only through a structured, jointly supported approach can we ensure that incidents occurring on one side of the border are managed with the timely awareness and involvement of the other.

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Report Background

Environmental emergencies caused from a spill of chemicals (petroleum products or other deleterious substances) into the water or a large-scale natural disaster (flooding, toxic algae blooms) pose a serious risk to the Basin. These emergencies have the potential to adversely impact water quality and quantity, human health through the potential contamination of community water intakes, and impact the ecological integrity of ecosystems. The potential for these events may be on the rise due to increases in industrial activities and increasing climate uncertainty. Having plans and procedures in place to ensure environmental emergencies are coordinated across borders is critical to ensure that the Basin and the public dependent on it is protected.

The International Rainy-Lake of the Woods Watershed Board (IRLWWB) is charged with monitoring and reporting on the ecological health of the Lake of the Woods and Rainy Lake boundary waters aquatic ecosystem, including water quality; coordinating the management of water levels and flows on Rainy and Namakan Lakes, and assisting the Commission in preventing and resolving disputes regarding the boundary waters of the Lake of the Woods and Rainy River watershed.

In response to concerns raised by the Board's Community Advisory Group (CAG), the IRLWWB initiated a review to:

- Assess whether appropriate plans and procedures are in place to respond to an environmental emergency in a coordinated fashion across borders and if they are not,
- Develop recommendations to the International Joint Commission for consideration for transmittal to the two federal governments.

The Board completed its review in 2019, resulting in the report titled: "Review of Environmental Emergency Planning, Preparedness and Response in the Boundary Waters of the Rainy-Lake of the Woods Drainage Basin (EEPPR)."

The EEPPR report concluded that:

- There are plans and procedures in place at all levels of government in both Canada and the U.S. to respond to environmental emergency situations in the basin, including a binational mechanism to ensure coordination and support across the international boundary.
- Based on a review of the Canada-U.S. Joint Inland Pollution Contingency Plan, it is evident that plans can become dated and this could reduce their effectiveness in times of emergency.
- Based on a review of the 2017 release of sulfuric acid from PCA Boise Paper in the Rainy River, it is evident that there is lack of clarity and potentially lack of effectiveness associated with processes in place to alert cross border communities of a spill occurrence, which could pose a hazard to human health and impede effective emergency response. In this context, state and provincial agencies, as well as federal agencies, play an important role.

The 2019 EEPPR focused on the degree to which plans and procedures are in place to respond to an environmental emergency. This review builds on the work of the previous report by:

- Confirming the full suite of agencies (and contacts) at the local/municipal, state/provincial and Federal levels whom are responsible for environmental emergency planning and response in the Basin.
- Contacting these agencies to obtain copies of relevant emergency plans and interview representatives to assess whether appropriate procedures are in place to ensure binational coordination and binational community/agency notification in the event of an environmental emergency in the transboundary.

- Conduct a review/assessment of the environmental incidents occurring in the basin over the last 10 years and assess the adequacy/effectiveness of cross border communications and coordination and whether operational plans have been adjusted based on debriefing and lessons learned from these incidents.
- Reporting on the degree that critical infrastructure owners (Dam/Bridge/treatment plants, etc.) within the basin have maintenance and life cycle replacement plans in place to ensure critical infrastructure does not fail.
- Reviewing the Boards previous recommendations for relevancy and providing any other recommendations in order to improve the binational coordination of environmental emergencies.

The Rainy-Lake of the Woods Watershed (the Basin)

The Rainy – Lake of the Woods watershed (the Basin) forms the international boundary between Minnesota, Ontario and Manitoba. The region is ecologically, geologically, and politically complex. Here, 600 km (372 miles) of waterways flow west from the Great Lakes Basin divide, through the chain of lakes to Namakan Lake, then Rainy Lake, through the Rainy River, and into Lake of the Woods where, at Kenora, it enters into the Lake Winnipeg basin, flowing north along the Winnipeg River and ultimately into Hudson Bay. The Rainy River is the largest tributary, contributing more than 70% of the inflow to Lake of the Woods. It is a binational waterway that forms the international boundary between Canada and the United States flowing west from Rainy Lake to the Lake of the Woods (Figure 1).



Figure 1. Rainy - Lake of the Woods basin (source: International Joint Commission).

Governance and regulation of water is shared among several entities, including Indigenous governments, the State of Minnesota, the Provinces of Ontario and Manitoba, and the federal governments of the United States and Canada. About 60% of the watershed is in Ontario, within the territory of the Anishinaabe Nation in Treaty #3 and homeland of the Northwestern Ontario Métis community; a small portion of the Canadian side is also in Manitoba. The remaining 40% is in Minnesota, inclusive of the Territories of 1854 Treaty Authority and Red Lake Nation. Within these

jurisdictions, there are 52 communities spread out along the water bodies, 16 in Ontario, 13 in Minnesota, 20 Anishinaabe and 3 Metis (see Appendix II Communities within the Basin).

The Basin serves as a drinking water source for more than 700,000 people in Ontario, Minnesota and Manitoba ([MNR, 2021](#)). Its world-class fisheries, rich history, and unique biodiversity make it an important cultural, economic, and ecological resource.

Potential Environmental Emergencies within the Basin

In fluvial (riverine) environments, timely and effective response to a release of a contaminant or hazardous material can pose challenges due to the rapid transport of the substance downstream and to receiving waters. Contaminants can travel long distances and, in some cases, persist in the environment long after the initial release. Preventative action and development of emergency response procedures is important to mitigate potential impacts. Given the large size and complexity of the Basin, there are many potential sources for a deleterious substance to enter into the watershed causing an environmental emergency that may impact water quality and harm human health or ecosystems. These include the potential for significant spills coming from the transport of hazardous materials by rail or truck, the release of untreated effluent or chemicals from industrial facilities (pulp and paper mill, mining operations etc), the dumping of raw sewage from the communities along the lakes and rivers, nutrient/fertilizer run off from agriculture along the Rainy River as well as substances entering the water from extreme flooding events.

Transportation of Hazardous Materials

The transportation of hazardous materials and substances carries risks that can have potentially harmful and significant impacts to human health and the environment in the event of an accident or spill. Dangerous goods travel across the Basin via rail and highway transport, rail being the more significant of the two.

Fort Frances and International Falls are not along the main national highway commercial routes for US or Canada. However dangerous goods are transported through the area's local highways and could enter the watershed in the event of an accident at one of the many bridges over the waterways.

The CN rail system crosses through the Basin in both Canada and the United States running along and across waterbodies. It is estimated that there are well over 50 points along the track where a spill from a derailment could enter the water. The busiest of all these locations is the Rainer International Train Bridge, linking Fort Frances, ON and Ranier, MN.

International Falls – Ranier, MN is the busiest port of entry on the U.S. northern border for rail car traffic and tonnage (2024 data; U.S Bureau of Transportation Statistics – North American Transborder Freight Data). It is estimated over 20 trains cross daily with 20-25% of the freight comprised of crude oil or other petroleum product, equaling over 4 billion litres of oil annually, enough to fill 4-5 Olympic sized swimming pools every day. This traffic travels across the Ranier International Train Bridge over the Rainy River at Fort Frances, ON. There is the potential for a significant environmental emergency in the event of a release of crude oil or petroleum product into the river from a derailment of a train at or near this point. A spill at the Rainer International Train Bridge would present a significant risk to human health from potential contamination of water intakes for the downstream communities, and pose significant risk to the ecological integrity of the Basin.

Discharge from Industrial Facilities

Currently, there are two remaining industrial facilities that have permits to discharge treated waste water into the waters of the Basin, the Rainy River Gold Mine and the Pulp and Paper mill in International Falls.

The paper mill located in International Falls, Minnesota is owned and operated by Boise Paper, a division of Packaging Corporation of America (PCA). PCA has experienced multiple chemical release incidents into the Rainy River. Notable incidents include a sulfuric acid spill in 2017, releases of untreated wastewater containing floating solids and pink foam in 2020 and 2021 associated with power outages, and an additional incident in 2024. Each of these events resulted in enforcement action, penalties, or ongoing regulatory review by the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA).

The Rainy River Gold Mine recently purchased by Coeur Mining Inc. from New Gold Inc. employs a closed loop tailings system, replenished by rainfall. They discharge 3-5 million m³ of treated water per year into the Pinewood river. Failure of key infrastructure at the Rainy River mine site such as the tailing dams or the pipeline to the Pinewood River could pose serious threats to the watershed. As noted in the 2024 New Gold Sustainability report, the mine sent nine exceedance notification letters to the Ontario Ministry of Environment Conservation and Parks (MECP) involving waste water. Which resulted in one Environmental Penalty Order (EPO) related to total suspended solids and un-ionized ammonia exceedances. According to MECP reports, this was the only EPO issued to the mine since 2014. Prior to mine operation during the construction phase, there was a large fine and victim surcharge fee under the Environmental Protection Act after it was found the mine was discharging higher than acceptable levels of un-ionized ammonia as well as a fine from the MNR for a dam failure that resulted in sediment entering the Pinewood River in 2016.

There is also a mill in Barwick owned and operated by West Fraser Timber Co. The mill produces OSB (Oriented Strand Board, engineered wood panels used for residential, commercial, and industrial construction. This plant does not discharge any waste water effluent into the waterways.

Pollutants from Flooding

Pollutants from flooding include biological contaminants (bacteria, viruses, parasites from sewage and waste), chemical contaminants (industrial waste, pesticides, heavy metals, and household chemicals), and physical contaminants like sediment and debris. These pollutants come from overflowing infrastructure, runoff from farms and industrial sites, damaged homes and businesses, and natural sources like dead animals. Floodwaters spread these contaminants into the environment, potentially contaminating drinking water, damaging aquatic ecosystems, and causing health problems for humans and animals.

Water levels within the Basin are controlled by the Water Levels Committee of the IRLWWB, except during times of extremely low and high water levels in which case authority lies with the International Lake of the Woods Board. The International Joint Commission (IJC) formed the International Rainy-Lake of the Woods Watershed Board to assist with binational coordination of water quality efforts for the entire boundary watershed and to coordinate the management of the water levels and flows on Rainy and Namakan lakes and the Rainy River.

Pollutants from the 2022 Rainy and Namakan lakes flooding likely included potential contaminants from overwhelmed infrastructure and flooded lands, such as sewage from damaged systems, agricultural runoff containing pesticides and fertilizers, and debris and sediment from eroding banks and inundated properties. While specific amounts of these contaminants are not available, general consequences of severe flooding indicate the transport of pollutants like these into the river and lake system of the Basin.

Excess Phosphorous and Toxic Algal Blooms

Lake of the Woods continues to experience recurring, toxin-producing algal blooms driven by excess phosphorus. These blooms threaten drinking water, recreation, and ecosystem health. Phosphorus enters the watershed from both point sources (direct, measurable discharges) and non-point sources (diffuse runoff and erosion). Research by Environment and Climate Change Canada and the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency shows that roughly half of the lake's external phosphorus load originates from the Rainy River, which carries both natural and human-derived inputs (Mills, 2025).

Known point sources along the river include the paper mill in International Falls, the Rainy River Gold Mine and municipal waste water treatment plants. Non-point sources are mainly related to run off from agricultural operations along the Rainy River.

Report on Project Tasks and Deliverables

Task 1 – Confirm the Agencies Responsible for Environmental Emergency Response and Planning

To gain a clear understanding of how environmental emergency planning and response (EERP) functions within the basin, it was necessary to expand the original contact list of 16 agencies identified in the 2018 report to a total of 54 agencies.

Findings

Table 1 presents the expanded list of agencies contacted for this review. **The additional agencies contacted are highlighted in grey.**

AGENCY	CONTACT COMMENTS
Public Safety Canada	Unsuccessful. No contact information.
Environment Climate Change Canada	Successful
Transport Canada	Successful
Department of Fisheries and Oceans Canada	Successful
Canada Border Services Agency	Deemed unnecessary. Engaged with border committee.
United States Environmental Protection Agency (US EPA)	Successful
United States Coast Guard (USCG)	Successful
United States Department of Transportation (US DOT)	Unsuccessful. No contact information.
United States Homeland Security	Deemed unnecessary. Focused on initial front line involvement.
United States Army Corps of Engineers	Deemed unnecessary. Focused on initial front line involvement.
United States Customs and Border Protection	Deemed unnecessary. Engaged with border committee.
Ontario Ministry of Environment Conservation and Parks (3) <i>Senior Manager Spills Action Centre</i> <i>Kenora Manager</i> <i>Kenora Field Officer</i>	Successful
Emergency Management Ontario (2) <i>Senior Field Manager</i> <i>Amethyst Field Officer</i>	Successful
Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources (3) <i>Emergency Management Coordinator</i> <i>Services Manager NWR Operations</i> <i>Technical Support Supervisor (Dams)</i>	Successful
Ontario Provincial Police (O.P.P.)	Unsuccessful. Attempted contact: April 17/25, May 1/25, May 9/25, May 12/25 (x3), May 14/25, May 27/25, June 13/25
Ontario Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services	No longer applicable. Now Emergency Management Ontario.
Ministry of Agriculture	Successful
Ministry of Health/Northwest Health Unit	Successful

AGENCY	CONTACT COMMENTS
Manitoba Department of Environment and Climate Change	Successful
Manitoba Department of Sustainable Development	Successful
Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA) (2) <i>Emergency Response Program</i> <i>Industry Water and Mining Section</i>	Successful
Minnesota Department of Public Safety (MDPS)	Successful
Minnesota State Police	Deemed Koochiching County to be most appropriate.
Warroad <i>Warroad Public Works</i> <i>Warroad - Police Chief</i> <i>Warroad - Fire Chief</i>	Unsuccessful. Attempted contact February 20/25, April 17/25 Unsuccessful. Attempted contact: May 1/25 (x2), May 1/25 Unsuccessful. Attempted contact: May 6/25, May 8/25, May 12/25
Town of Fort Frances (2) <i>Town of Fort Frances (FF) - Fire and Rescue Services</i> <i>Town of Fort Frances - Water Systems</i>	Successful
Alberton, Lavallee, Emo and Chapple Fire Departments	Successful
Town of Rainy River - Fire Department	Successful
Township of Morley - Fire Department	Successful
Koochiching County (2) <i>Emergency Management Division</i> <i>Law Enforcement Center / Emergency Management</i>	Successful Successful
City of International Falls (IF) - Fire/Rescue/EMS	Successful
Baudette - Fire Department	Successful
Lake of the Woods County - Emergency Management Coordinator	Successful
Pwi-Di-Goo-Zing Ne-Yaa-Zhing Advisory Services - Emergency Management <i>First Nations - Seine River, Lac La Croix, Nigigoonsiminikaaning, Couchiching, Mitaanjigamiing, Naicatchewenin, Rainy River</i>	Successful
Red Lake Nation	Successful
Treaty 3	Unsuccessful. Attempted contact: April 17/25, May 1/25, May 5/25 (x2), May 7/25, May 9/25, May 12/25, May 20/25, September 2/25. Interview conducted September 8/25.
NW Angle 33 First Nation	Unsuccessful. Attempted to contact: February 20/25, March 18/25, March 18/25
Animakee Wa Zhing #37	Unsuccessful. Attempted to contact: February 20/25, March 6/25. Phone visit on March 6/25. Directed to Treaty 3.

AGENCY	CONTACT COMMENTS
Buffalo Point First Nation	Unsuccessful. Attempted contact February 20/25. Dropped after interview with Red Lake Nation.
Canadian National Railway	Successful
NewGold	Successful
West Fraser - Barwick Facility	Successful
First Light	Successful
Evolugen	Successful
Packaging Corporation of America	Unsuccessful. Attempted to contact: April 17/25, May 8/25, May 19/25, May 27/25, June 13/25, July 22/25, August 1/25, October 28/25, August 6/25. Initial discussion, but no further cooperation for interview.

Table 1 – Summary of Agencies Contacted

The number and diversity of agencies involved, and their responsibilities, clearly demonstrate that EERP within the basin is complex and variable. This complexity is further compounded by the basin's binational context, where differing national regulations, jurisdictions, and legal frameworks add additional layers to environmental emergency planning and response.

Task 2 – Review of Agencies Environmental Emergency Response and Planning

This study was conducted over an eleven-month period from March 2025 to February 2026. During this time, more than 50 interviews were completed, representing 37 of the 54 agencies contacted. In addition, over 15 emergency plans were reviewed. The results of these interviews and plan reviews are summarized in Appendix I – Agency Contact and Information Summary Table.

The research team also met with key members of the Rainy River International Emergency Management Committee (formerly known as the Rainy River Cross Border Committee) on February 2, 2026, to gain a clearer understanding of its structure, mandate, and function.

Findings

Planning

Upon review, each of the private and government agencies contacted have environmental emergency response and planning (EERP) systems in place to manage incidents. Ontario and Minnesota use very similar emergency management models, with key differences rooted more in structure and terminology than in intent or outcomes. The private sector plans reviewed include provisions to respond to and manage on-site events, and report environmental emergencies to the appropriate regulatory agencies.

Municipalities, towns and First Nations in Ontario and cities, counties and Tribes in Minnesota are legally required to maintain emergency plans. The plans reviewed in this study provide provisions for declaring local states of emergencies as well as coordinating police, fire, EMS, and public works to protect life and property in the event of an emergency.

When local capacity is exceeded, provincial or state support plans are activated through Emergency Management Ontario (EMO) in Ontario and Minnesota Department of Public Safety (MDPS) in Minnesota using centralized emergency operations centres and specialized resources. Both systems allow escalation to the highest executive authority (the Premier and Cabinet in Ontario; the Governor in Minnesota) to unlock broader powers and resources, and both permit federal involvement only during major or exceptional events.

Some agencies on both sides of the border also conduct planning and preparedness exercises to test their EERP systems. These tests are a critical part of planning and response since actual events are rare. These tests and exercises are the only way to ensure that plans work in a real-life scenario.

Unfortunately, for most of these exercises are held internally within agencies or jurisdictions and do not account the binational nature of the basin. "Operation Walleye", held on August 26, 2021, is the only example of a major international, full-scale emergency response exercise in the Basin involving stakeholders and agencies from both the United States and Canada.

Reporting

On both sides of the international border, the Responsible Party (RP) has ownership of the incident and is expected to assume the lead role in reporting incident response and costs to the appropriate government agency. Examples of potential RPs encompassed during the study are CN Rail, PCA, New Gold, waste water treatment facilities (WWTF) and the companies that own and operate major dams. The RP is also required to report any spill of a pollutant or deleterious substance into a water body at the State or Provincial level.

At the local level, on both sides of the border, the 911 system is used to activate local fire and rescue, with the main priority of protecting human life and property.

In Minnesota, all incident reporting to the state goes through the Duty Officer at the Minnesota Department of Public Safety (MDPS) who in the case of environmental emergencies, routes to the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA). Depending on the size and type of spill, the RP may also be required to notify the National Response Center that notifies other federal agencies and Canada if necessary.

In Ontario, the window for all spill reporting is the Spills Action Centre (SAC) of the Ministry of Environment Conservation and Parks (MECP). They notify other provincial and Canadian Federal Agencies as required. If the incident involves the transportation of dangerous goods the Canadian Transport Emergency Center (CANUTEC) under Transport Canada is also required to be notified.

Response

After an emergency is reported, the Government agencies are present to monitor progress, provide support as required and ensure the RP's response is appropriate and regulations are followed.

In cases where the RP's response is determined to be inadequate, ineffective, or otherwise inappropriate or during acts of God, such as flooding, Government agencies will step in to take control. Government response is led initially at the local or county level, escalates to the provincial or state level as required, and involves federal authorities only when additional resources, coordination, or specialized expertise are necessary. Both systems allow escalation to the highest executive authority (the Premier and Cabinet in Ontario; the Governor in Minnesota) to unlock broader powers and resources, and both permit federal involvement only during major or exceptional events.

Binational Coordination and Notification

The summary of the binational coordination and communication protocols within the Agencies contacted is found in Appendix I – Agency Contact and Information Summary Table. After reviewing over 15 different agency emergency plans and protocols, it became evident that structured, policy-driven binational coordination, communication and response to environmental emergencies within the Basin is not commonly addressed. It exists at the highest federal levels under the Canada–United States Joint Inland Pollution Contingency Plan (the Inland Plan), and within one private-sector environmental emergency planning framework (CN Rail). None of the other private, local, or provincial/state plans reviewed formally addressed the unique binational nature of the watershed or included clear protocols for cross-border communication and notification during emergencies or environmental incidents.

There are however many informal notification protocols, parallel response systems and mutual aid understandings between local agencies on each side of the border. These are mainly based on cross border relationships fostered over time. These established professional connections enable rapid, informal communication between counterpart agencies during emerging situations, including floods, spills, infrastructure incidents, or other events with potential cross-border implications. This

informal communication often precedes and supports, any formal higher-level government notification and coordination protocols that may exist.

This informal local coordination system is best represented along the Rainy River by the Rainy River International Emergency Management Committee (formerly the Rainy River Cross Border Committee). The Committee's primary purpose is to facilitate timely information sharing, relationship-building, and practical coordination across the international boundary for matters related to environmental protection, water quality, emergency response, and public safety.

The Committee does not have regulatory authority or decision-making power. Instead, it operates as a collaborative mechanism that complements formal provincial, state, and federal regulatory frameworks. Participation typically includes representatives from municipal governments, provincial and state agencies, federal departments, First Nations and Tribes, and emergency management and environmental response organizations, depending on the issue being discussed.

A key strength of the Committee is the continuity of relationships it has fostered over time. During incidents affecting or potentially affecting the Rainy River, the Committee serves as a conduit for sharing situational awareness, technical information, and lessons learned, while respecting the legal authorities and responsibilities of each jurisdiction. Public notifications, enforcement actions, and emergency declarations remain the responsibility of the appropriate authorities within each country.

Overall, the Committee plays an important supporting role in enhancing binational relationships, preparedness, trust, and operational coordination between agency counterparts in the shared watershed, particularly during complex or rapidly evolving events where timely cross-border communication is critical.

There has been one large-scale binational exercise conducted to test a coordinated response to an environmental emergency within the Rainy-Lake of the Woods Basin. "Operation Walleye" in 2021, led by Koochiching County (Minnesota) in collaboration with the Rainy River International Emergency Management Committee, brought together agencies from both sides of the international border in a full-scale emergency response exercise by simulating a major chemical spill resulting from a train derailment near the mouth of the Rainy River, along the Canada-U.S. boundary.

While the exercise was generally considered successful, several key Canadian agencies did not participate, limiting the extent to which cross-border coordination could be fully evaluated under realistic conditions. A second "Operation Walleye 2" exercise was planned by the Committee, funded through US agencies; however, it was not carried out after funding was cut in 2024.

Despite the strength of local professional relationships and the good-faith efforts of individuals within agencies, reliance on informal notification and coordination protocols presents an inherent structural weakness. In the absence of a formal government policy or procedure directing agencies when and how to communicate across the border, notification processes can become inconsistent, delayed, or entirely absent.

Dependence on personal relationships between local counterparts for "courtesy" notifications is inherently unreliable. Such arrangements are vulnerable to staff turnover, retirements, departmental restructuring, or shifting priorities. When key individuals change roles or leave their positions, these informal communication pathways can disappear altogether.

Moreover, without clearly defined guidance outlining who is responsible for initiating cross-border notification, what types of incidents trigger communication, and when such notification must occur, critical information can easily fall through procedural gaps.

Compounding this vulnerability, several existing mutual aid agreements between first responders in border communities are outdated. In the event of a significant emergency requiring assistance from one side of the border to the other, outdated agreements may create legal, administrative, or operational barriers that could hinder timely coordination and response.

Recommendations

- 1. The Board recommends that Ontario MECP and Minnesota MPCA enter into an agreement for binational notification protocol.**
 - Currently there is no official policy or agreement in place between the primary environmental emergency reporting systems in Minnesota – MPCA and Ontario - MECP. When an environmental emergency occurs within the transboundary, one side should be required to notify and establish active communication with the other to ensure stakeholders on both sides of the border are properly notified. These agencies should maintain up-to-date lists of international downstream stakeholder contacts to be shared with, and provided to, RPs as part of their response to environmental emergencies.

- 2. The Board recommend that Emergency Management Ontario build in Unified Command, Hazard Specific & Binational Communication protocols into their Emergency Management Plan (EMP) templates and Minnesota Department of Public Safety build in Binational Communication protocols to their EMP templates provided to agencies within the Basin.**
 - Adding these requirements to the template will ensure these plans include unified command, hazard specific and binational notification and response protocols for all hazards that have the potential to adversely impact water quality/quantity in the Basin.

- 3. The IJC requests that the U.S. and Canadian federal governments work with their provincial and state counterparts to recognize, formalize, and adequately resource the existing International Emergency Management Committee within the Basin.**
 - This committee requires a clear mandate and equal funding from both countries to support, coordinate, and strengthen cross-border relationships. At a minimum, the committee will mandate regular binational training, joint response simulation exercises, and shared incident debriefings.

Task 3 – Review of Past Environmental Incidents in the Basin

Based on a review of publicly available information and information provided by agencies, the following section summarizes the principal environmental incidents over the past ten years that have had, or could have had, a negative impact on the waters within the Basin. This review is not intended to be comprehensive for the period 2014–2024. Smaller, lower-profile, or localized incidents may have occurred during this time that are not captured in this report. In several cases, limited access to information and/or incomplete cooperation from involved agencies restricted the ability to fully assess the adequacy and effectiveness of cross-border communication/coordination, and post-incident debriefing processes.

Boise White Paper L.L.C. Sulfuric Acid Release and Regulatory Actions (July 2017)
Boise White Paper L.L.C. - Wastewater Discharges and Regulatory Actions (2020–2021)
Packaging Corp of America (Boise White Paper LLC) - Major Non-Compliance (2024)
New Gold Inc. – Sediment Release into Pinewood River (2016)
New Gold Inc. – Un-ionized Ammonia Discharges (2016)
New Gold Inc. – Effluent Quality Exceedances (2024)
2022 Rainy Lake – Rainy River Basin Flood
CN rail derailments in the Basin 2014-2024
Waster Water Exceedances Identified in the IRLWWB exceedance reports 2014-2024
Toxic Algae Blooms on Lake of the Woods (2014-2024)

Findings

Boise White Paper L.L.C. Sulfuric Acid Release (July 2017)

Responsible Party (RP) Boise White Paper L.L.C.

In July 2017, an estimated 6,800 gallons of sulfuric acid was released into the Rainy River from a 19,450-gallon storage tank at the Boise White Paper L.L.C. paper mill in International Falls, MN.

There is no record of any cross-border communication for this incident. At the time of the spill, Boise's permit stated that the MN State Duty Officer must be contacted but there was no requirement for any cross-border communication. Cross-border communication regarding the spill was questioned by Canadian communities downstream on the Rainy River, who expressed concern over potential impacts. According to news sources, Boise White Paper L.L.C stated that there was no threat to public health, safety or the environment as a result of the spill which would indicate that from their perspective, further communications was not necessary.

According to public record, as a result of the incident, Boise White Paper L.L.C. was assessed a civil penalty of \$17,350 by the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA). In addition to the monetary penalty, the company was required to implement the following corrective actions:

- Ensure that all employees overseeing operations affecting effluent quality complete appropriate training.
- Provide a written description of corrective measures implemented to prevent recurrence of the incident.
- Submit a written protocol outlining response procedures during a waste water treatment plant upset.
- Develop and submit a backup electrical power contingency plan.

MPCA reported that Boise White Paper L.L.C. completed all required corrective actions, and did not pursue additional enforcement actions or penalties. The effectiveness of these actions and extent of debriefings/lessons learned could not be independently verified as part of this review. They are not public knowledge and despite numerous requests, the RP did not share the information with our research team.

Boise White Paper L.L.C. – Untreated Wastewater Discharges and Related Regulatory Actions (2020–2021)

Responsible Party (RP) Boise White Paper L.L.C.

From 2020 to 2021 the RP had three separate instances where untreated waste water effluent was released into the Rainy River from the Boise White Paper L.L.C. paper mill in International Falls, MN. Combined, the three incidents resulted in an estimated 1.4 million gallons of untreated wastewater being released as well as visible “pink” foam. The release was not immediately reported to MPCA and there was no recovery of accessible foam.

Cross-border communication occurred in relation to the pink foam incident. Informal communication took place between local agencies on each side of the border. Direct binational communication occurred between the Ontario Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks (MECP) and a representative of the Responsible Party. These communications did not extend to broader community or public notifications at the time, as first responders, specifically the International Falls Fire Department, classified the substance as non-toxic and contained to the United States side of the Rainy River. MECP noted during our interviews that they had to initiate the communications with the RP and MPCA only after the incident was reported to them and the communication were one sided with the RP and MPCA both unwilling to share much information other than they were aware of the incident and were dealing with it.

An investigation by the MPCA resulted in a stipulation agreement being put in place between the RP and MPCA as well as a fine of \$16,965. Under the stipulation agreement the RP was required to:

- Provide a plan to ensure no visible foam is released to the river.
- Identify how any release, spill, or unauthorized discharge will be reported immediately to the State Duty Officer.
- Provide at least 30 days advance notice of colored paper production at the facility and conduct toxicity tests on treated effluent during colored paper production, as directed by MPCA.
- Create a plan for preventing releases of untreated wastewater during power outages that will ensure emergency power to critical pumps is available to prevent unauthorized discharges.

MPCA reported that Boise White Paper L.L.C. completed required corrective actions, and did not pursue additional enforcement actions or penalties. The effectiveness of these actions and extent of debriefings/lessons learned could not be independently verified as part of this review. They are not public knowledge and there was a lack of cooperation from the RP to share information with our research team.

Packaging Corp of America (Boise White Paper LLC) - Major Non-Compliance (2024)

Responsible Party (RP) Boise White Paper L.L.C.

In August of 2024 a Routine Inspection by MPCA at the PCA mill in International Falls, resulted in a Major Non-Compliance finding and notice of violation order for unauthorized releases of waste water, failure to provide waste water samples and failure to properly operate the facilities and systems of treatment and control.

This incident is currently awaiting enforcement action from MPCA and we were unable to obtain any more information.

New Gold Inc. – Sediment Release into Pinewood River (2016)

Responsible Party (RP) New Gold Inc.

In March 2016, New Gold advised the Ministry of Natural Resources (MNR then MNRF) of an incident on their Rainy River Project in which water overflowed the incomplete Teeple Dam, causing a portion of the dam to erode and send sediment into the Pinewood River downstream. When New Gold officials learned what had happened, they took remedial action in consultation with the ministry.

To our knowledge, there was no binational communication of this incident. It was reported to the appropriate government agency (MNR).

MNR investigators determined that the company was aware that the dam wasn't finished prior to the incident, and had allowed water to flow through the network before design specifications had been met. New Gold pleaded guilty to failing to comply with the conditions of an approval under the Lakes and Rivers Improvement Act and in 2018 received a \$100,000 fine from the ministry. As a result of an intensive, detailed, internal review of the incident, New Gold implemented multiple measures to their operation to reduce the risk of any future dam failure including but not limited to flattening the slope on all their tailing and waste water management ponds. They also implemented a third-party Independent Tailings Review Board (ITRB) who visits the Rainy River's tailings management area annually to conduct direct observation of operations, construction, and maintenance activities. Independent review helps to verify that Rainy River's tailings management system complies with relevant laws, regulations and industry standards. Any recommendations or findings from the ITRB are reported to site management and New Gold leadership.

New Gold Inc. – Un-ionized Ammonia Discharges (2016)

Responsible Party (RP) New Gold Inc.

Between July 26 and July 29, 2016, during the construction phase of the Rainy River Project, the company discharged approximately 19 million litres of effluent (5 million gallons) from an in-pit sump that exceeded allowed concentrations of un-ionized ammonia found within their permits. While the company took samples on July 22, 2016 that showed high ammonia levels, they did not report the issue to the MECP (then MOE) until eight days later, on August 3, 2016.

To our knowledge, there was no binational communication of this incident. It was reported to the appropriate government agency (MECP).

New Gold pled guilty to the charges and in 2017, was assessed the following fines under the Environmental Protection Act by the MECP: \$100,000 for the discharge, \$50,000 for failure to report plus a mandatory victim surcharge fee of \$37,500 for a total of \$187,500. The Rainy River mine has since transitioned from construction to operation, with subsequent detailed environmental compliance reports filed annually. They have a robust waste water and tailing management system in place which is managed under an adaptive management framework. This ensures that all spills and any waste water exceedances on site are actioned, reported, tracked and debriefed. Any findings that can prevent a reoccurrence, are incorporated back into standard operating procedures.

New Gold Inc. – Effluent Quality Exceedances (2024)

Responsible Party (RP) New Gold Inc.

On June 5th and 6th, 2024 New Gold detected and reported to the MECP that their waste water exceeded permitted concentrations of un-ionized ammonia and total suspended solids (TSS). The resulting spill totaled 105,699 m³ of exceptional effluent being released. New Gold's internal monitoring was able catch the exceedance early and shut off the flow. If not in place and had the trend continued, this event had the potential to release 700,000 to 1,250,000 m³ of mine effluent with even higher levels of un-ionized ammonia before being detected.

To our knowledge, there was no binational communication of this incident. It was reported to the appropriate government agency (MECP).

In response to the effluent quality exceedance for total suspended solids and un-ionized ammonia, the Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks (MECP) issued an Environmental Penalty Order (EPO) and the mine received a minor financial penalty for violations under the Environmental Protection Act and the Ontario Water Resources Act of \$9,198. New Gold also reported that no other exceedances occurred for the remainder of the discharge season. Based on New Gold's internal review of the incident, the cause for the heightened TSS level was attributed to low water levels within the water management pond (WMP) in combination with high winds and rainfall. The pond has clay walls that make it susceptible to sedimentation during times of low water during storms. To mitigate future risk, they are exploring sediment control methods that are either permanent or can be deployed during the above-mentioned conditions. They are also trialing an email alert system to improve response times to potential exceedances in their waste water.

Rainy Lake – Rainy River Basin Flood (2022)

RP – Natural Disaster – Government Agencies

The 2022 flooding in the Rainy River Basin constituted an event of historic magnitude. The Rainy River Basin received 257 millimetres of rain between April 1 and the end of May, twice the average for that period. Rainy Lake reached record-breaking water levels (previous record 1950), while Namakan Lake experienced the third-highest levels ever recorded. The resulting impacts were widespread and severe, including extensive damage to homes, docks, boathouses, shorelines, trees, critical infrastructure, and road networks.

There is little evidence of any significant cross border or binational communications or coordination's during the flood. Public communications, emergency notifications and response remained the responsibility of authorities within each country. Provincial and State authorities along with municipalities, counties and first nations communities issued their own flood warnings, emergency declarations, and public advisories in accordance with domestic legislation and emergency management frameworks. There is some evidence showing that informal communications took place between local counterparts on each side of the border, but there was never an organized incident command established between the two countries or significant coordination between them.

The International Rainy-Lake of the Woods Watershed Board produced the 2022 Post Flood Report: A Report on High Water Levels in the Rainy River Basin. This report provides a review of the conditions which led to the high-water event in 2022, a summary of water level corrective actions, and answers questions raised by the public. It does not speak to the effectiveness of the emergency response or binational communication/coordination.

The Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources did a full debriefing after the flood and incorporated lessons learned into their operating procedures for flood response including provisions for accessing and managing sandbags. It recognized that establishing early communication protocols with all impacted parties, stakeholders, Indigenous, municipal and unorganized communities is essential. However international agencies are not on their contact list and the debriefing did not speak to or recognize a need for binational communications or coordination.

Canadian National Railway Company (CN Rail) derailments (2014-2024)

RP - CN Rail

Uncontrolled derailments of trains create high-risk situations that may have catastrophic consequences. We reviewed the Canadian Transportation Safety Board (TSB) and the US National Transportation Safety Board NTSB records from 2014 to 2025 and found the number of derailments within the Basin is not trending downward. From these records, there have been five noteworthy CN Rail train derailments within the Basin within the last ten years. Although no contaminants entered any international waters, these events highlight the risks derailments can pose to the Basin.

- May 2014, 35 cars near Fort Frances, Ontario. The derailed cars included 2 tank cars loaded with molten sulphur, one of which was punctured and released product. The product ignited a small grass fire that subsequently burned itself out.
- May 2015 a timber rail bridge that crossed the Rat Root River caught fire and burned, about 8 miles southeast of International Falls. Two cars on the train, both carrying potash (a common farm fertilizer), were caught up in the bridge wreckage in the river. The cars remained intact.
- February 2020, 31 cars derailed, including 26 crude oil cars near Emo, Ontario. Five of the derailed crude oil cars had released petroleum crude oil. Six homes in the area were evacuated as a precautionary measure.
- February 2025, 14 hopper cars loaded with fertilizer derailed. Ten cars were derailed on their side and the other four remained upright. No dangerous goods were involved, The Canadian Transportation Safety Board (TSB) is investigating.
- June 2025, 13 loaded grain hopper cars derailed. Most of the derailed cars were extensively damaged and released their product. The TSB is investigating.

There is no record of any binational notifications or coordination for any of these specific events which is not surprising considering that none of them involved any containments entering the shared waterways. In all of the cases, the RP was able to handle the incident to the satisfaction of state/provincial regulatory agencies and further government response was not required.

CN does have provisions for binational response, reporting and coordination within their environmental emergency response plan in the event they are the RP for a binational environmental emergency.

For every derailment along their lines, CN notifies the Transportation Safety Board (TSB) of Canada or in the United States, the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB), and works with them to determine the cause of the incident. Investigations often center on track conditions, engineering, employee training, and emergency protocols. As per CN Rail's emergency response plan, every incident has an accident investigation completed and when deemed appropriate by senior company officers an internal response critique may be carried out. The critique is intended to identify lessons learned to improve the response to future incidents. The critique may include a discussion of the incident, the factors involved, the dangerous goods/hazardous materials involved, the response actions taken, whether the existing procedures and resources functioned as expected; improvements to procedures and resources, and needs for additional training, equipment, and communications. The critique can also include involvement with external agencies when there are multiple agencies involved (fire departments etc.).

IRLWWB exceedance reports (2015-2024)

RP – Townships and Businesses with permits to discharge waste water into shared international waters from waste water treatment plants (WWTP)

Based on a review of the three IRLWWB exceedance reports provided to our research group (2015-2016, 2019-2023 and 2024), there are five exceedance events that are noteworthy and not already covered by this section of the report. They are all associated with spills, bypasses, or exceedances from permitted municipal or industrial wastewater facilities discharging into the Rainy River or Lake of the Woods or lack of reporting:

- Waste water exceedances from Town, Baudette
- Waste water exceedances from Town, Barwick
- Waste water exceedances from Springsteel Island Sanitary District near Warroad
- Waste water exceedances from North Koochiching Sanitary Sewer District in International Falls
- Lack of reporting from Town of Fort Frances and Emo

From 2015-2024 Baudette's WWTP has had several TP exceedances as well as issues with data validation and reporting. The WWTP in Barwick reported TP exceedances in 2019, 2020 and 2021 as well as a full bypass of the system in 2022 due to flooding. Springsteel Island Sanitary District near Warroad had 17 TP exceedances from 2019-23 and one load limit exceedance in 2019. North Koochiching Sanitary Sewer District in International Falls had two minor TP exceedances in 2024. There is no performance data available after 2016 in the reports reviewed from the Fort Frances or Emo WWTPs. As a result, their operational performance cannot be assessed. However, the absence of reporting information is, in itself, a matter of concern.

To our knowledge, there was no formal binational communication regarding these incidents at the time they occurred. Interviews with wastewater treatment plant (WWTP) managers suggest that informal notifications may occur on occasion as a professional "courtesy" to counterparts across the border. This is not unexpected, as there are no formal international notification protocols in place for wastewater exceedances within the Basin. In all cases, the incidents were reported to the appropriate regulatory authorities within each jurisdiction (MECP or MPCA).

The 2019-23 and 2024 IRLWWB exceedance reports recommend that the board work with agencies and operators to establish an emergency preparedness process for reporting and timely communication to the board and public in the basin when spills, bypasses or exceedances occur or will occur in boundary waters whether under planned or emergency conditions.

In all the cases of exceedances jurisdictional agencies took appropriate enforcement and corrective actions. The only incident that was significant enough to warrant fines from regulatory agencies was

the waste water exceedances from Springsteel Island Sanitary District near Warroad. The MPCA conducted an enforcement investigation and in November 2022 ordered a series of corrective actions in addition to a \$10,000 civil penalty.

Toxic Algae Blooms on Lake of the Woods (2014-2024)

RP – Not Applicable, multifaceted chronic issue

Toxic and nuisance algae blooms in the Lake of the Woods has been an ongoing issue for the transboundary watershed and remains at high priority for government agencies on both sides of the border. The Aquatic Ecosystem Health Committee (AEHC) is one of the four standing binational committees within the IRLWWB and is responsible for reviewing and setting objectives and exceedance alert levels for water quality in the Rainy-Lake of the Woods Watershed.

Total Phosphorus (TP) from the Rainy River is the main driver of harmful algal blooms in Lake of the Woods, threatening water quality, recreation, and ecosystems, with sources including natural runoff, agriculture, and known point sources such as industrial facilities and waste water treatment plants along the river.

Binational coordination with regards to science and research is driven by the International Multi-Agency Arrangement (IMA). The IMA allows for cooperation on research and management, among binational government agencies, indigenous groups and the Lake of the Woods Water Sustainability Foundation. In addition to the IMA management work group, a Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) pulls in the expertise of field and technical personnel from agencies who have mandates that align with the purpose of the IMA. Today, more than 30 agencies and groups participate in the IMA and IMA-TAC. The IMA terms of reference was updated in 2019.

In 2024, activities carried out under the IMA, set the areas of highest concern for the Rainy-Lake of the Woods watershed and these became the ‘alert levels’ adopted by the International Rainy-Lake of the Woods Watershed Board (IRLWWB) which included phosphorus levels.

2025 will see the first time that joint international core monitoring for nutrient levels and water quality will be undertaken in the Basin. This is seen as a huge step forward in tracking and managing water quality and TP in the Basin.

Recommendations

4. *The Board recommends that all incidents affecting the international waters of the Basin are reviewed, debriefed and lessons learned are shared internationally at the state and provincial level.*

- Based on the review of these ten incidents, binational debriefings and coordination of environmental incidents affecting the Basin are not common practice and there is no mechanism or mandate in place to share the information binationally.
- Sharing of information is critical if lessons learned from these incidents are to be incorporated into Environmental Emergency Response Plans to improve binational coordination and communication.
- There are potential synergies between the IRLWWB exceedance reporting mandate and incidents reporting within the Basin and the work of the International Emergency Management Committee.

Task 4 – Determine the relevancy of the IRLWW Board’s and CAGs recommendations from the 2019 Report

In 2019, the International Rainy–Lake of the Woods Watershed Board completed a review of environmental emergency planning and preparedness, resulting in the report *Review of Environmental Emergency Planning, Preparedness and Response in the Boundary Waters of the Rainy–Lake of the Woods Drainage Basin*. To assess the ongoing relevance of this report and its recommendations, our research team met with the Community Advisory Group (CAG) and relevant Board members on May 27,

2024. Based on feedback from this meeting and associated interviews, five recommendations were brought forward by the Board and the CAG for further assessment.

These recommendations are assessed as being:

- (a) relevant,
- (b) no longer relevant, or
- (c) relevant with modifications.

Findings

Board Recommendation 1

EPA and ECCC should be strongly encouraged to follow through on their planned review of the Canada-US Joint Inland Pollution Contingency Plan, and to put in place a schedule for regular ongoing review and revision into the future.

- b) no longer relevant – The Inland Plan was updated in 2024 and work continues in 2026 to update the associated Regional Annexes.*

Board Recommendation 2

Federal, provincial and state agencies should engage with other relevant entities to clarify and ensure effective functioning of emergency notification processes.

- c) relevant with modifications. See recommendation 1 from this report*

CAG Recommendation 1

Governments require lead agencies to take a “unified command” approach to incidents occurring with shared watersheds and that Agency and Industry plans are revised, and made complimentary in their description of process in this regard.

- c) relevant with modifications. See recommendation 2 from this report*

CAG Recommendation 2

Governments mandate the establishment of cross Border committees where they currently do not exist in shared watersheds, that the makeup of the committees include both community representatives and industries operating within its boundaries, and that a minimum of one tabletop emergency response exercise be completed annually by the committee to assist in operational preparedness at all levels.

- (c) relevant with modifications. See recommendation 3 from this report*

CAG Recommendation 3

The Packaging Corporation of America 2017 spill to the Rainy River and all further incidents within shared waters receive lead agency binational reviews that include input from local communities, with lessons learned incorporated into shared operating plans.

- (c) relevant with modifications. See recommendation 4 from this report*

Recommendations

5. Replace the Board and CAG previous recommendations with the recommendations from this report.

- All but one of the 5 previous recommendation remain relevant with the modifications suggested in this report

Task 5 – Review of Critical Infrastructure maintenance within the Basin

Our research team interviewed each of the agencies owning critical infrastructure within the Basin including owners of Dams, Public Highway Bridges, Railway Bridges, Railway Lines, Municipal Waste Water Treatment Facilities and Industrial Manufacturing facilities with the potential to affect the waterways. We also contacted the government agencies that regulate the maintenance of these critical pieces of infrastructure.

Findings

Table 2 summarizes the type of infrastructure and the maintenance/inspection schedule associated with it.

Type of Infrastructure	Maintenance/Inspection Schedule	Details
Ontario Dams	Annual 5 year 10 year	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Routine annual inspections of dams by operators, • 5 year independent P.Eng inspection, full-scale Independent • Dam Safety Reviews at a minimum of every 10 years or more often based on MNR dam risk assessment.
Minnesota Dams	Annual 5-8 year	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Routine annual checks are performed yearly by site staff and engineers • Comprehensive Periodic Inspections (CPIs): These detailed engineering assessments occur every 5-8 year depending on dam risk assessment.
Ontario Highway Bridges	Biennially	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • provincial highway bridges are inspected every two years (biennially) by professional engineers using the Ontario Structure Inspection Manual (OSIM) for detailed assessments, as required by the Public Transportation and Highway Improvement Act and associated regulations, ensuring regular checks on structural integrity and safety for all structure
Minnesota Highway Bridges	Biennially	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Standard: Every 24 months (two years) for most bridges. • High-Risk: Annually (every 12 months) for structures with any component in "Poor" condition or those that are fracture-critical. • Lower-Risk: Can be extended to 48 months (four years) after initial inspections if all parts are in "Fair" or better condition, according to MnDOT guidelines
CN Rail Bridges	CN inspects its bridges at least once per calendar year, with a maximum interval of 540 days between successive inspections	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CN Rail's inspection and maintenance programs meets or exceeds Transport Canada and Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) standards for bridge inspections.

Type of Infrastructure	Maintenance/Inspection Schedule	Details
CN Rail Lines	Weekly or Daily due to high volume of trains across the border	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CN inspects its rail lines frequently, ranging from daily to annual checks depending on the track class, traffic volume, and type of inspection, with mainline tracks often tested 1 to 18 times per year. These inspections meet or exceed regulatory requirements.
Ontario WWTPs	annually	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Municipal residential wastewater system components are inspected by the MECP at least once a year.
Minnesota WWTPs	Annually or up to 5 years depending on permitting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Actual Timelines for inspection of infrastructure is specified in each individual National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permit.
International Falls Papermill	<p>Varied depending on permitting requirements.</p> <p>PCA's actual internal protocols are not public and were not provided.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Paper mills in Minnesota, regulated by the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA), have strict water quality requirements, often needing monthly inspections, regular sampling, and annual reporting under their individual or general permits, with frequencies determined by their specific discharge and activities, all aimed at meeting stringent state and federal standards for industrial wastewater.

Type of Infrastructure	Maintenance/Inspection Schedule	Details
Rainy River Gold Mine	<p>All done and detailed as per:</p> <p>NEW GOLD RAINY RIVER MINE OMS MANUAL</p> <p>Per Shift</p> <p>Daily</p> <p>Weekly</p> <p>Monthly</p> <p>Annual</p> <p>5 year</p> <p>10 year</p>	<p>Routine Inspection:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dam Weekly • Diversions Weekly • Ditches Weekly • Seepage collection system Weekly • Spillways Weekly • Pipelines Once per 12 h shift • Tailings Pond Monitoring: Weekly • Pump intake Weekly • Staff gauges Weekly • Dam Instrumentation: Weekly • TMA, WMP and MRP Comprehensive (and water diversions during initial filling) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Daily during construction and initial filling - Weekly, during initial operations depending on trend - Monthly during routine operation • Dam Inspection Annually, with no snow cover • Event Driven Inspection Following unusual events (defined in table 7.1) <p>Comprehensive Review:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Low and Moderate dams Every 10 years and prior to decommissioning • Very High dams Every 5 years and prior to decommissioning
Barwick OSB mill	<p>Daily</p> <p>Weekly</p> <p>Annual</p> <p>but specific detailed schedules were not provided.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • West Fraser's Barwick OSB mill, like other large industrial facilities, performs maintenance and inspections continuously, with daily, weekly, and longer-term schedules managed by reliability teams to maximize uptime, with robust planning for safety and efficiency

Table 2 – Infrastructure inspection and Maintenance Summary

All owners of critical infrastructure within the watershed are required to comply with applicable government regulations governing maintenance, inspection, and operational standards, as well as the internal controls established through their own environmental protection, emergency management, and asset maintenance programs.

Collectively, these systems ensure that critical infrastructure is properly maintained and functioning as designed, and that risks and potential losses are minimized in the rare event of equipment failure or operational incident.

These detailed maintenance and life-cycle replacement plans significantly reduce the risk of failure resulting from neglect or inadequate maintenance. The risk posed to this infrastructure by catastrophic events remains; however, each plan includes contingency measures to address potential failure under such circumstances.

The most recent example of failure of critical infrastructure in the Basin is the recent Canadian National (CN) rail bridge collapse. This incident remains under review by CN and federal transportation authorities, and no formal determination of the cause has been publicly released. As a result, it was not possible to provide specific analysis or insight related to this incident at this time.

Conclusion

This review, conducted over a one-year period from February 2025 to February 2026, addresses the five tasks set out by the Rainy-Lake of the Woods Watershed Board:

- 1) Confirm the agencies responsible for environmental emergency response and planning.
- 2) Review agencies' environmental emergency response and planning frameworks.
- 3) Review past environmental incidents within the basin.
- 4) Determine the continued relevance of the IRLWW Board's and Community Advisory Groups' (CAGs) recommendations from the 2019 report.
- 5) Review critical infrastructure maintenance within the basin.

As a result of this work, five recommendations have been developed and are summarized in the following section.

Summary of Recommendations

- 1. The Board recommends that Ontario MECP and Minnesota MPCA enter into an agreement for binational notification protocol.**
 - Currently there is no official policy or agreement in place between the primary environmental emergency reporting systems in Minnesota – MPCA and Ontario - MECP. When an environmental emergency occurs within the transboundary, one side should be required to notify and establish active communication with the other to ensure stakeholders on both sides of the border are properly notified. These agencies should maintain up-to-date lists of international downstream stakeholder contacts to be shared with, and provided to, RPs as part of their response to environmental emergencies.
- 2. The Board recommend that Emergency Management Ontario build in Unified Command, Hazard Specific & Binational Communication protocols into their Emergency Management Plan (EMP) templates and Minnesota Department of Public Safety build in Binational Communication protocols to their EMP templates provided to agencies within the Basin.**
 - Adding these requirements to the template will ensure these plans include unified command, hazard specific and binational notification and response protocols for all hazards that have the potential to adversely impact water quality/quantity in the Basin.
- 3. The IJC requests that the U.S. and Canadian federal governments work with their provincial and state counterparts to recognize, formalize, and adequately resource the existing International Emergency Management Committee within the Basin.**
 - This committee requires a clear mandate and equal funding from both countries to support, coordinate, and strengthen cross-border relationships. At a minimum, the committee will mandate regular binational training, joint response simulation exercises, and shared incident debriefings.
- 4. The Board recommends that all incidents affecting the international waters of the Basin are reviewed, debriefed and lessons learned are shared internationally at the state and provincial level.**
 - Based on the review of these ten incidents, binational debriefings and coordination of environmental incidents affecting the Basin are not common practice and there is no mechanism or mandate in place to share the information binationally.
 - Sharing of information is critical if lessons learned from these incidents are to be incorporated into Environmental Emergency Response Plans to improve binational coordination and communication.
 - There are potential synergies between the IRLWWB exceedance reporting mandate and incidents reporting within the Basin and the work of the International Emergency Management Committee.
- 5. Replace the Board and CAG previous recommendations with the recommendations from this report.**
 - All but one of the 5 previous recommendation remain relevant with the modifications suggested in this report

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New Gold Rainy River Project - <https://rainyriver.newgold.com/>

First Light Energy (formally H2O Power) - <https://firstlight.energy/>

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Packaging Corporation of America (PCA) – International Falls Mill - <https://www.packagingcorp.com/>

CBC News - <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/thunder-bay/new-gold-fort-frances-charge-1.4397750>

TBW News Watch - <https://www.tbnewswatch.com/local-news/new-gold-inc-fined-100000-after-sediment-spill-from-dam-988742>

MPR News - <https://www.mprnews.org/story/2015/05/27/bridge-collapse>

Lake of the Woods Water Sustainability Foundation - <https://lowwsf.com/>

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<p>Public Safety Canada</p> <p>No Contact based on available public information</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Main coordinator of Federal resources during a national emergency. • Public Safety Canada helps Canadians and their communities protect themselves from emergencies and disasters related to all kinds of hazards – natural, human-induced and technological – through national leadership in the development and implementation of policies, plans and a range of programs. • In Canada, emergencies are managed first at the local level: hospitals, fire departments, police and municipalities. If they need assistance, they request it from their province or territory. If the emergency escalates and they need help, provinces or territories can get help from the federal government through Public Safety Canada. • Coordination is run through Provincial and territorial Emergency Management Organizations (EMOs). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Federal Emergency Response Plan (FERP) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Government of Canada's "all-hazards" response plan. It outlines the processes and mechanisms to facilitate an integrated Government of Canada response to an emergency. • The Emergency Management Act is the legislative foundation and the Federal Policy on Emergency Management (FPEM) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Provides the framework for a coordinated approach to federal emergency management. • The Emergency Management Framework for Canada and the Emergency Management Strategy for Canada <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Guide and strengthen the way governments and partners assess risks and work together to prevent/mitigate, prepare for, respond to, and recover from the threats and hazards that pose the greatest risk to Canadians. • The Emergency Management Planning Guide supports the implementation of the Federal Policy for Emergency Management and the Emergency Management Act (2007). <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The Guide provides step-by-step instructions of the planning process across the four pillars of Emergency Management Planning. It is the key tool designed to help federal institutions meet their responsibilities with respect to the management of emergencies. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The FERP covers all hazards including spills and flooding. • Infrastructure not in scope. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • None, any Federal Binational communication comes from the Canada-United States Joint Inland Pollution Contingency Plan. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The FERP is currently undergoing a modernization process, with a new version under development as of 2024 to adapt to more frequent climate-related disasters. • The FERP was activated. In recent years, to coordinate responses to major floods (e.g., BC atmospheric river in 2021), wildfires (2023, 2024), and hurricanes (Fiona and Lee in 2022, 2023). • Has never been activated in the Basin.

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<p>Environment and Climate Change Canada (ECCC)</p> <p>LISA PERUSE Senior Officer, Preparedness and Response – Central, Prairies and North lisa.perusse@ec.gc.ca</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide scientific advice to responders on how best to reduce environmental consequences. • Provides support through the National Environmental Emergencies Centre (available 24/7). • Science-based expert advice includes weather forecasting, ice conditions, contaminant trajectory modelling, fate and behaviour of hazardous substances, sensitivity mapping, establishing clean-up priorities, and protection of sensitive ecosystems and wildlife. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Federal Fisheries Act. • Right to a healthy environment portal - Canadian Environmental Protection Act, 1999. • Canada-United States Joint Inland Pollution Contingency Plan (“Inland Plan”) Annexes CANUSCENT AND CANUPLAIN <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - facilitates a coordinated and integrated federal response to a polluting incident along the inland boundary and provide a mechanism for cooperative responses among all levels of government. - CANUSCENT starts at the Manitoba, Ontario and Minnesota border junction and proceeds east along the Ontario/Minnesota border through the Lake of the Woods and Rainy River to Lake Superior, northeast of Grand Portage, MN. - CANUSPLAIN also starts at the Manitoba, Ontario, Minnesota border junction but it proceeds south initially on the Manitoba/Minnesota border before turning west and following the CAN/US border through Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta. - CANUSPLAIN and CANUSCENT provides overlapping coverage of “The Angle” and most of Shoal Lake including Shoal Lake Reserve 34B2, while CANUSPLAIN picks up the Lake of the Woods areas of Muskeg Bay (US) and Buffalo Bay (CAN). Environmental Emergency regulations under the Canadian Environmental Protection Act (CEPA). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Duty Officer is activated for anything in water unknown substance or unknown volume or over 200L. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Co-lead on the Canada-United States Joint Inland Pollution Contingency Plan. • Binational notification to ECCC comes from the US National Response Centre administered by the US Coast Guard or Environmental Protection Agency. • Can Establish a binational coordination role in large scale events to disseminate information between cross border agencies • ECCC expects the Responsible Party (RP) to notify the public and any stakeholders. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • St Clair River Tunnel CN acid spill in June 2019. • Table top exercise planned with the US EPA planned for April, 2026.

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<p>Transport Canada</p> <p>Andrea Jantoska Senior Program Officer andrea.jantoska@tc.gc.ca</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Involvement is limited and primarily focused on transportation-related activities in a supporting role. • CANUTEC - Canadian Transport Emergency Centre <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Provides chemical emergency response advice, to support preparedness and response in the transportation of dangerous goods sector across Canada. • Fund for Railway Accidents Involving Designated Goods - In the event of a major rail accident involving crude oil, the Rail Fund is available to pay for all remaining eligible claims. It also protects taxpayers from bearing the cost of damages, losses, and response efforts. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emergency Response Guidebook (ERG) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Identify the specific or generic hazards of material(s) involved in a transportation incident. - Protect themselves and the general public during the initial response phase of the incident. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All spill emergencies associated with transporting dangerous goods are covered off by the ERG. • Infrastructure is not within the scope. • Flooding is not within the scope. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emergency Response Guidebook (ERG) - developed by Transport Canada, the US Department of Transportation and the Secretariat of Transport and Communications of Mexico, with help from the Centro de Información Química para Emergencias of Argentina. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There were 277 transportation emergencies reported through CANUTEC in Ontario in 2024.
<p>Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO)</p> <p>Dallas Linley A/Environmental Incident Coordinator dallas.linley@dfo-mpo.gc.ca</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Main role in environmental emergency planning and response in marine environments with respect to minimizing the impacts on fish and fish habitat via the Canadian Coast Guard. • Develop and maintain aquatic species distributions and Resources and Risk mapping and provide site-specific advice related to vulnerable habitats and aquatic species, including Species at Risk. • Develop relationships with key stakeholders and maintain Subject Matter Expert contact lists related to fish and fish habitat for notification and engagement. • Provide supporting information for scientific research by key stakeholders and partner agencies. • Liaising with other internal DFO groups, including regulatory review units, to identify incidents that may harm fish and fish habitat. • Participating in mock spill response exercises with key response stakeholders and partner agencies. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DFO does not have its own plan, they provide response organization support via the Science table as detailed in the Canada-United States Joint Inland Pollution Contingency Plan (the Inland Plan), CANUSCENT and CANUSPLAIN Annexes. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annexes CANUSCENT and CANUSPLAIN of the Inland Plan accounts for environmental spills that result from flooding or infrastructure failures but does not directly address non-spill environmental issues. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information is provided via Environment and Climate Change Canada's (ECCC) National Environmental Emergencies Center (NEEC) at the Science Table, to be relayed to the Responsible Party (RP) in the Canada-United States Joint Inland Pollution Contingency Plan. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DFO in this area has not engaged with these plans in any detail (there have been no incidents to warrant plan activation).

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<p>Ontario Ministry of Emergency Preparedness and Response</p> <p>Tim Neufeld Senior Manager, Regional Field Services Branch, Emergency Response Division tim.neufeld@ontario.ca</p> <p>Patrick Briere Field Officer, Amethyst Sector patrick.briere@ontario.ca</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emergency Management Ontario (EMO) and the Provincial emergency operations centre (PEOC) are directly supported by provincial ministries that are each responsible for developing an emergency management program for specific hazards. During an emergency, the PEOC ensures that the response to any event is coordinated with the lead ministry. • Lead emergency management agency for Ontario. • Monitor, coordinate and assist in developing and implementing emergency management programs in Ontario. • Support municipalities and First Nations communities to comply with the Emergency Management and Civil Protection Act Regulation 380/04 that requires each municipality to establishment an emergency management program and program committee • Coordinates the Provincial Emergency Operations Centre (PEOC). • Delivers local support through Field Officers who assist community emergency management coordinators. • Emergency officers assess the situation and can deploy Ontario Corps, equipment, regional field services staff and/or other resources for support. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emergency Management Modernization Act (EMMA), 2025 is the updated and amended form of the former Emergency Management and Civil Protection Act (EMCPA). <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Provides the legal foundation for managing emergencies in the province, requiring ministries, municipalities, and Indigenous communities (with federal support) to create plans to protect people and property from hazards like nature, disease, or accidents. The Act grants powers to the Premier and Lieutenant Governor to declare emergencies, suspend laws, and take necessary actions, while Emergency. • Provincial Emergency Response Plan (PERP) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Prepared and managed by Emergency Management Ontario (EMO). - Coordinates a multi-agency response by the Government of Ontario that may be required for (non-nuclear type) emergencies that pose a threat of major proportion to people or property and is beyond the response capability of the RP and local authorities. - The Provincial Emergency Response Plan establishes decision groups that to manage an emergency and creates several groups of specialists and experts that can be called upon to provide input to the decision-making process. • Field Officers assist communities to develop local emergency response plans, conduct hazard identification and risk assessments, deliver training and facilitate exercises and other activities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All types of emergencies are covered off by the PERP • Infrastructure is not within the scope. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No provisions in the PERP however, • Northwestern Ontario Field Officer is the facilitator on the Ontario side for The Rainy River International Emergency Management Committee. • The Rainy River International Emergency Management Committee is comprised representatives from Fort Frances, ON, International Falls, MN and other local, state, provincial and federal partners. • Field Officer supported an integrated emergency management course delivered through Minnesota Homeland Security and Emergency Management. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The PERP is a standing plan that gets used and tested continuously, with the pandemic representing a major, real-world application, and exercises like Heatwave in 2024 being crucial for maintaining readiness. • EMO field officer was active and provided support to local authorities and partnered Ontario Ministries such as the MNR & MECP when needed.

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<p>Ontario Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks (MECP)</p> <p>Afeefa Karim-Nasir Senior Manager (A) Spills Action Centre afeefa.karim-nasir@ontario.ca</p> <p>Glen Niznowski District Manager Glen.Niznowski@ontario.ca</p> <p>Jason Tittlemier Environmental Compliance Officer jason.tittlemier@ontario.ca</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 24/7 Support: The Spills Action Centre (SAC) serves the one window for reporting spills in Ontario. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - SAC staff record all the details provided by the caller, including the name and phone number of the person reporting, the name of the company responsible, the location, time, type and quantity of material spilled, and any actions already taken to contain the spill. - SAC assesses the potential environmental and health impacts based on the gathered information. - The SAC notifies and coordinates with other necessary agencies, which may include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The Responsible Party (RP) ▪ Local police and fire departments. ▪ Public health officials. ▪ The local municipality. ▪ Other ministries ▪ Federal government departments, if required. - SAC may dispatch MECP Officers and Inspectors to the incident site when required to monitor the situation, take samples, and verify cleanup efforts. - SAC tracks and follows up on all required cleanup and remediation activities to ensure compliance with the law. • Inspect and monitor spills of hazardous materials and other pollutants released to the natural environment. • When required, offer advice and make recommendations as to the best practicable cleanup and disposal measures to be followed. • Monitor the response activities of Responsible Parties (RP) and, when warranted, initiate abatement and enforcement measures or intervention or pre-empt response measures (as a last resort) in order to protect the interests of the public and the interests of the Ministry and recover the costs from the RP. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Environmental Protection Act (EPA) (2017) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ontario's Environmental Protection Act (EPA) is the province's main law for controlling pollution, focusing on protecting air, water, and land by setting standards, requiring permits for harmful activities, mandating spill prevention/cleanup, controlling waste management, and holding polluters liable, including corporate officers, to ensure the natural environment's conservation. - Spills must be immediately reported to the local municipality and the owner of the spilled substance as part of the initial reporting duties under the (EPA). • Ontario Spills Action Centre (SAC) • Provincial Emergency Response Plan <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - They play a response role within this plan which is prepared and managed by Emergency Management Ontario (EMO). • MECP Emergency Response Plan (2017) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - provides a framework for coordinating Ontario's response to environmental emergencies, focusing on spills, drinking water issues, and other events needing ministry expertise, complementing the broader Provincial Emergency Response Plan (PERP) by defining roles for ministries like Health, Solicitor General, and others to ensure a coordinated provincial approach. It establishes structures for communication, authority, and action during complex crises, aiming to protect people, property, and the environment through preparedness, response, and recovery phase. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ontario Spills Action Centre (SAC) for all spills in Ontario. • SAC has a non-standard operating procedure in place for the Rainy River to handle notifications of stakeholders in the event of a spill. • They rely on other agencies for notifications to the general public • Flooding not within scope of ministry. • Infrastructure not within scope of ministry. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is no official link or protocol for communications between MECP and their MPCA counterparts in MN. • There is an informal non-standard SAC notification procedure to call the MN Duty Officer if a spill happens into the Rainy River. This is only one way, the MPCA does not call the SAC in Ontario for spills on the MN side. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MECP did not attend operation walleye, they saw no need to attend. • Provincially, in 2024/25 the MECP: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Conducted over 6,300 planned compliance activities. - Responded to almost 7,000 spills, over 6,700 pollution incident reports and over 2,400 Adverse Water Quality Incidents, which represent approximately 0.14 per cent of all samples submitted. - Continued to apply compliance and enforcement response, including over 2,300 voluntary compliance actions, 115 orders and 18 tickets issued.

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<p>Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources (MNR)</p> <p>Trevor Davis Services Manager (A) NWR Operations Division trevor.davis@ontario.ca</p> <p>Andor Petrovich Emergency Management and Safety Coordinator NW region andor.petrovich@ontario.ca</p> <p>Dams Andrew Bromley Technical Support Supervisor andrew.bromley@ontario.ca</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources (MNR) is not the lead emergency management authority in Ontario. Instead, it is a specialized supporting ministry with technical, operational, and resource responsibilities during certain types of emergencies—especially natural hazards. MNR is responsible for flood response and dam failure among other non-water related emergencies. For emergencies outside of their direct scope such as a rail accident or spill, OMNR may provide support to lead agencies requests for support routed through the EMO Provincial Emergency Operations Centre (PEOC). Support provided could include: logistical support, specialized advice, weather forecasting, geomatics, providing aircraft for monitoring or reconnaissance etc. As regulators of crown land the Ministry may be required to provide resource management guidance and expertise: assisting with remediation/restoration planning, monitoring site rehabilitation efforts, authorizing road construction and water crossings to access contaminant sites, providing Crown land occupation authority to deposit soil contaminants, providing authority for operational staging areas waste disposal requirement on Crown land etc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Lakes and Rivers Improvement Act (LRIA) requires dam owners to obtain approval from the Ministry of Natural Resources for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the construction of new dams certain repairs and alterations to existing dams certain water crossings and channelization works LRIA Administrative Guide, Technical Bulletins and Best Management Practices. Ontario’s Flooding Strategy <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Created after severe 2019 flooding events in Ontario in the Great Lakes - St. Lawrence basin. The strategy aims to improve awareness, preparedness, and response to flooding through initiatives in understanding risks, strengthening governance, enhancing preparedness, improving response, and investing in risk reduction. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dam owners are responsible for emergency, life cycle and capital planning and safe operation of Dams in Ontario. MNR also conducts regular safety training for all those involved with the operation of the dams. The MNR provides technical guidance and best management practices for design, construction, operation, maintenance and safety of dams. This includes guidance on dam safety, the identification of public safety hazards associated with dams, and how to eliminate or mitigate these hazards. MNR maintains an Ontario Dam Inventory <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Database of all Dams in Ontario. Dams are classed based on risk classification system, a combination of age and current condition of each dam. LRIA regulates routine annual inspections of dams by operators, 5 year independent P.Eng inspection, as well as full-scale Independent Dam Safety Reviews at a minimum every 10 years or more frequently based on the risk classification for the dam. Flood Forecasting and Warning Program <ul style="list-style-type: none"> GIS online application which prepares provincial and local authorities in the event of a flood. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> MNR may be required to participate under the response structure established under the Canada-United States Joint Inland Pollution Contingency Plan. Representative on IRLWWB that could act as liaison during any response involving the IJC. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The MNR deployed Forest Fire Fighters to help with sandbagged efforts in the 2022 Rainy Lake basin flood.

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<p>Ontario Ministry of Health/Northwest Health Unit</p> <p>Thomas Nabb Environmental Health & Smoke-free Ontario Manager tnabb@nwhu.on.ca</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not a lead agency in the event of emergencies. • Work with MECP, communities and municipalities to provide communication to the public. • Participate in Municipal response teams to provide advice on how events could impact public health. • Work with community partners to plan for and respond to public health emergencies. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can issue Provincial Emergency Alert, similar to Amber Alert. • Northwestern Health Unit (NWHU) issues building permits (“Sewage Permits”) for on-site sewage systems and performs related inspections required by the Building Code Act and the Ontario Building Code. The section of the Ontario Building Code that outlines the requirements for on-site sewage systems is Part 8. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NWHU provides information about how to be prepared, and works with community partners to plan for and respond to public health emergencies such as floods, fires and public health emergencies. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No bi national communications or US contacts. • Participated in Operation Walleye emergency test - inspector attended. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NA
<p>West Fraser Barwick Facility</p> <p>Molly MacDonald Environmental and Safety Coordinator</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • West Fraser is a key Responsible Party (RP) in the emergency response structure. • Manage on site events according to company emergency plan. • Report environmental emergencies to appropriate regulatory agencies. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • On site mill Emergency Response Plan (ERP). • Also a specific ERP in place for large propane tank. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resin Tank, Bulk Diesel and Propane Spills. • Tank testing done annually. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No bi national communications or US contacts. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No recent reportable incidents. • Testing of the ERP is done each year.
<p>New Gold Rainy River Project</p> <p>Garnett Cornell Environmental Manager garnet.cornell@newgold.com</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New Gold is a key Responsible Party (RP) in the emergency response structure. • Manage on site events according to company emergency plan. • Report environmental emergencies to appropriate regulatory agencies. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • On site mill Emergency Response Plan (ERP) in place revised in 2025. • Includes Communications Plan in event of an environmental emergency. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ERP addresses infrastructure management for berms, dams, 10 km water pipeline to Pinewood River. • Includes modelling of tailing dam failure and spills. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No bi national communications. • Provisions for reporting to Government Agencies and local public and stakeholders in Ontario. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ERP updated and tested in 2025.
<p>First Light Energy (formally H2O Power)</p> <p>Ron Medina Senior Operating Manager Ron.Medina@firstlight.energy</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • First Light Energy is a key Responsible Party (RP) in the emergency response structure. • Manage on site events according to company emergency plan. • Report environmental emergencies to appropriate regulatory agencies. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • H2O Power Emergency Response Management Plan (ERP) (2024). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oil/Chemical/Effluent Spills • Dam Breach or Failure • Fire/Explosion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No Bi-National reporting provisions in the Emergency Response Plan. • Provisions for reporting to Government Agencies. Other • Regularly distribute information on water flows. • Very close contact with PCA mill in International Falls and Colonel of the IJC. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tested in 2022 at other facilities. Plan activated in 2023 at Iroquois Falls (outside of Basin). • Had daily call with E.M.O. during 2022 Rainy Lake Basin Flood.

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<p>Evolugen by Brookfield Renewable</p> <p>James Neufeld Dam Safety Engineer ontario.info@evolugen.com</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evolugen is a key Responsible Party (RP) in the emergency response structure. • Owns and operates the Valerie Falls Generating Station upstream of the international border. • Manage on site events according to company emergency plan. Report environmental emergencies to appropriate regulatory agencies • In an emergency, Brookfield might be able adjust operation to support emergency responses downstream. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Brookfield's internal All Emergency Response Plan (ERP) and Dam Safety ERP. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The All Emergency ERP includes environmental spills. • The Dam Safety ERP includes flooding and impacts from a Dam failure. They include inundation mapping for the probable maximum flood in event of a dam failure. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • None, they feel they are not close enough to the international border to consider binational interests. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Brookfield has never activated the Dam Safety ERP for dam emergency. Brookfield has activated alerts for a high flow event in 2023. This event was communicated between H2O Power (now Frist Light) and MNR. • Brookfield conducted tabletop exercises over the past couple years with potential impacted stakeholders. • Brookfield has conducted notification tests with a mass notification system.

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<p>CN Rail</p> <p>Claire Marchand Manager Environmental ER Planning & Preparedness Claire.Marchand@cn.ca</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As the party having management or control of the dangerous goods, CN is a key Responsible Party (RP) in the emergency response structure. • Dangerous Goods (DG) Team: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A specialized team works to enhance emergency preparedness and response for DG incidents, utilizing a system that includes trained personnel, specialized equipment (like firefighting and transfer trailers), contractors, and industry partners. • Coordination with External Agencies: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - CN works within the Incident Command System (ICS) framework during an incident, providing a liaison to the Emergency Operations Centre (EOC) to help coordinate response and recovery operations with local police, fire services, and other authorities. • Information Sharing: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - CN must provide local emergency planning officials with aggregate information on the nature and volume of dangerous goods transported through their jurisdiction to aid community planning. • Public and First Responder Contact: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - public inquiry line and a dedicated 24/7 CN Police emergency number (1-800-465-9239) for reporting incidents or safety concerns. • Training for First Responders: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The CN Dangerous Goods team provides free online and in-person training courses, including hands-on simulations at training centers in Winnipeg, MB, and Homewood, IL. • AskRail® App: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - CN is a member of the Association of American Railroads which developed the AskRail® mobile app that allows qualified emergency responders to access real-time information about the contents of railcars. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CN Railroad Emergency Preparedness Guide (EPG) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - developed to assist local emergency response organizations in their efforts to plan for and respond to railway-related incidents or emergencies. • AskRail® <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The AskRail® app is a safety tool that provides first responders immediate access to accurate, timely data about what type of hazardous materials a railcar is carrying so they can make an informed decision about how to respond to a rail emergency. • CN Bridge Management Program <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Meets or exceeds all federal standards. - Follows strict bridge inspection regimen. - Employs qualified railroad bridge inspectors. - All bridges inspected at least once annually. - Continuous investment in bridge maintenance and renewal. • TransCAER® (Transportation Community Awareness and Emergency Response), CN participates in outreach efforts to train community emergency personnel and assist in developing local emergency response plans. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Spills and Flooding covered in the EPG. • Infrastructure <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - CN invests heavily in advanced detection systems and track maintenance to prevent incidents from occurring in the first place. - CN rail bridges vary from single timber 12-foot spans over streams in fields across the Midwest and Prairies, to structures spanning more than a mile over some of the continent's largest rivers. They are all inspected, maintained and, as necessary, repaired or rebuilt by a qualified workforce led by designated CN bridge engineers in accordance with Canadian and U.S. federal regulations and CN's Bridge Management Program. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Binational response and coordination is included in the Emergency Response Guidebook (ERG) - developed by Transport Canada, the US Department of Transportation and the Secretariat of Transport and Communications of Mexico, with help from the Centro de Información Química para Emergencias of Argentina. • CN utilizes this plan in the event of an incident involving a spill of dangerous goods. • CN internal EPG guide also contains a notification procedure where various responders and government agencies on each side of the border are alerted as required, depending on the nature of the incident. • Drills in MN conducted with Environmental Team out of Winnipeg. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Plans are regularly tested and reviewed. • Spills drills are conducted annually. • Warroad drill exercise 2025 - petroleum car spill into a ditch that fed into Lake of the Woods. One thousand feet of boom was deployed at the creek mouth. • There have been 6 noteworthy incidences in the last ten years in the Basin where the plan was invoked in a real-life scenario. The last one being derailment in Devlin, Ontario in June of 2025, however no dangerous goods where involved.

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<p>Grand Council Treaty #3 (GCT3)</p> <p>Justin Ersser Emergency Coordination Manager justin.ersser@treaty3.ca</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Grand Council Treaty is engaged in the coordination and support of Emergency Management Planning. Emergency Management Coordinators can work with communities to support and create emergency plans for floods, fires, pandemics and other emergencies. Planning includes updating plans, completing risk assessments, training and infrastructure support. an Environmental Coordinator who is contacted during an emergency. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Working on emergency response plans but nothing official provided. 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> none 	
<p>Pwi-Di-Goo-Zing Ne-Yaa-Zhing Advisory Services</p> <p>Tyler Yatchuk Emergency Management Coordinator tyatchuk@advisoryservices.ca</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Emergency Management Coordinator provides guidance and support that will assist First Nations communities in emergency planning initiatives. The Emergency Management Coordinator (EMC) assists with the development and maintenance of Emergency Management plans. In the event of an emergency, the EMC will liaise with the identified community lead and assist as requested. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Working on emergency response plans but nothing official provided. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Intent is to have provisions for all emergencies built into their plan including spills, flooding or infrastructure failure. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> None, plan still in development. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Plan is still in development.

Appendix I – Agency Contact and Information Summary Table

Agency	Role in Emergency Management Planning and/or Response	Relevant Plans, Agreements, Documentation or Other Information	Provisions for Environmental spills, flooding or infrastructure failure	Provisions for Binational Coordination and Communication	When was this plan last activated or tested?
<p>Town of Fort Frances</p> <p>Travis Rob Manager of Operations & Facilities trob@fortfrances.ca</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • During an emergency, the town's Fire and Emergency Services, led by a Community Emergency Management Coordinator (CEMC) under the Emergency Control Group, as defined in the Fort Frances Emergency Plan, coordinates the response efforts of all local agencies, including police, paramedics, and public works. • The Fire Chief is responsible for coordinating assistance with other municipal, regional, provincial, or federal departments and agencies • The Manager of Operations & Facilities maintains liaison with flood control centres, conservation and environmental agencies. • The Mayor, as the head of the council, has the authority to declare a state of emergency within the municipality, which allows the town to take extraordinary measures and mobilize resources beyond normal operations. • The town provides direction regarding evacuation procedures, including detailing evacuation routes and centers in its official Town map and plans. • The town uses emergency sirens to notify residents of a critical situation, such as a toxic gas leak or severe weather, and instructs them to tune into local radio (B93 FM, 93.1) for further instructions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emergency Management & Civil Protection Act. • Fort Frances Emergency Plan (FFEP). • Mutual aid agreements with other municipalities in the Rainy River District including 2 First Nations. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The FFEP is built to allow the town to respond to all types of emergencies; severe storms, floods, air or rail crashes, toxic or flammable gas/chemical leaks, transportation incidents involving hazardous materials, electric power blackouts, uncontrollable fires, explosions, or any combination thereof • Infrastructure is not within the scope of the FFEP • Class 3 Wastewater Treatment Facility MOE Certificate of Approval #3-0049-96-006 outlines the terms and conditions on how the waste water treatment plant is maintained and operated. The Town also operates and maintains 6 sewage pumping stations. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is no official requirement for binational coordination in the town FFEP. • The Town communicates with higher level provincial agencies and relies on them for binational communication & coordination. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Town invoked the plan in 2022 to declare a state of emergency due to flooding in the Rainy River Basin. • FFEP was revised in April 2024 • The FFEP outlines exercises to test the system and a minimum of one test exercise is required per year.
<p>Municipal, unincorporated and First Nation Volunteer Fire Departments - Ontario</p> <p>Various Contacts</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Often the first on-scene Ssecure/assist the scene with life safety as a priority. • Some hazardous material awareness hazmat training and may • Triage within their ability until fully trained personnel arrive. • Most have small spill kits • General resource for local supporting organization (municipality, First Nation governance or Roads Board etc.), may assist with road closures / evacuating residents etc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emergency Planning held by others. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Many have some pumping ability to assist with floods and provide other support to emergency management operations. • Some hazardous material awareness hazmat training. • Infrastructure not in scope. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No participation across border with the exception of those community's fire departments at the two main bridges across the Rainy River. • Some participation in Rainy River International Emergency Management Committee. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NA

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<p>United States Environmental Protection Agency (US EPA)</p> <p>Barb Lee RRT Coordinator and Regional Contingency Planner, US EPA Region 5 Lee.barbi@epa.gov</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Federal lead for planning, preparing and responding to environmental emergencies in the inland zone, including the Rainy River and Lake of the Woods region. • Lead the Region 5 Area Contingency Plan/Regional Contingency Plan (ACP/RCP) and co-lead the Region 5 Regional Response Team (RRT5) that is responsible for the U.S. portion of the watershed in Minnesota and includes Tribes. • RRT5 is comprised of members from state and federal agencies and has identified environmentally sensitive areas for the entire US portion of the watershed participate in exercises, including a rail- specific exercise, work with Tribes and Minnesota on preparedness initiatives. • Notified through the U.S. Coast Guard maintained, National Response Center (NRC) They triage and decide whether they need to attend. They have one On Scene Coordinator (OSC) in Minneapolis If they need to get involved to make sure the responsible party is handling the emergency effectively. They will intervene if they feel warranted, only in very rare instances. • Pollution reports to the NRC activate the National Contingency Plan and the federal government's response capabilities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National Response Center (NRC) • Canada-United States Joint Inland Pollution Contingency Plan. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Annex III (CANUSCENT) of joint contingency plan covers the Rainy River and Lake of the Woods. • Region 5 Regional/Area Contingency Plan <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - describes response protocols and assists in providing a coordinated response capability in the event of a release or spill that poses a threat to the environment or to human health and welfare for US EPA Region 5. - as part of the Region 5 planning, the EPA has identified environmentally sensitive areas for the entire U.S. portion of the watershed. These areas and others are available in an online interactive atlas for first responder. - There are sub regional plans within the Plan for areas of high importance but the Lake of the Woods/Rainy Lake Basin is not one of them. • National Response Team (NRT) Joint Information Center (JIC) model. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Outlines how notifications and public affairs are handled during an event. - A form of Unified Command Structure for communications during a spill response. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Spills are reported through the National Reporting Center (NRC). • If necessary, the EPA will issue a Notice of Federal Interest and move into an oversight role. • EPA can invoke a Notice of Federal Assumption under the National Contingency Plan if the RP is not able to adequately handle the emergency response and clean-up. • Flooding not in scope. • Infrastructure not in scope. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Events that affect shared boundaries & navigable waterways reported through NRC are reported to the ECCC's National Environmental Emergencies Centre in Canada. • Co-lead on the Canada-United States Joint Inland Pollution Contingency Plan and Annex III (CANUSCENT). • Canadian emergency response partners invited to all preparedness activities. • Attended the former Canadian-led Regional Environmental Emergencies Team (REET) meetings prior to the restructuring of the Canadian program. • EPA does not make notifications to the public. They rely on the JIC model. • The EPA's JIC model does not describe binational coordination. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Saint Clair Tunnel CN acid spill in June 2019. • Table top exercise planned with the Canadian ECCC planned for April, 2026.

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<p>United States Coast Guard (USCG)</p> <p>Jerry Popiel CANUSLAK Joint Response Team Co-Chair (US), Incident Management & Preparedness Advisor USCG Great Lakes District Jerome.A.Popiel@uscg.mil</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No involvement in planning or preparing for a response to a petrochemical release inland and outside of the coastal zone. Rainy River and Lake of the Woods fall under the jurisdiction of the U.S. EPA; could however USCG could act as first federal official on scene at the request of EPA. Maintains the National Response Center (NRC) (centralized reporting system for spills and environmental incidents) and coordinate notifying the responsible agency (US EPA for the Rainy-Lake of the Woods region). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Canada-United States Joint Inland Pollution Contingency Plan. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> CANUSCENT & CANUSLAK Annexes of joint contingency plan covers the Rainy River and Lake of the Woods. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Spills are reported through the National Reporting Center (NRC). Flooding not in scope. Infrastructure not in scope. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> May be required to participate under the response structure established under the Canada-United States Joint Inland Pollution Contingency Plan. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Not Applicable the USCG is not responsible for the Basin, it falls under the EPA Region 5.
<p>United States Department of Transportation (USDOT)</p> <p>No Contact based on available public information</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Primarily focused on the safe transport of hazardous materials and supporting infrastructure resilience during crises. Collaborates with state agencies like the Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT) and the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA) to integrate transportation into state-level emergency operations plans. Under the National Response Framework, USDOT acts as the primary federal agency for Emergency Support Function Transportation, which involves coordinating transportation resources and managing the impact of disasters on transportation system. Key agencies under the USDOT are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Federal Highway Administration (FHWA). Federal Railroad Administration (FRA). Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration (PHMSA). Provide data and guidance on hazardous material spills, pipeline breaks, and tanker truck accidents. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The USDOT does not have a specific environmental emergency planning and response plan. They work inside other agencies plans. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assists in implementing processes that ensure rapid response to infrastructure failures such as highway bridges. The Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensures railroad safety, the FRA employs safety inspectors to monitor railroad compliance with federally mandated safety standards including track maintenance, inspection standards and operating practices. Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration (PHMSA) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develops Federal regulations for the safe transport of energy and hazardous materials. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The USDOT does not have a specific environmental emergency planning and response plan. They work inside other agencies plans. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> NA

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<p>Minnesota Department of Public Safety (MDPS)</p> <p>Kelvin McCuskey HSEM Regional Program Coordinator Kelvin.mccuskey@state.mn.us</p> <p>George Wexler HSEM Operations</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Responsible for the Minnesota Duty Officer Program which provide a single point of contact for reporting spills/discharges and requesting state-level assistance for emergencies. Homeland Security and Emergency Management (HSEM) division coordinates state level planning and provides guidance to local governments for writing and updating local plans. Assist the County with any safety preparedness drills or exercises. Department does not have a specific environmental emergency response plan. It has adopted an all-hazards response plan, the Minnesota Emergency Operations Plan (MEOP). MEOP assigns MPCA as lead for environmental emergencies that are non- agricultural, non-radiological and not a weapons of mass destruction event. Responsible for managing the State Emergency Operations Center (SEOC) which coordinates all state agency support to the incident commander. Responsible for deploying state hazmat response teams. One of 11 teams is hosted by the International Falls Fire Department. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Minnesota Emergency Operations Plan (MEOP). <ul style="list-style-type: none"> It coordinates the multi-agency response to major disasters, defining roles for agencies. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The MEOP defines lead agencies as follows: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> MPCA for spills, waste water treatment facilities and chemical facilities. MNDOT for roads & rail. MNDNR for dams & levees. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Regional Program Coordinator is the facilitator on the MN side for The Rainy River International Emergency Management Committee. The Rainy River International Emergency Management Committee is comprised representatives from Fort Frances, ON, International Falls, MN and other local, state, provincial and federal partners. Help to coordinate and support “Operation Walleye” in 2021. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The MEOP is reviewed annually and updated accordingly.

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<p>Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA)</p> <p>Dorene M. Fier-Tucker Supervisor, Emergency Response Program dorene.firt-tucker@state.mn.us</p> <p>Theresa Haugen Manager Water and Mining Section theresa.haugen@state.mn.us</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lead state agency responsible for coordinating state efforts related to discharges of hazardous substances and oil and environmental hazard response. • Emergency Response Program (ERP) responsible for parts of Minnesota Statute 115E (“Spill Bill”): Oil and Hazardous Substances Discharge and Preparedness – includes requirements for all handlers of oil and hazardous materials to prevent spills and discharges and be prepared to recover substances during such events. • Provides direction and ERP templates to handlers of oil and hazardous substances. • Some facilities in the state are required to have specific preparedness. For example, railroads that operate unit trains are required to submit plans, offer trainings to fire departments along routes, conduct drills and deliver response and monitoring equipment. • Agency enforces Duty to Notify and Avoid Water Pollution statute 115.061. • Reportable spills are directed to the Minnesota Duty Officer - reporting threshold for petroleum spills is 5 gal. (~19L) and any quantity for all other chemicals. • Holds contracts with businesses that provide environmental emergency response services. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MPCA Emergency Operations Plan <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - focuses on preparedness, response, and recovery regarding environmental emergencies, such as hazardous material spills or contamination incidents. It involves coordinating with local, state, and federal partners, including the MN Duty Officer. • MPCA strategic plan 2024-2028 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - strategic plan has six broad goals that guides the agency's work from Jan. 1, 2024, to Dec. 31, 2028. • Member of the USEPA Region 5 Response Team. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plans deal with spills only <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - adheres to the standard five steps of emergency management: prevention, mitigation, preparedness, response, and recovery. • Floods outside of scope. • Infrastructure failure outside of scope. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May be required to participate under the response structure established under the Canada-United States Joint Inland Pollution Contingency Plan. • Participates in the IRLWWB. • No protocols in place for binational communications. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MPCA emergency response staff field over 3,000 incident reports each year.

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<p>Koochiching County</p> <p>Willi Kostiuk Emergency Management Coordinator Willi.Kostiuk@co.koochiching.mn.us</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Koochiching County has an Emergency Operations Plan (EOP) in plan that outlines procedures for dealing with hazardous materials accidents, spills or releases. All emergency staff has awareness level training in regard to hazardous materials and spills. • Emergency management functions, including the EOP, fall under the Sheriff's Office, specifically the Emergency Management Division. • The county uses an early warning system, including sirens, alarms, and a "Notify Me@" system for citizen alerts via email or text and the Integrated Public Alert and Warning System (IPAWS) is FEMA's national system to send authenticated, life-saving messages simultaneously through Wireless Emergency Alerts (WEA), Emergency Alert System (EAS), and NOAA Weather Radio notification is also utilized. • Koochiching County Hazard Mitigation Plan (KCHMP) to identify risks and guide actions, and maintaining local water management plans to address resource concerns. • Implement long-term projects to reduce disaster impacts, such as flood control or shoreline stabilization, often through grant programs. • Work with state agencies (like the MN Pollution Control Agency - MPCA) for technical support and response during spills. • Planning for coordinated county-wide response during emergencies, with the Emergency Management Division activating plans to protect health, safety, and welfare. • Regularly assessing local threats, including potential technological hazards like hazardous material spills from rail, working with stakeholders to rank risks. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Koochiching County Hazard Mitigation Plan (KCHMP). • Koochiching County Emergency Operations Plan (EOP). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Koochiching County Emergency Operations Plan (EOP). • The KCHMP <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Recognizes all hazards such as flooding, wildfires, blizzards, straight line winds, ice storms, and hazardous material spills have the potential for inflicting vast economic loss and personal hardship. - The intent of the plan is to reduce the actual threat of specific hazards by limiting the impact of damages and losses. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One of the lead agencies in the Rainy River International Emergency Management Committee. • The main driving agency for "Operation Walleye" in 2021, including planning, securing funding and a contractor to facilitate the actual the exercise. • The EOP has a notification list that includes binational counterparts in Fort Frances as well as EMO. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The EOP is approved by the Minnesota Department of Homeland Security and Emergency Management (HSEM) every four years. • It is evaluated on a four-year cycle consisting of independent regional review board, peer, county, and state review. • 2022 flood was the last major event that tested the system.

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<p>Lake of the Woods County</p> <p>Jill Hasbargen Olson Emergency Manager Director Lake of the Woods County Sheriff's Office jill_o@co.lotw.mn.us</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lake of the Woods County Emergency Management is responsible for maintaining emergency planning for the county. • The department works as part of the HSEM system in Minnesota. • The county recognizes the risk and shares the concerns associated with the transport of petroleum-based products and other chemicals. • Notes that trains travel at slower speeds when travelling cross border at the Rainy River Crossing as an additional safety precaution • county also leads round table discussions with emergency management partners. • Lake of the Woods County Sheriff's Office is the likely first responder to an environmental emergency. • Lake of the Woods County has a fire department and EMS within City of Baudette. • All agencies collaborate with Lake of the Woods County Emergency Management and MN HSEM in the planning of a large-scale tabletop exercise and full-scale mock exercises. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lake of the Woods County Hazard Mitigation Plan (2020). • Lake of the Woods County Emergency Operations Plan (EOP) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - guides emergency operations and assists officials and organizations carry out their responsibilities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognizes all hazards such as flooding, wildfires, blizzards, straight line winds, ice storms, and hazardous material spills. • Infrastructure not in scope. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participates in the Rainy River International Emergency Management Committee and the Can-Am (Manitoba) Border Committee – these are a panel of U.S. and Canadian officials meets regularly and works to prepare and share resources in the event of an emergency. • Coordination between agencies is handled through individual mutual aid agreements or an annex in emergency management planning. • Given the remoteness of the area, resources have always been shared across the border including fire and emergency services. • Mutual aid agreement with Rainy River, ON to share fire and emergency services resources. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EOP is currently in the fourth year of a four-year planning and exercise cycle and will be undergoing HSEM review in the near-term. • EOP is being revised and expanded for all hazard responses.
<p>City of International Falls (IFalls) Fire Department</p> <p>Adam Mannausau Fire Chief, EMS Director adammm@ci.international-falls.mn.us</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plays a critical role in an emergency spill, typically acting as the Incident Commander (IC) to manage the scene, ensure public safety, and coordinate with state agencies to mitigate environmental damage. • They are responsible for responding to hazardous material (HAZMAT) incidents within the limits of their training and initiating containment efforts for small spills. • As first responder, assess the type, quantity, and potential hazards of the spilled material. • Responsible for ensuring the Minnesota Duty Officer is called when required. • Develop and maintain Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) for hazardous material incidents, incorporating the National Incident Management System (NIMS). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emergency Plan for IFalls falls under Koochiching County. Emergency Management <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Koochiching County Hazard Mitigation Plan (KCHMP). - Koochiching County Emergency Operations Plan (EOP). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IFalls Fire is 1 of 11 Hazardous materials response teams in MN. • Provide staff and resources in response to flooding, pumps, sandbagging securement of hazardous materials. • Infrastructure not in scope. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No official protocol for cross border communications. • Participates in the Rainy River International Emergency Management Committee. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The EOP is approved by the Minnesota Department of Homeland Security and Emergency Management (HSEM) every four years. • 2022 flood was the last major event that tested the system.

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<p>City of Baudette Fire Department</p> <p>Brad Levasseur Fire Chief blevasseur@mmua.org</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Often the first on-scene Secure/assist the scene with life safety as a priority. • Some hazardous material awareness hazmat training and may triage within their ability until fully trained personnel arrive. • Has small spill kits. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emergency Planning held by the county Lake of the Woods County Hazard Mitigation Plan (2020). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have some pumping ability to assist with floods and provide other support to emergency management operations. • Some hazardous material awareness hazmat training. • Infrastructure not in scope. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does not Participate in the Rainy River International Emergency Management Committee. • Mutual aid agreement with Rainy River, ON to share fire and emergency services resources but needs updating. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NA
<p>Packaging Corporation of America (PCA) – International Falls Mill</p> <p>Braeden Colsch Environmental Manager BraedenColsch@packagingcorp.com</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Did not respond to requests for information after initial contact. • PCA is a key Responsible Party (RP) in the emergency response structure. • Based on regulations they must: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Manage on site events according to company emergency plan. - Report environmental emergencies to appropriate regulatory agencies. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nothing provided for review. • MPCA has issued orders requiring written procedures for emergency management including preventing releases of untreated wastewater. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nothing provided for review. • MPCA issued orders to prevent future occurrences. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nothing provided for review. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Actual Spills <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Oct 2020, 1.4 M gallons of untreated waste water. - May 2021, untreated waste water. - March 2021, Floating solids and visible pink foam. - Aug 2025, 1500 sq ft of foam, 10m sq ft to river.

Appendix II Communities within the Basin

Ontario

Rainy River District

Town of Fort Frances

Town of Rainy River

Town of Atikokan

Township of Alberton

Alberton

Township of La Vallee

Devlin

La Vallee

Township of Emo

Emo

Township of Chapple

Barwick

Township of Morley

Stratton

Township of Dawson

Pinewood

Sleeman

Township of Lake of the Woods

Morson

Bergland

Kenora District

City of Kenora

Township of Sioux Narrows - Nestor Falls

Sioux Narrows

Nestor Falls

Minnesota

District 1A

Roseau County

Warroad

District 2A

Lake of the Woods County

Baudette

District 3A

St. Louis County

Ely

Babbitt

Tower

Cook

Orr

Bigfork

Squaw Lake

Koochiching County

Rainer

International Falls

Little Fork

Big Falls

Cook County

no communities on Basin

Lake County

no communities on Basin

Turtle Island

Indigenous Communities

Anishinaabe Communities

Lac La Croix

Seine River

Nigigoonsiminikaaning - Red Gut Bay

Mitaanjigamiing - Stanjikoming Bay

Couchiching

Rainy River

Naicatchewenin - Northwest Bay

Mishkosiminiziibiing - Big Grassy

Naongahiing - Big Island

Onigaming - Sabaskong Bay

Animakee Wa Zhing 37

Northwest Angle No. 33

Naotkamegwanning - Whitefish Bay

Wauzhusk Onigum - Rat Portage

Washagamis Bay

Iskatewizaagegan - Shoal Lake No.39

Shoal Lake No.40

Buffalo Point

Red Lake Nation

Bois Forte Band

Metis Communities

Sunset Country Metis

Kenora Metis

Atikokan Metis