

Statement
October 24, 2025

The International Joint Commission (IJC) is guided by the Boundary Waters Treaty, signed by Canada and the United States in 1909. The Treaty provides general principles for preventing and resolving disputes over waters shared between the two countries and for settling other transboundary issues.

In the Red River basin, the IJC reports on water quality through its International Red River Watershed Board (IRRWB), which keeps the IJC informed of basin activities that affect transboundary river flows, water quality, and ecosystem health in the Red River and its tributaries as per its [Directive](#). This Directive asks the IRRWB to: *Maintain an awareness of current and emerging land use and development and socio-economic activities and conditions and the potential or existing impact of these activities and conditions on the Aquatic Ecosystem Integrity of the Red River Basin, including through maintaining an awareness of the activities of other governments (federal, Indigenous, provincial, state, and municipal as relevant) and their agencies and institutions.*

Accordingly, the IRRWB has an ongoing responsibility to remain aware of ongoing developments in the basin, which include, wastewater treatment plants, Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations (CAFOs), and other activities that could affect the aquatic ecosystem health of the Red River watershed.

In terms of CAFOs, the IJC has asked the IRRWB to evaluate and assess relevant information and permits issued by North Dakota to determine whether impacts on aquatic ecosystem integrity and water quality at the international boundary were sufficiently considered. The IRRWB has also been asked to consider potential impacts of CAFOs in the context of cumulative effects, and whether the water quality objectives for nitrogen and phosphorus in the Red River basin, that have been agreed to by Canada and the United States at the recommendation of the IJC and the IRRWB, can be met with the approval of these CAFOs.

The intent of the IRRWB review is to gather information, including from permits issued, in order to understand the potential effects of the CAFOs on the aquatic ecosystem integrity of the Red River watershed. Neither the IJC nor the IRRWB have any regulatory authority regarding water quality and this IRRWB review is not a formal regulatory process. Consistent with IJC practice, boards, including the IRRWB, do not comment on or take a position regarding domestic permitting processes.

If the IRRWB has outstanding concerns about the potential impacts of CAFOs' or other issues on aquatic ecosystem integrity, which includes water quality, the board will bring these to the attention of the Commission for its consideration in raising to the two governments.