



Save The River®

Upper St. Lawrence RIVERKEEPER®

*Protecting the St. Lawrence River through Advocacy, Education and Research since 1978
...now and for generations to come.*

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John Peach

409 Riverside Drive

Clayton, New York 13624

(315) 686-2010

email: info@savetheriver.org

www.savetheriver.org

October 1, 2019

Craig Middlebrook, Deputy Administrator

Policy Headquarters

U.S. Department of Transportation

1200 New Jersey Ave, SE

Washington, DC 20590

Terrance Bowels, President and CEO

Head Office

202 Pitt Street

Cornwall, Ontario

Canada K6J 3P7

Dear Administrator Middlebrook and President Bowels,

As we enter the fall season of this extremely high water year caused by record precipitation throughout the Great Lakes and Ottawa River basins, many of our members, St. Lawrence River and Lake Ontario riparians, and business owners are quite anxious about the spectre of another year of flooding and shoreline damage. It appears that the only proactive maneuver within your power against such a future event is to ramp up the outflows through the Moses-Saunders Dam to the maximum design limits.

We are aware that to increase the outflow to the maximum through the next three months causes safety concerns for the shipping industry. However, a program of patterning of shipping, as proposed in our July 22, 2019 letter to you, would allow the ILOSLRB to let out more water than they are currently able to outflow through the dam. Alternatively, if the shipping season was closed on December 1 there would also be an opportunity for the ILOSLRB to decrease the water level before having to temporarily reduce the flow to form a proper sheet of ice.

We understand that a call for the early closure of shipping would cause scheduling and logistics challenges for the shipping industry, and perhaps some supply chain disruption in Great Lakes ports. The practice of patterning would cause much less disruption than a full closure. And patterning is still possible to schedule.

For over 40 years Save The River has been the leading grassroots advocacy organization working to protect the St. Lawrence River by campaigning to stop aquatic invasive species, fighting winter navigation, and promoting an environmentally friendly water levels plan. Save The River also organizes the water quality restoration and monitoring programs that track River health and identify pollution problems.

Many of our shoreline businesses such as marinas, restaurants, hotels, and fishing guides have suffered significant losses this season due to the effects of the extreme high water. It will be difficult for them to make up those losses. Another extreme high water year could force them out of business. We are asking the shipping industry to shoulder their share of the burdens caused by the water levels. During times of flooding, it is usual for all businesses and stakeholders to lend their support to help those most severely affected recover from their losses.

Having ignored our July suggestion of patterning, there is still time for shipping to do its part to help lower the historically high water levels back to nearer seasonal averages while the opportunity exists.

I look forward to hearing from you at your earliest possible convenience about what actions you will take to help resolve this situation.

Sincerely,



John Peach
Executive Director, Save The River
Upper St. Lawrence Riverkeeper

cc. IJC Commissioner Jane Corwin, U.S. Chair
IJC Commissioner Pierre Béland, Canadian Chair
Frank Bevacqua, IJC Public Information Officer
Governor Andrew Cuomo
Representative Elise Stefanik
Senator Charles Schumer
Senator Kirsten Gillibrand
Senator Patty Ritchie

Save The River envisions a healthy Upper St. Lawrence River that provides safe drinking water, is home to a thriving range of indigenous species, and supports sustainable economic activity.