



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.

March 11, 2020

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Dear Ms. Lochman,

As regards the plan to maximize outflows from the Moses Saunders Dam beyond safe navigation limits for the period of April 1 through April 15, 2020, Save The River Upper St. Lawrence Riverkeeper® is writing in support of the International Joint Commission (ICJ) decision to give such authority to the International Lake Ontario St. Lawrence River Board (ILOSLRB) should water levels in the Upper St. Lawrence River and Lake Ontario, caused by years of record precipitation, remain significantly above average. Under such circumstances, it will be imperative that the ILOSLRB take action to get as much water as possible out of the system in order to avoid a repeat of the catastrophic damage caused in 2017 and 2019 to the homes, businesses and lives of tens of thousands riparians in affected Lake Ontario and St. Lawrence River locales.

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While we applaud the Seaway's decision to delay the opening until April 1, it is critical that the period from April 1 - April 15 also be available to the ILOSLRB to remove water from the system. We understand that this decision may necessitate further delaying of opening of the 2020 shipping season, but it is a delay that we have been requesting since early December 2019. At that time, we wrote Governor Cuomo and Premier Ford. Since then we have had no success convincing the Seaway to close early or curtail shipping in an effort to let more water out of the system to help alleviate the extreme high water levels that have caused so much pain for riparians and businesses along the shoreline.

UPPER ST. LAWRENCE
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John Peach

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"Therefore, we are proposing that the Seaway delay the spring 2020 opening until the beginning of Ottawa River freshet. According to members of the International Lake Ontario-St. Lawrence River Board (ILOSLRB) and others who attended a recent meeting (November 14, 2019) on water levels in Ogdensburg, this is the best opportunity that remains to continue to lower water levels to seasonal averages.

As you know, the Great Lakes remain at historical seasonal highs going into the winter season. Our River and Lakeshore businesses and homeowners cannot withstand another year of extreme high water resulting from the potential of high precipitation this winter and spring. We believe that the losses and damages sustained by the region's riparians and businesses are at least equal to, or greater than, the loss that shipping may sustain by a delay in next spring's opening. While there are environmental benefits to minimally higher

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seasonal water levels in wet years, the extreme high levels and long durations of 2017 and 2019 were much higher than were needed to be beneficial to the environment.

On behalf of Save The River and all of the Upper St. Lawrence River and Lake Ontario riparians and businesses, we ask you to use your powerful and effective voice to request that the Seaway delay the opening of the spring 2020 shipping season to allow the ILOSLRB to lower the water levels to at least the seasonal averages. Making this request now, rather than later in the winter, would allow shippers to adjust their schedules and businesses to make arrangements for alternative modes of transportation for time sensitive deliveries of critical materials".

During times of flooding, it is usual for all businesses and stakeholders to lend their support to help those most severely affected to recover from their losses. The delay of the opening of the shipping season until April 15 would be a significant help to the riparians and businesses that live and work along the shorelines of the St. Lawrence River and Lake Ontario.

On behalf of Save The River's 1000+ members and 15,000 supporters, we ask that you use your influence to endorse the IJC and ILOSLRB in their efforts to remove as much water as possible from the system before the beginning of the Ottawa River freshet. Thank you in advance for your attention to this very crucial situation.

Sincerely,



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

Cc Julien M Katchinoff, Foreign Affairs Officer, US Department of State

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