

**Canadian Environmental Law Association
Clean Wisconsin
Environmental Advocates of New York
Great Lakes United
Lake Michigan Federation
Michigan Environmental Council
Michigan Land Use Institute
Michigan United Conservation Clubs
National Wildlife Federation Great Lakes Office
Ohio Environmental Council
Tip of the Mitt Watershed Council
Union québécoise de la conservation de la nature**

January 7, 2005

Samuel Speck
Chair
Water Management Working Group
Council of Great Lakes Governors

BY ELECTRONIC MAIL

Dear Director Speck,

Thank you as always for continuing to forward the difficult process of achieving state and provincial agreement on the difficult road to binding collective water management.

We think the summer-fall comment period revealed a need for better communication with the public about the jurisdictions' efforts to reform the region's water management systems. For many members of the public the summer release of the draft agreements was their first exposure to this sweeping proposed change in regional environmental affairs. There is a high level of public interest in the agreements, and many are struggling to understand their complexities. At times newspaper editorial writers, hearing speakers, and those submitting written comment all revealed points of misunderstanding about the region's water management problems and the means being proposed in the draft agreements to address them. Some members of the public accused the jurisdictions of acting secretly and underhandedly.

To help assure that this problem does not persist as the annex process enters its final and most sensitive months, we would like to suggest that the negotiations be made somewhat more accessible to the public. This suggestion would be most usefully pursued by each jurisdiction as individually appropriate, but as a beginning we would like to suggest that the Council of Great Lakes Governors, on behalf of the ten negotiating jurisdictions, take several steps in the near term:

1) Post on the council Web site an appropriately edited version of the public comment summary handed out to the advisory committee at our November meeting, with Great Lakes email list server announcements that the material is now available online.

2) Settle on and announce in a press release a tentative plan for completion of negotiations, particularly including decisions related to further opportunities for public comment.

3) More quickly post the results of meetings, as appropriate, on the council Web site, again with email list server announcements of the fact. The November meeting results, possibly the results of widest public interest since negotiations began in 2001, are not yet posted. It would be ideal if the results of next week's meeting could be posted within two weeks.

4) Quickly post results after the meeting between negotiators and basin Tribes and First Nations scheduled to begin January 31.

We feel these actions would be an important step in helping build public understanding and support for the annex agreements.

Thank you for your attention to these suggestions. All the best in the new year to the council staff and the many dedicated negotiators who have taken us all such an impressive distance in this process.

Sincerely,

Sarah Miller, Coordinator
Canadian Environmental Law Association

Andy Guy, Great Lakes Project Director
Michigan Land Use Institute

Derek Scheer, Water Policy Campaign Director
Clean Wisconsin

Donna Stine, Policy Specialist
Michigan United Conservation Clubs

David Higby, Project Director
Environmental Advocates of New York

Noah Hall, Water Resources Program Manager
National Wildlife Federation Great Lakes Office

Derek Stack, Executive Director
Great Lakes United

Molly Flanagan, Director of Lake Erie Programs
Ohio Environmental Council

Cheryl Mendoza, Water Conservation
Program Manager
Lake Michigan Federation

Jill Ryan, Great Lakes Aquatic Habitat Network
and Fund Director
Tip of the Mitt Watershed Council

James Clift, Policy Director
Michigan Environmental Council

Marc Hudon
Union québécoise de la conservation de la nature