

Reply-To: <striver@gisco.net>
From: "Executive Director" <striver@gisco.net>
To: <striver@gisco.net>
Subject: Great Lakes Navigation System Review Comment Period..
Date: Thu, 1 Feb 2001 18:09:50 -0500
Importance: Normal

Dear lobby group,

If you sent a letter to the Army Corps requesting more information about its Great Lakes System Navigational Improvements Study, then you may have just received notice of the Great Lakes Navigation System Review comment period, starting Jan. 18 and ending Feb. 10th. We are currently in the process of compiling a list of key points for comments, and I will send them along in the next few days. The number of comments received will be as important as their content, so send this information to other river lovers you think would want to submit comments. If you can join us for winter weekend, Rick Spencer from the National Wildlife Federation will be speaking after dinner on Saturday (Feb 10). He is a past president of STR, and he was instrumental in stopping the Corps plan for Winter Nav. in the '70's. He is now a regional organizer for NWF and summers on Grindstone Island. If you need more information or if you have any questions give me a call (315.686.2010) and otherwise I'll be sending along comment key points soon. Thanks!

Stephanie Weiss

-----original message-----

**** Action is needed in response to two legislative initiatives which could alter the St. Lawrence River for commercial navigation interests. At the end of this e-mail you will find a sample letter you can personalize and send to the Detroit Office of the Army Corps of Engineers, requesting to be kept informed of the project's progress. If you send this letter, they are required by law to send you any and all info on the project. This is really important because it lets the Corps know that people care about the River, and are informed about what's going on. Also "cc" Congressman John McHugh and he'll get the same message. If you add a sentence or two about your relationship to, and interest in the river that would be even more effective. Call me anytime with questions or comments, or for more information!!**

ISSUE SUMMARY

Two pieces of legislation are currently in existence pertaining to "Navigational Improvements" in the Great Lakes/St. Lawrence River System:

1. There is language in The Water Resources Development Act of 1999 (WRDA 99), which authorizes one million dollars to the Detroit office of the Army Corps of Engineers to look at "Improvements" to Navigation in the Great

Lakes/St. Lawrence Seaway System. The goal of this study will be to determine the feasibility of revamping the system to accommodate larger ships, with larger drafts, potentially by blasting, dredging and building bigger locks. This year's bill appropriates half of that million to the Corps, which is currently beginning the reconnaissance phase of the study – contacting Port Authorities throughout the system to find out what they feel they need in the way of improvements. Once they have decided what they want to look at, the corps will create a scope of work and reapply to congress to have money appropriated for them to do a feasibility study. Projects that include blasting and dredging are a serious threat to the ecology and economy of the St. Lawrence River.

2. There is also a bill before Congress (HR 2332) that, if passed, would create a private binational corporation to run the St. Lawrence Seaway instead of the two entities that currently exist. The goal of this legislation is, like the feasibility study, to make way for larger ships, more and deeper traffic, and possibly a longer shipping season. The difference here is that by privatizing the Seaway and creating a “bank” from which to draw funds and finance reengineering projects, those projects would not be subject to the same scrutiny- either from an environmental standpoint or economic standpoint- as projects approved and funded through congress. The private bank that the bill sets up would be created initially by hundreds of millions of dollars in long-term loans from the US and Canadian governments. There will be no action on this bill in this session of congress (106th), but it will probably be reintroduced in January. Unfortunately, there is already a significant amount of support for the bill, as it is being sold as an infrastructure improvement that will benefit the whole Great Lakes Region. Our job is to counsel policy makers about the destruction, both economically and environmentally, that these kinds of projects could bring to many Great Lakes and St. Lawrence River communities.

Impacts could include but are not limited to:

1. Destruction of wetlands, fish habitat and fish populations as a result of dredging and blasting.
2. Increased toxin levels in sediments and fish tissue also from dredging and blasting, causing the resuspension of contaminated sediments.
3. Increased risk from oil and chemical spills as a result of enormous increases in cargo size (and we know the preparedness is insufficient already!), and finally,
4. The removal of the last barrier between the Thousand Islands and a brand new icebreaker being used on the upper lakes that is being touted by the Coast Guard as having virtually no environmentally damaging effects. The reason stated by the Coast Guard and Seaway that this icebreaker would not be used on the St. Lawrence is that it would not fit through the locks. New, larger locks could set the stage for another push for winter navigation.

From: "Dana Debel" <ddebel@mucc.org>
To: "Tim Eder" <eder@nwf.org>, <Reg@glu.org>, <millers@olap.org>, <LMF002@aol.com>, <jjackson@web.net>, <hudo@videotron.ca>, "Dave Ross" <ROSS@nwf.org>, "Cheryl Mendoza" <cmendoza@lakemichigan.org>, "Allegra Cangelosi" <acangelo@nemw.org>, "Lisa Yee" <YEE@nwf.org>
Subject: Buffalo News Article on water diversion
Date: Thu, 18 Jan 2001 16:17:27 -0500

Hey everyone,

might want to check the article. Looks good. I think it is a good indication that we will come off in a consistent manner which is always a good thing. Good job tim and dave.

The home page for the paper is:
<http://ge2.us.publicus.com/> <<http://ge2.us.publicus.com/>>

The specific article can be found at:
<http://ge2.us.publicus.com/apps/pbcs.dll/artikkel?SearchID=73050336605593>
<<http://ge2.us.publicus.com/apps/pbcs.dll/artikkel?SearchID=73050336605593&Avis=GE&Dato=20010118&Kategori=NEWS02&Lopenr=10118071&Ref=AR>>
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Concerns aired about Great Lakes plan (The Buffalo News 1/18)

By John Bartlett
Staff writer

A plan developed by the governors of the eight Great Lakes states to manage the water from the lakes came under scrutiny for the first time at a public meeting in Erie Tuesday night.

The state, in cooperation with the Great Lakes Council of Governors, is holding a series of public meetings to outline the water management plan and hear from the public on the proposed amendment to the Great Lakes Charter.

What the officials heard in Erie were concerns over an exemption in the amendment for certain withdrawals of less than one million gallons of water, which could affect Summit Township, and a lack of details and definitions in the plan.

The Great Lakes Charter is a nonbinding agreement among the eight Great Lakes states and Ontario and Quebec. It required prior notice and a "consultation" before allowing any withdrawal of more than five million gallons per day of water from the lakes.

The Great Lakes governors also control water diversions or withdrawals under the Water Resource Development Act of 1986, which requires the approval of all the governors for any withdrawal.

The Supreme Court has ruled water is a commodity governed by the Commerce Clause of the Constitution. That ruling and concerns over legal challenges under free trade agreements to any ban of water withdrawals led the governors to rethink their approach. To withstand legal challenges the governors felt they needed a uniform water management plan based on sound science and resource management and reflecting the use and loss of water within the basin.

The governors' proposal calls for a binding agreement between the Great Lakes's states and provinces. It sets stringent new standards by which to judge any proposed withdrawals or diversion, including requiring improvement to the water and water-based resource before allowing any new withdrawals. It would also include the premiers of Ontario and Quebec in reviewing and consulting on diversions subject to the Water Resource Development Act, and not just those that meet the Great Lakes Charter trigger of five million gallons per day.

"Since an outright ban is unconstitutional, are we trying to effect the same thing through red tape," was the rhetorical question posed by North East Borough Councilman Jerry Sheridan, one of about 40 people who attended the meeting.

However, most comments centered on an exemption in the governor's proposal

for certain withdrawals of less than one million gallons a day presumed to have minimal impact. The withdrawal would be permitted for health and safety reasons, if no practical alternative was available and appropriate water conservation measures were implemented.

Some have seen this as a way that higher elevations of Summit Township, outside the Lake Erie Water Basin, could have access to lake water.

Rick Spencer of the National Wildlife Federation questioned whether the exemption weakened the entire effort of the governors to effectively manage Great Lakes water. "We support a moratorium of all diversions while this framework is developed," he said.

The moratorium on diversions was also supported by Western Pennsylvania Conservancy president Larry Schweiger and local environmental advocates Martin Visnosky, Kathy Horan and others in comments at the meeting.

"One million gallons a day sets a very dangerous precedent," Visnosky said. "The cumulative affect could be much greater."

Visnosky and several others also questioned the lack of definition of such terms as "improve the water quality," and "reasonable and appropriate water conservation measures."

"In some ways there are some unknowns," said Jeff Edstrom, policy director for the Council of Great Lakes Governors.

"This is a first step, said Irene Brooks, executive director of the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection Office of River Basin Cooperation, who chaired the public meeting. "We need the input and your comments, and that is what we are starting with tonight."

Many of those who attended the meeting lauded the

governor's efforts to forge a
new agreement, and said it was an important first
step even if they saw
weaknesses in the proposal.

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Date: Fri, 16 Feb 2001 19:49:47 -0500
To: jen@glu.org
From: Jennifer Nalbone <jen@glu.org>
Subject: Habitat Watch #212

Habitat Watch # 212
Great Lakes United
February 11- February 18, 2001

Contents:

1. Army Corps accepting comments on the Great Lakes Navigation System Review
2. Comments due for Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness fuel treatment plans

Army Corps accepting comments on the Great Lakes Navigation System Review:

The Army Corps of Engineers is accepting comments on the scope of the Great Lakes Navigation System Review. The Review was authorized to determine "the feasibility of undertaking modifications to improve commercial navigation on the Great Lakes Navigation System, including locks, harbors, ports, channels and other related features" from Duluth to the St. Lawrence Seaway. Any such activities may have repercussions to environments and communities in the US and Canada

Environmental groups are concerned that associated with commercial navigation modification projects are potential serious environmental and human health impacts. Dredging, blasting and other modification activities could cause the destruction of wetlands, fish habitat and fish populations, and increase toxin levels in sediments and fish tissue caused by the resuspension of contaminated sediments. Additionally, with increases in Lake commerce, there is an associated increased risk of oil and chemical spills from ships. Save the River, one such concerned environmental group located on the St. Lawrence River, is working to ensure that the interests of industry do not supercede the interests of the citizens of the St. Lawrence River community, or the overall health of the River itself. To this end, STR is calling for an ecosystem-wide biological assessment of any proposed modifications on the Great Lakes Navigation System-- a recommendation made initially by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in response to a previous navigation feasibility study, the Connecting Channels and Harbors Report of 1985.

The Corps is asking for comments by February 18th that would produce an "efficient and modern environmentally sound navigation system on the Great Lakes." Let the Corps hear your thoughts on the meaning of "environmentally sound." Comments can be sent by fax (313) 226-7494, e-mail: Wayne.Schloop@lre02.usace.army.mil or by writing to: Mr. Terry Long, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, 477 Michigan Avenue, Detroit, Michigan 48226. STR requests that a copy is forwarded to Congressman