

GREAT LAKES—ST. LAWRENCE RIVER BASIN WATER CONSERVATION AND EFFICIENCY INITIATIVE

BACKGROUND

The Great Lakes Governors and Premiers signed the Great Lakes—St. Lawrence River Basin Sustainable Water Resources Agreement (Agreement) on December 13, 2005. This Agreement created the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence River Water Resources Regional Body (Regional Body), comprising the Governors and Premiers, to further coordinate implementation of its terms.

Pursuant to Article 304(1) of the Agreement, the Regional Body will adopt regional water conservation and efficiency objectives by December 13, 2007. These objectives are intended to be broad, overarching concepts which will provide context for further State and Provincial action that will be more specific in nature.

The process for developing the regional water conservation and efficiency objectives was intended to be open and transparent. Regional stakeholders were asked to provide technical information, make recommendations and foster communication with interested organizations and individuals. Representatives of Tribes and First Nations were also engaged and asked to share their experience and traditional knowledge. Additionally, public was sought through a formal public comment period.

Once finalized and adopted by the Regional Body, the regional objectives will then be used to inform the development of individual State and Provincial water conservation and efficiency goals and objectives. These goals and objectives will in turn shape State and Provincial water conservation programs that will be more specific in nature. The Agreement also provides direction to ensure that the States and Provinces, along with the Regional Body, undertake periodic reviews of their water conservation programs. Additionally, the regional objectives, as well as reports prepared by each State and Province on their programs, will be reviewed by the Regional Body every five years.

INTRODUCTION

Efficient and responsible water use is a cornerstone of sound water management policy, whether the resource is considered abundant or scarce. Efficient use and conservation of our water resources can:

- Ensure equitable access to and long-term availability of water;
- Protect public health and enhance quality of life;
- Minimize impacts of water use to support healthy aquatic ecosystems of the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence River Basin;
- Minimize costs related to water and wastewater infrastructure;
- Preserve social and cultural heritage;
- Prevent or minimize conflicts among water users;
- Enhance economic viability and competitiveness of the region;
- Support reductions in energy use and greenhouse gas emissions;
- Improve the ability to manage an uncertain future and growing demand for water; and,
- Demonstrate that the region's citizens are prudent stewards of the resource.

These Basin-wide goals and objectives are intended to complement other water conservation and efficiency efforts consistent with water quality objectives. They will accelerate intergovernmental and other partnerships including, for example, partnerships with Basin Tribes and First Nations to build a greater understanding and consideration of traditional knowledge and practices. Whether accomplished through voluntary, mandatory, or a combination of measures, to be successful, these goals and objectives need to be broadly supported.

Regional collaboration and assistance among all governments, stakeholders and the public will be necessary to ensure that the States and Provinces are collectively able to meet these Basin-wide goals and objectives.

GOALS—As stated in the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence River Basin Sustainable Water Resources Agreement

1. Ensuring improvement of the waters and water dependent natural resources;
2. Protecting and restoring the hydrologic and ecosystem integrity of the Basin;
3. Retaining the quantity of surface water and groundwater in the Basin;
4. Ensuring sustainable use of waters of the Basin; and,
5. Promoting the efficiency of use and reducing losses and waste of water.

DRAFT OBJECTIVES

-Guide programs toward long-term sustainable water use.

- Use adaptive programs that are goal-based, accountable and measurable.
- Develop and implement programs openly and collaboratively, including with local stakeholders, Tribes and First Nations, governments and the public.
- Prepare and maintain long-term water demand forecasts.
- Develop long-term strategies that incorporate water conservation and efficient water use.
- Review and build upon existing planning efforts by considering practices and experiences from other jurisdictions.

-Adopt and implement supply and demand management to promote efficient use and conservation of water resources.

- Maximize water use efficiency and minimize waste of water.
- Promote appropriate innovative technology for water reuse.
- Conserve and manage existing water supplies to prevent or delay the demand for and development of additional supplies.
- Provide incentives to encourage efficient water use and conservation.
- Include water conservation and efficiency in the review of proposed new or increased uses.
- Promote investment in and maintenance of efficient water infrastructure and green infrastructure.

-Improve monitoring and standardize data reporting among State and Provincial water conservation and efficiency programs.

- Improve the measurement and evaluation of water conservation and water use efficiency.
- Encourage measures to monitor, account for, and minimize water loss.
- Track and report program progress and effectiveness.

-Develop science, technology and research.

- Encourage the identification and sharing of innovative management practices and state of the art technologies.
- Encourage research, development and implementation of water use and efficiency and water conservation technologies.
- Seek a greater understanding of traditional knowledge and practices of Basin First Nations and Tribes.
- Strengthen scientific understanding of the linkages between water conservation practices and ecological responses.

-Develop education programs and information sharing for all water users.

- Ensure equitable public access to water conservation and efficiency tools and information.
- Inform, educate and increase awareness regarding water use, conservation and efficiency and the importance of water. Promote the cost-saving aspect of water conservation and efficiency for both short-term and long-term economic sustainability.
- Share conservation and efficiency experiences, including successes and lessons learned across the Basin.
- Enhance and contribute to regional information sharing.
- Encourage and increase training opportunities in collaboration with professional or other organizations in order to increase water conservation and efficiency practices and technological applications.
- Ensure that conservation programs are transparent and that information is readily available.
- Aid in the development and dissemination of sector-based best management practices and results achieved.
- Seek opportunities for the sharing of traditional knowledge and practices of Basin First Nations and Tribes.