COMMENTS ON DRAFT WATER USE INFORMATION REPORTING PROTOCOLS TO THE REGIONAL DATABASE

PRESENTED TO THE
COUNCIL OF GREAT LAKES GOVERNORS

DURING PUBLIC CONSULTATIONS ON
DRAFT WATER USE INFORMATION REPORTING PROTOCOLS FOR THE GREAT LAKES – ST. LAWRENCE RIVER BASIN

BY
NATURE QUÉBEC

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INTRODUCTION

Nature Quebec is very happy to see the States, Ontario and Quebec move forward with the Reporting protocols to the Regional Database. We also welcome this opportunity to comment on this important piece of management of water use informations. We feel we are heading in the right direction to protect the Basin's waters.

Below is our comments/recommendations on the document submitted March 2009.

COMMENTS

COMMENT 1

We are not enthusiast nor supportive of the use of "Aggregate information" to build the Water use database. This will render problematic areas much more difficult to be identified and will only ultimately in our view, slowdown the necessary water use informations gathering required to protect the water resources from cumulative impacts. We strongly encourages users and Parties to submit data below the threshold required in the Agreement and Compact. We will all benefit from this on the long run.

COMMENT 2

We feel that the "Agricultural activities" should be identified also as a specific water user sector and taken out of the "Other Self Supply" sector. This activity sector is too important to be "diluted" within other larger categories. Below then it's own category would figure the actual "self–supply irrigation or self-supply livestock" etc, that are related to the agricultural sector.

COMMENT 3

We recommend to the States, Ontario, Quebec, to set up rapidly their own public information activities on the water usages. We feel this will be a tremendous educational tool for the general public to begin appreciate how best water management practices help protect this vital element. It will also allow the public to learn on what the situation is at the present regarding water usages and how it is evolving over time. This activity should also allow for public comments.

COMMENT 4

We ask that the Commercial Navigation activity be identified for it's own sector, instead of being "diluted" within "other uses". Here is why :

In Quebec, as you are aware, the portion of the St. Lawrence river included in the Agreement/Compact stretches from the Ontario border to the east to Trois-Rivières. In that segment of the river, we feel that although the St. Lawrence river is the natural outflow of the Great Lakes, the Navigation channel since it's conception in 1959, has accentuated the water outflow as dredging work increased it's volume capacity. Left as it is, with maintenance dredging being done annually there could be future groundwater impacts on the many tributary watersheds feeding the river.

What we think will happen with the coming climate change impacts, is that when water levels of the St.Lawrence river will be sufficiently low, water will be concentrated within it's center thus in

the navigation channel. With the waters at that low level, this will trigger a domino effect upstream in each of the tributaries connected to the river and will in fact drain water from them more rapidly and ultimately, suck groundwater from the shoreline of these tributaries. This will then affect other water users in these watersheds.

Because climatic conditions were “as always” relatively well known and predictable with no foreseable threats to the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence river water levels, These “long term impacts” may not have been sufficiently identified or studied.

The solution to these problems isn’t to use “habitat destructive” technics like artificially raising the water levels or slowdown the St. Lawrence flow of water with concrete works. We need to use a softpath approach like for example evaluate if diminishing gradually the maintenance dredging would help, make better use of deep sea ports on the river, develop short sea shipping, etc. These measures would help to maintain a living ecosystem and better share the waters between all users including the fish.

COMMENTS 5

Because Commercial navigation and In-Stream Hydroelectric Water Use are very much related in terms of water works in the St. Lawrence river, we ask that this category be ask to report it’s water usage instead of leaving it to “voluntary” measure. The main reason is that when climate change impacts make water levels drop significantly, we will need to know how this industry manages the waters it shares with the other users, how it contributes to “conserve” or do it’s part in regards to adaptive management.

COMMENTS 6

We would like to ask that future comments on these Reporting Protocols can be considered and possibly received or adopted by the Water Use Committee if it was then appropriate to do so.

Fondée en 1981, l'Union québécoise pour la conservation de la nature (UQCN) est un organisme national à but non lucratif devenu Nature Québec en 2005.

Nature Québec souscrit aux trois objectifs principaux de la Stratégie mondiale de conservation :

- maintenir les processus écologiques essentiels et les écosystèmes entretenant la vie;
- préserver la diversité génétique de toutes les espèces biologiques;
- favoriser le développement durable en veillant au respect des espèces et des écosystèmes.

Nature Québec réfléchit sur l'utilisation de la nature dans l'aménagement du territoire agricole et forestier, dans la gestion du Saint-Laurent et dans la réalisation de projets de développement urbain, routier, industriel, et énergétique. Les experts des commissions Agriculture, Aires protégées, Biodiversité, Eau, Énergie et Foresterie, au cœur du fonctionnement de Nature Québec, cherchent à établir les bases des conditions écologiques du développement durable.

Résolument engagé dans un processus qui vise à limiter l'empreinte écologique causée par les usages abusifs, Nature Québec participe aux consultations publiques et prend position publiquement pour protéger l'intégrité biologique et la diversité des espèces sur le territoire québécois lorsque des projets de développement fragilisent les écosystèmes et les espèces biologiques.

Nature Québec
870, avenue De Salaberry, bureau 270
Québec (Québec) G1R 2T9
tél. (418) 648-2104 ● Téléc. (418) 648-0991
www.naturequebec.org ● conservons@naturequebec.org