



PLAN 2014 ENACTED, COALITION APPLAUDS ACTION TO RESTORE HEALTH OF LAKE ONTARIO AND ST. LAWRENCE RIVER

Following 20 years of study and input, enactment of this modern plan provides historic environmental advancement for lake and river watershed



Contacts: Lee Willbanks, Save The River, lee@savetheriver.org, (315) 686-2010
Brian Smith, Citizens Campaign for the Environment, bsmith@citizenscampaign.org,
(716) 831-3206
Amy Kober, American Rivers, akober@americanrivers.org, (503) 708-1145
Brendan F. White, Saint Regis Mohawk Tribe, brendan.white@srmt-nsn.gov,
(518) 358-2272
Tony David, Saint Regis Mohawk Tribe, tony.david@srmt-nsn.gov,
(518) 358-5937



December 8, 2016 – The St. Lawrence River, one of America’s Most Endangered Rivers for 2016, is on the path to recovery. Congresswoman Elise Stefanik (R-NY), a coalition of environmental advocacy groups and the Saint Regis Mohawk Tribe today applauded the enactment of Lake Ontario – St. Lawrence River Plan 2014 by the United States and Canadian governments. The coalition played a central role in the fight for this once-in-a-generation opportunity to adjust the Moses-Saunders Hydropower Dam’s operations on the St. Lawrence River to harmonize with the natural environment. For over 50 years, Saint Lawrence River and Lake Ontario water levels have been regulated to benefit hydroelectric power generation and seaway shipping, without consideration for the environment. This intervention has significantly altered the lake and river’s natural habitats and processes and reduced critical natural services for people.

American Rivers named the [St. Lawrence River one of America’s Most Endangered Rivers™](#) in 2016 because of the threat of outdated hydropower operations.

Over two years ago, the International Joint Commission (IJC) approved Plan 2014 and referred it to the United States and Canadian governments for enactment. Plan 2014 is designed to undo decades of devastation, improve the resiliency of shorelines, ensure the survival of birds, mammals, and fish, and benefit the region’s residents and businesses.

The IJC projects the benefits of Plan 2014 include: a 40% increase in wet meadow acreage; a 39% rebound in populations of Northern Pike, the top fish predator in coastal marshes; a 16% rebound in Black Tern populations, a state listed endangered species that depends on a diverse marsh habitat; a \$5.3 million annual increase in hydroelectric power production; a \$9.1 annual increase in recreational activity along the St. Lawrence River and Lake Ontario; and, continue over 50 years of significant shoreline protection.



In October 2016; American Rivers, Citizens Campaign for the Environment, the Saint Regis Mohawk Tribe and Save The River met with the White House's Council on Environmental Quality to press for timely enactment of Plan 2014. The meeting followed the decades-long advocacy of [businesses, individuals, elected officials, local governments, and local, regional, state and national sportsmen, conservation and environmental organizations](#). Collaboratively, their efforts resulted in the most significant environmental advancement the Lake Ontario- St. Lawrence River watershed has ever seen.

"Plan 2014 is critical to our local economic growth in addition to good environmental policy, and I applaud this important decision," said Congresswoman Elise Stefanik. "Better regulating the water levels of the St. Lawrence will ensure that users — from boaters to commercial fisherman — can continue to enjoy the river. Lowering the impact of invasive species will ensure that outdoor recreationalists can enjoy the river for decades to come. Additionally, The Nature Conservancy estimates that Plan 2014 will result in an increase of \$12 million in economic value for New York, and it has strong support from businesses and Chambers of Commerce across our region.

"In the North Country, we are fortunate to be surrounded by many ecological treasures. Protecting these gems for future generations is a job I take very seriously. I thank Save The River and the entire river community for their important work on this issue."

[A steadfast supporter of Plan 2014](#), Congresswoman Stefanik has remained the most important elected official to support the plan.

"The Saint Regis Mohawk Tribe is proud to be an environmental advocate and a governmental partner who has continually supported the implementation of Plan 2014. Protecting and restoring our territory's ecosystem damaged by more than 50 years of regulated water levels on our shorelines, wetlands, fish and wildlife has always been a priority." said Chief Eric Thompson, Saint Regis Mohawk Tribe. "As a result, we welcome the immediate implementation of Plan 2014 and will continue to voice the ongoing need to safeguard the well-being and long-term health of the St. Lawrence River. We are pleased that Plan 2014 will help prevent any further degradation to more than 64,000 acres of river shoreline by restoring the natural level and flow to the St. Lawrence."

The Saint Regis Mohawk Tribe issued an importantly-timed [call to action](#) adding a crucial voice from a tribal community with the longest and most important relationship with the St. Lawrence River.

"Today is the day the St. Lawrence River starts recovering," said Bob Irvin, President of American Rivers. "The approval of the IJC's Plan 2014 by the Obama Administration will result in a healthier river and wetlands along with increased hydropower production at the Moses-Saunders dam. This is a win-win for all."

"I cannot overstate the importance of today's announcement. Enactment of Plan 2014 is the most significant environmental and economic advancement the St. Lawrence River has seen in over 50 years," said Lee Willbanks, Upper St. Lawrence Riverkeeper and Executive Director of Save The River. "While Save The River has worked consistently on the issue for decades, this could not have been accomplished without the thousands of groups, businesses, governments,

elected officials and citizens that demanded real change and action. I commend the US and Canadian governments and am proud of the role Save The River played in seeing Plan 2014 enacted.”

While Save The River has played a key, decades-long role in the fight for a modern water levels plan for the St. Lawrence River, the organization increased its efforts over the past year with a [topic-specific microsite](#), and [member-generated videos in support of Plan 2014](#) in addition to its ongoing advocacy efforts.

“Speaking with tens of thousands of New Yorkers in communities along the lake and river, we found overwhelming support for a modern plan to restore the health of the lake and river,” said Brian Smith, Associate Executive Director of Citizens Campaign for the Environment. “Today’s adoption of Plan 2014 is a long-awaited victory for all New Yorkers and for the future of our Great Lakes. CCE applauds the U.S. and Canadian governments for seizing this once-in-a-generation opportunity to restore the health of our lake and river.”

One of the original and longest-running supporters of Plan 2014, Citizens Campaign for the Environment gathered the majority of the more than 36,000 expression of support presented to CEQ earlier this fall.

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