

NEWS RELEASE
INTERNATIONAL JOINT COMMISSION

COMMUNIQUE
COMMISSION MIXTE INTERNATIONALE

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IJC QUESTIONS GOVERNMENTS ON POLLUTION CONTROL

The International Joint Commission has asked the Governments of Canada and the United States what steps are being taken to assure that regulatory requirements in both countries are consistent with the achievement of water quality objectives (for the Great Lakes) which are called for under the 1978 Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement.

The Commission, a binational organization established under the provisions of the Boundary Waters Treaty of 1909 between Canada and the United States, has a responsibility to advise Governments on the adequacy of programs and other measures to fulfill the purpose and meet the general and specific water quality objectives of the (1978 Canada-U.S. Great Lakes Water Quality) Agreement. The Commission has no authority to grant or withhold waste discharge permits or approvals.

Specifically, the Commission has asked the two Governments for information on whether permit-granting or other regulatory measures in the basin as a whole incorporate provisions adequate to achieve the purpose and objectives of the Agreement, or if steps are being taken to ensure that this will occur. The Governments were also asked if such measures take into account the cumulative effect of multiple discharges of contaminants to the Great Lakes Basin Ecosystem and if coordinated planning processes are being developed and implemented to ensure consideration of these effects between jurisdictions. The Commission also asked to be informed of the extent to which various alternatives, including non-waste technology, are taken into account to comply with the terms of the Agreement which call for the prohibition or virtual elimination of persistent chemical discharges which are likely to be toxic.

The Commission's request to the Governments came as a result of public concern over the proposed discharge of treated chemical wastes into the Niagara River at Porter, New York, by SCA Chemical Waste Services, Inc., and into Lake Erie at Conneaut, Ohio, by U.S. Steel Corporation.

SCA Chemical Waste Services was issued a Phase I National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permit by New York State Department of Environmental Conservation on January 14, 1980, to increase the volume of treated waste discharge from a present amount of 100,000 gallons per day to one million gallons per day.

U.S. Steel has applied to the U.S. Department of the Army for a permit to construct a steel mill on the south shore of Lake Erie at Conneaut, Ohio. Concern has been raised that the discharges from the proposed plant may not meet the Water Quality Objectives of the 1978 Agreement.

The Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement, signed originally in 1972 and revised in 1978 authorizes the Commission to request any data or other information relating to water quality in the Great Lakes System to facilitate the Commission's role of monitoring and advising Governments on the implementation of the Agreement.