



International Joint Commission
Commission mixte internationale

News release • Communiqué

Release date / Date de parution : Tuesday, September 3, 1991

Contact / Personne ressource :
Valdas Adamkus, WQB U.S. Co-Chair (312)353-2000
David Egar, WQB Canadian Co-Chair (416)336-6415
Michael Gilbertson, WQB Secretary (313)226-2170
or (519)256-7821

WATER QUALITY BOARD RECOMMENDS ACTION TO STOP CONTAMINATION OF GREAT LAKES FROM PERSISTENT TOXIC SUBSTANCES IN ITS 1991 REPORT TO THE IJC

"Our industrial society, including its governments, was not designed to anticipate and prevent serious environmental problems. It has generally operated on the principle that when problems are found, society will react and cure them. Pollution of the Great Lakes and many other environmental problems have shown that it is almost impossible to recapture persistent toxic pollutants once they have been dispersed in the environment."

Such is the conclusion of the **Great Lakes Water Quality Board** in its 1991 Report on Great Lakes Water Quality. The report outlines the sources and effects of persistent toxic substances in the Great Lakes, and the programs developed thus far by governments to control and reduce the level of pollution entering the ecosystem.

The Board also concludes that many persistent toxic substances "are so troublesome as to require clear and absolute bans" because of their deleterious effects on human health and wildlife throughout the region, even in low concentrations. It specifically recommends that:

- six persistent toxic substances -- PCBs, DDT, dieldrin, toxaphene, mirex and hexachlorobenzene -- be targeted to immediately control and eliminate their manufacture, import, use, storage, transportation and disposal in the Great Lakes;
- because many persistent toxic substances enter the region from out-of-basin sources, Canada and the United States take a leadership role to promote elimination of the use of these substances, worldwide;
- the definition of persistent toxic substances, as defined in the Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement, be revised to reflect the high potential for certain substances to cause harm to species throughout the ecosystem; and
- a joint approval process be developed for proposed new substances to ensure that they will not harm any sector of the ecosystem. This process should place the burden of proof on the manufacturer and be open to public scrutiny.

The Great Lakes Water Quality Board's report will be among the topics discussed at the International Joint Commission's Biennial Meeting on Great Lakes Water Quality, to be held September 29 - October 2, 1991 at the Grand Traverse Resort in Traverse City, Michigan. There is no meeting registration fee and the public is encouraged to attend.

-#-

Windsor • Ottawa • Washington

100 Ouellette Avenue, Windsor, Ontario N9A 6T3 (519) 256-7821 Fax (519) 256-7791
or/ou P.O. Box 32869, Detroit, Michigan 48232 (313) 226-2170