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New Co-Chair and Members Named to Public Interest Advisory Group Diverse Viewpoints Help Lake Levels Study Improve Public Outreach

Michigan attorney and lakeshore advocate Dave Powers has been named the U.S. co-chair of the 20-member, binational Public Interest Advisory Group (PIAG) that advises the International Upper Great Lakes Study (IUGLS) on issues of communications and outreach to the public. Powers has served as a member of PIAG since 2007 and replaces Kay Felt, who continues as a member. As co-chair of PIAG, Powers will also serve as a member of the IUGLS Board, providing a direct link from the public to the ten-member body that makes key strategic decisions regarding management and direction of the Study.

A highly-regarded lawyer admitted to practice before U.S. Supreme Court, Powers is a partner in a Bay City, Michigan, law firm and the co-founder of Save Our Shoreline, a group of lakeshore property owners. "The International Joint Commission has done a remarkable job assembling talented and informed leaders to guide public input to the Study," said Powers. "I look forward to working more closely with them and to the continuing challenge of balancing the many varied interests."

Launched by the International Joint Commission in 2007, IUGLS continues through 2012 as scientists and other experts, with extensive input from the public, develop and evaluate alternative regulation plans for Lake Superior outflows through the control works at Sault Ste. Marie.

In addition to naming Powers co-chair of PIAG, the IJC has also added new PIAG members:

- Glen Nekvasil, vice president, corporate communications, Lake Carriers' Association;
- Frank Ettawageshik, executive director, United Tribes of Michigan, former tribal chairman, Little Traverse Bay Bands of Odawa Indians; and,
- Jim Te Selle, president, Wisconsin Great Lakes Coalition.

"Their diverse viewpoints and considerable experience on the Great Lakes will help PIAG provide important advice to improve public outreach and assist the already extensive efforts underway to include expertise from a wide range of interests and geographical areas in the Study," said Jim Bruce, the Canadian co-chair of PIAG.

“As a long-time resident on the shores of Lake Michigan I've seen a steady deterioration of the water and basin lands,” said Te Selle. “Most of the problems the lakes face are caused by human beings, so human beings will need to fix them. It's encouraging to see our two countries beginning to do that. I feel honored that the International Joint Commission chose me to help, and I look forward to contributing to the welfare of all the Great Lakes and the people who live and depend on them.”

“Lake Carriers’ Association looks forward to continuing to work with all to keep the Great Lakes a vital element in the North American transportation system while protecting the environment,” said Nekvasil.

“Lake levels have critical impacts on all interests around the basin,” said Ettawageshik. “I look forward to helping the Study make sure that native and aboriginal voices are heard and to ensuring that indigenous traditional knowledge and philosophies are part of the considerations in completing the Study.”

On December 15th, 2009, the Study released a report on the St. Clair River and its impacts on upper Great Lakes water levels. The report, a non-technical summary, public comments and peer reviews are all posted at www.iugls.org. A report regarding PIAG activities over the past two years and a synthesis of public comments is also available at the Study website.

The IJC is currently receiving comments on the St. Clair River report and will soon be announcing dates and sites across the basin where the public will be able to provide their views on the recommendations.

Editor’s Note: Biographies and a complete list of PIAG members IUGLS Board members are available at: www.iugls.org.