



United States Department of State

Washington, D.C. 20520

June 29, 2012

Mr. Chuck Lawson
International Joint Commission
2000 L Street, NW
Washington, D.C. 20440

Dear Mr. Lawson:

Thank you for the timely submission of the *2011 International Joint Commission's (IJC) Report to Governments of the United States and Canada on Bi-national Water Management of the Lake of the Woods and Rainy River Watershed* in response to the joint reference from the governments of Canada and the United States regarding the binational management of this watershed.

After consultations with other federal agencies, the state of Minnesota, and tribal interests in the region, the Department of State is writing to inform you of its response to the report's recommendations. We were pleased with the IJC's comprehensive report and continue to support its efforts to improve lakewide management in the watershed. It is important to note that our response is framed within existing federal resource restraints.

The Department of State supports consolidating the boards with an expanded geographic scope consistent with the mandate as defined in the 1909 Boundary Waters Treaty. Further, the United States believes that a more streamlined board would be more functional and productive. We also fully support the IJC's recommendation that the board should include tribal representation to reflect tribal ownership and interests in the region. The Department requests that the IJC provide a detailed description of the proposed consolidated board and its objectives for review by both parties.

We also agree with the IJC's proposal that the development of a water quality plan of study is beneficial to the Lake of the Woods watershed. As the International Multi-Agency Working Group (IMA-WG) presently coordinates binational water quality activities in the watershed, the United States foresees that officials from Environment Canada and a U.S. federal agency will oversee coordination between the IMA-WG and the newly consolidated International Lake of the Woods and Rainy River Watershed Board. While designation of positions as *ex-officio* could reduce delays caused by vacancies, we understand that Canada has certain constraints that prevent it from approving this recommendation.

Changing water levels of the Lake of Woods watershed reflect changes in the environment such as climate change and social development. While the Department supports in principle the IJC recommendation for a water levels study, we want to defer our endorsement of this recommendation until the water quality plan of study is developed and we have a better understanding of the human and financial resources required.

The Department appreciates the need for tribal involvement and supports further coordination and management with the tribes in the basin. As always, we look forward to continued cooperation with the government of Canada and the IJC to improve binational management of the Lake of the Woods watershed.

Sincerely,



Lee Martinez
Director
Office of Canadian Affairs