



COMPENDIUM OF CANADA'S ENGAGEMENT IN INTERNATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL AGREEMENTS AND INSTRUMENTS

Agreement between Canada and the United States of America to Regulate the Level of Lake of the Woods

SUBJECT CATEGORY:

Freshwater

TYPE OF AGREEMENT / INSTRUMENT:

Canada – United States

FORM:

Legally-binding treaty

STATUS:

- Signed February 24, 1925
- Entry into Force for Canada on July 17, 1925
- Entry into Force for The United States on May 22, 1926
- Amendment put into force on June 19, 1979

LEAD & PARTNER DEPARTMENTS:

Global Affairs Canada, Environment and Climate Change Canada

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION:

Web Links:

- Treaty Text – [Canadian Treaty Information](#) website
- [Canadian Lake of the Woods Control Board](#)
- [International Joint Commission](#) website

Contacts:

[ECCC Inquiry Centre](#)

COMPENDIUM EDITION:

February 2017

PLAIN LANGUAGE SUMMARY

This legally binding treaty between Canada and the US outlines the establishment of an independent board to control the water levels of the Lake of the Woods, a shared body between the two countries. If the water level rises above a certain level, the Board has the necessary authority to approve outflows. Canada appoints one member and one alternate member to this Board, often an engineer. The Board further has a full-time staff of engineers to monitor this water level. This agreement is beneficial to Canadian citizens who live near the Lake of the Woods and could have their livelihoods threatened by a water level that is too high for the lake.

OBJECTIVE

The agreement sets forth the principles for regulating the water levels of the Lake of the Woods, with the objective of securing the most advantageous use of the waters thereof for the inhabitants of both countries.

KEY ELEMENTS

The Agreement established an International Lake of the Woods Control Board, which approves outflows in the event that the water level rises above 1061 feet of elevation, or falls below 1056 feet of elevation. This Board refers to the International Joint Commission (IJC) when a lake level higher than 1062.5 feet is inevitable or when unable to reach a consensus.

The Agreement mandates the Canadian Lake of the Woods Control Board to regulate and control the outflow of the waters of the Lake of the Woods under most conditions. This domestic board was first established by federal Order-in-Council in 1919, and includes one federal member, two members from Ontario, and one member from Manitoba.

EXPECTED RESULTS

Regulation of the Lake of the Woods to the benefit of inhabitants in both countries.

CANADA'S INVOLVEMENT

Canada appoints one member and one alternate member to the Lake of the Woods Control Board. These Governor-in-Council appointments are customarily engineers within Environment and Climate Change Canada who serve on the Board in a personal capacity. The federally appointed member is also Canadian co-Chair of the International Lake of the Woods Control Board.

The Lake of the Woods Control Board maintains a full-time staff of engineers, the Lake of the Woods Secretariat. By arrangement with Environment and Climate Change Canada, the Secretariat is housed at the headquarters of National Hydrological Services in Ottawa. The Secretariat monitors conditions in the basin, provides information and analysis, and recommends regulating strategy and/or specific outflows. It also implements regulation strategies when so directed, conducts studies and maintains communications with basin users.

RESULTS / PROGRESS

Activities

The Canadian Lake of the Woods Control Board regulates the outflows of the Lake of the Woods, and works to keep outflows within the range specified in the Agreement. The [Canadian Lake of the Woods Control Board](#) website contains more information on the activities of this board, including its [2015 Annual Report](#).

In the event that water levels fall outside the specified range, the International Lake of the Woods Control Board approves outflow decisions of the Canadian Lake of the Woods Control Board for Lake of the Woods. This has happened infrequently.

Reports

The International Lake of the Woods Control Board reports occasionally in the spring to the International Joint Commission, when levels warrant its activation.