



## 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:**

January 2020

#### PLAIN LANGUAGE SUMMARY

This legally binding treaty between Canada and the US establishes the requirements and powers of two boards to oversee the regulation of the water level of the Lake of the Woods (a boundary water), and flows from the Lake of the Woods into the Winnipeg River. While the lake is within a range of levels as defined in the treaty, the authority to manage the levels and flows is under the domestic Canadian Lake of the Woods Control Board. When water levels exceed the upper or lower bounds of this range, the International Lake of the Woods Control Board approves any regulation decisions of the domestic board. Canada appoints one member to the international Board, a duly qualified engineer who also sits on the domestic board. Both the international and domestic boards are supported by a full-time Secretariat. This agreement is beneficial to Canadian and American citizens who live along the Lake of the Woods and Winnipeg River downstream of the lake, as the treaty requires both boards to regulate the lake level and flows released into the Winnipeg River for the most advantageous use on each side of the boundary.

#### OBJECTIVE

The agreement sets forth the principles for regulating the water levels of the Lake of the Woods and flows into the Winnipeg River, 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 any disagreement among its members to the International Joint Commission (IJC) for final decision.

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 when the level of Lake of the Woods is within the 1056-1061 ft. range. The Canadian board has four members, one

appointed by Canada, two by Ontario and one by Manitoba. This board was first established by federal Order-in-Council in 1919, and subsequently by legislation in each of the three jurisdictions.

### **EXPECTED RESULTS**

Regulation of the level of the Lake of the Woods and the flows into the Winnipeg River to the benefit of inhabitants in both countries.

### **CANADA'S INVOLVEMENT**

Canada appoints one member and one alternate member to the domestic 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 Gatineau. 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 [2018 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***

By custom, the International Lake of the Woods Control Board provides a report to the International Joint Commission, when the water levels require its involvement.