

## **Adapting Sustainably to Climate Change at the Canada/U.S. Border: Assessing the Role of IJC Stakeholder Engagement**

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The effects of climate change are a reality that must be actively managed to successfully maintain a healthy and sustainable ecosystem in any region. This paper works on the premise that humans are a part of their regional ecosystems and that the effects of climate change on the health of ecosystems have been exacerbated by human activity. Thus, understanding the ways people manage the balance between themselves and the environment in changing eco-conditions provides insights nations can use to adapt to apparent and undiscovered effects of climate change without further compromising the current or future health of ecosystems.

Natural landforms present unique management situations when their geophysical space straddles political borders. This is because a political boundary artificially divides otherwise symbiotic environmental systems by imposing differing sovereign interests and governance models onto the human activity within an eco-space. In recognition of the need for the two nations to collaborate for the benefit of existing and future generations, the Canadian and United States governments established the Boundary Waters Treaty in 1909 to manage activity affecting water resources and ecosystems along their common borders. The International Joint Commission (IJC) was founded in tandem as an impartial, binational and quasi-judicial advisor with two main responsibilities: regulate shared water uses and investigate transboundary issues and recommend solutions.<sup>1</sup>

As such, this paper is interested in discovering in what ways stakeholder engagement by the IJC impacts policy and programs that encourage sustainability in the common eco-regions along the Canada/United States border. To do this, this paper will explore three things: how the IJC conducts stakeholder engagements; how engagement is used to inform the IJC's recommendations for action; and, how the IJC's recommendations contribute to sustainability initiatives by each government. Through this exploration, the connection between stakeholder engagement and adaptation to the effects of climate change will be elucidated in support of further efforts toward sustainable human activity.

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<sup>1</sup> International Joint Commission. (2014) *The Role of the IJC*. Retrieved from: [http://www.ijc.org/en/\\_Role\\_of\\_the\\_Commission](http://www.ijc.org/en/_Role_of_the_Commission) (10 July 2014).