

## DIVERSIONS IN THE GREAT LAKES SYSTEM

Data on Great Lakes Diversions comes from various sources. Environment and Climate Change Canada (ECCC) and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) who support the Coordinating Committee compile the data for use in water reporting and Great Lakes regulation. ECCC and the USACE provide this data to the Province of Ontario and the States who in turn compile and report on Great Lakes Diversions through the Great Lakes Commission (GLC). The GLC manage the [Great Lakes Regional Water Uses Database](#) and produce an annual report on withdrawals, diversions and consumptive uses of Great Lakes waters. The Great Lakes - St. Lawrence River States and Provinces report annual water use to the GLC in response to the recommendation of the [Great Lakes Charter of 1985](#). Water use data are submitted to the repository on an annual basis and reports are published through the Great Lakes Regional Water Use Database at <https://waterusedata.glc.org/annualreports.php>.

### **Additional Background**

In water resource literature, a diversion indicates a withdrawal of water at one point and the transfer of that water to another point some distance away. If the water transfer occurs from one watershed or basin to another, it is called an inter-basin diversion. A water transfer that occurs totally within one watershed or basin is called an intra-basin diversion. Both inter- and intra-basin diversions occur in the Great Lakes Basin.

The International Joint Commission (IJC) investigated and reported on Great Lakes diversions in mid 1980's, in response to a request from the US and Canadian governments. In 1985, the IJC presented a detailed [Great Lakes Diversions and Consumptive Uses](#) report to the governments of the United States and Canada. This report had two parts: Part One examined the effects of existing diversions, the potential to lessen extremes in Great Lakes levels by changing existing diversion flow rates, and existing and projected consumptive uses in the Great Lakes basin. Part Two provided a broader and more appropriate context within which to address the longer-term prospects for the use of Great Lakes water.

Later in 1996, the IJC advised both national governments that the subject of diversion and consumptive use of Great Lakes waters needed to be addressed more comprehensively than it had been to date. In response, the governments, in their 1999 letter, showed their concern about the increasing and competitive uses of water that flow along or across the boundary and requested the IJC for a comprehensive report on the matters that may affect levels and flows of waters within the boundary or transboundary basins and shared aquifer. The existing and potential consumptive uses, diversions and the cumulative effects of existing and potential

diversions, and the current laws and policies that may affect the sustainability of the water resources in boundary and transboundary basins were the focus points of the report. The governments also requested the IJC to give first priority to an examination of the Great Lakes water removal and to provide interim recommendations for the protection of the waters of the Great Lakes. In 2000, the IJC submitted its final report to the governments of the United States and Canada titled [Protection of the Waters of the Great Lakes](#).