



Media Release

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First Binational Beneficial Use Impairment Re-designation in the St. Clair River Area of Concern

The St. Clair River Area of Concern (AOC) now has one less beneficial use impairment (BUI) to restore as the "Tainting of Fish and Wildlife Flavour" BUI has been assessed and found to be "not impaired". The St. Clair River is one of 43 Areas of Concern found throughout the Great Lakes basin.

The St. Clair River was designated an Area of Concern in 1987 under the Canada–United States Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement. Areas of Concern are sites on the Great Lakes system where environmental quality is significantly degraded and beneficial uses are impaired. Currently, there are nine such designated areas on the Canadian side of the Great Lakes, 25 in the United States, and five (including the St. Clair River) that are shared by both countries.

In each Area of Concern, government, community and industry partners are working together to restore environmental quality and beneficial uses through a remedial action plan. The St. Clair River re-designation of the "Tainting of Fish and Wildlife Flavour" BUI to "not impaired" status represents the first such achievement from a binational AOC.

In 1995 the St. Clair River AOC identified this beneficial use impairment as requiring further assessment due to reports from the early 1990s of fish and wildlife from the St. Clair River having an odd smell or taste. Pollution reduction regulations, source control programs, and remedial actions have addressed significant sources of pollutants known to cause or contribute to tainting, and recent surveys of over 300 anglers and hunters present a weight of evidence that any concern around this issue no longer exists.

The decision to re-designate this Beneficial Use Impairment to "not impaired" status was reached through consensus with the Remedial Action Plan (RAP) partners, and was endorsed by the St. Clair River Binational Public Advisory Council (BPAC), the Aamjiwnaang and Walpole Island First Nations.

