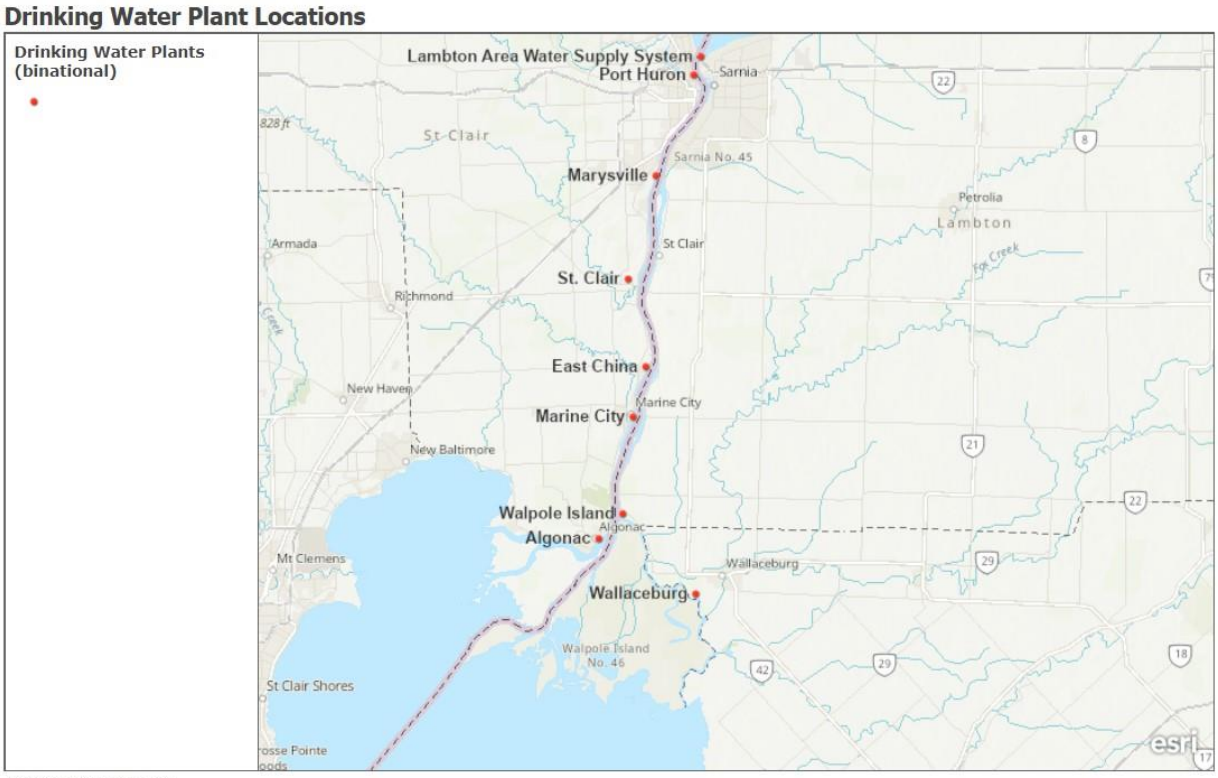
FACT SHEET August 2022

DRINKING WATER
ST. CLAIR RIVER AREA OF CONCERN

1. **Who relies on the St. Clair River as a source of drinking water?**
   In Ontario, there are three water treatment plants that draw water from the St. Clair River, one located upstream of the Sarnia-Lambton industrialized zone, and two located downstream. The Lambton Area Water Supply System, located upstream, serves the Sarnia-Lambton area with 120,000 users. The downstream water treatment plant at Wallaceburg serves 11,000 people, and the downstream water treatment plant at Walpole Island First Nation serves 2,300 people.

   In Michigan, there are six water treatment plants that draw water from the St. Clair River. These facilities serve the cities of Port Huron, Marysville, St. Clair, East China Township, Marine City, Algonac, and surrounding communities, providing clean drinking water to approximately 80,000 people.



2. **Is the St. Clair River a safe source of drinking water?**
   The drinking water supplied by the water intake and treatment facilities using the St. Clair River as source water, has always met and/or exceeded all federal, state and provincial drinking water standards. The implementation of strict discharge regulations, wastewater infrastructure upgrades and active participation by local industry, on both sides of the river, has greatly reduced the risk of major spills to the river since the late 1990's. In Canada and the U.S. there are also

Source Water Protection programs that evaluate and minimize potential contamination sources. Also, ongoing chemical monitoring of the St. Clair River helps to identify potential water quality issues. Prevention is the first line of defense in protecting drinking water resources.

3. **How do I know where my drinking water comes from?**
   If you receive a water bill, you are receiving water from the local water treatment plant and your municipality or administration will be able to provide this information to you. If you are a U.S. resident, you can also find this information in your Consumer Confidence Report produced yearly by the municipal water treatment facility. If you do not receive a water bill, you are likely on a well accessing the groundwater supply or you are supplied by a property management system, such as, mobile home parks or rental properties.

4. **Who regulates and/or monitors the quality of the water reaching my home?**
   In Ontario, annual inspections are conducted at municipal drinking water treatment systems by the Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks to verify that they are being operated and maintained in accordance with Ontario's strict regulatory requirements.

   In Ontario and Michigan, all drinking water systems regularly monitor the quality of the water entering their facility. The source water is treated so that it is safe to consume. Water quality is again monitored at the plant output to confirm that all federal, provincial or state water quality standards have been met.

   In the event there is concern over the quality of the drinking water due to an adverse sample result or other operational issues, the system operators are required to take corrective actions to resolve the concern. In some instances, a notification may be released to the public with an advisory to boil the drinking water or to not consume the drinking water.

5. **What is a spill?**
   A spill is when a pollutant is accidentally released to the natural environment in excess of regulated allowances. Spills can occur from vehicles, watercraft, residential, commercial, agriculture, municipal or industrial sites.

6. **What happens when a spill occurs?**
   In Ontario, spills to land, air or water are required to be reported to the Spills Action Center (SAC), a branch of the Ontario Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks. If a spill occurs to a local water body, the SAC determines the appropriate action to respond to the spill, including ensuring that any downstream drinking water intakes are notified. In addition, through the Community Awareness Emergency Response (CAER) organization in Sarnia-Lambton, a MyCNN community notification system was put in place to send messages to subscribers about issues affecting the community, including industrial incidents.

   In Michigan, spills are to be reported to the Pollution Emergency Alert System (PEAS) hotline. Emergency managers from the Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes and Energy (EGLE), the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS), the St. Clair County Office of Homeland Security/Emergency Management and the affected municipalities would work together to address any spill affecting the drinking water supply.

Notification occurs bi-nationally between agencies for any spills which could impact the other side of the border. In the US there is also the National Response Center for federal notifications.

7. **How is my water supply protected from spills to the St. Clair River?**
In the town of Wallaceburg, future supply disruptions to consumers can be avoided in the event of a spill through intake closure and the availability of storage. Storage options include ground level storage, an elevated storage tower, an interconnection with the Lambton Area Water Supply System (LAWSS) with a water intake at the head of the St. Clair River, and an interconnection with the Chatham-Kent water supply system with a water intake at Lake Erie. If a prolonged intake closure is predicted, operators can immediately open the LAWSS interconnect to ensure the continuation of a secure water supply to Wallaceburg. For Walpole Island First Nation, in the event there is a need to close their intake, the water treatment plant has the ability to fill their storage reservoir to allow for approximately two days of drinking water. After two days, water can be trucked in.

   In Michigan, water treatment facilities have all or some of the following: ground level storage facilities; in-plant treated water reservoirs; elevated treated water storage; and distribution system interconnections with neighboring communities to allow continuing service in the event of a shutdown of treatment or intake. Also, all of the drinking water intake facilities on the St. Clair River have automatic, enhanced monitoring of water chemistry at the intake pipe, occuring every 15 minutes, to alert operators to any changes in the source water. If changes are detected that would ultimately affect the quality of the drinking water, the operators can shut down the intake until the water chemisty returns to normal.

   In Canada and the U.S., there are Source Water Protection programs/regulations that identify and evaluate potential contamination sources. This allows drinking water facilities to manage and minimize the potential for contamination impacts to the drinking water source.

8. **How are spills prevented?**
There are several laws in Canada and the U.S. that are designed to regulate and prevent spills to the natural environment from municipalities, industries and shipping.

   Municipalities, in the U.S., are required to separate their sanitary and storm sewer systems. Separation does not allow the mixture of storm and sewage water, thereby preventing the overflow of sewage after heavy rain events. In Ontario, the province provides guidance to municipalities on the control of existing combined sewer overflow systems, minimum treatment requirements, and control options to mitigate impacts. Any new construction requires that sanitary and storm sewer systems be separate.

   Industrial facilities are required to have plans in place to prevent and respond to spills. Many facilities along the St. Clair River have changed from a once-through system of cooling water to a recycled system of cooling water towers and retention basins. This recycled system allows the facility to contain cooling water, in the event it has been contaminated, and either treat it or dispose of it in accordance with disposal regulations.

In Canada, as part of the Ocean Protection Plan, Transport Canada addresses navigation safety risks aimed at reducing marine incidents causing oil, gas or chemical spills. In the U.S., the Coast Guard and the Department of Transportation are responsible for marine safety, spill prevention and response.

These examples are just some of the way's spills are being prevented. Spill prevention is the first line of defense in a multi-level protection plan to protect our drinking water. Other protections include: Spill notification systems in Ontario and Michigan, as well as cross-border notifications; Spill response plans for Ontario and Michigan as well as the Canadian and U.S. Coast Guards, and; Water intake and treatment plant operations designed to prevent contaminated water from getting into the drinking water distribution system.

9. **Is the water from my tap safe to drink?**
   Yes, the water that leaves a treatment facility is monitored to confirm that it meets all drinking water quality standards.

   In Michigan, anyone interested in getting their tap water tested can contact the drinking water facility for their municipality. In the case of water from a private water well, contact the St. Clair County Health Department.
   St. Clair County Health Department: Phone: (810) 987 – 5306; http://www.scchealth.co

   In Lambton County and the Municipality of Chatham-Kent, anyone on a muncipal water supply that is interested in getting their tap water tested should contact the drinking water operating authority in their municipality. If your water supply is from a private water well, a well water sampling kit can be obtained by contacting:
   Lambton Public Health at 519-383-8331; lambtonpublichealth.ca
   Chatham-Kent Public Health at 519-352-7270; ckphu.com

10. **Who can I contact or where can I find more information if I have questions/concerns about my drinking water?**
    For more information about your drinking water supply, contact your municipality or local administration. For more information about actions being taken to protect source water and drinking water systems on the St. Clair River, use the contact information below:

    Canada:
    Ontario Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks, Sarnia District Office
    1094 London Road, Sarnia ON N7S 1P1
    Phone: 519-336-4030
    www.ontario.ca/page/drinking-water

    U.S.:
    Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes and Energy, Water Division
    Warren District Office: phone 586-753-3700
    www.michigan.gov/drinkingwater

We acknowledge the role of First Nations in our efforts to protect water quality.
The Anishinaabeg people have a strong spiritual and cultural connection to water. In their culture, women have inherited the traditional responsibility of protecting the water, carrying it and speaking for it, as the ones that carry new life. Water (Nibi) is not a physical entity, water is life, has its own spirit, it is healing and it is sacred medicine.