The Boundary Waters Treaty of 1909 created the International Joint Commission for the purpose of settling and preventing transboundary water disputes between the United States and Canada.

Creation of the Treaty was necessitated by population growth, increased agricultural activity and emerging transboundary issues related to water quantity and quality.

The Treaty pioneered general principles for North American water management that are still in use over 100 years later.

The Commission’s work focuses on the entire transboundary with considerable emphasis on water apportionment and flood mitigation programs.
The shared waters of the St. Mary and Milk River basins was a primary factor in the creation of the 1909 Treaty, and Article VI marked the beginning of the IJC’s rich history of water apportionment issues.

Flood mitigation is an important aspect of international water management, especially due to the changing climate.

Watershed Boards utilize the concept of Adaptive Management to monitor and review international water regulation plans across the transboundary.

IJC’s structure of transboundary watershed boards support the sustainment of watersheds, provide a focus on the changing climate and ensure sustainable international water resources – goals that we share with UNECE.
Early successes in addressing water quality issues led to an expanded binational effort and the 1972 Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement (GLWQA).

The Great Lakes contain one-fifth of the world’s fresh water and the priority of use is for domestic and sanitary purposes.

The goal of the 50th anniversary review of the GLWQA is to envision ways of supporting health of the Great Lakes well into the future.

The “Great Lakes Horizon” project will identify the factors that will impact the Great Lakes ecologically, economically, socially and culturally over the next 30+ years.

Work in 2022 is underway toward developing a Great Lakes Manure Management Framework, which supports the objectives of the International Water Action Decade and SDG 6.
The 2021 Great Lakes Water Quality Board’s report on manure management included research from a very diverse group of stakeholders from agriculture, nutrient research and water treatment organizations.

Subsequently, a Phase 1 report from the Health Professionals Advisory Board provided the framework for a basin-wide fecal pollution tracking study utilizing new technology to compare bacterial sources and trends.

The focus of this research has been extended beyond the Great Lakes to include connecting waters.

The 5-year study will determine near-shore point sources, changes in microbial populations, and their associated health risks.
The Board is actively developing its Phase 2 work plans for implementing the research activities of this project.

Partnerships are key to establishing implementation plans. Collaboration and resource-sharing is being accomplished with regional governmental agencies and institutions.

IJC will act in its historical role as a leader and convenor, providing a space for the many talented and advanced researchers to share knowledge.

The framework and specific study included in these activities directly support the Sustainable Decade Goal 6, and the overall 2030 agenda.
Thank you
(Jane Corwin, U.S. Chair, International Joint Commission)

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