

Senator Gilbert offered the following resolution:

Senate Resolution No. 95.

A resolution to urge the International Joint Commission and the United States Army Corps of Engineers to expedite studies investigating the effect of dredging and erosion of the St. Clair River on the water levels of the upper Great Lakes and, if necessary, take prompt actions to remediate any impacts.

Whereas, The upper Great Lakes have regularly approached historic low water levels over the last decade. In the fall, Lake Superior could break records for low water levels established in the late 1920s. Meanwhile, Lake Erie has generally remained near its historic average water level; and

Whereas, Extreme low water levels affects the economy and quality of life along the upper Great Lakes. Ships must carry less coal, iron ore, grains, and other cargos, increasing the expense of delivering vital materials for manufacturing and power production. Recreational boaters risk running aground as they navigate shallow areas and attempt to dock their boats. Shoreline property owners and visitors encounter increases in nuisance vegetation growing along exposed lakebeds; and

Whereas, A 2005 independent engineering study concluded that Lake Michigan and Lake Huron are more than 2.5 feet lower than natural levels because of dredging conducted during the 1960s on the St. Clair River and subsequent erosion. This estimate more than doubled previous estimates of the impact from changes to the St. Clair River and far outstrips any effect from water diversions out of the Great Lakes basin; and

Whereas, Both the International Joint Commission (IJC) and the United States Army Corps of Engineers have acknowledged that the contribution of dredging, erosion, and other factors affecting upper Great Lakes water levels deserve closer scrutiny. The IJC will be investigating the changes to the St. Clair River and potential remediation as part of its review of upper Great Lakes water levels regulation but is not scheduled to complete its study until 2012; and

Whereas, Recent reports indicate that erosion may be accelerating, with the potential to lower water levels of the upper Great Lakes even further. The dire implications of this report, if true, create a new urgency to move forward quickly with investigations before the problem gets any worse; now, therefore, be it

Resolved by the Senate, That we urge the International Joint Commission and the United States Army Corps of Engineers to expedite studies investigating the effect of dredging and erosion of the St. Clair River on the water levels of the upper Great Lakes and, if necessary, take prompt actions to remediate any impacts; and be it further

Resolved, That copies of this resolution be transmitted to the International Joint Commission, the United States Army Corp of Engineers Detroit District, the President of the United States Senate, the Speaker of the United States House of Representatives, the members of the Michigan congressional delegation, the director of the Michigan Department of Natural Resources, the director of the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality, and the Michigan Office of the Great Lakes.