



JOINT PROJECTS FOCUSED ON THREE ISSUES

Under the St. Lawrence Action Plan 2011–2026, the governments of Canada and Quebec continue to work together by pooling their expertise and their resources to protect and enhance the St. Lawrence.

Three priority issues have been identified. They are supported by joint projects presented in more detail online at www.planstlaurent.qc.ca/.

CONSERVATION OF BIODIVERSITY

The St. Lawrence shelters a great diversity of living organisms. The transformation of ecosystems, the proliferation of alien invasive **species, and the impacts of climate change are the main threats to biodiversity.**

To contribute to the conservation of biodiversity, the governments are pursuing **three courses of action:**

- **Identify, protect, restore and enhance environments of ecological interest**
Develop shared tools for identifying environments of priority interest to be conserved; consolidate the network of protected areas; and enhance and restore sensitive habitats.
- **Prevent the introduction of alien invasive species and control their dispersal**
Consider additional tools and measures to control the abundance and prevent the dispersal of these species and improve information management without affecting trade on the St. Lawrence.
- **Assess the impact of climate change on ecosystems**
Develop and use indicators to characterize the impact of climate change on St. Lawrence ecosystems and more accurately assess its impact on wetlands.

SUSTAINABLE USE

The St. Lawrence is used for recreational, commercial, industrial and public purposes. Urban development, artificialization of the shoreline, degradation of aquatic and riparian habitats, bank erosion, major fluctuations in water levels as well as climate change have resulted in the loss of many uses.

To ensure the sustainable use of the river, the governments are pursuing **four courses of action:**

- **Foster the sustainable management of fisheries resources**
Conduct an inventory of existing data on the state of fisheries resources in the St. Lawrence in order to make this information available.
- **Identify and enhance public access sites**
Consolidate the inventory of access sites and develop information and awareness-raising tools on the sustainable use of these sites.
- **Maintain and promote sustainable navigation**
Pursue cooperation among stakeholders on the St. Lawrence and the Great Lakes regarding navigation; develop information and awareness-raising tools for users of the St. Lawrence and



the general public; and adopt a more integrated approach for dredging and sediment management activities.

- **Foster the sustainable management of water levels and water inputs**
Introduce management tools to consolidate mechanisms for sharing data and develop decision-support tools for sustainable water management.

IMPROVEMENTS TO WATER QUALITY

Improved water quality requires the characterization of pollution sources and an understanding of the effects of pollution on the environment. Although point sources of contamination are fairly well characterized, nonpoint-source pollution and its effects on human health are not well understood.

In order to better identify and reduce these sources of pollution, the governments are pursuing **three courses of action**:

- **Reduce agricultural sources of nonpoint-source pollution**
Support and coordinate action aimed at reducing nonpoint-source agricultural pollution and improving understanding of the effects of this pollution on freshwater and marine ecosystems.
- **Improve management tools for contaminated sediment**
Enhance risk-assessment and management tools associated with those areas of the St. Lawrence where contaminated sediment is found.
- **Assess the presence and the effects of toxic substances on the ecosystem**
Assess the presence and the effects of contaminants associated with municipal effluent discharges; improve understanding of emerging toxic substances; characterize the contamination of Lake Saint-Pierre; and study the effects of toxic substances on the food chain.



TWO DECISION-SUPPORT PROGRAMS

STATE OF THE ST. LAWRENCE MONITORING PROGRAM (SSLMP)

Launched in 2003, the purpose of this program is to pool all the data and knowledge gleaned from the environmental monitoring activities of the partner departments and agencies. To this end, 21 indicators are analyzed; they are focused on the main components of the St. Lawrence: water, sediment, biological resources, uses, and shores. Every five years, the accumulated data are used to provide a snapshot of changes to the health of the St. Lawrence. The most recent overview, published in 2008, is available online at:

www.planstlaurent.qc.ca/sl_obs/sesl/publications/portrait/2008/Portrait_global_2008_e.pdf

The SSLMP also provides for the St. Lawrence Rendez-vous, an event held every three years to allow experts and players from the environmental monitoring field to get together and share information.

NUMERICAL ENVIRONMENTAL FORECASTING FOR THE ST. LAWRENCE

Similar to weather forecasting, numerical environmental forecasting serves to anticipate certain phenomena or to evaluate their impact based on actual observations, theoretical applications or advanced technological tools.

Under this new program, the expertise and forecasting models of the various participants are pooled. The creation of this virtual numerical laboratory will lead to a better understanding of the St. Lawrence ecosystem and facilitate the decision-making process.

These numerical environmental forecasts will focus on:

- Water: currents, temperature, waves, levels, flows, quality and salinity;
- Ice and snow: cover, thickness, temperature and density;
- Ecosystem health;
- Precipitation;
- Soil temperature and humidity;
- Urban conditions.



INTEGRATED MANAGEMENT OF THE ST. LAWRENCE

Adopted by the Quebec government in 2009, the purpose of the *Act to affirm the collective nature of water resources and provide for increased water resource protection* is to consolidate the joint integrated management of water with an eye to the sound governance of water resources throughout Quebec, including the St. Lawrence.

This process has led to the implementation of the integrated management of the St. Lawrence. This approach is based on cooperation among all decision-makers, users, and citizens in the planning and harmonization of measures to protect and use the resources of this important ecosystem, within the perspective of sustainable development.

THE INTEGRATED MANAGEMENT OF THE ST. LAWRENCE PROVIDES FOR:

Twelve Regional Round Tables (RRTs)

With six created by 2016, in the following areas:

- Montréal region
- Lake Saint-Pierre
- Québec City Region
- North of the Lower Estuary
- South of the Lower Estuary
- Magdalen Islands

These RRTs will allow the various regional stakeholders involved in managing the resources and the use of the St. Lawrence to harmonize their actions through the development and implementation of a regional integrated management plan.

Area of Prime Concern (ZIP) committees

Reporting to the regional issue tables, the ZIP committees are responsible for coordinating the development and production of regional integrated management plans that they will also help implement. In some cases, however, ZIP committees may be given other integrated-management responsibilities. In areas where regional issue tables have not yet been created, the ZIP committees will continue their current cooperative activities in order to lay the groundwork for the eventual creation of a regional issue table.

Forum Saint-Laurent

This annual event brings together stakeholders with responsibilities or interests related to the management of resources and uses of the St. Lawrence. The purpose of this forum is to share information and search for solutions to the issues affecting the St. Lawrence as a whole.



A COMMUNITY FUNDING PROGRAM

COMMUNITY INTERACTION PROGRAM (CIP)

The Community Interaction Program (CIP) is a funding program for community projects aimed at addressing a regional environmental concern related to the St. Lawrence ecosystem. This funding program has been renewed with a contribution of \$4.28 million for the period 2011–2016. Since 1993, the \$12.4 million allocated by the CIP has led to the completion of 375 projects for a total value of \$22.6 million.