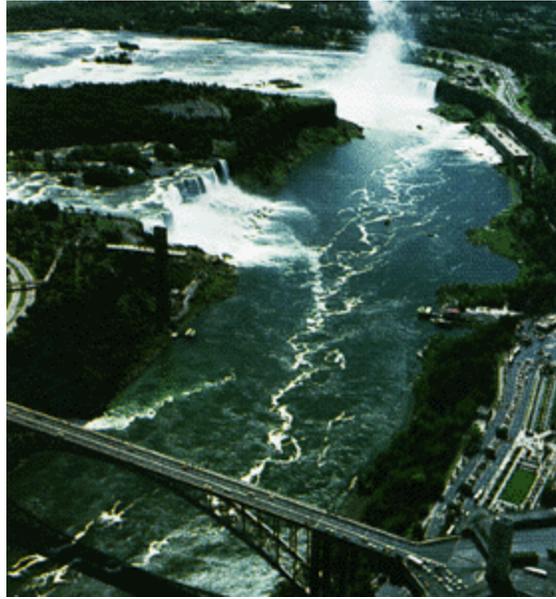




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The International Niagara Board of Control



[Lake Erie/Niagara River Ice Boom Information Sheet](#) (1.1 MB PDF file)



International Cooperation on the Niagara River

The Boundary Waters Treaty of 1909 requires that the United States and Canada, together, approve projects that affect the levels and flows of waters along their common boundary. Water diversions in the Niagara River for hydroelectric power projects in both countries were approved by the 1950 Niagara Treaty. Water diverted from the river above Niagara Falls is returned to the river below the Falls. The 1950 Niagara Treaty specifies the minimum amount of water that must flow over the Falls at different times.

The International Joint Commission

The 1909 Boundary Waters Treaty also created the **International Joint Commission** to help prevent and resolve disputes over the use of waters along the boundary between Canada and the United States. The Commission was asked to help implement the 1950 Niagara Treaty by overseeing the design, construction and operation of works in the Niagara River that control the level of the Chippawa-Grass Island Pool. The Commission also oversees the annual installation of an ice boom that is designed to reduce ice jams in the Niagara River. The Commission requires that these activities meet certain conditions to ensure that interests in both countries are protected.

The International Niagara Board of Control

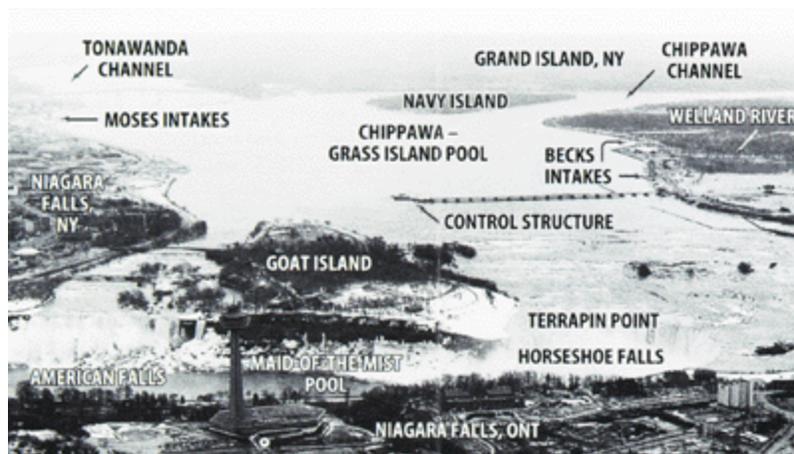
The **International Niagara Board of Control** was established by the Commission in 1953 to provide advice on matters related to the Commission's responsibilities for water levels and flows in the Niagara River. The Board's main duties are to oversee water levels regulation in the Chippawa-Grass Island Pool and installation of the Lake Erie-Niagara River Ice Boom. The Board also collaborates with the International Niagara Committee, a body created by the 1950 Niagara Treaty to determine the amount of water available for the Falls and power generation.

The Board meets at least twice a year and provides semi-annual progress reports to the Commission. The Board also produces an annual report on the operation of the Lake Erie-Niagara River Ice Boom and holds an annual public meeting to provide information and receive input from all interested persons.

Regulation of the Chippawa-Grass Island Pool

Various international studies have examined factors affecting the scenic beauty of Niagara Falls and the Niagara River. Remedial works, first suggested in 1929, were constructed in the 1950s to enhance the scenic beauty, provide for the most beneficial use of the river's waters and maintain the minimum flows over the Falls required by the 1950 Niagara Treaty. The remedial works consist of the International Niagara Control Works, which controls water levels in the Chippawa-Grass Island Pool, and excavation and fill on both flanks of Horseshoe Falls. The excavation and fill provide for a more even and unbroken flow across the Horseshoe Falls.

The International Niagara Control Works is a structure extending about 0.8 kilometre (0.5 mile) into the river from the Canadian shore at the downstream end of the Chippawa-Grass Island Pool. Its 18 sluice gates allow for precise changes in the flow over the Falls and adjustments to the water level in the Chippawa-Grass Island Pool, where water is diverted for hydroelectric power production.



The Board monitors operation of the control works by the power entities, Ontario Power Generation and the New York Power Authority, under a Commission directive. To lessen the adverse effects from high or low water levels, the power entities are required to maintain the long-term average level of the Chippawa-Grass Island Pool within certain tolerances. Under abnormal flow or ice conditions, these tolerances may be suspended and a somewhat wider range of levels is permitted. Operation of this structure does not change the total flow of the Niagara River and has no measurable effect on Lake Erie water levels.

The ability to change water levels near Niagara Falls by adjusting gate settings and altering plant diversions has, on numerous occasions, assisted in river rescue operations to save people from going over the Falls.

Lake Erie-Niagara River Ice Boom

[Ice Boom monitoring and Information](#)

In 1964 the Commission approved an application by the power entities to install a floating ice boom in Lake Erie near the entrance to the Niagara River. The purpose of the ice boom is to reduce the frequency and duration of heavy ice runs into the river. Ice runs may cause ice jams that can damage shoreline property and significantly reduce power diversions. The ice boom speeds formation of and stabilizes the natural ice arch near the head of the Niagara River every winter. The boom is owned, operated and maintained by the power entities.

When in position, the 2,700-metre (8,000-foot) ice boom is located approximately three kilometres (two miles) upstream of the

Peace Bridge and spans the outlet of Lake Erie. Installation of the floating sections of the boom may begin on December 16th, or when the water temperature at the Buffalo water intake reaches four degrees Celsius (39 degrees Fahrenheit), whichever occurs first. All floating sections of the ice boom are opened by the first of April, unless ice cover surveys on or about that date show there is more than 650 square kilometres (250 square miles) of ice remaining in the eastern end of the lake. If that is the case, the ice boom opening may be delayed.



Membership

The International Niagara Board of Control is appointed by the International Joint Commission and consists of four members, two each from the United States and Canada. Members serve in their personal and professional capacities and not as representatives of their home organizations. The members for the U.S. Section are from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission. The members for the Canadian Section are from Environment Canada and the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources.

The Board is supported in its role by the International Niagara Working Committee. The Working Committee is made up of members from federal and provincial agencies, the New York Power Authority and Ontario Power Generation.

More Information

- [International Joint Commission](#)
- [U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Great Lakes Division \(LRD\)](#)
- [U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Chicago \(LRC\)](#)
- [U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Detroit \(LRE\)](#)
- [U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Buffalo \(LRB\)](#)

**Questions?
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