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Tuesday 20 November, 2001

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State, federal, Canadian officials say 'enough studies,' they're ready to rescue Lake St. Clair

By: Chad Selweski, Macomb Daily Staff Writer

November 20, 2001

Numerous committees have studied the pollution in Lake St. Clair, with most creating barely a ripple of impact. But the newest attempt promises to make waves.



State, federal and Canadian officials are drafting a report that will offer recommendations and a plan of action to address the causes and sources of pollution in the lake and the St. Clair River.

"This is not a study, this is a plan," said Col. Richard Polo of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. "This is different because it will have specific recommendations on actual actions that have to be taken. It won't be broad generalities."

Polo and about 50 officials and environmental activists from the United States and Canada discussed the water management plan Monday at a Chesterfield Township luncheon put on by the Great Lakes Commission.

The federally funded project, launched in July, will result in a report that will be unveiled at a "State of the Lake" conference in August.

A preliminary draft is expected as early as February.

The findings and recommendations will incorporate portions of past studies, but unlike those other attempts, it will put forward cost estimates and possible funding sources for the solutions.

The plan will not pinpoint polluters, such as industrial sites or sewage discharge points, but it will recommend ways to track them down.

Matthew Doss, a program manager for the Great Lakes Commission, said his organization was pleased to see that "the forgotten lake" -- Lake St. Clair -- will receive the same scrutiny as the five Great Lakes.

Based in Ann Arbor, the Great Lakes Commission is a clean-water group consisting of the eight Great Lakes states and the provinces of Ontario and Quebec. The commission is playing a leading role in the study.

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 - Business
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At Monday's meeting of project participants, U.S. Rep. David Bonior called Lake St. Clair the sixth Great Lake deserving of a "doable, achievable and manageable plan of action."



As the home of more than 200 marinas and as the main drinking water source for southeastern Michigan's 5 million people, the lake must be protected from polluters, the congressman said.

Bonior, who secured \$400,000 to fund the water plan, said the beach closings that began in 1994 showed that the lake had been neglected for decades.



"Lake St. Clair is often an afterthought, or not thought of at all. It is the poor, neglected cousin of the five big lakes," said the Mount Clemens Democrat. "But I'm here to tell you today that Lake St. Clair can no longer be our secret. It needs national and international attention."

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