

water policy.³

With increasing regional consumptive use⁴ pressures on a surprisingly fragile Great Lakes water supply⁵, the de facto political strategy facing the region's stakeholders has evolved from a policy of blanket denial of out-of-basin diversions to one whose aim is to ensure that new diversions do not permanently compromise the water levels necessary to maintain the ecological integrity of the basin. Needless to say, this new political strategy is considerably more complicated than the historical no diversion strategy and, consequently, is the focus of this article.

Drawing upon past and current survey research and position papers of the various stakeholders in the Great Lakes basin as well as official correspondence, this article explores the political dimensions of water diversion in order to identify politically acceptable criteria for evaluating future water diversion proposals. In the process of identifying these criteria, the author will explore the legal and political changes that have led to a political environment more likely to be sympathetic to diversion projects. Canada and Michigan, as the two governmental entities most affected and thus most sensitive to diversion projects⁶, will be compared to determine how water diversion criteria can be crafted to meet their individual and sometimes divergent water diversion political strategies.

The Rise and Demise of the Historic Great Lakes Anti Diversion Strategy

Before the approval of the Pleasant Prairie, Wisconsin, water diversion project in 1989, the Great Lakes had only five existing diversions⁷. The five diversions have had a long history associated with the development of the region and only two of them actually divert water out of the basin. Despite the interstate and international nature of the Great Lakes and thus the potential preemptive authority of the U.S. government, the riparian states of the Great

³Moskal, Jerry. "Canada, 8 states vow to fight lakes diversion plan", Lansing State Journal, 8 May, 1983: p 1B.

⁴For purposes of this article the term consumptive use of water is water withdrawn or withheld from the Great Lakes by entities within the Great Lakes basin while the term diversion is the transfer of water from the Great Lakes to another watershed. In 1992, consumptive use of water in the Great Lakes Basin increased by 37% over the previous year.

⁵It is estimated that only one percent of the waters of the Great Lakes are renewed each year.

⁶It is estimated that Michigan and the province of Ontario constitute 45% of the total consumptive use of Great Lakes water.

⁷The Long Lac and Ogoki (Canada), the Lake Michigan diversion in Chicago, the Portage Canal in Wisconsin, and the New York state Barge Canal.