

From Pollution Control to Ecosystem Integrity in Great Lakes Governance

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Governance for the environmental quality of the Great Lakes is an evolving challenge to the people and institutions of Canada and the United States. Institutional arrangements through which governance is effected often reflects the larger social, cultural, economic and political influences felt in society. Indeed, over the past several hundred years, the predominant nature of Great Lakes governance has ranged from the sacred of First Nations, the utilitarian by pioneers, the exploitive by successive industrial generations and more recently is evolving to the restorative.

Development of Great Lakes institutional arrangements since the mid 1960s can be related to:

- the growth of the scientific knowledge on the extent and severity of lake pollution problems and the establishment of a resident scientific community in the Great Lakes Basin keenly studying the ecological quality of the lakes;
- the growth of environmental regulatory frameworks in both countries;
- the establishment of permanent non-governmental environmental groups specifically focused on the ecological quality of the Great Lakes Basin;
- the development of an environmentally interested public and a media which nurtures that public;
- the changing nature of economic relationships between Canada and the U.S. as well as with other developed countries;
- the fiscal limitations of governments; and
- the establishment of the concepts of ecosystem integrity, the ecosystem approach and sustainable development.

The current challenge for Great Lakes governance is to find the institutional arrangements for achieving ecosystem integrity within a context of sustainable development.