

April 16, 2010 – The negotiation of amendments to the Canada-U.S. Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement is well underway. The second formal negotiating session was held on April 8, 2010.

Since the formal launch of negotiations on January 27, 2010, a significant amount of work has been undertaken.

During this time, governance discussions focused on the Agreement's purpose, scope, vision, principles, and management framework. Provisions for future reviews and amendments to the Agreement were also discussed.

On April 8, 2010, senior officials from Environment Canada, Foreign Affairs and International Trade Canada, the U.S. Department of State and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency met for the second formal negotiating session for amending the GLWQA. At this negotiating session, progress on governance was reviewed and discussions on governance were broadened to include consideration of place-based approaches such as areas of concern, lakewide management plans, the nearshore, dredging and contaminated sediment, and groundwater. In addition, work began on other specific issues such as nutrients, toxic substances, ship-source pollution, science coordination, aquatic invasive species, habitats and species, and climate change impacts.

During the coming months, lead negotiators for the various issues will work towards recommending directions, elements and suggested approaches for amendments to the Agreement.

Canada and the United States are committed to continued public engagement and have planned additional domestic and binational mechanisms to further engage the public and Great Lakes stakeholders at key stages in the negotiating process. These mechanisms will include a series of binational public webinars that will begin in May. During this webinar series, written comments will be solicited over a six week period. Towards the end of the negotiating process, Canada and the United States also intend to host one public forum in each country.

A third negotiating session is expected to take place in Summer 2010, at which time progress on all of the issues will be reviewed and the focus of negotiations will shift to the synthesis stage. This will ensure that the interrelation between governance and specific issues is reflected in the Agreement. Focus will also shift to drafting amended text for the Agreement.