

## Headline: ST. LAWRENCE SEAWAY STUDY WILL TAKE LONGER THAN EXPECTED

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A navigation study for the St. Lawrence Seaway and Great Lakes will take a year longer than expected, a project manager said Thursday.

The binational study, originally scheduled for completion later this year, will not be ready until the autumn of 2006, due mostly to drawn-out discussions about how to mesh economic information from Canada and the United States, said David L. Wright, project manager for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

"We have a good framework now set," Mr. Wright said.

The delay attracted the attention of Sen. Hillary Rodham Clinton, D-N.Y., Rep. John M. McHugh, R-Pierrepont Manor, and other federal lawmakers from the Great Lakes region. They wrote to the Army Corps on Monday, asking why the study would take longer than expected and how the agency plans to use public comments submitted while the study is in progress.

The study of the Seaway and Great Lakes has evolved from an Army Corps responsibility to a broader effort involving Canadian transportation and environmental agencies as well as other U.S. departments. Working with the various agencies has taken more time than first envisioned, Mr. Wright said. In addition, environmental groups and shipping interests are also participating, and the Army Corps decided to hold five "stakeholder" meetings, Mr. Wright said.

The extension will increase the study's cost, Mr. Wright said, but he did not have any estimates. "You're always going to have certain added costs" when people have to spend more time on it, he said.

The Corps is examining the condition of the inland waterway to determine what sort of improvements might be needed. But Mrs. Clinton and Mr. McHugh have made clear that they do not want to see the Army Corps address expansion of Seaway locks or deepening of shipping channels.

In their letter, the Great Lakes lawmakers said they support a binational approach, but they added, "The study's shared leadership has led to some confusion about the scope, process and timeframe for the study, and we would appreciate additional information."

The lawmakers also asked for detailed information about the engineering, economic and environmental working groups the governments assembled to complete the study. They wrote that they have learned the study will "net out" the costs and benefits of the navigation system, considering the impacts of invasive species such as zebra mussels.

When the study evolved into a binational effort, it became less structured and potentially less accountable to the public, said Stephanie G. Weiss, executive director of Save The River, the Clayton environmental group that has led the call against Seaway expansion and winter navigation.

"It is less open by definition because it's less defined," Ms. Weiss said.

But Mr. Wright said the study team is devising a plan for public involvement and has already held five regional meetings with stakeholders. He said the agency will continue to post updates on its Internet

site, <http://www.lre.usace.army.mil/greatlakes/greatlakes&st-lawrenceseawaystudy/>.

The Bush administration will submit its last funding request for this phase of the study on Feb. 7, as part of the White House's spending plan for fiscal 2006.