



Canadians and Americans share a priceless resource: the Great Lakes basin ecosystem, linked downstream with the St. Lawrence River. Spanning two provinces and eight states, the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence region is an important part of our physical and cultural heritage. We depend on our Great Lakes for drinking water, recreation, transportation, power and economic opportunities. Yet, the demands of a large population in this region have taken their toll over time, and the impacts of industrialization, climate change, invasive species and toxic contaminants, among other pressures, are evident in the environment. Although human activities have degraded many parts of the Great Lakes ecosystem, we are taking steps to repair the damage we have inflicted.

## *The Great Lakes Summary Series includes:*

### *HUMAN HEALTH*

- Can We Drink the Water?
- Can We Eat the Fish?
- Can We Swim at the Beach?
- Are We Making Progress to Improve Air Quality?

### *ECOLOGICAL HEALTH*

- Top Predator Fish
- Amphibians
- Birds
- Forests
- Non-native Aquatic Species
- Coastal Wetlands
- The Food Web
- Alvars and Cobble Beaches

### *GREAT LAKES AND RIVERS*

- Lake Superior
- Lake Michigan
- Lake Huron
- St. Clair-Detroit River Ecosystem
- Lake Erie
- Lake Ontario
- St. Lawrence River

The Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement, signed in 1972, commits Canada and the United States to restore and maintain the chemical, physical and biological integrity of the Great Lakes ecosystem. Environment Canada, the U. S. Environmental Protection Agency and their many Great Lakes partners work together to evaluate the current condition of the lakes and the progress towards the goals established under the Agreement. This process involves the development and assessment of key indicators for issues such as invasive species, human health, contamination, and degradation and loss of aquatic and terrestrial habitats.

The indicators are discussed at the biennial State of the Lakes Ecosystem Conference (SOLEC), and are evaluated in the *State of the Great Lakes* reports. A selection of indicators representing human and ecological health-related issues is presented in this *State of the Great Lakes 2005 Summary Series*. In addition, information on the current, most pressing issues facing the lakes and rivers of the Great Lakes basin is included in this series. This information will help you to better understand our region's most precious resources.

For further information about SOLEC and for other Great Lakes references, including the *State of the Great Lakes 2005* report, visit [www.binational.net](http://www.binational.net). For more information on the St. Lawrence River, visit [www.slv2000.qc.ca](http://www.slv2000.qc.ca).

