

USES

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Navigation and hydropower production



Natural economic artery on the East side of North America, the St. Lawrence Seaway is administered under the joint responsibility of Canada, via the St. Lawrence Seaway Management Corporation and the United States, via the St. Lawrence Seaway Development Corporation.

Each year, nearly 37 million tonnes transit through the Seaway. Transport and handling of these goods generate 86,000 jobs and CAN\$12.7 billion in economic activity, representing 35% to 40% of the activity of the 110 Canadian and U.S. ports located in the Great Lakes and along of the Seaway.

For more than 150 years, Lac Saint-François has been the subject of successive enhancements to promote maritime trade and to increase the production of hydropower.

The fact that the lake level has been raised by 40 cm would have allowed Hydro-Québec to increase revenues of \$13.5 million per year on average. (M. Falardeau).

A little bit of History and background of Lac Saint-François

In 1729, the King of France Louis XV conferred to the marquis Charles de Beauharnais the seigneurie of Beauharnois and the right to divert the waters of the St. Lawrence River to maintain the flow in the Rivière Saint-Louis. The marquis had a first canal built between Lac Saint-François and the Rivière Saint-Louis to drain some of his lands.

At that time, the rapids of the St. Lawrence River, which separated Lac Saint-Francois from Lac Saint-Louis, had long been an obstacle to navigation. To remedy the situation, a first canal of 18 kilometres long was dug between 1842 and 1845. Shortly after the completion of the Beauharnois canal, it was noticed that the upper entry in Valleyfield was hazardous for ships. The channel leading there was tortuous and crossed by strong currents in some places. In addition, it was only eight feet deep in summer, which exposed the boats to potentially delicate

situations. Between 1849 and 1850, dams were erected to attenuate the currents and raise the level of Lac Saint-François.

Lac Saint-François has played a crucial role in the construction of contemporary Canada. Works like the old hydroelectric power station Des Cèdres (not to be confused with the one still operating on the river bed) are important remnants of the electrification of Quebec and the history of the Lac Saint-François. Today inactive since 1959, opening date of the current Seaway, it is now part of our industrial and architectural heritage. Built in 1899 by the Canadian General Electric Company for the electrification of the Soulanges canal, it contributed to bypass the rapids of the St. Lawrence River between Lac Saint-Louis and Lac Saint-François. The electric current supplied the swing bridges, the valves of the five locks and illuminated the channel for more than 20 kilometres.

Built from 1929 to 1933 by the Beauharnois Light Heat and Power Co. with 2,500 workers, the Beauharnois plant is a colossal work of close to 1 km long remaining, today, one of the largest plants in the world. It required the construction of a 1 km wide and 24.5 km long canal to divert 80% of the waters of the river and create an artificial elevation of 24 metres at the entrance of the plant.



In 1933, the station passed into the hands of the Montreal Light, Heat and Power Consolidated and, in 1941 the Privy Council of Canada requested that the Beauharnois Light, Heat and Power Company raises the level of the Lac Saint-François again, in order to increase the production of hydro-electric power in times of war. In 1944, the station passed into the hands of Hydro-Québec during the nationalization of electricity. Expansions began a few years later, and lasted until 1979, a record year of electric power production established in Beauharnois, 1,643 MW before major hydroelectric projects in Northern Quebec.

The Beauharnois power plant is open to visitors, and an interpretation centre welcomes them.

The port of Valleyfield celebrated its 50th anniversary in 2016.

An expansion of the port and port activities are under review, reflecting the dynamism of this activity and the crucial issues concerning Lac Saint-François.

References: M. Falardeau, 2015 and the [Répertoire du patrimoine culturel](#)

[Exhibition & tour of the Port of Valleyfield](#)

Drinking water supply

The quality of the water of the Lac Saint-François is directly related to the preservation of its wetlands. They act like a sponge, during heavy rain or flooding, and as a filter generating drinking water. Nearly 60% of Quebecers consume drinking water generated by Lac Saint-François. It is our collective source and the source of our mission – “Improve and maintain the quality of the water of the Lac”. To better understand its importance, we invite you to visit the Lac Saint-François National Wildlife Area, upstream of the lake. RAMSAR site since 1987, the reserve aims to preserve one of the largest coastal wetlands in the world.

[Les Amis de la réserve nationale de faune du lac Saint-François](#)

Resort and Tourism



Located less than one hour's drive of the Quebec metropolis, Lac Saint-François is one of the favourite resorts of Montrealers. All municipalities bordering the Lac, such as Saint-Anicet, Sainte-Barbe and Saint-Stanislas-de-Kostka, see their population more than double when the nice season arrives. As in many parts of Quebec, from the first warm days of spring, residents

open their cottages, get busy spring cleaning and indulge in the popular bazaars and garage sales. Pure happiness! In its lower part, Lac Saint-François is bordered by a string of almost continuous cottages, second homes, and other trailers. The demographic pressure there is very strong. During summer time, in the vicinity of the beaches and popular tourist places, it is common to hear a constant buzzing of motorboats of all sorts going in all directions on the vast lake.

The water quality and the ease of access to many parks and available boat ramps, make Lac Saint-François an incredible place to practice and engage in most sports and water recreation. In fact, Saint-Zotique Beach which is very popular in the summer, has been recognized recently as the 2nd most beautiful beach of Quebec by CANAL ÉVASION.

Lac Saint-François is the jewel and pride of the whole region. The ASLSF's goal is to prevent and raise public awareness about the enormous pressures the lake and its environment are facing ([see the Awareness page](#)).

Fishing and hunting



Lac Saint-François offers an exceptional variety of fish species. There are 39 species (see list below), of which several are threatened and/or endangered. Many accesses to the lake allow to enjoy the pleasures of sport fishing, so dear to the cultural heritage of local communities. Invasive species, such as the round goby, are the subject of special attention by the authorities and biologists.

Yellow perch fishing is particularly popular and many fishermen of all regions of Quebec visit the lake. Its maintenance and durability are highly dependent on the quality of the water of the lake.

Species	Catching limit	Period of the year
Yellow perch	50	May 6, 2016 to March 31
Pike	6	May 6, 2016 to March 31
Walleye *	6	May 13, 2016 to March 31
Bass	6	June 17, 2016 to March 31
Muskellunge	1	June 17, 2016 to March 31
Sturgeon**	1	June 15, 2016 to March 31

* Permitted size of fishing between 37 and 53 cm

** Fishing prohibited on the Lac Saint-François



An endangered species: longnose gar ©Edithe Trépanier

- Largemouth bass
- Smallmouth bass
- Catfish
- White perch (*Morone americana*)
- Carp
- Mottled Sculpin
- Tadpole madtom
- Silver redhorse
- Red horse
- Quillback
- Bluegill
- Rock bass
- pumpkinseed (sunfish family)
- Brook silverside
- Iowa darter
- Walleye
- Lake sturgeon
- Banded killifish
- Logperch (*Percina caprodes*)
- Alewife
- Round goby
- Northern pike
- Silver lamprey
- Longnose gar
- Black Crappie
- Muskellunge
- Blackchin shiner
- Bluntnose minnow
- Spottail shiner
- spotfin shiner
- Golden shiner
- Sand shiner
- Mimic shiner
- White sucker
- Yellow perch
- Tessellated darter
- Johnny darter
- Chinook salmon
- Coho salmon

[Click here to view the list of fish in pictures \(in French\)](#)

Hunting (ducks and game animals) is also part of these traditions and these privileged activities are still permitted on the water and at the edge of the lake.

For more information, visit the section on [regulation and sport hunting areas](#) on the website of the Ministère des Forêts, de la Faune et des Parcs.

Boats and water skiing



Boats abound on the waterway of the St. Lawrence River and Lac Saint-François. Several shores and beaches, such as Baie-des-Brises with its turquoise waters, look like Côte d'Azur during periods of intense heat. Boats, strung by the dozens, testify to the popularity of the places, the sand and the clear waters available to boaters.

Speaking of boat, one cannot ignore the [Régates de Valleyfield](#) event. For over 80 years, the region beats to the rhythm of the regatta racing. Nearly 150,000 spectators are there for 3 days and generate significant economic benefits for the region.

Scuba diving



The emerald waters make Lac Saint-François a unique place for scuba diving in Quebec. Diving enthusiasts, with bottle or snorkel, have easy access to incredible underwater scenes and landscapes. The aquatic beds along the coast offer a very rich and diverse flora and fauna.



Divers have access to more than 10 wrecks spread over 6 diving sites, all located in the lower part of the lake between Saint-Anicet and the Beauharnois canal, as among other ones, the

famous wreck of the Collier sunk during the 1940s. The underwater parks of Saint-Zotique, Rivière-Beaudette and Saint-Anicet offer several alternative dives to independent enthusiasts and through local dive clubs like Valleyfield's Eco Dive.



Canoeing, kayaking, SUP (Stand Up Paddleboarding), pedal-boating, cross-country skiing, snowshoeing, snowmobiling, "Fat biking", etc., during summer and winter, are practiced by a large number of vacationers, alone or in groups. Around the lake, organizations offer the sale and/or rental of this type of equipment and boats. For more information, visit the site of [Tourism Haut-Saint-Laurent](#).

Sailing Sports



The fans of windsurfing, kitesurfing, kite skiing on ice, catamaran and sailboat rub shoulders on the lake. The quality of sandy bays with emerald waters makes Lac Saint-François a mecca for the practice of sailing sports. Canadian Windsurfing Championships have been held in the southern bays as they are well-exposed to the prevailing southwest winds. Sails regattas are held regularly during the summer. For more information, you may visit the website of the [Club de Voile St-François](#) (Lake Saint-François Sailing Club).

History and Aboriginal Culture



Lac Saint-François is the natural border between 2 countries, the United States (New York State) and Canada (Ontario and Quebec provinces). The upstream part of the lake, consisting of an archipelago of hundreds of islets, corresponds to the territory of the Akwesasne Mohawk Nation. It straddles 2 countries, 2 provinces and 1 state. First Nations cultures, great national heritage wealth, left several villages of longhouses among the biggest and best restored in North America. The Droulers site, located in Saint-Anicet outside the territory, is home to an internationally-renowned museum that attracts many tourists and school groups. You may visit the website [here](#).

Rabaska rides are available in the National Wildlife Area and allow to observe a fauna and flora unique in the world, as did our native ancestors. You may visit the [Lac Saint-François National Wildlife Area](#) website for more information.