



## 2017 High Water Impact Survey

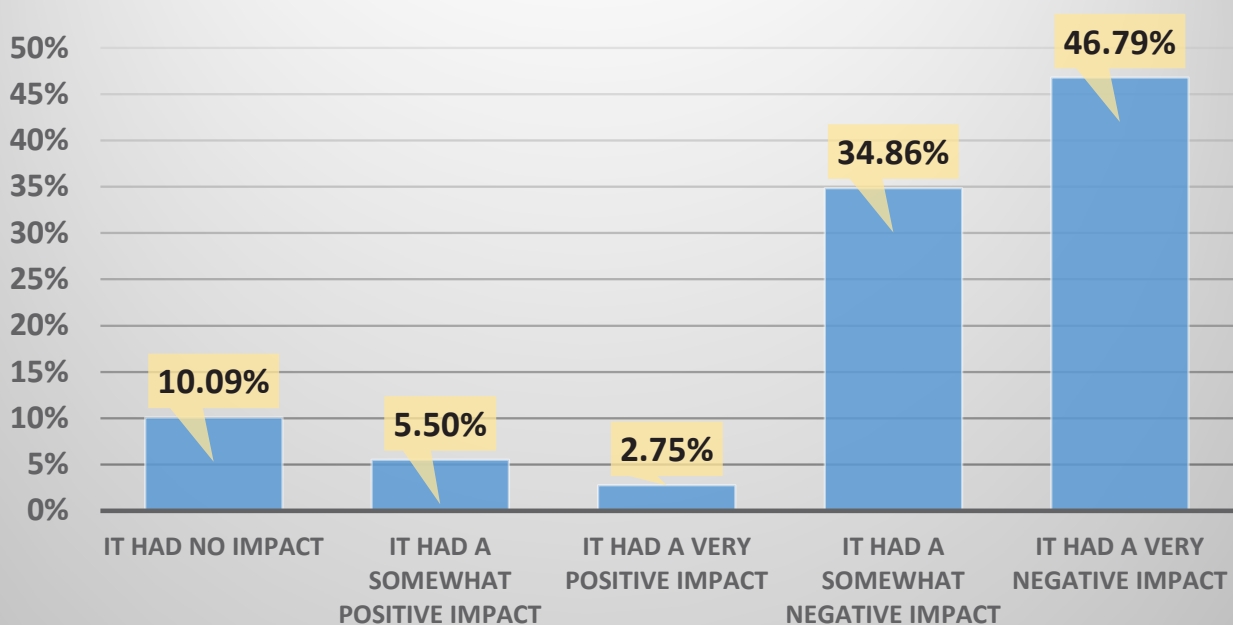
1000 Islands International Tourism Council

In early September 2017, the 1000 Islands International Tourism Council conducted an informal survey regarding high water impacts on tourism operations. An email request to complete the survey was sent to its database of tourism stakeholders in the bi-national region. The email was sent to 680 contacts. In total 109 stakeholders completed the survey. While the survey is not a scientific sample, it does reflect the experiences of a substantial cross-section of tourism interests in the region. The data and numerous comments from the survey illustrate the impacts of the unique high water event on the region.

### What best describes the impact of this year's high water on your business?

The large majority of those completing the survey saw negative impacts from the high water. While 82% noted some degree of negative impact, 8% saw a positive impact from the levels and 10% saw no impact.

#### What best describes the impact of this year's high water on your business?



## Negative Impact Details

What best describes the impact on your business by month?

Month	No Impact	A little Impact	Quite a bit of Impact	A lot of Impact
May	12.64%	21.84%	26.44%	39.08%
June	2.30%	22.99%	32.18%	42.53%
July	7.95%	30.68%	31.82%	29.55%
August	14.77%	42.05%	21.59%	21.59%
Expected September	31.33%	34.94%	26.51%	7.23%
Expected October	45.95%	29.73%	17.57%	6.76%

The survey showed that June saw the highest level of negative impacts, with reductions in impacts as the summer progressed. Anticipated negative impacts on September and October business are significantly lower, but still substantial.

The survey also showed that direct physical damage had a smaller impact than the high water presenting an impediment to operations or discouraging visitation. The “discouraging visitation” was seen to have either quite a bit or a lot of impact by 75% of those noting negative impacts from the high water.

### Considering your own business, how would you rate the following types of negative impacts from 2017 high water?

Those that indicated they saw a negative impact were asked about the type of impact they saw. Of the total survey, 89 responses noted negative impacts of various types and degrees:

Type of Impact	No Impact	A little Impact	Quite a bit of impact	A lot of impact
Impact of direct physical damage from high water	38.37%	19.77%	25.58%	16.28%
Impact of high water impeding business operations	28.74%	20.69%	17.24%	33.33%
Impact of high water discouraging visitation to the area	7.87%	17.98%	29.21%	44.94%

## Business loss estimates

The survey asked those who indicated a negative impact to estimate the amount of lost business compared to a "normal" year. Among the 86 who indicated a loss of business from normal, the average decline was 29%. A quarter indicated losses of more than 40%, while 10% indicated losses of less than 10%.

Overall, compared to an "average" year, what percentage of your business was lost in 2017 due to the various high water impacts?

Range of loss	Percentage	Count
0% to 9%	10%	9
10% - 19%	16%	14
20% - 29%	29%	25
30% - 39%	17%	15
40% - 49%	10%	9
50% or more	16%	14
<b>Total responses</b>		<b>86</b>

## Business gains

Some (8.25%) businesses saw a positive impact from the high water. Of those, two-thirds indicated increases of 15% to 25% and one-third indicated increases over 30%.

### Business gain comments:

We are located half way between Clayton & Cape Vincent, not directly on the water...we were WAY busier this year

We have a beach, and usually, it is covered with weeds which have rolled around in the sandy beach, making them very heavy to remove. The high water eliminated the sandy beach, and the weeds were much easier to remove from the swimming area. Our guests are mostly fishermen, and they found the higher water easier to navigate, the water cooler, and the growing weeds were down, making the fishing AWESOME!! Many are returning for a 2nd time this Fall, for the sole purpose of fishing.

As a charter service --others did not put boats until later

Great for fishing, successful breeding, lots of little fish in the bay

Negative in the aspect of people hearing stories of debris floating and unsafe boating conditions

I put my boat in before the water came up over the docks. I checked 2-3 times a day starting at 5:00am. The positive impact for me was from people that wanted to fish, but didn't have a place to keep their boats. A little extra effort paid off for me.

## About those that responded

Please indicate your type of business:

Answer Choices	Percentage	Count
Lodging	36.36%	36
Dining	13.13%	13
Retail	22.22%	22
Marine	29.29%	29
Fishing/Hunting	22.22%	22
Attraction	23.23%	23
Event/Entertainment	7.07%	7
	Answered	99
	Skipped	10

Where is your business located?

Answer Choices	Percentage	Count
Canada	23.47%	23
USA	76.53%	75
	Answered	98
	Skipped	11

Which body of water most impacts your business?

Answer Choices	Percentage	Count
Lake Ontario	15.15%	15
St. Lawrence River	79.80%	79
Tributaries to the River or Lake	5.05%	5
	Answered	99
	Skipped	10

## Comments: Considering your own business, how would you rate the following types of negative impacts from 2017 high water?

Our business June-August was down 25-30%. There was less foot traffic this summer. I think the negative news in the beginning of the summer had people deciding not to open and/or changing vacation plans.
40% of the operation was flooded into late August
Loss of seasonal dockage, could not pump gas until June 15th, no sales of bait, ice and could not provide bathrooms as our lift station was under water.
It is possible people stayed away because they heard the water was inaccessible. It is hard to tell.
Water levels should be better controlled. It is either too high (this year only) or they let out too much and we have difficulty hauling boats out in fall and need to dredge.
High water scattered the fish making it difficult to locate them. Many fishermen did not come here this season due to flooding reports.
5mph speed limit made boating a tiresome activity,
Access restrictions to Parks Canada Islands disappoint visitors to the area
We are a marina need I say more!
State facility - public aquarium was closed for the season due to flood damage.
Difficult loading and disembarking passengers on cruise boat. Sand bags needed on the dock, flooding basements.
We store around 400 boats at the marina and very few boats were launched before 4th of July weekend. Gas sales during that period were way down. The season ended better than it began, but still not a typical year in repairs and gas sales. Of all the boats we store, 68 were never launched this year because of high water issues. Gross sales were off by about 20%.
It was one of several factors. People just did not come
In May we sustained damage to one of our tour boats as a result of floating submerged debris that damaged a drive.
We were not able to operate our high-speed catamaran, the 'WildCat' all season due to concern for the wake it creates at slower speeds and the enforcement of speed and wake restrictions along particular sections of the river.
We had reduced visitation we think due to fewer people visiting the area.
The IJC is completely to blame for retaining too much water in 2016 and 2017 that severely impacted our area.
We received calls from as far away as Virginia stating the media had said our roads were closed due to flooding. This occurred right up to the middle of August.
I was unable to operate my business for the first two months of my season. My net loss was 60%
We undertook many costly repairs and changes to continue in business.
We own a golf course in Chaumont. Our business was down by 20+% in May & June and 5% in July. We were hurt by summer cottage owners returning to the area by at least a month - many due to high waters. Also, saw fewer vacationers too.
Sackets boat launch closed preventing boating visitors from coming ashore to spend money.
Floating docks needed planking and fixed docks were submerged for many weeks.
Because I am not located directly on the water nor is my business in a downtown area, the water levels did not directly impact me. Although, the amount of traffic on Rt. 12 was noticeably down which I believe did impact my business this year.
Had to rent porta pottys as our bathrooms were under water and spent extra time on the phone convincing guests we were business as usual. People were under the impression we were not operating.
Boat traffic to the village dock was low, we did notice a drop in business, the rain also kept customers away just as it would any other season.
We bought this business 25 years ago and have never had such a terrible season. I do think the news coverage and the boom of social media affects this area also.
Many of our customers live on islands, boat to Clayton and were not able to do so.

Had to close my waterfront campground for the season. Septic Systems were compromised and converted septic tanks into holding tanks. One dock system gone astray. A season of many challenges.
The boaters weren't able to use their boats and the docks were underwater it meant no boat traffic
Hard for people to put their boats in at dock. People not buying new boats.
We had few visitors to our store in June & July... same for the village.
Tourists managed to change their plans with no problem
No docks no boats
We had a struggle keeping our docks in place on windy days, but we figured it out.
We did not see hardly any boats this year, not much in transient guests either
One of businesses was dependent on a dock that was underwater. Another business is very dependent on islanders / cottagers spending time in Gananoque and they just did not come this year. We saw a year over year INCREASE in our business until April and then from May to August we have seen a 15% DECREASE in our revenues in Gananoque.
The press coverage had a large impact, the village and state park closing boat ramps was unnecessary and discouraged visitors. The governor's politics hurt! The high water was a challenge but the perception was worse.
Although the water levels were over my lawn and we had to build 20 ft. ramps to get to our docks the overall benefit to fish breeding and the successful fishing season so far have out-weighed this, the water levels were way too low for the last 10 years at a detriment to fish breeding and the rooting of choking bull rushes in breeding areas
The Haunted Walk has had to adjust certain tour routes due to high water levels.
We sustained damage to our docks and waterfront. Our laundry room was flooded. We had 5 pumps running 24/7 for 10 weeks to save our commercial washer and dryer and two hot water tanks. We had the most cancellations ever, totaling just under \$11,000 so far.
People from Quebec did not travel to Ontario with boats. Cottagers did not go to cottages. And American boaters traffic was down dramatically.
I had to clarify to clients the conditions and safety of navigation. The high water will overall positively impact the fishery with increased survival of this year's northern pike and largemouth bass fry.
A third of our customers did not put their boats in the water this year, significantly affecting gas sales, labor sales, dockage, etc. The customers that did put their boats in the water tended not to move from the dock due to the speed limit.
The high water put our swim ladder and swim shore underwater and therefore unusable to guests. We also were unable to rent slips in our boat house through most of the season due to the boat house being underwater.
The high water had a very negative effect on business
We have a tiny rental business and for most of July did not feel we could rent weekly due to sodden lawn and fears for the septic. Also, we have been without our waterside deck all summer; it's still on the lawn at the end of August.
Flooded docks at our motel cottage rental business caused issues. Less rentals of docks, less people bringing boats, less people coming to rent cottages and motel rooms. Guests afraid of floating debris, shoals being covered, and poor fishing conditions.
Loss of dive charters due to the fact that divers said with hi water that visibility would be greatly affected.
Also due to water run off being increased greatly, some of the wrecks are NOT diveable due to swift currents making it impossible to dive a wreck in some cases.
It was not just the high water that negatively impacted the 2017 Tourism season, it was also the outrageous government interference with boating, from "danger warnings" put out by the Governor and the State Parks, to draconian speed limits and overzealous police harassment of the few boaters who had the "audacity" to venture onto the river. If every car coming to the 1000 islands all summer long was stopped, boarded and searched for a "safety check" you might as well just close every business on the river.
My boat sustained a small amount of damage from hitting the dock. It was unfortunate, but ultimately my mistake.
There's no secret about my feelings on the High-water since I've been on the news half a dozen times talking about it. The village of Clayton was open for business. The docks in Clayton were open for business and the businesses were open. The tourists did not come due to speed restrictions. Basically every dock in every marina in our section of the St. Lawrence were closed down due to the high water.

## Comments: Please share any comments regarding your experience with high water in 2017:

Just fewer people visiting the area.
Sept 7th and the water has dropped dramatically. I am having difficulty understanding which is causing these highs and lows in the water? Nature or manipulation of water ?
Hopefully this is not the new normal
It put us out of business after 68 years.
Dock anchors were snapped. We should have been better prepared and there would be no impact.
Large amount of debris made navigation difficult in the spring. Lack of docking at parks/restaurants was a big issue
Access restrictions, speed restrictions, boat launch restricted or denied
Terrible
We have lodging and a restaurant that were affected somewhat since recreational boaters did not stay with us. We are located 2 miles from the river
It was VERY unfortunate to have excessive rain events tied to the inception of Plan 2014; the two issues were not related. We need to remember that, in a more "normal" year, Plan 2014 will significantly extend the boating season on both ends. Even more importantly, the ecological benefits of Plan 2014 to fish and wildlife habitat are essential to future fishing and hunting related tourism.
A lot of people never even put their boats in the water.
There are other factors. I am also impacted by air bnb
In addition to the aforementioned direct impact on our business, there was also a general misconception, particularly in May and June that none of the tour boats were operating as a result on media coverage on the high water levels.
Totally unprepared for it. The water rose so fast.
This has greatly affected our sales this year and likely will affect years to come.
The media (nationwide) killed the tourism for the area. Though some places had issues not all were impacted and not as bad as they were saying.
It was a huge challenge to get through, but next season is just around the corner.
May take years to recover.
These answers are for our business. For my job as town supervisor it was challenging to respond to all residents' concerns and take appropriate action.
High water and rain did not make for a vintage year.
Just a lot of sad/disappointed summer folks.
Affected our seasonal residents, not virtually no impact on our seasonal business.
Had no impact
High water was an inconvenience and initially very troublesome, but as the summer wore on, had little or no impact on business. Cottage owners and island dwellers did not come as soon or stay as long, but many weekends were both busy and profitable from short term visitors.
Once the media stopped reporting gloom and doom business picked up
There was no end in sight and we are still uncertain of how to prepare for high waters in the future because there are still swampy areas that are usually dry. Pinehurst has been around since the 1920's and half of our floating docks were accessible all season. The other half could have been used but the access docks were not floating and while we would like to remedy that situation, we do not know how the political plan for the wet lands will be enforced and therefore we are uncertain on how to fix things.

Overall retail purchasing was down due to our loss of summer residents, their families and visitors are great supporters of the local shops and they were not here this summer due to water levels.
Ground is still saturated. Huge # of mosquitoes. Pool issues due to water under liner. Horrible year for water related issues and customer dissatisfaction because of ground water. Staffing costs up as they dealt with flooded camping sites and moving guests.
The number of people here was down and those spending were very conservative with their dollars
I am assessed as a business income producing property. The income that was lost can never be made up. But we won't get a tax break because of it. Instead, I bet our taxes will go up.
We have seen a loss with the high water. We had to move merchandise from our basement since it was coming up through the bedrock
I hope they can control the water
We adapted where we could and were able to receive visitors after closing for one week in May and reopening May 13th. Where the BYH was very much impacted by the high water levels Boldt Castle has fared quite well despite many challenges
Cape Vincent has both the lake and river traffic.
My business is SCUBA diving and the high water flow/current made SCUBA diving much more challenging. I had many cancellations due to the increased current.
I rent a cottage so most reservations were made prior to tenants being aware of the high water. I have floating docks and was able to accommodate renters' boats and water rafts.
Ottawa region affected but small impact on tourism
Just tried to keep my feet dry
I am in Clayton, and the village of Clayton was for the most part open and ready for business during the heavy rain and rising water in May, but Alex Bay was not. The media seized on the Bay's inability, early on, to function normally and it flooded the bigger cities of NY with negativity surrounding the 1000 islands. Unfortunately, many people associate the 1000 Islands with Alex Bay and therefor thought EVERYBODY was under water.
Boating season and weather was an issue
Cottagers / islanders just didn't come to Gan.
We need improvements, there is so much more we could do to improve our business
We do need to continue with higher levels of water in the future, maybe not as high but certainly not the lows we had over the last decade,
We don't believe mother nature was completely to blame. The IJC was complicit also.
Hope we never see this again! Gave empathy for hurricane and tornado victims, to see water where it's not supposed to be. Friends used an outhouse all summer ... and sometimes our shower.
May and June were our biggest hit months!! The media coverage did NOT help the situation!!
We always need to navigate with caution in the early boating season. This year required more than normal. I've been very disappointed in our local chambers of commerce for not continuing to let the public near and far know that our lake and river are and have been open for business from the start!
The compound effects of this event and the subsequent government interference with private enterprise, virtually prohibits reasonable commentary.

Prepared by  
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