

## Sediment named as possible cause

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Much of the discussion at Tuesday's meeting in Port Huron for the International Upper Great Lakes Study will likely focus on erosion on the bottom of the St. Clair River and its possible role in falling water levels in Lakes Huron and Michigan.

"This portion of it should certainly concentrate on it," said Robert Sweeney, executive director of the International Association for Great Lakes Research in Port Huron. "That's logical."

But Sweeney is also about erosion occurring along tributaries to the Great Lakes.

"I think there are a number of issues that need to be addressed and they are being addressed," he said.

"But one of the matters that I'm not sure is being looked at to the degree it should be is sedimentation."

Stream-bank erosion typically occurs in urban areas when water runs off hard surfaces such as parking lots, roofs and streets through storm drains and into rivers and streams.

Not only does that runoff carry a load of dirt, it causes rivers to rapidly rise, to become what some hydrologists call "flashy." That in turn scours the stream banks of vegetation and soil, resulting in an increased sediment load.

Much of that dirt, according to Sweeney, winds up in the Great Lakes and connecting waters such as the St. Clair River.

He blames problems with sedimentation on "inadequate management of the watershed, the area where the water drains from to form the Black River and other (Great Lakes) tributaries."

Sedimentation builds up the bottom of connecting channels such as the St. Clair River, he said. It's not as visible as rising and falling water levels, said Sweeney, but it contributes to problems such as recreational and commercial vessels hitting bottom