

# ENVIRONMENTAL OBSERVATORY FOR THE BAY OF SEPT-ÎLES PRESENTATION OF OVERALL REPORT

3 December 2018 | *Press release*



**Sept-Îles, December 3, 2018** – After initiating the process five years ago, the City of Sept-Îles and the Port of Sept-Îles today are pleased to release the overall report on the research conducted by the Environmental Observatory for the Bay of Sept-Îles, including data and findings from phases I, II, and III.

This major study was carried out locally by INREST, the northern institute for environmental and occupational health research, which teamed up with numerous scientific collaborators to fulfill its mandate.

“For both the City and the Port of Sept-Îles, the project’s primary objective was to improve our understanding of the bay, its current condition, and the impacts of development around it. The knowledge we’ve gained will now allow us to roll out suitable approaches to preserve and protect the bay going forward. For example, we’ll be able to better assess the area’s capacity to accommodate projects that are acceptable and safe for both the population and the environment,” said Sept-Îles mayor Réjean Porlier and Port of Sept-Îles president and CEO Pierre D. Gagnon.

“The government of Québec, through Société du Plan Nord, is proud to support the innovative approach put forward by the Environmental Observatory for the Bay of Sept-Îles. It’s very gratifying to see how this major effort to characterize the bay’s ecosystem was made possible through the concerted efforts of multiple community partners,” said Jonatan Julien, Minister of Energy and Natural Resources and Minister responsible for the Côte-Nord Region.

The Observatory's work mobilized numerous researchers and spanned four years, with research conducted in the spring, summer, and/or fall of 2013 (Phase I), 2014 (Phase II), and 2016–2017 (Phase III). "A project of this magnitude requires experts from various fields of environmental science," noted the project's director Dr. Julie Carrière. "We put together a multidisciplinary team of 40 experts made up of university professors, graduate and postdoctoral researchers, and technicians and biologists to provide an updated overview of the quality of the environment and ecosystems of the Bay of Sept-Îles."

## **Project Financing**

This project required nearly \$1.2 million in investments and the equivalent of \$500,000 in in-kind contributions from local businesses. The first two phases were funded jointly by the City and the Port of Sept-Îles, while the third phase, which cost a total of \$650,000, received \$217,000 (or one-third of phase III costs) in funding from Société du Plan Nord. Contributions by Aluminerie Alouette, Iron Ore Company of Canada, Mine Arnaud, Tata Steel Minerals Canada, and Minerai de fer Québec covered another third of the costs, with the City and Port of Sept-Îles sharing the remainder.

## **General Conclusion (excerpts from the report)**

The findings of the studies conducted and the data available to the team at the time of writing attest to the good quality of the environment as a whole.

Overall water quality for the Bay of Sept-Îles (determined using two water quality indices) is classified as B (i.e., water of satisfactory quality that is suitable for most uses, with concentrations that rarely deviate from natural or desirable levels).

For sediment quality (determined based on the criteria in effect at the time of writing for sediments with a different geology than that of the study area), assessments of the samples collected ranged from "no action required" to "avoid the presence of new sources of contamination" at some sampling stations. The highest values (for specific parameters) were observed primarily in industrial sectors. This was to be expected given that industrial operations have been running at or near these sampling sites for over 65 years. Criteria that take into account local geological signatures need to be developed.

To maintain environmental and ecosystem quality going forward, it will be crucial for managers, leaders, government representatives, and the public to draw on this report, particularly its recommendations, in order to implement a sustainable development approach that preserves and protects Bay of Sept-Îles for future generations.

## To view the report

The report is available online at [www.baie.septiles.ca](http://www.baie.septiles.ca). Members of the public may submit their questions by completing the questionnaire provided for this purpose no later than January 31, 2019. All questions received will be compiled and the answers published on this site.

The report will also be available on the Port of Sept-Îles and INREST websites. A paper version has also been submitted for on-site consultation at the Louis-Ange-Santerre Library.

A poster exhibition summarizing the main themes of the study will also run from December 5, 2018, to January 31, 2019, in the Louis-Ange-Santerre Library lobby and at Musée régional de la Côte-Nord (Salle Jeunesse Port de Sept-Îles).

## About the Environmental Observatory for the Bay of Sept-Îles

Launched in 2013 by the City of Sept-Îles, the Environmental Observatory for the Bay of Sept-Îles is an innovative project undertaken to characterize the ecosystem of the bay. The completion of this final phase is a testament to the determination of the partners and users involved to work together on environmental and sustainable development issues. The initiative aims to provide an overall picture of the bay and develop a monitoring tool for the future.

## About INREST

INREST (Institut nordique de recherche en environnement et en santé au travail) is an institute dedicated to conducting research on the environment and occupational health in northern settings. INREST's objectives are to develop innovative applied research projects that take sustainable development concerns into account, to provide scientific data to aid decision-making, and to measure impacts on ecosystems, the environment, public health, and worker safety. The organization encourages its partners to pool their resources to find solutions to the challenges posed by northern development. INREST manages the environmental and occupational health research unit at Cégep de Sept-Îles. ([www.inrest.ca](http://www.inrest.ca)).

## Sources :

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# **ENVIRONMENTAL OBSERVATORY FOR THE BAY OF SEPT-ÎLES**

## **SUMMARY**

### **Objectives presented at launch in September 2013:**

- Update and consolidate data and metrics on the bay's environment
- Produce an annual monitoring report drawing on data processed by INREST
- Assess the bay's capacity to accommodate projects that are acceptable and safe for the population and the environment
- Help existing businesses improve their environmental performance, as warranted
- Measure the results of conservation and environmental improvement efforts in the Bay of Sept-Îles

### **Some of the key topics studied by INREST in different phases (2016–2017):**

- Water quality studies
- Sediment quality and particle size studies
- Overview of the benthic community (organisms living on the sea floor)
- Characterization of eelgrass beds
- Overview of the macroalgae community in the subtidal zone
- Marine mammal inventory and monitoring
- Studies based on existing reports and/or data on topics such as the regulatory landscape, marine currents, sediment dumps, ice conditions, and municipal and industrial