



Cleaning Up Toxic Pollution

Drinking water restrictions. Beach closings. Declines of fish and wildlife populations. These impacts are the legacy of toxic pollution in the Great Lakes and its rivers and harbors—a legacy that remains today.

High concentrations of toxic pollutants in the sediments of these waters threaten the health of people and wildlife. In 1987, the U.S. and Canadian governments identified the most polluted sites around the Great Lakes as “areas of concern” – 31 of the 43 sites are located in the United States. Unfortunately, more than 20 years since this designation, only one site has been taken off this list in the United States.

It does not have to be this way. We have solutions to clean up these harbors and waters. It is time to use them, because every day that we wait, the problems get worse and more costly.



Congress Must Act Now

Congress can help clean up these toxic sites by re-authorizing the Great Lakes Legacy Act of 2002 this year. The program specifically targets the Areas of Concern for remediation. Updating this critical program is a major recommendation of the Great Lakes Regional Collaboration Strategy, a historic plan put forward by more than 1,500 citizens, public officials, business representatives, scientists and conservationists.



Funds provided under the Great Lakes Legacy Act fuel new cleanup projects to remove contaminated sediments polluting the Great Lakes and advance the restoration of the lakes. From fiscal years 2004 through 2008, the Great Lakes Legacy Act has authorized \$270 million to help with the remediation of contaminated sediment in the 31 U.S. Great Lakes Areas of Concern.

The Great Lakes Legacy Act has provided benefits to the entire nation. This program fosters technological innovation that works toward not just moving toxic sediment but by eliminating it. These techniques and technologies can and must be used around the country, not just in the Midwest.

Currently, federal legislation (H.R. 1350/S. 791) reauthorizes the Great Lakes Legacy Act but does not reflect all of the recommendations of the Great Lakes Regional Collaboration Strategy, which the Healing Our Waters-Great

Lakes Coalition supports. We urge stand-alone legislation to be introduced early in 2008 that incorporates our recommendations, which include:

- Increasing authorization level to \$150 million per year and re-authorizing the act through 2013;
- Allowing Potentially Responsible Parties (PRPs) – industries which may be responsible for the toxic pollution – to contribute to nonfederal share;
- Removing “maintenance of effort” requirements that mandate nonfederal partners contribute funding in the later years of a project which may exceed the cost of the project, deterring participation from partners and disqualification of worthy projects;
- Allowing disbursement of Legacy Act funds to nonfederal contractors;
- Extending life of Legacy Act funds;
- Add public participation component to existing public information program.

A Successful Program

The federal government has spent \$55.4 million since the program began. Eight additional projects are under review with a federal cost share of approximately \$92 million.

To date two projects are underway (Ashtabula, Ohio; Sault Ste. Marie, Mich.), three have been completed, though not delisted, (Black Lagoon, Mich.; Hog Island, Wisc.; Ruddiman Creek, Mich.), and seven sites have been monitored or evaluated (Buffalo River, N.Y.; Grand Calumet, Ind.; Kinnickinnic River, Wisc.; Ryerson Creek, Mich.; Riverview, Mich.; St. Louis River, Wisc.; Waukegan Harbor, Ill.).

Cleaning up all of the Areas of Concern will raise coastal property values \$12 billion to \$19 billion, according to studies

The Healthy Lakes, Healthy Lives campaign is directed by the Healing Our Waters®-Great Lakes Coalition. The coalition consists of more than 90 zoos, aquariums, museums, and hunting, fishing and environmental organizations representing millions of people, whose common goal is to restore and protect the Great Lakes. Formed in 2005 with support from the Wege Foundation, Joyce Foundation, and others, the Healing Our Waters®-Great Lakes Coalition reflects a growing public awareness about the urgent need to protect the Great Lakes.

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