

Great Lakes Legacy Act

Great Lakes Fact Sheet October 2008



In communities around the Great Lakes, people live with drinking water restrictions, beach closings and fish consumption advisories – a byproduct of past policies and practices that created a legacy of toxic pollution that continues to restrict our ability to fully benefit from local water resources. The U.S. and Canadian governments designated the most polluted rivers, lakes and bays across the Great Lakes as “Areas of Concern.” The Great Lakes states, in collaboration with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA) and local communities, are working to clean up the 31 toxic hot spots in the United States. Cleanup plans are being implemented to restore beneficial uses for local residents. The most significant, and most costly pollution problem in the Areas of Concern (AOCs) is contaminated sediments. To date, the pace of cleanup has been slow: only the Oswego River Area of Concern in New York has been formally removed from the list of Great Lakes toxic hot spots. A more substantial federal investment is needed to clean up these toxic sites before the problem gets worse and more costly.

Program Overview

In 2002, Congress passed the Great Lakes Legacy Act (P.L. 107-303) to speed the clean up of toxic sediments in the U.S. AOCs. Administered by the USEPA Great Lakes National Program Office, the Legacy Act funds projects that monitor or evaluate contaminated sediment, implement contaminated sediment cleanups or prevent continued sediment contamination. These projects require a 35% non-federal cost-share. The act also provides funding for research and development as well as public outreach and information. Congress renewed the Act in 2008, authorizing

- \$50 million annually to monitor, evaluate or remediate contaminated sediments, or prevent new contamination;
- \$3 million annually for research on innovative remediation technologies;
- \$1 million annually for public outreach and education;
- the use of Legacy Act funds to restore habitat at contaminated sediment cleanup sites; and
- full federal funding to evaluate contaminated sediment sites.

Toxic sediment is the most significant pollution problem in the Great Lakes AOCs. Thus, cleaning up this sediment is critical to restoring beneficial uses and removing areas from the list of “toxic hot spots.” Studies have shown that property values in areas near contaminated sites will increase by up to 25 percent after the sites are cleaned up.

Progress to Date

The Great Lakes Legacy Act is an effective program, contributing to cleanups in ten Areas of Concern – yet it is underfunded. Since 2004, approximately \$126 million has been appropriated for eight cleanup projects and nine projects to monitor and evaluate contaminated sediments. The eight cleanup projects alone will remove more than 1.3 million cubic yards of contaminated sediments from the Great Lakes and leverage \$88 million in non-federal funding. As of February 2009 there are eight projects under review, in development, or anticipated with an expected federal cost share of more than \$80 million. The Legacy Act has provided much needed support to local groups in the planning and implementation of these complex and expensive projects.



Project Details

Completed Projects	Description	Award	Match
Detroit River, MI	Remediated 115,000 cubic yards of contaminated sediment at the Black Lagoon on the Detroit River. Completed September 2005.	\$5,600,000	\$3,100,000
Muskegon Lake, MI	Remediated 90,000 cubic yards of contaminated sediment at Ruddiman Creek. Completed June 2006.	\$8,900,000	\$5,300,000
Muskegon Lake, MI	Evaluated contaminated sediments in Ryerson Creek, Division Street outfall and Heritage Landing. Completed sampling and analysis in 2005 and reporting in 2006.	\$135,000	\$115,000
St. Marys River, MI	Remediated 41,000 cubic yards of contaminated sediment at Tannery Bay. Completed September 2007.	\$4,800,000	\$3,200,000
Ashtabula River, OH	Remediated 500,000 cubic yards of contaminated sediments. Dredging was completed in October 2007. Landfill is scheduled to be closed and capped in spring 2009.	\$30,000,000	\$30,000,000
St. Louis River, WI	Remediated 46,000 cubic yards of contaminated sediment at the Hog Island Inlet-Newton Creek. Completed spring 2006.	\$3,700,000	\$2,000,000
Projects Underway	Description	Award	Match
Grand Calumet River, IN	Final engineering design for sediment remedial action underway in the west branch of the Grand Calumet River.	\$21,100,000	\$11,600,000
Muskegon Lake, MI	Continues work conducted on the Division Street outfall in 2005 with a feasibility study to assist engineering design work for a potential future remedial action at the site.	\$390,000	\$210,000
Detroit River, MI	Remedial investigation to evaluate magnitude and extent of contamination at the Riverview site on the Trenton Channel.	\$325,000	\$175,000
Buffalo River, NY	Sediment assessment completed in 2007. Feasibility and additional remedial investigations underway for Upper and Lower Buffalo River.	\$1,500,000	\$1,500,000
Eighteen Mile Creek, NY	Assessment of extent of contamination and source control identification.	\$440,000	\$235,000
Maumee River, OH	Sampling, feasibility and design activities and remediation of 250,000 cubic yards of contaminated sediment in the Ottawa River.	\$22,250,000	\$22,250,000
St. Louis River, WI	Evaluate the nature and extent of sediment contamination on the Wisconsin side of the St. Louis River as an amendment to the Hog Island Inlet sediment remediation project.	\$390,000	\$210,000
Milwaukee Estuary, WI	Supplemental design and remedial planning for the proposed sediment remedial action in the Kinnickinnic River completed in 2008. Remediation of 170,000 cubic yards of contaminated sediments planned for spring 2009.	\$14,600,000	\$7,800,000

Funding History

(In millions of dollars)

Authorized Amount (Annual)	FY2004	FY2005	FY2006	FY2007	FY2008	FY2009 President's Request
\$54.0	\$9.9	\$22.3	\$29.3	\$30.0	\$34.5	\$35.0

Program Needs

The pace of cleaning up toxic pollution around the Great Lakes has been too slow. It is important that federal lawmakers fully fund the successful and effective Great Lakes Legacy Act. The Great Lakes Regional Collaboration projected that between \$1.5 billion and \$4.5 billion is needed to fully clean up toxic sediments in all U.S. AOCs. This investment pays off by protecting public health and increasing property values. Delay will only make the problem worse and more costly. Additional cleanup projects have been identified and are ready for implementation. Summaries of projects proposed for funding are available at <http://epa.gov/greatlakes/sediment/legacy/projlst.html>.

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More Information

USEPA Great Lakes Legacy Act:

<http://epa.gov/greatlakes/sediment/legacy/index.html>