

Wisconsin GLRI Highlights 2010-2021

Federal funding, totaling more than **\$525 million** through the [Great Lakes Restoration Initiative \(GLRI\)](#) is accelerating Wisconsin's progress to restore the health of Lake Michigan and Lake Superior. From cleaning up toxic hotspots, to restoring vital fish and wildlife habitats and improving the health of Wisconsin's beaches— these projects increase the economic, recreational and ecological value of our Great Lakes. Planning, engaging communities, assessing water quality and environmental health, and monitoring fish and wildlife populations are other important aspects of our restoration efforts.

Lower Menominee River Area of Concern Delisted

The [Lower Menominee River](#) was removed from the international list of most polluted sites on the Great Lakes in August 2020. This was Wisconsin's first of five AOCs to be delisted and is a significant milestone in the binational agreement between the U.S. and Canada to restore the Great Lakes. Michigan's Upper Peninsula and northeastern Wisconsin meet at the Menominee River, which flows into Lake Michigan's Green Bay. Pollution from coal tar, paint sludge and arsenic had earned the lower three miles of the river and Green Bay shoreline around the river mouth an AOC designation.

The states worked closely with local citizens, businesses, industries and other agencies to address environmental problems stemming from historical pollution and habitat loss. Over \$170 million worth of pollution cleanup and habitat restoration projects were accomplished with a combination of federal GLRI funding, matching state, local and private funding, and through government regulatory actions.

These are significant accomplishments by people who have worked for decades to reconnect with their river and Great Lakes harbor to create a brighter economic, ecological and recreational future. The relationships forged through the AOC cleanup also set the stage for other environmental efforts, as partnerships among many stakeholders will be essential for continued stewardship of these waters. To learn more watch [Menekaunee Harbor: Remediated, Restored, Revitalized](#).



Menekaunee Harbor in Marinette (above) is now cleaner, deeper and better able to accommodate recreational and commercial fishing boats. As a result of the AOC cleanup, the harbor was chosen as one of the sites for Cabela's 2017 and 2019 National Walleye Tours — events that contribute to the revitalized economic prosperity of the area. Native plantings at the harbor (right) are an example of the more than 133 acres of shorelands, wetlands and uplands that were restored. This community now enjoys better economic and recreational opportunities, a cleaner environment, and improved habitat for fish and other wildlife.

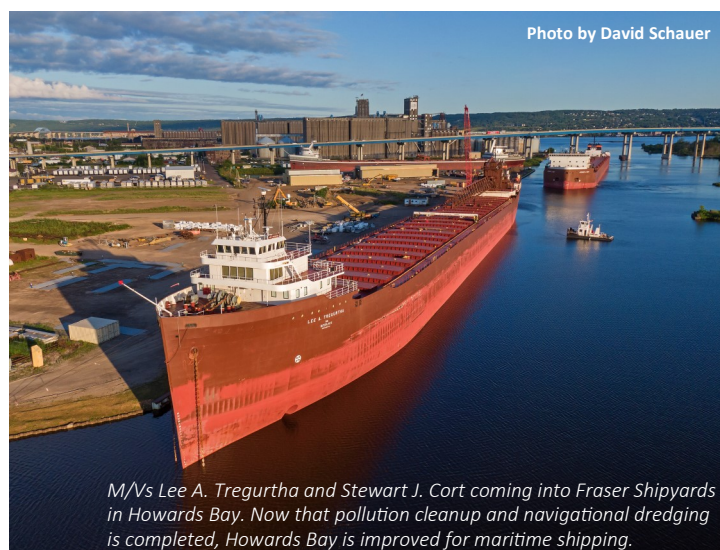


St. Louis River AOC Howards Bay Pollution Cleanup

The Howards Bay dredging project was completed in Dec. 2021, marking a key milestone in pollution cleanup in the [St. Louis River AOC](#). Howards Bay is an industrial bay in the City of Superior, important for Great Lakes commerce. It was completed by a public-private partnership with the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, Fraser Shipyards Inc., City of Superior, and U.S. Environmental Protection Agency in coordination with U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. The \$21.5 million project was funded through GLRI with in-kind and cash contributions from the non-federal partners.

84,660 cubic yards of sediments contaminated with lead, mercury, tributyltin and polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons were removed from Howards Bay and the three slips located within it. Maintenance dredging in the navigational channel removed 34,000 cubic yards of sediment.

Dredged material that met strict environmental safety criteria was used to improve the cap and cover on the closed Wisconsin Point Landfill. As part of the project, the City of Superior will open the former landfill to the public as a recreational area.



M/Vs Lee A. Tregurtha and Stewart J. Cort coming into Fraser Shipyards in Howards Bay. Now that pollution cleanup and navigational dredging is completed, Howards Bay is improved for maritime shipping.

Harbor Projects Benefit Economy and Environment

Cat Island Restoration in Green Bay, Piping Plover Habitat Restoration at Wisconsin Point in Superior, and Common Tern Habitat Restoration at Interstate Island between Duluth and Superior are excellent examples of projects that provide environmental benefits while also promoting economic initiatives. Restoration of the 272 acre Cat Island Chain in Green Bay offers a triple benefit of an improved shipping canal, cost-effective disposal of 20-30 years of dredged sediment, and vital fish and wildlife habitat. The highest diversity of shorebirds, including endangered species, were documented on Cat Island compared to any other place in Wisconsin. To learn more, watch [Plovers are Back in Green Bay](#) and [Cat Island - Rebirth of an Environment](#).

At Wisconsin Point and Interstate Island, clean dredge material from the Duluth-Superior Harbor was put to good use restoring essential habitat for endangered piping plovers and threatened common terns. The dredged sediment was used to create 14 acres of new beaches at Wisconsin Point and 5.5 acres at Interstate Island, which are necessary for the rare birds to raise their young. The projects were also a cost-effective way for the port to maintain shipping channels and manage dredge material. To learn more watch, [Protecting Dunes and Restoring and Piping Plover Habitat on Wisconsin Point](#).



Endangered piping plovers nest and successfully raise young on new beaches and islands created with clean dredge material from shipping channels.



Islands take shape with clean sediment dredged from Green Bay Harbor.

Milwaukee Estuary AOC Contaminated Sediment Cleanup

Lincoln Park on the Milwaukee River was one of many contaminated sediment sites in the Milwaukee Estuary AOC that suffered from fish consumption advisories, health problems in local fish and wildlife and degraded habitat. Wisconsin DNR and Milwaukee County collaborated with U.S. EPA to remove over 175,000 cubic yards of sediment contaminated with PCBs and other toxins from Lincoln Park. Habitat was then restored for fish and wildlife. The cleanup and restoration of Lincoln Park has improved the environmental health, accessibility and recreational value of this popular urban park. Lincoln Park can now reach its full potential as a community asset. To learn more watch, [Milwaukee River Estuary Area of Concern: Connecting Milwaukee's Youth](#).

2020 Great Lakes Legacy Act Project Agreement leverages federal, state, local and private funding and resources to accelerate cleanup of the remaining polluted sediments in the Milwaukee Estuary AOC. A group of over 20 long-standing, trusted partners in the greater Milwaukee community formed the [Waterway Restoration Partnership](#) to formalize their relationship and renew their commitment to work together to clean up the Milwaukee Estuary AOC. With a historic opportunity to rid Milwaukee of its toxic legacy through GLRI funding, community members have a seat at the table and meaningful ways to participate in AOC projects which will foster innovation to get the work done. To learn more watch, [A Toxic Legacy: Cleaning Up Milwaukee's Waterways](#).

