
Kinnickinnic River Legacy Act Dredging Project Begins

Kinnickinnic River Legacy Act Site/Milwaukee AOC

Milwaukee Wisconsin

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About the Great Lakes Legacy Act

Although discharges of toxic substances into the Great Lakes have been reduced over the last 20 years, high concentrations of pollution remain in the bottom of some rivers and harbors. That poses potential health risks to people and wildlife, and states have issued fish advisories in many Great Lakes locations.

The tributaries and harbors identified as having pollution problems are known as “Areas of Concern,” or AOCs. There are 43 AOCs on the Great Lakes – 26 on the U.S. side, 12 in Canada and five shared between the two countries. Kinnickinnic River is part of the Milwaukee Estuary Area of Concern.

Since 2004 five sediment cleanup projects have been completed under the Great Lakes Legacy Act at a cost of \$97 million. EPA’s Great Lakes National Program Office administers the Act.

For more information

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U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Great Lakes National Program Office and state partner Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources have begun dredging contaminated sediment from Milwaukee’s Kinnickinnic River. The \$22 million project is being funded under the Great Lakes Legacy Act (GLLA). The Act provides federal money that along with local matching dollars are used to clean up polluted sediment (mud) along the U.S. shores of the Great Lakes. The Kinnickinnic River project calls for the removal of about 170,000 cubic yards of sediment contaminated with PCBs and PAHs (polychlorinated biphenyls and polyaromatic hydrocarbons). The removal will be conducted between Becher Street and Kinnickinnic Avenue on the south side of Milwaukee (*see aerial map back page*). The first two phases of the project were recently completed, including construction of a cell at the Milwaukee Confined Disposal Facility and shoreline stabilization within the dredging area.

Federal government and state share costs

GLLA will fund 65 percent or \$14.3 million of the \$22 million cost of the project. The required non-federal share of 35 percent or \$7.7 million will come from a state bond fund for sediment cleanup. The special fund was approved by the State Legislature and signed into law by Gov. Jim Doyle last year.

The Kinnickinnic River cleanup is the result of many years of collaboration between EPA, Army Corps of Engineers, WDNR, the city and Port of Milwaukee and local stakeholders including Business Improvement District No.35.



The placid waters of the Kinnickinnic River in Milwaukee hide thousands of cubic yards of contaminated sediment that will be removed under a new Great Lakes Legacy Act project.

Beneficial uses

The Great Lakes Legacy Act was passed by Congress in 2002 as a tool to accelerate the pace of sediment cleanup within the Great Lakes Areas of Concern. One of the goals of the GLLA is to help restore “beneficial uses” to polluted sections in the Great Lakes AOCs. Beneficial use impairments include restrictions on dredging, loss of fish and wildlife habitat and limiting activities such as fishing and boating.

The Legacy Act was reauthorized in 2008 and includes new provisions that allow for habitat restoration in conjunction with a sediment remediation project and site characterization at 100 percent federal cost share.

Project schedule

The Kinnickinnic River sediment removal involves three phases:

- Construction of a special cell for Kinnickinnic River sediment within the existing Milwaukee Area Confined Disposal Facility – Completed last December.
- Construction of shoreline stabilization features within the project area – Completed this April.
- Sediment removal and disposal – late spring to late fall this year.

The work plan calls for dredging using an

environmental dredge bucket to remove about 170,000 cubic yards of contaminated sediment. The project will result in the removal of about 1,200 pounds of PCBs and 13,000 pounds of PAHs.

Dredged sediment will be transported by barge and disposed of in the special cell built at the Milwaukee Area Confined Disposal Facility. The disposal facility at Jones Island is owned by the Port of Milwaukee and operated by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

Sediment removal successes

Since 2004 five sediment cleanup projects have been completed under the Great Lakes Legacy Act. These projects have cleaned up more than 800,000 cubic yards of contaminated sediment at a cost of almost \$97 million. Some \$53 million in Legacy Act funds have leveraged \$44 million in non-federal dollars from state, local and private partners.

This funding translated into the removal of more than 1.5 million pounds of contaminants from Great Lakes waterways, reducing risks to human health and wildlife. The Kinnickinnic River is the second Legacy Act project in Wisconsin. In 2005 sediment removal was completed in Newton Creek and Hog Island Inlet in Superior.



Aerial view of the section of the Kinnickinnic River in South Milwaukee that will undergo removal of contaminated sediment.