

# Spirit Lake Great Lakes Legacy Act Project

**Recreational trails adjacent to the St. Louis River are open to the public. Please stay on gravel trails as the rest of the upland areas are private property and closed to the public. Please be aware restoration and maintenance operations are ongoing and use caution when near workers on site.**

## Site History

We acknowledge that the area known as Spirit Lake and the surrounding areas in close proximity to Spirit Island are located on the traditional, ancestral, and contemporary lands of the Ojibwe Anishinaabe people. This land holds great historical, spiritual, and personal significance for the Native nations and peoples of this region. Historical industrial activities as well as other activities upstream of the site previously impacted the onshore areas and areas within Spirit Lake. The recently completed remediation project targeted the polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs) and heavy metals including lead, copper and zinc. PAHs are a class of chemicals toxic to fish and aquatic organisms that could potentially cause cancer in humans.

## Cleanup Process

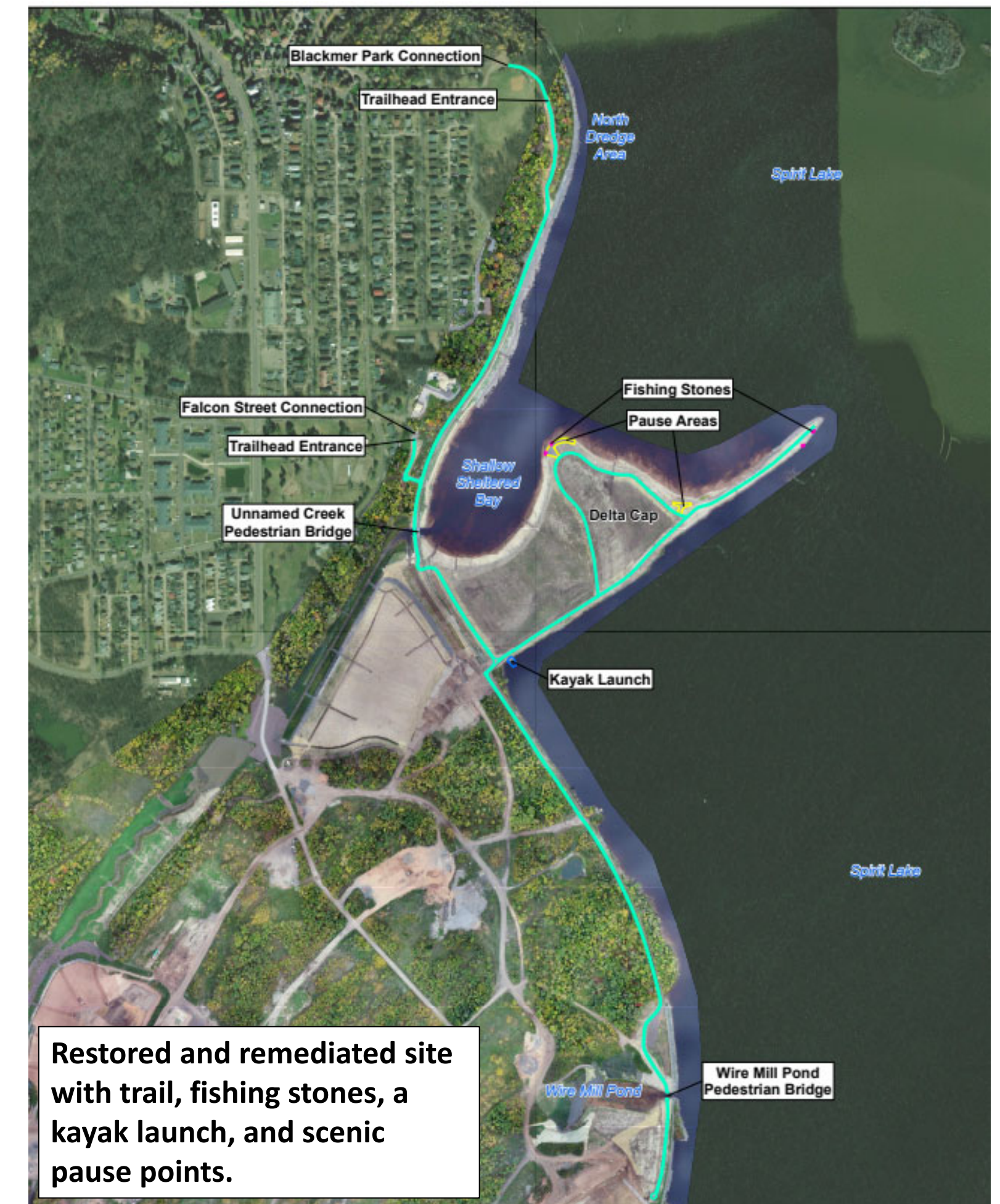
U. S. Steel (USS) and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) entered into a voluntary agreement under the Great Lakes Legacy Act (GLLA) to cleanup the aquatic areas through dredging (sediment removal), capping (isolation of sediment from the environment), and long-term monitoring of impacted sediments. The remainder of the impacted areas within Site will be addressed later under the Superfund program, where necessary.

## Benefits

This cleanup resulted in aquatic ecosystem improvement through the creation of new open water, increased fish spawning habitat and restored wetlands. This contributed to the removal of Beneficial Use Impairments and will contribute to the eventual delisting of the St. Louis River Area of Concern. Public access to the St. Louis River has also been improved.

## Project Success

- **Cleanup work was completed in July 2024.**
  - ✓ 460,000 CY of sediment/soil dredged
  - ✓ 96 acres covered by a remedial cap
  - ✓ 2 Confined Disposal Facilities (CDFs)
  - ✓ 127 acres of monitored or enhanced natural recovery
  - ✓ Shoreline protection throughout the site
- **Habitat restoration was completed in 2023, with maintenance into 2024.**
  - ✓ 138 acres of aquatic restoration
  - ✓ 70+ acres of upland restoration
- **Recreational features are complete.**
  - ✓ 2 miles of pedestrian trails
  - ✓ Trail pause points
  - ✓ Fishing stones
  - ✓ Kayak launch



Shoreline aquatic plants are still establishing. Limited areas of in-water planting will be completed in 2024.



Trail access point at Blackmer Park.

## Site Status and Ongoing Work in 2024

- Limited restoration and maintenance operations are ongoing through fall of 2024.
- The trails are open for public use; however, native plants are still establishing. Signage is installed to guide public use and protect the work that has been done.
- Trailhead maps and interpretive signage will be installed along the pedestrian trail in 2024.



Signage for sensitive habitat areas is present throughout the site.

### FOR MORE INFORMATION

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EPA Spirit Lake Website  
<https://www.epa.gov/great-lakes-aocs/spirit-lake-great-lakes-legacy-act-cleanup>

