



# Cleaning Up Toxic Sediments To Restore Areas of Concern

## Regional Priorities for the Great Lakes

March 2007

### Background on the Issue

The Great Lakes states, in collaboration with U.S. EPA and local communities, are cleaning up 30 Areas of Concern (AOC) designated under the Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement. These “toxic hot spots” include rivers, lakes and bays located across the Great Lake region. Severe pollution in these areas has caused beneficial use impairments, such as restrictions on drinking water and beach closures. Detailed cleanup plans are being implemented in the AOCs to restore beneficial uses for local residents.

Toxic sediments are the most significant – and the most costly – pollution problem in the AOCs. In 2002 Congress passed the Great Lakes Legacy Act (P.L. 107-303) to provide dedicated funding for cleaning up toxic sediments in the AOCs. The Act authorizes \$270 million over five years, including

- \$50 million annually to monitor, evaluate or remediate contaminated sediments, or prevent new contamination;
- \$3 million annually for research on innovative remediation technologies; and
- \$1 million annually for public outreach and education.



#### *This fact sheet prepared by the* **Great Lakes Commission**

The Great Lakes Commission is an interstate compact agency that works on behalf of the eight Great Lakes states to advance restoration, protection and sound management of the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence River Basin.

#### **Contacts:**

Tim Eder, Executive Director,  
[teder@glc.org](mailto:teder@glc.org)  
Jon MacDonagh-Dumler,  
Government Affairs,  
[jonmacd@glc.org](mailto:jonmacd@glc.org)



Great Lakes Commission  
Eisenhower Corporate Park  
2805 S. Industrial Hwy., #100  
Ann Arbor, MI 48104-6791  
734-971-9135 • 734-971-9150 (fax)  
[www.glc.org](http://www.glc.org)

The Act requires a 35 percent nonfederal cost share for remediation projects.

### Congressional Priorities for Cleaning Up Toxic Sediments

The Great Lakes Commission requests congressional support for the following priorities to clean up toxic sediments and restore the Areas of Concern. These priorities reflect recommendations from the Great Lakes Regional Collaboration and the Council of Great Lakes Governors.

- **Great Lakes Legacy Act:** Fully fund the Legacy Act at \$54 million.
- **AOC Program Implementation:** Appropriate \$10 million for the Great Lakes states and community-based coordinating councils to implement the AOC program and \$1.7 million to U.S. EPA for technical support, regional coordination and program oversight.
- **U.S. Army Corps of Engineers:** Appropriate \$4 million for the USACE Great Lakes Remedial Action Plan Program for engineering and planning assistance to prepare sites for Legacy Act cleanups and address other pollution problems.



Dredging underway in the Black Lagoon on the Detroit River. The first cleanup funded under the Great Lakes Legacy Act, the project removed 115,000 cubic yards of toxic sediments and leveraged \$3.3 million in nonfederal funds.



Redevelopment planned for the Black Lagoon, including a park, marina, condominiums and shops.

## Funding History and Committee Jurisdiction

AOC Priority	Fiscal Year Funding (millions of dollars)				
	2004	2005	2006	2007	President's 2008 Request
Great Lakes Legacy Act	\$9.9	\$22.3	\$29.6	\$29.6 <sup>1</sup>	\$35.0
AOC Program Funding to U.S. EPA, States and Local Groups	\$2.7	\$5.3 <sup>2</sup>	\$5.2 <sup>2</sup>	\$4.9 <sup>1</sup>	\$4.9 <sup>2</sup>
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Great Lakes RAP Program	\$1.0	\$0.25	\$0.06	\$0 <sup>1</sup>	\$0

<sup>1</sup>Anticipated funding based on FY 2006 level

<sup>2</sup>Includes AOC and Lakewide Management Plan funding in base budget for U.S. EPA's Great Lakes National Program Office

AOC Priority	Committee Jurisdiction
Great Lakes Legacy Act	House Appropriations Subcommittee on Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies
AOC Program Funding to U.S. EPA, States and Local Groups	House Appropriations Subcommittee on Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Great Lakes RAP Program	House Appropriations Subcommittee on Energy and Water Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Energy and Water Development

## Progress to Date

The following are significant recent accomplishments in restoring the Great Lakes Areas of Concern:

- **Cleaning up toxic sediments under the Great Lakes Legacy Act:** Approximately \$91 million has been appropriated for the Act since 2004. Five cleanup projects and three assessments have been completed or are underway with a federal cost share of \$50 million and local funding of \$38 million. The five cleanup projects alone will remove nearly 900,000 cubic yards of toxic sediments from the Great Lakes. An additional nine projects are under review with an estimated federal cost share of \$71 million.
- **Restoring beneficial uses and “delisting” AOCs:** The first U.S. AOC – Oswego River in New York – was removed (or “delisted”) from the list of AOCs in 2006. Several other AOCs are expected to be delisted in coming years. AOCs are also removing individual beneficial use impairments as environmental goals are met.
- **Improving valuable fish and wildlife resources:** As contaminated sediment cleanups are completed, U.S. EPA and other agencies are rehabilitating fish and wildlife resources. With continued support, this “clean and restore” approach will clean up the environment and improve recreational opportunities.
- **Coordinating federal and state cleanup efforts:** A Federal-State AOC Coordinating Committee has been established to improve the efficiency of regional efforts and leverage resources from all available programs.

## Benefits to the Great Lakes Region

- **Benefiting local communities:** The AOCs are located in each of the eight Great Lakes states, where pollution impacts thousands of local residents. Cleanup efforts will directly benefit local communities.
- **Safeguarding public health:** Cleanup efforts will address public health threats from toxic sediments, bacterial contamination and other pollution problems in the AOCs.
- **Restoring beneficial uses:** Cleaning up the AOCs will restore and enhance beneficial uses that are important to local communities, such as swimming beaches, fishing and drinking water.
- **Increasing property values and promoting economic development:** The AOCs include valuable waterfront areas that are vital for economic development. Studies project that property values in areas near contaminated sites will increase by up to 25 percent after the sites are cleaned up.

## Links for More Information

- **Great Lakes Information Network, Areas of Concern page:** [www.glin.net/envt/pollution/aoc.html](http://www.glin.net/envt/pollution/aoc.html)
- **Summaries of individual Areas of Concern:** [www.epa.gov/glnpo/aoc](http://www.epa.gov/glnpo/aoc)
- **Great Lakes Legacy Act:** [www.epa.gov/glnpo/sediment/legacy](http://www.epa.gov/glnpo/sediment/legacy)
- **Resources on Great Lakes Areas of Concern:** [www.glc.org/rap/resources](http://www.glc.org/rap/resources)