

WHITE LAKE: *On the Path to Delisting*



OVERVIEW

White Lake is one of Michigan's 14 Areas of Concern (AOC) out of a total of 42 throughout the Great Lakes Basin. Michigan's Office of the Great Lakes works to coordinate federal, state, and local resources to remove contaminated sediment, restore degraded habitat, and perform other tasks necessary to remove Beneficial Use Impairments and eventually delist Areas of Concern. AOCs are among the most contaminated sites in the state, and while the AOC program itself is non-regulatory, it works closely with federal and state agency staff in Superfund, Resource Conservation Recovery Act, permitting, and other regulatory programs to restore these areas.

WHITE LAKE HABITAT RESTORATION PROJECT

The \$2.1 million Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI) grant to the Muskegon Conservation District will restore seven priority parcels of riparian and upland habitat around White Lake. This project is the culmination of over a decade of partnerships and intensive planning and community participation. This project will:

- Restore over 5,100 linear feet of shoreline
- Create and restore 35 acres of wetlands and aquatic habitat
- Reconnect and restore 8 acres of riparian and upland habitat corridors
- Remove over 27,000 cubic yards of shoreline/submerged debris

Successful completion of the project will enable the removal of two Beneficial Use Impairments: Loss of Fish

and Wildlife Habitat and Degradation of Fish and Wildlife Populations. During the next 15 months, seven of White Lake's eight Beneficial Use Impairments are expected to be removed. When completed in September 2012, the White Lake habitat restoration project is expected to implement the final management actions necessary to put White Lake on the path to delisting this area as an AOC.

WHITE LAKE HABITAT RESTORATION NEEDS

Over the last decade or so, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (U.S. EPA), the Department of Environmental Quality, Department of Natural Resources, the White Lake Public Advisory Council, the Muskegon Conservation District and countless dedicated individuals and organizations have contributed to the development of the White Lake Community Action Plan, the Shoreline Habitat Management Plan, the Community Action Plan, and the White Lake Habitat Restoration Blueprint. Because of all these planning efforts, the community was well positioned to obtain GLRI funding to implement these seven shovel-ready projects around White Lake.

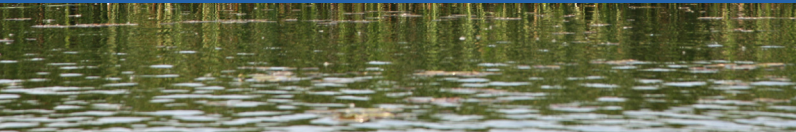
The White Lake area, including Montague and Whitehall, used to be known as the home of chemical, leather, and other manufacturing operations. Today, the area is known as much for the beautiful scenery and recreational opportunities it offers, including fishing, boating and bird watching. White Lake is quickly regaining its reputation as a great place to work, live, play, and thrive. This project will contribute to the continuing transformation of the area from a "toxic hotspot" to a natural resource focused, recreation and tourism hotspot.





concluded that every dollar spent on specific environmental improvements in the Great Lakes region would return a range of between two and four dollars in economic benefits to the region. These are benefits local communities will enjoy for years to come, in addition to the unquantifiable but significant economic activity generated by making the region more attractive to businesses and workers.

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ECONOMIC AND ENVIRONMENTAL BENEFITS OF THE PROJECT

This region has been hard-hit by the current recession and significant losses of major industries. The GLRI project funding is about much more than simply cleaning up areas of historic industrial pollution, this funding will also:

- Restore and increase valuable ecosystem services for the community
- Act as a catalyst for local investment and economic recovery
- Enhance tourism through natural resource recreational opportunities
- Improve and increase habitat for native fish and wildlife
- Improve overall quality of life for White Lake area residents

According to a recent study by Grand Valley State University (GVSU) economics Professor Paul Isley, a larger scale restoration project in the Muskegon area is likely to generate a local economic benefit of six times the project cost over the next 10 years. The White Lake area can reasonably expect similar benefits to the local economy, including:

- Increases in recreational spending
- Increased tourism, fishing and other water-based recreation
- Increased property values
- Increased tax revenues for area communities
- Creation and retention of jobs related to increased tourism and recreation and in the “green economy” in the scientific, engineering, and contracting fields

Similarly, a 2007 cost-benefit analysis of Great Lakes restoration investments conducted by the Brookings Institution

SPECIAL THANKS TO COMMUNITY LEADERS AND ORGANIZATIONS

The successes in restoring the White Lake AOC have been due in large part to the extensive partnerships forged between many entities and individuals with vested interests in this area. A few of the key organizations that have been involved in the decades of restoration efforts in the White Lake AOC include the former Lake Michigan Federation, GVSU Annis Water Resources Institute, the White Lake Public Advisory Council, the Whitehall Chamber of Commerce, the Cities of Montague and Whitehall, Muskegon County, and all the surrounding communities. The Muskegon Conservation District has played a vital role in getting us here today. Many others have spent countless hours working for the clean-up and restoration of sites around White Lake over the years, from local residents to federal and state agency staff, consultants, engineers, and others.

Many thanks to all who have taken an interest, dedicated their time and other resources to restoring White Lake. Special thanks are due to the management and staff of the U.S. EPA Great Lakes National Program Office for making this project possible by providing funding through the GLRI and for dedicating their energies to making this restoration project a reality.

For additional information about the White Lake Area of Concern, contact Mr. John Riley, Office of the Great Lakes at rileyj2@michigan.gov or 517-335-4122.



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Pursuant to Public Act 451 of 1994 for Governor Rick Snyder

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