

Sediment Removal Completed; Cleanup of River One Step Closer

St. Marys River Great Lakes Legacy Act Project
Sault Ste. Marie, Mich.

January 2012

Great Lakes Legacy Act

The Great Lakes Legacy Act was signed into law in 2002 to tackle the problem of “legacy” sediment contamination in 31 U.S. Areas of Concern, or AOCs. The Act was renewed in 2008. The EPA’s Great Lakes National Program Office administers this program. To be eligible for Legacy Act funding, a project must evaluate or clean up contaminated sediment, or prevent new contamination from occurring in an AOC. At least 35 percent of project funds must come from state, local or private sponsors.

The Legacy Act is part of a larger strategy called the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative, which funds projects to provide a healthy, natural Great Lakes environment for swimming and fishing as well as a source of clean water for drinking, and industrial or commercial uses.

Ten Legacy Act sediment cleanup projects have been completed with more than 1.3 million cubic yards of contaminated sediment removed or contained.

For more information

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Aerial view of the St. Marys River. The arrow shows where the recently completed project was focused.

Completion of a sediment removal project in the St. Marys River in Sault Ste. Marie has brought the St. Marys River Area of Concern one step closer to being taken off the list of the most polluted places around the Great Lakes. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency worked with Consumers Energy on the project that began in May 2010 and was completed in mid-November.

This \$8.5 million Great Lakes Legacy Act (*see box, left*) project removed about 24,000 cubic yards of sediment contaminated with polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons, or PAHs, from the river. Legacy Act funds covered 60 percent of the total cost, or about \$5.1 million, while Consumers Energy paid the required non-federal 40 percent share, or about \$3.4 million.

The project cleaned up the last known remaining deposit of contaminated sediment on the U.S. side of the St. Marys River in the St. Marys River AOC.

The St. Marys River AOC extends from Whitefish Bay downstream through the St. Joseph Channel to Humburg Point on the Ontario side, and to the Straits of DeTour on the Michigan side.

This is the tenth completed Legacy Act cleanup. So far, more than 1.3 million cubic yards of sediment have been cleaned up under the Great Lakes Legacy Act.

The first phase was dredging about 6,500 cubic yards of contaminated sediment from commercial marine slips in May and June of 2010. The sediment was treated and taken to Dafter Landfill in Dafter, Mich., for disposal. Workers also placed a 9-inch sand cover over the dredged area, and treated about 400,000 gallons of water.

In the second phase, workers dredged some 17,500 cubic yards of contaminated sediment from the river next to the shore and extending

into the federal navigation channel. That sediment was also taken to Dafter Landfill for disposal. Workers installed a 9-inch sand cover over the dredged area and treated about 598,000 gallons of water. The work took place in September, October and November of 2011.

EPA and Consumers Energy worked closely with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality, the city of Sault Ste. Marie and the Binational Public Advisory Council. The U.S. Coast Guard also assisted in the project.



Dredging with machinery like this cable arm environmental clamshell bucket moved 24,000 cubic yards of contaminated sediment out of the St. Marys River.