
First Phase Begins on Project to Clean Up Contaminated Sediment

Muskegon Lake Great Lakes Legacy Act Project

Muskegon, Michigan

September 2011

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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EPA contractors place contaminated sediment from Muskegon Lake in a drying bed. The dredging is the first phase of a Great Lakes Legacy Act project.

About 41,000 cubic yards of contaminated sediment are being dredged out of Muskegon Lake in a bay on the south shore, not far from downtown Muskegon. The work is part of a \$12 million project by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality under the Great Lakes Legacy Act (*see box, left*).

Legacy Act funds cover 65 percent of the total cost, or about \$7.8 million. As in other Legacy Act projects, a minimum of 35 percent comes from non-federal sources. In this case, about \$4.2 million will come from the Clean Michigan Initiative bond fund.

The sediment is contaminated with mercury and polyaromatic hydrocarbons, or PAHs. This project, along with past cleanup activities in the lake, is part of a larger strategy to keep the contaminants out of not only Muskegon Lake, but also the Lake Michigan food chain. The project is in the Muskegon Lake Area of Concern.

EPA officials expect to finish the three-phase project by the end of this year. The first phase, digging up and removing contaminated sediment, should be completed in early fall. In the second phase, EPA contractors will cover the bottom of the bay with six to 12 inches of sand. The sand will help reduce exposure of aquatic life to contaminated sediment and help the lake recover naturally. The final phase is restoration of the shoreline in part of the project area.

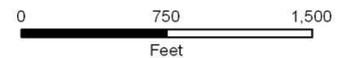
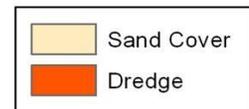
During the project, local residents may see increased truck traffic in the area as dredged sediment is transported to Ottawa Farms County Landfill in Cooperstown, Mich., for proper disposal. Residents may also notice a white powder being added to dredged material before it is taken to the landfill. The powder helps solidify the sediment, and a small amount could become airborne. It is a non-toxic substance that will not harm boats and is not dangerous to people or animals.

EPA and MDEQ are also working with the Muskegon Lake Watershed Partnership, the city of Muskegon and Hartshorn Marina, which is adjacent to the project site.

The Great Lakes are among the largest and most complex freshwater ecosystems in the world, providing a home, water and food to millions of aquatic plants, animals and people.



Division Street Outfall Muskegon, Michigan



This map shows where dredging is taking place, as well as where a sand cover will be placed in the project's second phase.