

Cleaning Up Toxic Sediments

Legislative Priority Fact Sheet
February 2008



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 Lakes 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, which requires a 35 percent nonfederal cost share for remediation projects, 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.

Congressional Priorities for Cleaning Up Toxic Sediments

The Great Lakes Commission requests congressional support for the following priorities to clean up toxic sediments:

- **Reauthorize and fully fund the Great Lakes Legacy Act**, including amendments to enhance its effectiveness, and increase appropriations to \$150 million.
- **Appropriate \$11.7 million to implement the AOC program**, including \$10 million for the Great Lakes states and community-based coordinating councils and \$1.7 million to U.S. EPA for technical support, regional coordination and program oversight.
- **Appropriate \$3 million for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Great Lakes Remedial Action Plan Program** for engineering and planning assistance to prepare sites for Legacy Act cleanups and to address other pollution problems.
- **Appropriate \$2 million for the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Great Lakes Habitat Restoration Program** to restore fish and wildlife resources in the AOCs.

Funding History and Committee Jurisdiction

AOC Priority	Fiscal Year Funding (millions of dollars)				
	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009 Budget Request
Great Lakes Legacy Act	\$22.3	\$29.6	\$29.6	\$34.5	\$35.0
AOC Program Funding to U.S. EPA, States & Local Groups ¹	\$5.3	\$5.2	\$4.9	\$4.9	No detail provided
Army Corps of Engineers Great Lakes RAP Program	\$0.25	\$0.06	\$0	\$0.43	\$0
NOAA Great Lakes Habitat Restoration Program	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$1.5

¹ Includes AOC and Lakewide Management Plan funding in base budget for U.S. EPA's Great Lakes National Program Office.

Committee Jurisdiction

AOC Priority	Committee Jurisdiction
Great Lakes Legacy Act – Appropriations	House Appropriations Subcommittee on Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies
Great Lakes Legacy Act – Reauthorization	House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee, Subcommittee on Water Resources Senate Committee on Environment & Public Works, Subcommittee on Transportation Safety, Infrastructure Security and Water Quality
AOC Program Funding to U.S. EPA, States & Local Groups	House Appropriations Subcommittee on Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies
Army Corps of Engineers Great Lakes RAP Program	House Appropriations Subcommittee on Energy and Water Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Energy and Water Development
NOAA Great Lakes Habitat Restoration Program	House Appropriations Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice, Science and Related Agencies Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice, Science and Related Agencies

Progress to Date

Cleaning up toxic sediments under the Great Lakes Legacy Act: Approximately \$126 million has been appropriated for the Act since 2004. Five cleanup projects and seven projects to monitor and evaluate contaminated sediments have been completed or are under way with a federal cost share of \$55 million and local funding of \$45 million. The five cleanup projects alone will remove nearly 800,000 cubic yards of toxic sediments from the Great Lakes. An additional seven projects are under review with an estimated federal cost share of \$85 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, NOAA and other agencies are rehabilitating fish and wildlife resources. NOAA has received seven proposals requesting \$21 million for large-scale habitat restoration projects in the AOCs. 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: www.glin.net/envt/pollution/aoc.html

USEPA Areas of Concern: www.epa.gov/glnpo/aoc

Great Lakes Legacy Act: www.epa.gov/glnpo/sediment/legacy

Other Areas of Concern Resources: www.glc.org/rap/resources