

Michigan

\$10M in Great Lakes grants target shoreline quality, habitat cleanup



Muskegon Lake during the 14th annual Summer Sailstice on June 21, 2014. (Ken Stevens | MLive.com file photo)



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The federal government is sprinkling millions around the Midwest to improve the Lake Erie, Lake Superior and Lake Michigan watersheds.

On Wednesday, Aug. 10, the Great Lakes Commission and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency announced nearly \$10 million in grants to fund habitat restoration and water quality improvement projects in 14 cities around Wisconsin, Ohio, Indiana, Michigan, Minnesota and New York.

The bulk of that money, \$7.9 million, was funneled to Michigan through the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) from the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (**GLRI**), a federal program that funds region-wide pollution cleanup, habitat restoration and invasive species management.

The money is going to the Lower Muskegon River Hydrological Reconnection and Wetland Restoration Project, which hopes to remove Muskegon Lake from a U.S. and Canadian list of toxic hot spots known as Great Lakes Areas of Concern.

Once delisted, Muskegon Lake would follow White Lake in Muskegon County and Deer Lake in the Upper Peninsula, which came off the toxic list in 2014.



White Lake finally delisted as Great Lakes area of concern

Muskegon Lake was added to the list in 1985 after decades of industrial discharge, shoreline alteration and coastal wetland destruction. The once-polluted lake and tributaries have undergone two decades worth of ecological repair. Officials hope to officially delist the lake in 2018 or 2019.

Millions have been spent to remove phosphorous-laden sediments, restore natural tributary flow through former industrial sites and create wetlands in the Muskegon Lake watershed. Removal of three dikes filled with broken concrete, soil and tree stumps should be among the final hurdles to delisting.

Healthier waters are expected to boost tourism and fishing opportunities.

Elsewhere in the Lake Michigan watershed, about \$815,500 was divided among East Chicago, Ind. and the Wisconsin cities of Wind Point, Two Rivers, Manitowoc, Ashland and Algoma to reduce stormwater runoff draining into the lake.

In the Lake Erie watershed, about \$997,500 was divided among Evans, N.Y. and the Ohio cities of Ashtabula, Cleveland, Huron, Sandusky and Vermillion to install green infrastructure to prevent untreated runoff from reaching the lake.

Duluth, Minn., also got \$58,000 for similar work.

In total, officials say the various bioretention areas, sediment filters, dune swales, rain gardens, vegetation planting, wetlands construction, shoreline buffers and permeable pavement installations across five states should capture or prevent more than 13 million gallons of untreated stormwater from contaminating swimming beaches and getting into the Great Lakes.

The green infrastructure grants came through the EPA, which traditionally administers most of the annual \$300 million Great Lakes restoration funding.

"Our beaches are the window to the Great Lakes for millions of residents and visitors from around the world," said Cameron Davis, EPA senior advisor. "The purpose of the GLRI grants announced today is to protect public health and give more people the chance to swim, recreate and connect with the Great Lakes."



Great Lakes cleanup, protection and dredging funds in omnibus bill

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