

Michigan

# Latest \$7.9 million boost could remove Muskegon Lake from area of concern list

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MUSKEGON, MI – The ongoing effort to clean up Muskegon Lake may be in the home stretch thanks to another massive influx of funds from the Great Lakes Commission.

The commission received \$7.9 million to restore the lake as part of a new \$40 million regional partnership to clean up several Great Lakes Areas of Concern.

Muskegon Lake has been on that list since 1985 due to ecological problems caused by industrial discharges, shoreline alterations and the filling of open water and coastal wetlands.

However, these funds combined with the \$7.9 million in funding received in March 2015 could very likely be the final habitat restoration project needed for the formal removal of the Lake from the list. Delisting could come as soon as the end of 2018.



## Muskegon Lake-Bear Creek cleanup gets \$7.9 million boost

Funding for the Lower Muskegon River Hydrological Reconnection and Wetland Restoration Project is being provided by the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative to the GLC, in coordination with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

*"Our way of life in West Michigan is forever linked to the careful preservation of the Great Lakes. Programs that invest in the economic and environmental health of these treasured resources, such as the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative, are showing real and measurable results and are something I am proud to continue to fight for," said Congressman Huizenga in a statement.*

*"With White Lake officially delisted as an area of concern, I am encouraged and delighted to see the Great Lakes Commission collaborating with NOAA, as well as, state and local partners to address the remaining areas of concern across the Great Lakes region, beginning with Muskegon Lake."*

*"Restoring these sites will enhance recreational activities, expand economic opportunity, and build a stronger and more environmentally sound Muskegon County. In order to successfully preserve and restore the Great Lakes ecosystem for future generations, we must have continued engagement from stakeholders at every level. I look forward to being part of that discussion, and part of the solution."*

The project will reconnect former wetlands with the Muskegon River and restore fish passage and habitat for a variety of native fish and wildlife.

Restoration will involve the removal of three dikes composed of artificial fill, including broken concrete, soil, and tree stumps. Local implementation will be led by the West Michigan Shoreline Regional Development Commission.

The project is expected to increase tourism and enhance the Muskegon Lake fishery, which is estimated to contribute \$1.3 million annually to the local economy.

U.S. Sen. Gary Peters and Debbie Stabenow also made the following statements in regard to the project.

"From fishing and boating to tourism and shipping, Michigan's Great Lakes and waterways drive our economy," Peters, a member of the Senate Great Lakes Task Force said. "The Great Lakes Restoration Initiative is vital to protecting our precious water resources, and this funding will help restore critical habitat for fish and other wildlife and boost West Michigan's economy with increased outdoor recreation opportunities."

"Protecting our Great Lakes is so important to our way of life and our economy in Michigan," Stabenow, co-chair of the task force added. "Today's investment will help us continue the cleanup and restoration of Muskegon Lake while keeping our waterways and wildlife habitats safe."

This is the third regional partnership the Great Lakes Commission has been awarded since 2008, with more than \$70 million being directed to key sites across the basin."

The Muskegon Lake project has been ongoing for more than 20 years now. Since 1992, community groups, governmental and nongovernmental organizations have worked collaboratively to remove contaminated sediments, restore fish and wildlife species, and protect their habitats.

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