

Michigan

# Muskegon Lake-Bear Lake restoration work about to start

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MUSKEGON COUNTY, MI — The West Michigan Shoreline Regional Development Commission and Muskegon County are about to kick off a major habitat restoration project to restore the health of Bear Lake.

The project in North Muskegon will move Muskegon Lake a step closer to removal from the international list of Great Lakes Areas of Concern, a list of toxic hot spots. Delisting is expected by 2018.

The process begins Monday, May 16, with wildlife relocation at the Bear Creek Hydrologic Reconnection and Habitat Restoration Project site off Witham Drive on upper Bear Lake on the north side of Muskegon Lake. Project participants including local officials and volunteers from the Muskegon Lake Watershed Partnership will observe and assist.

The wildlife relocation is the first step in removing phosphorus-contaminated sediment from wetlands along Bear Creek, restoring natural water flow and reconnecting the flood plain to Muskegon Lake. Those steps will support the lake's natural fish populations and other wildlife.

Muskegon County purchased property at the former celery farm through Area of Concern grants from NOAA and the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality through a regional partnership with the Great Lakes Commission.



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The county acquired an 18-acre area including the east pond on Nov. 27, 2013, and the 21-acre west pond in December 2015. The purpose of the purchases was to allow fish and wildlife habitat restoration and water quality improvements in Muskegon Lake.

WMSRDC completed engineering and design for the project in 2015 and is managing the restoration. It's expected to be completed in the fall of 2016.

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Muskegon Lake is one of 14 Areas of Concern designated in Michigan under the 1987 Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement between the United States and Canada.

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