

# Legacy Act Projects Tackle Great Lakes Pollution

## U.S. Areas of Concern

Great Lakes

January 2009

### Federal funding

The Great Lakes Legacy Act of 2002 authorized \$270 million in funding over five years, beginning in fiscal year 2004. The Act was reauthorized in 2008.

Appropriations received to date have been:

FY2008 – \$34.5 million  
FY2007 – \$30 million  
FY2006 – \$29.3 million  
FY2005 – \$22.3 million  
FY2004 – \$9.9 million

### For more information

EPA's Great Lakes National Program Office administers the Legacy Act for the federal government. For more information contact:

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### Web sites

Check out these Web pages for even more information:

#### About The Great Lakes Legacy Act

[www.epa.gov/glla](http://www.epa.gov/glla)

#### About Areas of Concern

[www.epa.gov/glnpo/aoc/](http://www.epa.gov/glnpo/aoc/)

#### GLLA rules for identifying and evaluating proposed projects

[www.epa.gov/glla/rule](http://www.epa.gov/glla/rule)



*EPA's research vessel Mudpuppy can enter shallow inlets on the Great Lakes to test for contaminated sediment.*

The Great Lakes are among the largest and most complex freshwater ecosystems in the world, providing water, food and a home to millions of people, aquatic plants and animals. The Great Lakes Legacy Act of 2002 is part of a larger strategy to provide a healthy, natural Great Lakes environment for swimming and fishing as well as a source of clean water for drinking and industrial uses.

Although discharges of toxic chemicals to the Great Lakes have been reduced in the last 30 years, high concentrations of contaminants persist in the sediment of some rivers, harbors and bays as a "legacy" of North America's industrialization.

Harmful pollutants include polychlorinated biphenyls, better known as PCBs, as well as heavy metals like mercury, oil and grease, and polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons, or PAHs. These substances accumulate in the sediment. They first affect the tiny organisms that fish eat. That contaminates the fish, and can be a health risk to people who eat the fish. The contaminants also affect the environment in other ways.

To help address the contaminated sediment problem, The Great Lakes Legacy Act of 2002 authorized \$270 million in funding over five years, beginning in fiscal 2004, to specifically assist with the cleanup of

contaminated sediment in America's 30 Areas of Concern or AOCs. The Great Lakes Legacy Act was reauthorized by Congress and signed into law on October 8, 2008. The Act reauthorizes the U.S. EPA GLNPO for two more years at level funding. The new legislation allows GLNPO to continue to move forward with sediment cleanups in the Great Lakes Areas of Concern and includes several new provisions to improve the program.

AOCs are designated by the United States and Canada as locations where beneficial uses have been impaired or restricted. This can include the use of a body of water as a drinking water source, or it can be recreational uses such as fishing, boating and swimming. For most of these AOCs, the main pollutant is contaminated sediment. U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's Great Lakes National Program Office administers the Legacy Act.

The U.S. and Canadian governments originally identified 43 Areas of Concern; 26 in U.S. waters, 12 in Canada and five shared on connecting river systems. Three AOCs – Severn Sound, Collingwood Harbour, and Oswego River – have since been removed from the list. That leaves 40 AOCs; 25 U.S., 10 Canadian and five shared. Remedial Action Plans are being developed for each of these AOCs to address impairments to any one of 14 beneficial uses.

To be eligible for Legacy Act funding, proposed projects must lie within a U.S. AOC, and 35 percent of the cost must come from state and local sources. The project must implement a plan to clean up the AOC, evaluate it or prevent new contaminated sediment.

As of January 2009, five cleanup projects have been largely completed and several more are scheduled to get under way this year. More than 900,000 cubic yards of sediment have been cleaned up, removing 1.7 million pounds of contaminants. In these projects, \$53 million in Legacy Act funds have leveraged nearly \$44 million in non-federal dollars. The key to the success of these projects has been the strong partnerships that have developed between EPA and other federal, state, local and private entities.

The five completed GLLA projects have been the springboard for Great Lakes communities to turn areas that were once a detriment to economic growth and a healthy environment into a new asset for their cities and watersheds. These cleanups are turning contaminated waterways into rejuvenated fish and native plant habitats, and neighboring properties are becoming sites of economic growth, including marina construction. Biking and hiking trails along with fishing piers are planned for areas that used to be marked with contamination warning signs.



Remediation projects completed or substantially completed					
Project	Action	Total Cost (\$Million)	Cubic Yards Removed	Major Contaminants	Pounds of Contaminants Removed
Black Lagoon	Removal/Residual Cover	\$8.7	115,000	PCBs, mercury, oil & grease	478,500
Hog Island	Removal	\$5.7	46,000	PAHs, lead	7,500
Ruddiman Creek	Removal/Residual Cover	\$14.2	90,000	PCBs, lead, chromium	333,400
Tannery Bay*	Removal	\$8	41,000	Mercury, chromium	882,000
Ashtabula*	Removal/Residual Cover	\$60	630,000**	PCBs	25,000

\*Costs for Ashtabula are not final.  
 \*\*Includes dredging of outer harbor conducted by the Army Corps of Engineers.