



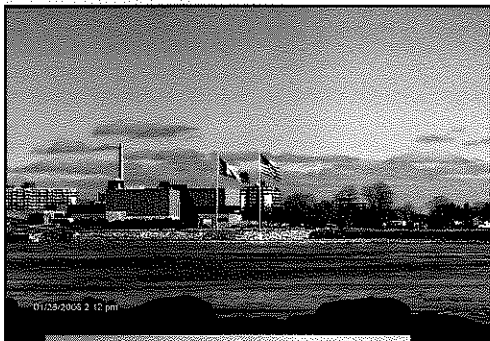
St. Clair River Progress Report

In the 1987, the United States and Canadian governments identified 43 places in the Great Lakes region that had severe, long-term environmental problems and were in need of restoration. These places are called *Areas of Concern*. Michigan has 12 *Areas of Concern* located in both the upper and lower peninsulas.

The St. Clair River was listed as an *Area of Concern* because of its significant pollution problems. As a result, businesses, non-profits, agencies, citizens, and governments formed the Bi-National Public Advisory Council in 1988 to address these environmental problems and remove the river as an Area of Concern.

Although great progress has been made over the last thirty years to remove the pollution sources, there is still more work to be done until the river's health is restored. The St. Clair River is the Blue Water Area's most significant natural feature -- we must improve and protect it so we can all enjoy it!

Friends of the St. Clair River is dedicated to showcasing the St. Clair River as a shining example of how community investment and partnership can create and sustain environmentally, socially and economically successful places. Please join us in our efforts!



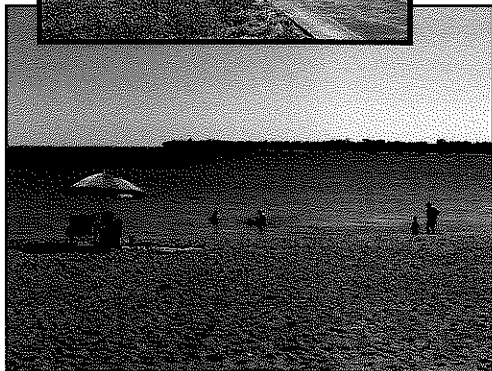
Can we drink the water?

Yes! Shoreline communities draw water from the river and purify it for human consumption. The drinking water meets or surpasses all state and federal health requirements. Most water intake plants on the St. Clair River do extra monitoring to detect real-time spills so that water intake can be stopped if a foreign substance is detected.



Can we eat the fish?

Yes! Fish should be eaten in moderation because all Great Lakes sport fish contain some contaminants at varying levels. For recommendations on fish species that contain low levels of chemicals go to www.michigan.gov/EatSafeFish.



Can we swim at the beaches?

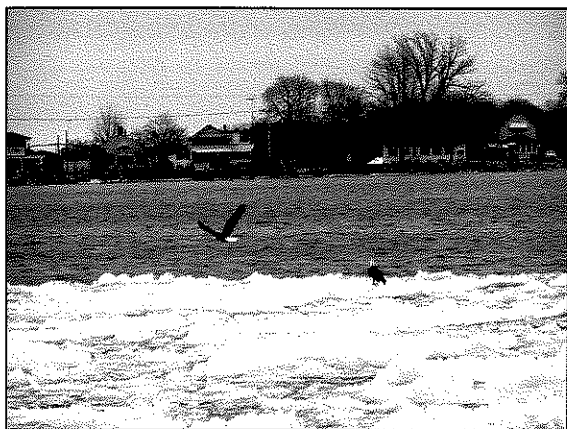
Yes! Testing conducted by the St. Clair County Health Department at fifteen Great Lakes beaches indicates bacterial levels are safe for swimming. Beaches close occasionally especially after a heavy rainfall. For current beach closings call the 24-hour hotline at (810) 987-7253 or visit "St Clair County Beaches" on Facebook.

The St. Clair River Continues to Improve

The St. Clair River's list of environmental problems are called *beneficial use impairments* or *BUIs*. There are 14 categories of BUIs, however, the St. Clair River only had 10, detailed on these two pages. Each BUI has goals that need to be met in order to be removed from the *Area of Concern* list. Once all ten of the St. Clair River's BUIs are removed, the St. Clair River can be removed from Michigan's list of *Areas of Concern*. Thanks to the dedication of local, state, and federal stakeholders, along with funding from the US Environmental Protection Agency and the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative, there has been great progress made to restore the health of the St. Clair River.

1. Restrictions on Fish and Wildlife Consumption

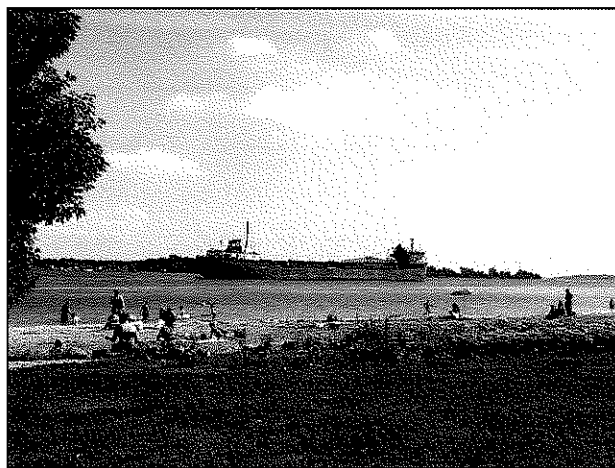
Goal: Fish and wildlife contain no more contaminants than background levels found in fish and wildlife throughout the Great Lakes. Fish may be consumed in moderation as contaminant levels have been dropping. Check out new fish consumption advisory signs posted at fishing and boat launch sites on the river. Fish consumption guidelines were updated for the St. Clair River by the MI Department of Community Health at www.michigan.gov/EatSafeFish.



Bald eagles are making a comeback to the Blue Water Area and are a common sight on the St. Clair River especially during the winter months.

2. Bird and Animal Deformities or Reproductive Problems

Goal: No evidence of deformities or reproductive problems in birds and animals in the St. Clair River. In 2012 the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ) conducted assessments and concluded that the risk to wildlife is low; however some toxins are still present in the food web at levels that could cause problems. Additional fish samples from the St. Clair River will be analyzed to better assess the amount of toxins that wildlife are exposed to and whether that translates to a higher incidence of deformities or reproductive problems.



Marysville's Chrysler Beach, one of only two public beaches on the St. Clair River, is a popular summer hangout for swimming and freighter watching.

3. Beach Closings

Removal expected soon! GOAL: To have no bacterial contamination that would require beaches to be closed for swimming. In the past, St. Clair River beaches have been closed because of *E. coli* bacteria. High levels of bacteria are caused by municipal sewer system overflows, failing septic systems, and pet and wildlife droppings around beaches. The St. Clair County Health Department has canvassed the county looking for and fixing failing septic systems and illicit discharges. Separating storm water sewage systems in Port Huron, Marysville and St. Clair is almost complete. To date, Port Huron has eliminated 290 million gallons of sewage to our waterways annually over the last fourteen years.

4. Loss of Fish and Wildlife Habitat

Removal expected soon! Goal: Restoration of habitat to provide healthy and sustainable fish and wildlife populations. Hardening of the shoreline with seawalls, draining wetlands for construction or agriculture, and invasive species have adversely affected fish & wildlife populations. There are six projects in progress and four already completed with goals of “softening” the shoreline, reconnecting tributaries to provide shallow habitat for spawning, nursery and feeding, and constructing artificial reefs.



5.



The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service regularly conducts tagging and tracking of the threatened Lake sturgeon. Due to the completion of recent sturgeon spawning reefs in the St. Clair River, sturgeon are beginning to make a comeback.

Restrictions on Drinking Water Consumption or Taste and Odor Problems

Pending removal! Historically there were high incidences of chemical spills to the river but those have been greatly reduced. Spills still occur so procedures are in place to prevent their occurrence, ensure quick notification, and proper cleanup. This impairment will be removed with enhanced monitoring by some of the drinking water intake plants on the St. Clair River, updated emergency notification systems, and emergency response training exercises.

6. Degradation of Benthos

No longer impaired! After a review of data it was concluded that there is a healthy benthic population which is no longer impacted by contaminated sediment. Historically chemical pollution that settled at the river’s bottom negatively affected the benthic organisms (bugs). The benthos are an important part of the aquatic food web and pass contamination from the sediment to fish and then to humans. This impairment was removed in 2014.

7. Degradation of Aesthetics

No longer impaired! Undesirable surface scum, suspended solids and other unsightly flotsam are no longer a problem in the St. Clair River. Based on the MDEQ’s recommendation, this impairment was removed on the U.S. side in 2012 and in Canada in 2014.

8. Added Costs to Agriculture and Industry

No longer impaired! In the past, industries were forced to shut down due to chemical spills in the river. This interruption of service resulted in added costs to industrial and agricultural users to clean St. Clair River water. Surveys concluded that that no added costs have incurred recently so this impairment was removed in 2012.

9. Tainting of Fish and Wildlife Flavor

No longer impaired! Surveys of fishermen and consumers in the U.S. and Canada indicated no problem with tainted taste in fish or wildlife from the St. Clair River, so this impairment was removed in 2011.

10. Restrictions on Dredging Activities

No longer impaired! Samples taken from the dredge spoils of the shipping channel since 1992 have shown no contamination that would require hazardous material disposal. Navigational dredging permits required by the MDEQ also may still require sediment analysis and proper disposal of the material.



Whatever you do, get out and show the water some love!

Follow these simple tips on how you can show the St. Clair River some love

- Don't feed swans, geese, ducks and gulls on or near the water and beaches. If you feed them on the beach, they go on the beach. Their waste contains high levels of E. coli bacteria. Also clean up after your pet and immediately dispose of the waste in the trash. Pet waste contains E. coli bacteria too.
- Never place anything down a storm drain, including litter, cigarette butts, leaves and grass clippings, fertilizer, chemicals, or oil. *Remember, only rain in the drain!*
- Keep fertilizer applications at least 20 feet away from the edges of rivers, streams and storm drains. This keeps algae-causing nutrients like phosphorus out of our waterways.
- Never place expired pharmaceuticals down a toilet or sink where they enter our drinking water supply. Throw them in the trash by putting them in a sealable or double bag mixed with coffee grounds or cat litter, or return them to your sheriff department during a collection day.
- Repair defective or failing septic systems. Surfacing sewage is a health concern and sewage runoff makes its way to our beaches and waterways during rain storms.
- Stabilize stream banks and shorelines with plants native to Michigan, instead of using grass and mowing up to the water's edge. Native plant's deep root systems helps them tolerate our climate, require less fertilizer, resist pests and helps reduce erosion.
- Sign up to become a Friends of the St. Clair River Steward by helping to lead programs, participate in river clean-ups, educate the public, and engage other volunteers with protection of the St. Clair River. Or volunteer with the St. Clair River Area of Concern Bi-National Public Advisory Council.
- Choose personal care products that are free from microbeads. These tiny plastic microbeads flow straight from our bathroom drains into the sewer system and wastewater treatment plants do not filter them out. Microbeads are not biodegradable and once they enter the water supply they are impossible to remove and become part of the food chain. Encourage positive action from manufacturer's to remove them from personal care products.
- Take a walk along the beautifully restored Port Huron Blue Water River Walk and Marysville Living Shoreline riverfronts. If you see litter or cigarette butts, pick them up and dispose of them properly.



Friends of the St. Clair River

P.O. Box 611496

Port Huron, MI 48061

Email: info@scriver.org

Web: www.scriver.org

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