



Southern Lake Michigan Focus Area



Background

Southern Lake Michigan is characterized by the wealth and diversity of its resources, people, habitats and environmental challenges. Because the region lies in the Lake Michigan lakeplain, it represents a globally significant ecosystem. Almost 10 million people rely on Lake Michigan for drinking water. The basin contains 40 percent of the Great Lakes coastal wetlands, as well as large forested areas and a number of national wildlife refuges; most of these are contained in the northern portion of the basin. Approximately 12 percent of the rivers, lakes, dunes and swales and five percent of the wetlands are contained within the forested lands of the basin, mainly located in Indiana.

About 37 percent of the southern basin is agricultural. The largest agricultural area is in the St. Joseph River basin of Michigan and Indiana; this is a major stopover for migratory birds and holds the greatest concentration of migratory land and waterbirds in the Midwest. A portion of the world's largest freshwater lakeshore dune system is also found in the area. The Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore is third in total number of plant species of all national parks and a portion of the southern coastal basin has been designated a "Shoreline Biodiversity Investment Area" by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and Canada.

Activities

- Developed clear geographic definition of focus area
- Agreed to focus on three specific areas
- Development and sharing of monitoring information
- Worked to avoid duplication of effort
- Enhance resources and sharing of data

Partners

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, Bureau of Indian Affairs, National Park Service, U.S. Geological Survey, Federal Highway Administration

For More Information

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On-The-Ground Projects

- Continue to develop the Lake Michigan Monitoring Coordinating Council and make it operational with the development of a Lake Michigan Monitoring Plan
- Continue to develop the Lake Michigan On-line atlas, with the addition of the Chicago Wilderness models and tools
- Holding a Beach Conference to address E. Coli and erosion issues February 6-8, 2000