M·N·R·G

Midwest Natural Resources Group

Saginaw River and Bay Focus Area

Background

The Saginaw Bay watershed includes all or part of 22 Michigan counties and the aquatic resources of the second largest bay in the Great Lakes system. Saginaw Bay has a surface area of over 1,100 square miles and is divided equally into a shallow inner bay (15 feet average depth), and a deeper outer bay (51 feet average depth). Saginaw River and the associated watershed, as well as the inner Saginaw Bay have been significantly impacted by contaminants, eutrophication, habitat destruction and fragmentation. As a result, the area has been listed by the International Joint Commission as an Area of Concern.

The quantity and concentrations of the released hazardous substances are sufficient to potentially cause injury to natural resources and people. Human consumption advisories for some fish species have been placed for dioxins and PCBs (polychlorinated biphenyl) for over a decade. Sediment contamination is believed to be a point of significant accumulation of these releases/discharges, and is thought to be an important source of continuing contamination. Coastal and riparian wetland habitats, which are essential for self-sustaining populations of several species of Great Lakes fish and wildlife, have been significantly depleted and impaired as a result of anthropogenic activities. The invasion of non-indigenous aquatic species such as the zebra mussel are being shown to be causing major changes in the ecosystem and the food chain.

Activities

(1) the creation of nearly 1,275 miles of riparian filter strips and the development of 610,000 acres of nutrient management practices within the watershed (NRCS); (2) work on a Cass River Planning Study utilizing GIS capabilities (USACOE); (3) continued growth and implementation of wetland restoration efforts through the Private Lands Program and management of two National Wildlife Refuges (USFWS); (4) assistance in planning greenway implementation and development of a trail system that includes the Bay City River Walk system (NPS); (5) plans for a second round of research to examine continuing ecological changes resulting from establishment of exotic species (NOAA); (6) examination of food web dynamics in the fish community (GLSC); (7) planning for spill response training in 2003 (USCG); and, (8) coordination and collaboration for the Saginaw River NRDA (USFWS, USEPA, USACE).

Partners

Those listed above as well as numerous other federal, state, local and tribal agencies and organizations.

For More Information

Jerry McClain, Focus Area Team Leader
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Alpena, Michigan
517/356-5102

On-The-Ground Projects

Great Lakes Discovery Center
- Place for all agencies to showcase missions and accomplishments
- High public visibility
- Excellent inter-agency collaborative potential

Natural Resources Damage Assessment in Saginaw River
- PCB contaminated sediment cleanup
- Monitoring and habitat restoration

Comprehensive Ecosystem Study of Saginaw Bay
- Track fish, habitat recovery and determine the impacts of exotic species
- Aquatic wetland restoration

01/01