



## U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Great Lakes National Program Office (GLNPO) Significant Activities Report

On the Web at:  
[www.epa.gov/greatlakes](http://www.epa.gov/greatlakes)

December 2005

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### **Great Lakes Restoration Strategy**

The final *Great Lakes Regional Collaboration Strategy to Restore and Protect the Great Lakes* was released at “Summit II” on Monday, December 12<sup>th</sup> at the John G. Shedd Aquarium in Chicago, Illinois. The Strategy was the result of a year-long process involving 1,500 participants representing the entire spectrum of interested stakeholders within and outside government. Representatives of the Great Lakes Regional Collaboration also took the opportunity to sign a *Great Lakes Regional Collaboration Resolution* pledging their continued support for the Great Lakes Collaboration effort and actions to restore and protect the Great Lakes. The Strategy and Resolution can be viewed on the Web at: <http://www.glrc.us/strategy.html>

### **Background**

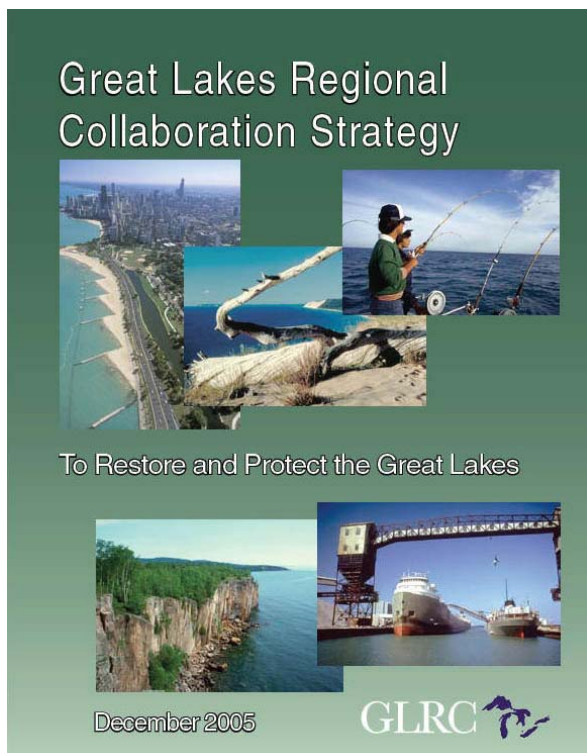
A Great Lakes Interagency Task Force was established by President Bush through an Executive Order on May 18<sup>th</sup>, 2004 to undertake two major activities: Form a “Great Lakes Interagency Task Force” (IATF), and Promote a “Regional Collaboration of National



USEPA Administrator Steve Johnson, speaking on behalf of the federal members of the Great Lakes Regional Collaboration, addresses the participants at the GLRC Summit II meeting in Chicago, IL

Significance” for the Great Lakes.

On December 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2004, a Great Lakes Regional Collaboration Conveners Meeting was held in Chicago, Illinois, where the Conveners signed the “Great Lakes Declaration” and “Framework” documents affirming their commitment to the Great Lakes Regional Collaboration process and the development of a comprehensive strategy to restore and protect the Great Lakes. The “Framework” document established eight Issue Area Strategy Teams, comprised of representatives from all sectors of the Great Lakes community, as the working bodies responsible for drafting action plans for their issue areas to be incorporated into a comprehensive Great Lakes Strategy. Additional information on the Executive Order and Great Lakes Regional Collaboration is available on the Web



Great Lakes Regional Collaboration Strategy to Restore and Protect the Great Lakes cover page

at: <http://www.epa.gov/glnpo/collaboration/taskforce/index.html>

The Strategy Teams completed their draft documents in late June, and a draft strategy document was released for public review and comment at "Summit I" on July 7<sup>th</sup>, 2005, in Duluth, Minnesota. The 60-day public comment on the draft strategy ended on September 8<sup>th</sup>, 2005. In addition, six public meetings were held in locations throughout the Great Lakes basin in order to obtain further public input. The Executive Committee and Issue Area Strategy Teams met on October 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup>, 2005 in Rochester, New York to review public comments and begin finalizing the strategy. The document released on December 12<sup>th</sup> was the culmination of the year-long effort.

(Contacts: Vicki Thomas, 312-886-6942, [thomas.vicki@epa.gov](mailto:thomas.vicki@epa.gov) or Nancy Guiden,

312-353-5006, [guiden.nancy@epa.gov](mailto:guiden.nancy@epa.gov))

### New Wetlands Partnership

On December 12<sup>th</sup>, USEPA's Assistant Administrator for Water, Ben Grumbles and USEPA Great Lakes National Program Manager/Region 5 Regional Administrator Thomas V. Skinner joined a meeting of the National Association of Manufacturers (NAM) to launch its new wetlands restoration initiative in the Midwest. The Chicago meeting was also attended by numerous local business leaders, who discussed a range of topics including federal tax incentives to foster private efforts to improve the Nation's water resources and habitats. Since the year 2000, NAM has served as the national program sponsor of Corporate Wetlands Restoration Partnership (CWRP), which was formed in 1999. CWRP matches every private dollar spent by corporations for wetlands restoration with about \$4 in federal funds and joins America's corporate leaders with federal, state, and local governments; non-governmental organizations; and academia in restoring and protecting the nation's wetlands and aquatic habitats. So far, the program has resulted in the restoration of more than 6,000 acres and stream miles, mostly in the Northeast. NAM President John Engler, who once served as governor of Michigan, recently sent some 400 letters encouraging corporate involvement in the program. More than 200 companies now participate in the CWRP voluntary effort, many of which are also NAM members.

(Contact: Judy Beck, 312-353-3849, [beck.judy@epa.gov](mailto:beck.judy@epa.gov))

### Toxics Strategy Update

A Great Lakes Binational Toxics Strategy Stakeholder Forum was held on December 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> in USEPA's Chicago Valdas Adamkus Conference Center. The Featured

Keynote speaker was Clive Davies, who discussed USEPA's "Design for the Environment Program."

The Minnesota Pollution Control Agency's Carrie Lohse Hanson, who serves as the United States co-chair of the Lake Superior Chemical Committee, gave a presentation about Minnesota's PCB transformer project on December 6<sup>th</sup>. The presentation was very well received, and some members of the PCB workgroup immediately followed up with requests for assistance with their PCB transformer inventories. Some ideas that resulted from the presentation and discussions that followed include: that the Great Lakes Binational Toxics Strategy's Utility Solid Waste Activity Group will combine the data with some other utility data to try to better predict the GE transformer suspects. Representatives from the Council of Great Lakes Industries emphasized the importance of financial incentives for successful PCB transformer phase-outs. USEPA Region 5's Tony Martig will work with the Lake Superior group to further get the word out using the Minnesota project as a pilot. The Utility Solid Waste Activity Group distributed its excellent flyer called "Promoting the Voluntary Phase-down of PCB-containing Equipment."

The speakers' PowerPoint presentations can be viewed at <http://www.epa.gov/glnpo/bns/reports/stakesdec2005/index.html>.

(Contacts: Ted Smith, 312-353-6571, [smith.edwin@epa.gov](mailto:smith.edwin@epa.gov) or Elizabeth LaPlante, 312-353-2694, [laplante.elizabeth@epa.gov](mailto:laplante.elizabeth@epa.gov))

### **Areas of Concern Progress Ashtabula Cleanup Moves Closer**

On December 9<sup>th</sup>, USEPA GLNPO signed a Project Agreement with the Ashtabula City Port Authority to undertake the remediation of a 1-mile stretch of the Ashtabula River in



Pleasure boats on the Ashtabula River

Ashtabula, Ohio. The \$50 million project involves the dredging and disposal of approximately 600,000 cubic yards of PCB-contaminated sediments upstream of the 5th Street Bridge. Construction of the disposal facility is expected to commence in early 2006, with dredging scheduled to begin in Fall 2006. The cleanup will be conducted under GLNPO's Legacy Act authority and funding. For more information about the Ashtabula cleanup, see: <http://www.epa.gov/glnpo/sediment/legacy/ashtabula/index.html>.

(Contact: Scott Cieniawski, 312-353-9184, [cieniawski.scott@epa.gov](mailto:cieniawski.scott@epa.gov))

### **Oswego River, New York**

The updated Oswego River Area of Concern Stage 3 Delisting Document was posted on December 14<sup>th</sup> on the New York Department of Environmental Conservation Web Site at: <http://www.dec.state.ny.us/website/dow/oswdlist.html>. This posting started a 45-day public-comment period, which was announced also on December 14<sup>th</sup> at <http://www.dec.state.ny.us/website/enb/index.html>. The comment period closes January 30<sup>th</sup>, 2006, with finalization of the document expected March 2006.

(Contacts: Barbara Belasco, 212-637-3848, [belasco.barbara@epa.gov](mailto:belasco.barbara@epa.gov) or Mark Elster, 312-886-3857, [elster.mark@epa.gov](mailto:elster.mark@epa.gov))

### Presque Isle Bay, Pennsylvania

Work is underway under a GLNPO grant to establish fish-tumor reference sites in order to develop a supportable delisting target for this Beneficial Use Impairment. To learn more about the Presque Isle Bay Area of Concern, go to: <http://www.epa.gov/glnpo/aoc/presque.html>

(Contact: Scott Ireland, 312-886-8121, [ireland.scott@epa.gov](mailto:ireland.scott@epa.gov))

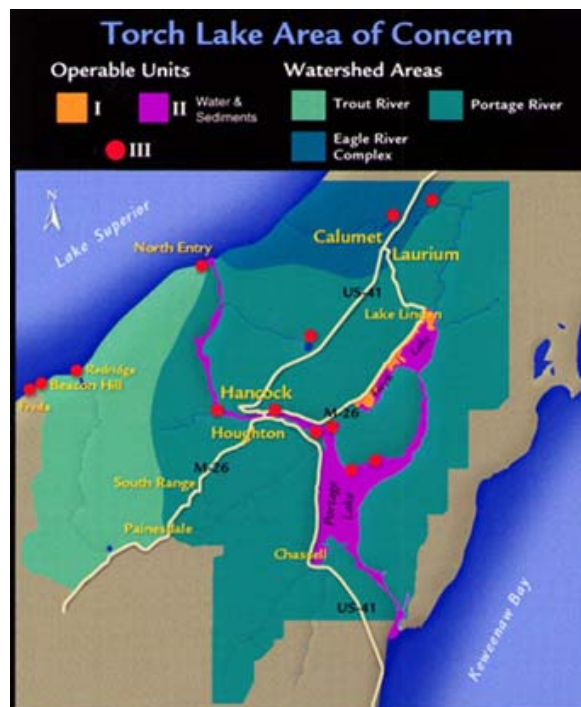
### Torch Lake, Michigan

The Michigan Department of Environmental Quality, with support from USEPA, collected samples to determine PCBs in the water column. The sampling is being done to determine whether the sources of PCBs found in Torch lake fish are inside the AOC or outside the AOC. This work will allow the State and local citizens group to determine if the fish-consumption advisory Beneficial Use Impairment can be delisted. Results are expected in April 2006. More information about the Torch Lake Area of Concern is available on the Internet at: <http://www.epa.gov/glnpo/aoc/trchlke.html>.

(Contact: Brenda Jones, 312-886-7188, [jones.brenda@epa.gov](mailto:jones.brenda@epa.gov))

### Waukegan Harbor Preliminary Design Document Finalized

On December 16<sup>th</sup>, USEPA in cooperation with their contractor, CH2M Hill, finalized the "Preliminary Design Document, Waukegan Harbor Area of Concern, Waukegan, Illinois." The document provides preliminary cost estimates for the dredging and disposal of 290,000 cubic yards of PCB-contaminated sediments in the harbor. Three disposal options are evaluated, with cost estimates ranging from \$45 to \$75 million. USEPA, the U. S. Army Corps of Engineers, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration,



Map of the Torch Lake Area of Concern

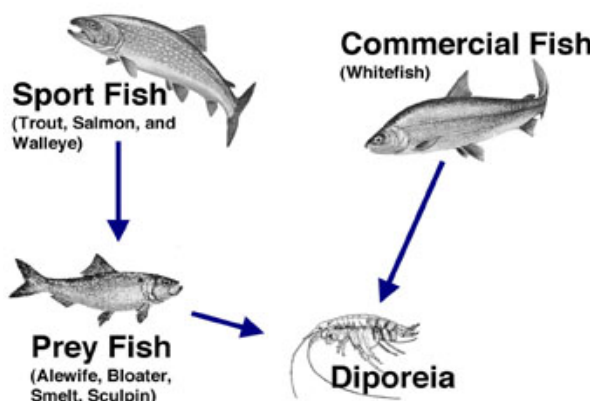
Illinois EPA, and the City of Waukegan are coordinating efforts with other stakeholders to select a final remedy for site and identify source of funding for implementation. The parties are also discussing whether there is a need for additional data prior to the selection of a final cleanup plan. See <http://www.epa.gov/glnpo/aoc/waukegan.html> to learn more about the Waukegan Harbor Area of Concern.

(Contact: Scott Cieniawski, 312-353-9184, [cieniawski.scott@epa.gov](mailto:cieniawski.scott@epa.gov))

### Tracking Changes in Lake Huron Food Web

GLNPO grantee Dr. Mary Balcer and contract scientist Dr. Rick Barbiero presented recent data on Lake Huron phytoplankton and zooplankton at the 2005 Midwest Fish and Wildlife Conference held in Grand Rapids, Michigan from December 11<sup>th</sup> to 14<sup>th</sup>. As a part of a robust two-day discussion between lower food web and fishery research-

## Great Lakes Food Web



How *Diporeia* fits into the Great Lakes food web  
(Graphic courtesy of NOAA)

ers, GLNPO's monitoring data helped shed light on recent disruptions in the Lake Huron food web. Lake Huron suffered a huge decline of forage fish (primarily non-native alewife) in 2003, likely due to declines in *Diporeia* populations and high levels of predation. *Diporeia*, an amphipod that looks like a miniature freshwater version of shrimp, are an important food item for both native and non-native fish species. As a result, fish in upper trophic levels now face a sharply reduced food supply. GLNPO's data suggest that availability of zooplankton is likely a limiting factor for forage fish populations. Lake Huron continues to support a healthy level of phytoplankton and nutrients, so overall water quality conditions should be able to support a healthy fishery. However, the current species composition and size of zooplankton is indicative of very high levels of predation, which indicates that forage fish now face a limited food supply. The Lake Huron fisheries management community is using the GLNPO data to assess the prospects for recovery of prey fish, particularly the native lake herring, which is believed to have been suppressed by previously high numbers of alewives and smelt. These lower food web findings, which re-

sulted from collaboration between GLNPO, contracting laboratories, and a cooperative grant with University of Wisconsin at Superior, made good use of GLNPO's unparalleled zooplankton and benthos datasets to explain how the lower trophic levels (zooplankton and amphipods) might be affecting – and be affected by – the recent changes in the fish community.

(Contact: James Schardt, 312-353-5085, [schardt.james@epa.gov](mailto:schardt.james@epa.gov))

## Conservation and Native Landscaping Awards

The 2005 Conservation and Native Landscaping Awards were presented at the Morton Arboretum on December 6<sup>th</sup>. Working in partnership with Chicago Wilderness organization, USEPA provided awards to 14 organizations in the Chicagoland area representing park districts, municipalities, homeowner associations, institutions, and corporations. Winning projects included native plant gardens, prairie communities, wetland / shoreline restoration projects, two conservation development sites, and an infill site with excellent storm water management features. USEPA sent out a news release to Chicago area media outlets and the *Daily Herald - Lisle/Naperville* edition ran a front-page story on the awards. *Lawn & Landscape Magazine* contacted the USEPA Office of Public Affairs to express interest in writing and article on the awards for their magazine. USEPA showcased slides about the awards program and the winning sites on December 9<sup>th</sup>, during the Illinois American Society of Landscape Architects annual awards dinner held in Chicago.

The 2005 Conservation and Native Landscaping Award winners in the various categories were:

**Conservation Development:  
Subdivisions and Infill Sites**

- Sanctuary of Bull Valley, McHenry County, a 300-acre development with approximately 47% of the land set aside as dedicated open space, including prairie, savanna, and forested areas.
- Alps Development – Tuscan Hills Green Garden Township, Will County, Illinois, for a 95-acre development with approximately 54% open space. Native plants will cover much of the open space.
- Villa Park Police Station, Villa Park Municipal building, Villa Park, Illinois for developing an area with 3 major components utilized to prevent runoff from the site: a “Green Roof,” bio-retention swales, and permeable paving in the parking lot.

**Native Landscaping Sites:  
Corporations (for profit)**

- ComEd, for restoring and maintaining a high quality Buffalo Grove, Illinois prairie community on their right-of-way.
- Motorola Schaumburg, Illinois for native landscaping around a pond area with path.
- Abbott Labs, Abbott Park, Illinois for the Abbott Park North Prairie restoration, including managing for a population of rare white fringed orchids.

**Native Landscaping Sites:  
Local Governments**

- St. Charles Park District, St. Charles, Illinois for the St. Charles Native plant garden at its community center.
- Cary Park District, Cary, Illinois, for its native landscaping around the pond area of Jaycee Park.
- 63rd St. Beach, Chicago, Illinois by the Chicago Park District, Chicago Department of Transportation, and Illinois Department of Transportation (Terry Guen



Award-winning native landscaping project around the pond area of Jaycee Park in Cary, Illinois

- Design Associates) for a 3-acre native grassland (dunes-type ecosystem).
- Oakbrook Terrace Park District, Oakbrook Terrace, Illinois for its Lake View Nature Center which includes 3 native plant gardens: butterfly, sensory, and-teaching.

**Native Landscaping Sites:  
Public Institutions**

- Chicago Botanic Garden, Glencoe, Illinois for its lakeshore restoration, restoring 2.5 miles of shoreline.
- Morton Arboretum, Lisle, Illinois for its lakeshore /wetlands restoration.

**Homeowner Associations**

- The Madison Club, Burr Ridge, Illinois (Pizzo & Associates) for restoration of an oak-hickory savanna and open water wetland in a subdivision setting affecting 13 acres.
- Harbor Springs, Aurora, Illinois (Pizzo & Associates) for an open water wetland restoration affecting 6 acres.

(Contacts: Danielle Green, 312-886-7594, [green.danielle@epa.gov](mailto:green.danielle@epa.gov) or Bob Newport, 312-886-1513, [newport.bob@epa.gov](mailto:newport.bob@epa.gov))

## *Upcoming Events*

**2006**

November 1-3    State of the Lakes Ecosystem Conference  
(SOLEC) 2006  
Milwaukee, Wisconsin

We welcome your questions, comments or suggestions about this month's Significant Activities Report. To be added to or removed from the Email distribution of the Significant Activities Report, please contact Tony Kizlauskas, 312-353-8773, [kizlauskas.anthony@epa.gov](mailto:kizlauskas.anthony@epa.gov).