

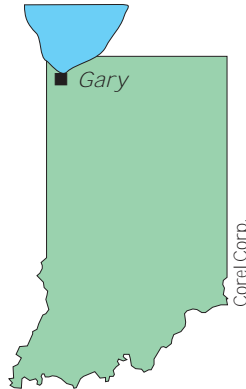


U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Restoring Our Resources

Indiana's Grand Calumet River — The U.S. Steel Settlement

When harmful substances enter the environment, fish, wildlife, and other natural resources are often injured. The Department of the Interior, along with State, Tribal and other Federal partners, act as "trustees" for these resources. Trustees seek to identify the natural resources injured and determine the extent of the injuries, recover damages from the polluters, and plan and carry out natural resource restoration activities. These efforts are possible under the Natural Resource Damage Assessment and Restoration Program, whose goal is to restore natural resources lost to contamination. Led by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the Interior Department, along with other trustees, is accomplishing this goal on the Grand Calumet River in northwest Indiana, bringing a cleaner, healthier environment to the people of the area.



The U.S. Steel settlement area is located near Gary, Indiana.

The Grand Calumet River

Northwestern Indiana has long been an area characterized by heavy industry. In the early 1900s, large steel and oil-refining facilities began locating near Gary, Indiana. Decades later, the region is a landscape of factories, urban sprawl and high

human population. But interspersed among the factories, housing developments and refineries are some of Indiana's most important natural features. Unique among them is the globally rare dune and swale habitat, a series of low beach ridges interspersed with swales, or depressions. The natural communities associated with this area include savanna, prairie, marsh, and swamp -- habitat which supports a number of plants and animals which are state or federally recognized as threatened, endangered, or of special concern.

Traversing the area is the Grand Calumet River. Located about 15 miles southeast of Chicago, the Grand Calumet River watershed encompasses about 25 square miles in Lake and Porter counties, Indiana. Nearby is the National Park Service's Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore.



The Grand Calumet River traverses one of Indiana's most heavily industrialized areas. Clean up efforts are underway. Dan Sparks/USFWS photo.

The waterway, in spite of its proximity to Gary's industrial centers, continues to support a host of fish and wildlife, including rare species such as the bald eagle, peregrine falcon and Indiana bat, along with a multitude of migratory waterfowl.

The Problem

Over the decades, a number of factories, refineries, and other manufacturing facilities have released oil and toxic substances into the Grand Calumet River. These contaminants have affected the water quality in the river and the sediments in the river bed. There, they are a continuous source of contamination to the surrounding environment.

The eastern five miles of the Grand Calumet River has been affected by release of pollutants by the U.S. Steel's (USX) Gary Works. Located there since 1909, the Works has released substances such as polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs), oil, benzene, cyanide, and heavy metals into the river. Resources such as fish, birds, endangered species, surface and ground water, and State and Federal lands have been affected. Pollutants occurring in sediments in the riverbed kill fish, injure migratory birds, and release contaminants into the river and into Lake Michigan.

Solving the Problem

There is an ongoing effort to clean up the Grand Calumet River. Partners such as the Interior Department, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, and State of Indiana are working to negotiate cleanup efforts among the parties responsible for polluting the river. One big step has already been achieved. In August 1998, the Department of Justice announced a settlement with USX whereby release of contaminants into the environment will be stopped and the eastern 5 miles of the Grand Calumet River will be completely dredged. The dredging project, at a cost of about \$30 million to be paid for by USX, will completely remove the contaminated sediment from the riverbed and place it in a safe, sealed storage area. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, with a focus on benefitting injured natural resources, was instrumental in expanding the original settlement to ensure that the dredging project completely removed contaminants that continue to affect fish, water quality, birds, and other resources.



Despite its urban setting, the Grand Calumet River supports a diversity of fish and wildlife resources. Dan Sparks/USFWS photo.

Restoring the Resources

Thanks to the efforts of the Interior Department and the State of Indiana, the USX settlement will help restore those resources lost over the decades to pollution. In addition to the dredging, USX will support restoration of in-stream habitat for fish and aquatic invertebrates in the river, and will also enhance riparian (stream-side) habitat along the waterway. The company, to help replace the lost resources, agreed to acquire 139 acres of dune and swale habitat to become part of the National Park Service's Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore. The Indiana Department of Natural Resources will receive 77 acres of land along nearby Salt Creek. And, under the agreement, USX will spend \$1 million in monitoring efforts to ensure the ongoing success of the restoration project.

Restoration of the natural resources associated with the Grand Calumet River will benefit not only the fish, birds, and other wildlife that depend on the river, but will make the human environment a better place to live. Increased recreation, cleaner water, a more pleasing landscape, and the opportunities to appreciate natural features will be available to residents in the area. This is especially important in an urban setting, where many people may feel removed from the resources that others take for granted.

A Partnership for Success

The USX settlement and restoration effort is an example of what can be achieved when state and federal partners work together to benefit the American public. The Interior Department, State of Indiana, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, and U.S. Justice Department joined efforts to secure a cleaner environment for the people of northwestern Indiana, and a healthier ecosystem for the natural resources in this heavily urbanized area. The cooperative effort will continue as trustees seek similar success for the remainder of the Grand Calumet River.

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