



The Coastal Program - Great Lakes

Caring for Our Coastal Habitats

Overview

The Coastal Program – Great Lakes uses a non-regulatory partnership approach to provide funding and technical assistance to projects benefiting federal trust species in the Great Lakes basin.

The binational Great Lakes basin represents the world's largest freshwater system, the nation's fourth largest coastline, and supports the livelihood and activities of 10 percent of the U.S. and 25 percent of the Canadian populations. As the premier freshwater system in the world, the Great Lakes basin is home to a wide variety of fish and wildlife species with a unique assemblage of habitats. The environmental and economic vitality of the Great Lakes depends on the ecological state of the lakes and their fish and wildlife communities. The Coastal Program in the Great Lakes embraces each of these themes. It's about working together in a voluntary proactive manner with public and private landowners to restore and enhance fish and wildlife habitat. It's about sharing resources of time, energy, and funds to help ensure that elements of our common heritage-- wildlife, fish and a healthy ecosystem-- will be sustained. Since this program began in the Great Lakes Region in

Coastal Program – Great Lakes Accomplishments FROM 2000-2006

Restored / Enhanced

- 8144 acres of coastal wetlands, upland and riparian habitat
- 109 miles of instream Great Lakes tributary habitat
- 8 fish passage barriers removed

IN FY 2006

Partnerships

- 26 Partnership agreements

Restored / Enhanced

- 5380 acres of coastal wetlands, uplands and riparian habitat
- 9.2 miles of instream habitat
- 2 fish barriers removed

fiscal year 2000, we have made tremendous strides with numerous partners on conservation and habitat restoration projects across the basin. Together with our partners, the Service has also undertaken projects that have focused on island monitoring, invasive species control, erosion prevention along tributaries, and education.

Priorities

The Coastal Program-Great Lakes has four priorities which focus on improving habitat for Federal trust resources: migratory birds, federally-listed endangered or threatened species, and inter-jurisdictional fish.

Habitat Restoration: Projects that restore or provide coastal shore habitats and natural processes that sustain long-term diverse and abundant populations

of native resident and migratory fish and wildlife species.

Research and Evaluation:

Projects that further our understanding of natural coastal ecosystem diversity, functions and productivity through the acquisition, compilation, and dissemination of scientific information.

Education and Outreach:

Projects that increase public awareness of coastal resources, issues and corrective actions.

Planning and Technical

Assistance: Projects that plan and provide for ecologically sound levels of restoration, public use, economic benefits, and enjoyment of coastal resources.

Featured Project: St. Louis River Estuary Restoration

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's (FWS) Coastal Program – Great Lakes in partnership with the St. Louis River Citizens Action Committee (CAC) has been working to advance natural resource conservation in the Lower St. Louis River and its watershed.



The St. Louis River forms a 12,000 acre freshwater estuary as it flows into Lake Superior at Duluth, Minnesota and Superior, Wisconsin. This lower portion of the St. Louis River has been significantly impacted by decades of industrial, commercial, and residential use; yet, the estuary continues to provide important breeding, rearing, and migratory habitats for a variety of fish and wildlife species. The FWS and the CAC have a common interest in protecting, enhancing, and restoring the fish and wildlife habitat in the Lower St. Louis River. The FWS recognizes the significance of the area for lake sturgeon and piping plover reintroduction, migratory bird habitat, and for Great Lakes coastal wetlands; as such, the FWS has identified the Lower St. Louis River as a "Focus Area" within the FWS Great Lakes Basin Ecosystem Team and the Coastal Program.

The CAC represents key conservation partners including citizens, organizations, local governments, and state agencies in the implementation of recommendations identified by the Lower St. Louis River Habitat Plan (Habitat Plan), which was developed with help from the Service's Coastal Program - Great Lakes to restore and protect the ecological diversity in the lower St. Louis River. The Habitat Plan will help guide conservation actions in the Lower St. Louis River such as species recovery and habitat restoration at hazardous waste sites. The Habitat Plan will also allow the CAC to expand existing partnerships to help support FWS priority habitat restoration and resource conservation objectives in the Lower St. Louis River.



The Coastal Program – Great Lakes is now involved in helping implement the Habitat Plan. Project implementation that has recently taken place includes interpretative signage along a wetland nature trail being developed by the City of Duluth, MN, native vegetation restoration, vegetation enclosures in a restored habitat area to prevent browsing damage to newly-established plantings, and community wetland environmental education and awareness efforts.



Areas of the St. Louis River estuary are heavily impacted by industry and other uses. The Coastal Program – Great Lakes works with partners to lessen impacts from these areas on fish and wildlife.



Much of the St. Louis estuary remains relatively intact. The Coastal Program – Great Lakes works with partners to implement the Habitat Plan by restoring degraded areas and evaluate results.

For More Information

For more information about the Coastal Program, contact the East Lansing Ecological Services Field Office at 517-351-2555 or the Ashland Fishery Resources Office at 715-682-6185 or visit us on the internet at:

http://www.fws.gov/midwest/great_lakes/glcoastal.htm

