



Habitat Restoration

NOAA staff are working to restore coastal and near-shore habitats in the Great Lakes.

Primary Activities

NOAA staff work with a wide array of partners to improve Great Lakes habitat and water quality. Key activities include:

- Fund and implement quality restoration projects to ensure healthy and sustainable fishery resources;
- Employ technical staff to help improve project design, ensure environmental compliance, and advance restoration techniques;
- Engage the local community and encourage stewardship of the region's coastal and riverine habitats;
- Collaborate with public, private, and non-profit partners to prioritize projects and leverage successes; and
- Use scientific monitoring to evaluate restoration project success and ensure the efficient use of tax dollars.

In 2008, NOAA initiated its **Great Lakes Habitat Restoration Program** to plan, implement, and fund coastal habitat restoration projects throughout the region. Much of NOAA's work in the region is focused on supporting community-identified restoration priorities in Areas of Concern (AOC), environmentally degraded areas within the Great Lakes basin. To qualify as an AOC, an area must contain one or more beneficial use impairments — a significant negative change in the chemical, physical or biological integrity of a water body.

The Program strives to demonstrate meaningful, measurable, and sustainable ecological benefits to coastal and near-shore resources by addressing habitat beneficial use impairments such as loss of fish and wildlife habitat; degraded fish and wildlife populations; and degraded benthos.

NOAA's Damage Assessment, Remediation, and Restoration Program (DARRP) addresses damage due to oil spills and releases of hazardous substances and works with remedial agencies, responsible parties and others to protect and restore NOAA managed injured resources. The technical and scientific capabilities associated with the DARRP provide a holistic, ecosystem-based approach to Great Lakes coastal habitat restoration.

NOAA Fisheries Service Habitat Restoration in the Great Lakes

*Restoring waters and substrate
where fish and other coastal
and migratory species live*



Partnering and Interagency Coordination

NOAA's current partnership with the Great Lakes Commission aims to restore coastal habitat in the U.S. Great Lakes Areas of Concern (AOC). The first two on-the-ground restoration projects funded through this partnership are located in Muskegon Lake, Michigan and on Hog Island, Wisconsin. Future public-private partnerships such as this will help to restore AOCs and other degraded areas. NOAA also leverages existing partnerships through the Interagency Great Lakes Regional Collaboration, which was created in 2004 to protect the Great Lakes, which are national treasures.

Through two years of effort, and engaging over 1,500 Great Lakes stakeholders, federal agencies in the Great Lakes developed a comprehensive strategy to protect and restore the Great Lakes. Since the completion of the strategy, NOAA has been working in concert with other federal agencies through the NOAA Great Lakes Regional Collaboration Team to engage and fully utilize restoration science, resources, and capabilities in the region. In addition to the federal collaboration, NOAA also engages with academia to conduct innovative research and evaluation of projects.

Emerging Issues and Priorities

NOAA will continue to use a competitive process and a partnership approach to fund and provide technical assistance to restoration projects that contribute toward the delisting of AOCs. The agency will also support funding of research and monitoring activities to address critical project-specific restoration needs and improve the science of Great Lakes restoration.

There is a great need for habitat restoration work outside of the AOCs. Identification of key species for establishing restoration targets and restoration planning is a NOAA priority. NOAA is also interested in a lake-wide assessment approach to injury assessment and contaminated sediment remediation.

For more information on NOAA's restoration activities, please visit our website: <http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/habitat/restoration/>

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