

Whatever you do, get out and show the water some love!

Follow these simple tips on how you can help the St. Clair River

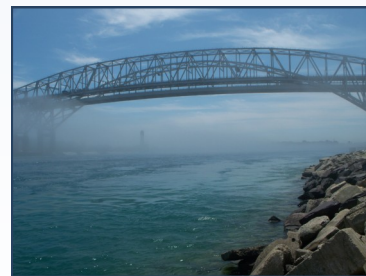
- Don't feed geese, ducks and gulls on or near the water and beaches. If you feed them on the beach, they go on the beach. Their waste contains E. coli bacteria.
- Clean up after your pet and immediately dispose of it in the trash. Pet waste contains E. coli bacteria too.
- Never place anything down a storm drain, including litter, cigarette butts, leaves and grass clippings, fertilizer, chemicals, or oil. *Remember, only rain in the drain!*
- Keep fertilizer applications at least 20 feet away from the edges of rivers, streams and storm drains. This keeps algae-causing nutrients like phosphorus out of our waterways.
- Never place expired pharmaceuticals down a toilet or sink where they then enter our drinking water supply. Throw them in the trash by putting them in a sealable or double bag mixed with coffee grounds or cat litter, or return them to your sheriff's department during a collection day.
- Repair defective or failing septic systems. Surfacing sewage is a health concern and sewage runoff makes its way to our beaches during rain storms.
- Stabilize streambanks or the water's edge with plants native to Michigan, which tolerate our climate, require less fertilizer, resist pests and help reduce erosion.
- Participate in stream clean-up events, Adopt-A-Stream days, and attend the Blue Water Sturgeon Festival held every year in May.
- Encourage federal, state and local governments to continue river monitoring and improvement activities.
- Take a walk along the Blue Water River Walk in downtown Port Huron or Marysville's Living Shoreline. If you see litter or cigarette butts, pick them up and dispose of them properly.



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Friends of the St. Clair River



Updated November 2014



St. Clair River Progress Report

The St. Clair River is one of forty-three waterways in the Great Lakes where action is needed to clean up pollution. These locations are known as Areas of Concern. The St. Clair River was listed as an Area of Concern in 1987 by the U.S. and Canadian governments because of significant historical pollution problems.

In 1988 an international Public Advisory Council for the St. Clair River formed to oversee the restoration of the river and our nonprofit organizations was created. Friends of the St. Clair River's mission is to advise government agencies on measures needed to clean up and eventually delist the river as an Area of Concern.

Although great progress has been made over the last thirty years to remove the impairments, there is still more work to be done until all the river's uses are restored. The St. Clair River is the Blue Water Area's most significant natural feature. We must appreciate and improve it so we can all use it. Please join us in our efforts!



Can we drink the water?

Yes! Municipalities draw water from the river and purify it for human consumption. The drinking water meets or surpasses all state and federal health requirements. Most water intake plants on the St. Clair River do extra monitoring to detect real-time spills so that water intake can be stopped if a foreign substance is detected.

Can we eat the fish?

Yes! All Great Lakes sport fish contain some contaminants, so eat it in moderation. For recommendations on fish species that contain low levels of chemicals go to www.michigan.gov/EatSafeFish.

Can we swim at the beaches?

Yes! Testing conducted by the St. Clair County Health Department at fifteen Great Lakes beaches indicates bacterial levels is generally at safe levels for swimming. Beaches still close occasionally, especially after a heavy rainfall. For current beach closings call the 24-hour hotline at (810) 987-7253 or visit "St Clair County Beaches" on Facebook.

Improvements Continue in the St. Clair River

Each Great Lake and their rivers have fourteen protected Beneficial Uses by the U.S. and Canadian governments. The St. Clair River had ten impaired Beneficial Uses, but through almost three decades of collaborative efforts by government agencies, industry, the public and environmental groups, conditions in the St. Clair River are improving.

1. Restrictions on Fish and Wildlife Consumption

Goal: Fish and wildlife contain no more contaminants than background levels found in fish and wildlife throughout the Great Lakes. Fish can be consumed in moderation as contaminant levels have been dropping. Fish consumption guidelines were updated in 2014 for the St. Clair River by the MI Department of Community Health at www.michigan.gov/EatSafeFish.



2. Degradation of Benthos

Pending removal! Goal: A healthy benthic population not impacted by contaminated sediment. Due to chemical pollution settling at the river's bottom, benthic organisms (bugs) living in the sediment have been adversely affected. The benthos are an important part of the aquatic food web and can pass contamination from the sediment to fish and then to humans. The U.S. side of the river had significantly less sediment contamination to begin with due to less industry, so this impairment has been approved for removal in 2014.



3. Loss of Fish and Wildlife Habitat

Removal anticipated 2015! Goal: Restoration of habitat to provide healthy and sustainable fish and wildlife populations. Hardening of the shoreline with seawalls, draining wetlands for construction or agriculture, and invasive species have adversely affected fish & wildlife populations. There are five projects in progress and four already completed with goals of "softening" the shoreline, reconnecting tributaries to provide shallow habitat for spawning, nursery and feeding, and constructing artificial reefs.

4. Bird and Animal Deformities or Reproductive Problems

Goal: No evidence of deformities or reproductive problems in birds and animals in the St. Clair River. In 2012 the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ) conducted assessments and concluded that the risk to wildlife is low; however some toxins are still present in the food web at levels that could cause problems. Additional fish samples from the St. Clair River must be analyzed to better assess the amount of toxins that wildlife are exposed to and whether that translates to a higher incidence of deformities or reproductive problems.

5. Beach Closings

GOAL: To have no bacterial contamination that would require beaches to be closed for swimming. In the past, Lake Huron and St. Clair River beaches have been closed because of *E. coli* bacteria. High levels of bacteria are caused by municipal sewer system overflows, failing septic systems, and pet and wildlife droppings around beaches. The St. Clair County Health Department has canvassed the county looking for failing septic systems and worked with owners to repair faulty systems. There has been great progress in separating storm water sewage systems in Port Huron, Marysville and St. Clair. To date, Port Huron has eliminated approximately 290 million gallons of pollution to our waterways annually over the last fourteen years.



6. Restrictions on Drinking Water Consumption or Taste and Odor Problems

Pending Removal! Historically there were high incidences of chemical spills to the river but those have been greatly reduced. However, spills still occur so procedures need to be in place to prevent their occurrence, ensure quick notification to water intake plants, and ensure proper cleanup. Monitoring equipment was installed in many water intake plants in 2006. This Huron to Erie Drinking Water Monitoring Network has been modified to make it more affordable for municipalities to maintain.



7. Degradation of Aesthetics

No longer impaired! Undesirable surface scum, suspended solids and other unsightly flotsam are no longer a problem in the St. Clair River. Based on the DEQ's recommendation from data they collected in 2011, this impairment was removed on the U.S. side in 2012 and in Canada in 2014.

8. Added Costs to Agriculture and Industry

No longer impaired! In the past, some industries were forced to shut down due to chemical spills in the river because of the interruption of water intake. This resulted in added costs to industrial and agricultural users to treat St. Clair River water. Surveys were conducted in 2011 indicating that no added costs have incurred recently so this impairment was removed in 2012.

9. Tainting of Fish and Wildlife Flavor

No longer impaired! Surveys of fishermen and consumers in the U.S. and Canada indicated no problem with tainted taste in fish or wildlife from the St. Clair River, so this impairment was removed in 2011.

10. Restrictions on Dredging Activities

No longer impaired! Samples taken from the dredge spoils of the shipping channel since 1992 have shown no contamination that would require hazardous material disposal. Due to historical industrial contamination of sediments near the Canadian shoreline navigational dredging is still restricted in Canada. In the U.S., navigational dredging permits required by the DEQ also may still require sediment analysis and proper disposal of the material.

