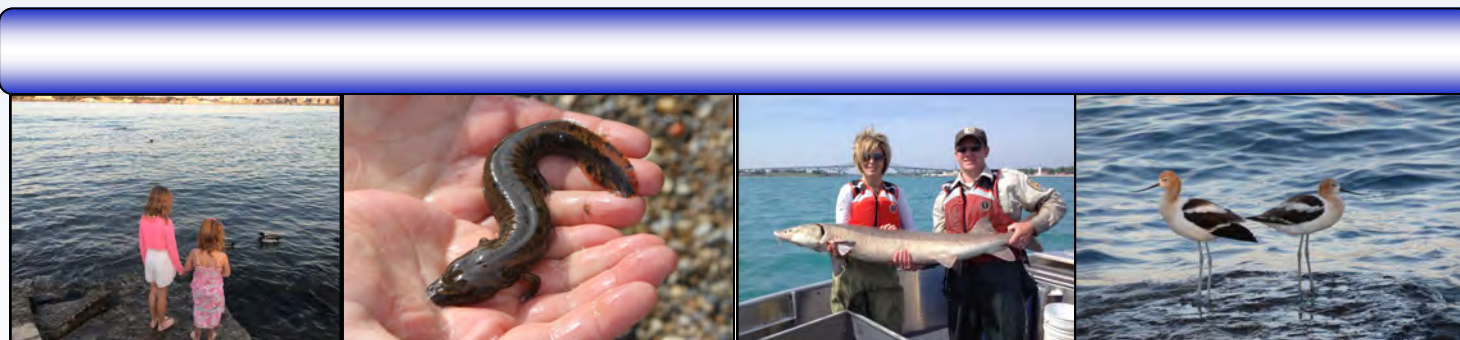


# Show our river some **love!**

- Don't feed swans, geese, ducks, gulls or any waterfowl. These birds are much better off with the diet nature provides. And besides, their waste contains high levels of E. coli bacteria, the kind that fouls beaches. Also clean up after your pet and immediately dispose of the waste 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 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 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 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 and waterways during rain storms.
- Stabilize stream banks and shorelines with plants native to Michigan, instead of using grass and mowing up to the water's edge. The deep root systems of native plants help them reduce erosion, require less fertilizer, resist pests and tolerate our climate.
- Choose personal care products free from microbeads. These tiny plastic microbeads flow straight from our bathroom drains and wastewater treatment plants do not filter them out. Microbeads are not biodegradable and once they enter the water supply they are impossible to remove and become part of the food chain. Encourage positive action from manufacturers to remove them from personal care products.
- Take a walk along the beautifully restored Port Huron Blue Water River Walk and Marysville Living Shoreline riverfronts. 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

Edition Spring 2017

# St. Clair River Area of Concern **Health Report Card**

## What is an **Area of Concern**?

In the 1980s, the United States and Canadian governments identified forty-three areas in the Great Lakes that had severe environmental problems in need of restoration. These places are called *Areas of Concern*. Michigan has twelve *Areas of Concern*. *Areas of Concern* do not support aquatic organisms, such as fish and waterfowl, that are safe for human consumption. The St. Clair River *Area of Concern* includes the 40-mile long river on both the Canadian and U.S. sides.

## Why is the river an **Area of Concern**?

The St. Clair River is an *Area of Concern* because of poor management of significant pollution problems long before regulations better protected our waterways and beaches. As a result, partners on both sides of the river formed the St. Clair River Binational Public Advisory Council to address these environmental problems with the ultimate goal to improve water quality due to a century of neglect. This international council seeks funding to implement the St. Clair River Remedial Action Plan, which is a road map to improve the river's health.

## How is the **health of the river**?

Although great progress has been made over the last thirty years, there is still more work to be done until the river's health is restored. The healing process was given a boost in 2011 with \$21 million of Great Lakes Restoration Initiative dollars and private funding. The St. Clair River is the Blue Water Area's most significant natural feature; we must protect it so we can all enjoy it!



**This tremendous effort is due to the successful collaboration of many federal, state & local partners:**

Prepared by:



Funded by:

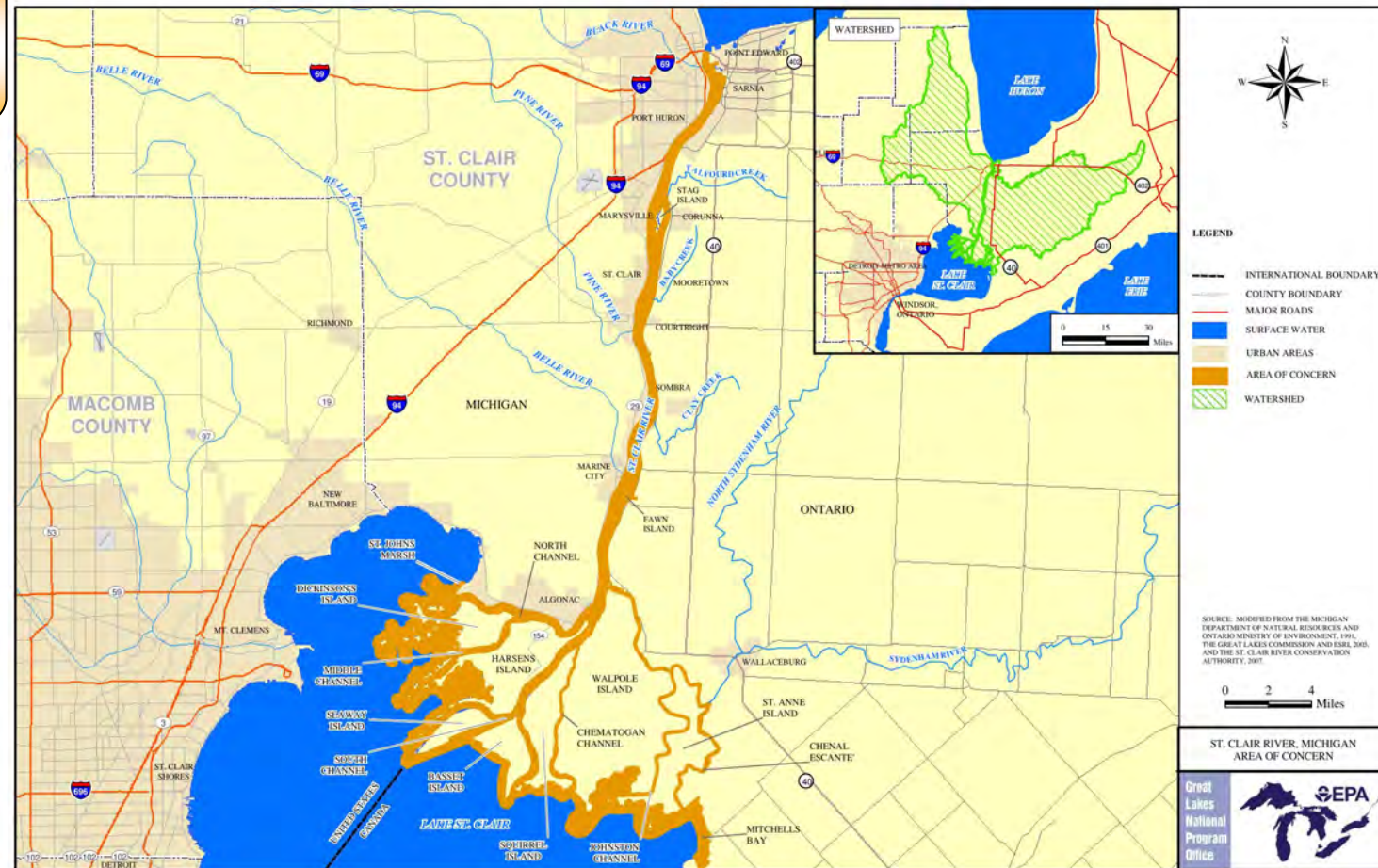


# St. Clair River **Restoration Status Update**

Tackling **Area of Concern** problems, called *beneficial use impairments*, require several steps. These steps can be large and complex, requiring efforts of many partners over multiple years. After actions are completed, we must verify through monitoring that our goals have been achieved. It takes time for the natural system to recover following cleanup actions and habitat restoration. The river began with ten impairments, six have been restored to a healthy condition, and now only four impairments remain until the river can be removed from the **Area of Concern** list.

## REMOVAL Progress

- ❑ **Restrictions on Fish and Wildlife Consumption**  
Fish consumption guidelines exist due to the presence of mercury and PCBs. These toxic chemicals are persistent and remain in the environment for a very long time despite pollution controls that are in place.
- ❑ **Restrictions on Drinking Water Consumption or Taste and Odor Problems**  
Concerns to the safety of our drinking water occur when there are spills from industry, shipping, or pipelines. Spill detection, notification and response capabilities have all greatly improved.
- ❑ **Loss of Fish and Wildlife Habitat**  
*Removal expected in 2017!*  
Ten habitat projects representing \$21 million dollars have been completed with goals of planting native vegetation, stabilizing shorelines, reclaiming wetlands, and constructing three fish spawning reefs at the bottom of the river.
- ❑ **Bird and Animal Deformities or Reproductive Problems**  
*Removal expected in 2017!*  
Studies of bald eagles, mink, tree swallows and carp were undertaken by U.S. and Canadian partners. The results showed that birds and animals are no longer impacted by pollution-related problems in the St. Clair River.



- ☑ **Beach Closings**  
*Restored in 2015!*
- ☑ **Degradation of Benthos**  
*Restored in 2014!*
- ☑ **Degradation of Aesthetics**  
*Restored in 2012!*
- ☑ **Added Costs to Agriculture and Industry**  
*Restored in 2012!*
- ☑ **Tainting of Fish and Wildlife Flavor**  
*Restored in 2011!*
- ☑ **Restrictions on Dredging Activities**  
*Restored in 2011!*



## Can we eat the **fish**?

**Yes!** Certain types of fish should be eaten in moderation because all Great Lakes fish contain some contaminants at varying levels. For recommendations on Great Lakes fish species that contain low levels of chemicals go to [www.michigan.gov/EatSafeFish](http://www.michigan.gov/EatSafeFish).

## Can we drink the **water**?

**Yes!** St. Clair County communities draw water from the river and purify it for human consumption. The drinking water meets or surpasses all state and federal health requirements. Some water 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 swim at the **beaches**?

**Yes!** Water testing conducted by the St. Clair County Health Department along Lake Huron and St. Clair River beaches indicates bacterial levels are safe for swimming. Beaches close occasionally especially after a heavy rainfall. For beach closings follow the 24-hour hotline at (810) 987-7253 or “St Clair County Beaches” on Facebook.

## Did you know? The St. Clair River...

- Is 40 miles long
- Flows at a rate of 1.4 million gallons per second
- Is home to the largest threatened Lake Sturgeon population in the Great Lakes
- Has ten islands, six of which are the land of Walpole Island First Nation
- Has the largest freshwater delta in North America, known as the St. Clair Flats