



Your Environment

A collaborative information resource for the Muskegon County Community

Summer 2013

Your job, should you choose to accept it, is to work yourself out of a job. Task accepted! Thanks to the White Lake Public Advisory Council, the Muskegon Conservation District, and the White Lake community, the job of getting White Lake de-listed as a federally designated Area of Concern was started back in 1985, and is expected to be completed in the near future! With 8 levels of degradation, lovely White Lake landed on the list of toxic hot spots, due pollution from industrial waste and municipal dumping in the past. Strong community efforts over the last 8 years, and decades of activism and studies have put White Lake within close reach of being completely de-listed as an Area of Concern (AOC). 4 of the 8 levels of degradation have already been removed as impairments; 3 are expected to be removed this year; and the final level is expected to be removed next year.

The degradation issues are as follows:

1. **Restricted Dredging Activities.** This level of degradation was removed as an impairment when it was determined that the polluted sediment from industrial waste was not impacting Lake Michigan.
2. **Excessive Eutrophication.** This means aquatic plant life, such as algae, which depletes oxygen from the lake and negatively impacts fisheries; it is caused by nutrient loading. White Lake is comparable to other Michigan lakes, so this was removed as an AOC issue. However, as with all lakes, there will be on-going efforts to address this issue, including stormwater runoff, phosphorous fertilizer, and septic controls, wetland management, and supporting watershed group activities.
3. **Degradation of Benthic Communities.** These are the beneficial bugs that live on the bottom of the lake and support fisheries. This impairment was removed after evaluations put White Lake in line with other lakes.
4. **Restriction of Fish Consumption.** Who would want to eat a toxic fish? This impairment was removed. As with all lakes (in the world!) there are concerns of mercury and other issues, so it is an on-going effort, but White Lake is no worse than other lakes.
5. **Degradation of Aesthetics. Sludge.** Not pretty (see last quarter's newsletter). Beauty is in the eye of the beholder. Let's hope beholders like the looks of large felled trees, because fish and wildlife love it. Continued efforts of natural habitat restoration and clean up are in place, which will further beautify the area. This is expected to be removed as an impairment soon.
6. **Degradation of Fisheries Population and also...**
7. **Degradation of Wildlife Population.** Restoration is in process. Digging up mysterious 55 gallon drums is not fun. HazMat is a potential danger. Work is on-going to create sustainable fish and wildlife populations, and it is expected that these impairments will be removed this year.
8. **Last but certainly not least. Restriction on Drinking Water Consumption.** Potable water is something that many Americans take for granted, however, everyone should be aware that clean drinking water is world wide problem. In the White Lake area, polluted groundwater at an industrial site is expected to be the final impairment for removal. Active remediation is taking place, and removal of the impairment is expected in 2014.

In 1985, White Lake, along with 42 others in the Great Lakes area, was designated as an Area of Concern, and in 2014 White Lake is expected to be de-listed as an AOC. While there is agreement that work will be on going, and the industrial waste toxins will actually take 500 years or more to dissipate, the efforts to improve the problem to healthier levels is quite an accomplishment. We should throw a 30 Year Anniversary Party in 2015 for the White Lake community to celebrate their hard work!

Good Websites Good Information

EPA CARE Program
www.epa.gov/care

EPA Lead Safety
www.epa.gov/lead

E-Waste Recycling
www.reconnectpartnership.com

County-wide Health Concerns
www.muskegonhealth.net

Link from National Wildlife
Federation

GARDENER'S GUIDE TO
GLOBAL WARMING
Challenges and Solutions:
[www.nwf.org/gardenersguide/
Gardeners_Guide.pdf](http://www.nwf.org/gardenersguide/Gardeners_Guide.pdf)