

Great Lakes Legacy Act fosters riverfront revitalization

The Great Lakes Legacy Act (GLLA) helps communities reconnect with once thriving waterways that over time have become degraded by toxic chemicals and other pollutants. Throughout the process of restoration, IISG works closely with local residents to ensure that their questions are answered and to help the community make the most of this

In Milwaukee, the Lincoln Park project is underway right now. The park is intersected by Lincoln Creek and the Milwaukee River, which provides an opportunity for fishing and other activities. It also has a golf course, picnic areas, a water park, and trails for walking, biking, and cross country skiing. Local residents use this expansive park to its fullest.

was part of the process and that residents had ample opportunities to learn about what was taking place and why. At town meetings, U.S. EPA and state of Wisconsin representatives explained the project and provided information on specific concerns. Questions were addressed both in a follow-up meeting and a publication.

To ensure that anyone visiting the park can learn about the project, the team developed two 3-sided signs. The three panels include guidance on local fish advisories; a description of how this project connects to other cleanup projects in the region and other Areas of Concern; and specifics about the Lincoln Park project including the activities that will occur, a timeline, and a weekly update. A dump truck that fills up over time illustrates the project progress.

In northwest Indiana, the Grand Calumet River cleanup has reached a milestone. The first two phases of the project are done and 148,000 cubic yards of contaminated sediment were removed or capped.

The Grand Cal runs through what once was one of the most industrialized regions in the country, including the cities of Gary, East Chicago, and Hammond. Now that most of that industry is gone, it left behind a river contaminated with what sounds like a toxic soup: PCBs, PAHs, heavy metals, fecal coliform bacteria, suspended solids, oil, grease, and more.

Nonetheless, amazingly, small



U.S. EPA employees, left to right, Marc Tuchman, Ajit Vaidya, and John Perrecone inspect the three-sided sign in Milwaukee's Lincoln Park. This side provides updates to the public about ongoing remediation.

chance to turn the waterfront environment and economy around.

Signed into law in 2002, and reauthorized in 2008, the GLLA provides cost-sharing opportunities to clean up contaminated sediments in U.S. EPA Great Lakes Areas of Concern. So far, 10 Great Lakes sites have been cleaned up, totaling 1.3 million cubic yards remediated, with many more in progress.

"When it was announced that contaminated sediment in a section of the river was going to be cleaned up through the Legacy Act, residents had many questions—they wanted to understand what was going to be happening in their park," said Susan Boehme, IISG former coastal sediment specialist.

IISG, working with all the project partners, developed a plan to ensure that the community

patches of remaining habitat support rare plant and animal species including the black-crowned night heron. With restoration as an important component of this project, IISG has been there to help manage public expectations. "Restoration takes time, and the process doesn't necessarily reflect the outcome, so people have questions and concerns when they see large-scale removals of plants that are actually invasive species," said Caitie McCoy, IISG social scientist.

The third phase of this GLLA project is in progress—the cleanup of nearby Roxanna Marsh, a former shorebird nesting area, including the removal of invasive species as well as contaminated sediment.

In Milwaukee, the Kinnickinnic River demonstrates the after image in an environmental makeover. But, since the cleanup, which was completed in 2009, economic benefits have bloomed as well.

In 2007, American Rivers magazine called the KK River one of the most troubled in the nation. About 158,000 cubic yards of contaminated sediment later, the riverfront is in the midst of resurgence.

"Since the cleanup, a riverfront restaurant has expanded fivefold with a new boardwalk and boat piers, plus an expanded patio with volleyball courts and riverfront seating. A nearby marina has expanded 2-3 times and can now accommodate larger boats," said David Ferron of the Paul Davis Restoration Company, which is building a \$5 million industrial complex along the river.



The West Branch Grand Calumet River in Hammond, Indiana has undergone remediation through the Great Lakes Legacy Act.

"For each of the GLLA projects, it has been critical that project partners and the public be strongly invested in its success," said McCoy. "Communities take ownership of their lakes and rivers through this cooperative process, ensuring local environmental stewardship in the future long after the cleanups are finished."